

**North** The Methodist Church  
**Bedfordshire**  
**Circuit**

34/1

# Magazine

Issue No.58

Spring 2026



Flowers appear on the earth;  
the season of singing has come,  
the cooing of doves  
is heard in our land.

*Song of Songs 2:12 NIV*

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# ***A Pastoral Letter***

by Rev Sydney Sichilima

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.



First of all, let me express how grateful I am to have this rare opportunity to share this pastoral message with our Church family at such a time as this, when, as the Church, we are just concluding our observance of the Lent season. I believe it has been a life-changing event for all of us as we took a moment to remember Christ's temptation in the wilderness, as we fasted, made self-introspection, reflections and repentance, and are now transitioning into the most sacred season in our liturgical calendar – the Passion Week – a spiritual journey that leads us towards Easter. What a joy to see how enthusiastic our Christians have been!

As a new Minister in this Circuit, I have been deeply moved by the devotion within our Methodist fraternity and, frankly speaking, I am profoundly touched by the warmth of your hearts. Your beautiful, inspired singing always vibrates deep within my soul! To God be the glory! Friends, it has indeed been my pleasure and a privilege to journey together with you through the season of Lent, and I look forward again to walking with you through the Passion Week, my first ever Holy Week in another global Church.

As we dive deeper into this sacred season, I invite you brethren and sisters to temporarily take a break from our fast-paced schedules and spend a moment in the presence of the Almighty God! In the Bible, before Christ was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, Scripture says, He (Jesus) came back to the disciples and found them sleeping. And He said to Peter, “**So, could you not watch with me one hour?**” (*Matthew 26:40 ESV*) Beloved in Christ, I believe the Lord is still asking just one hour from every one of us in the world. In a world that is so noisy, impatient and fast-moving, a sacred season such as Passion Week invites us to slow down, take a quiet, honest look at our lives.

Let me end here by echoing what I have usually heard from our leaders as one of the priority areas for our strategic plan. In nearly all the meetings I have attended, “**Church Growth**” has been on top of the agenda as focus for this year. To this effect, I invite you brethren and sisters that we may take this “Holy Week” as an occasion to cultivate new growth in our spiritual lives, caring for one another and walking in the light of God’s love.

May the Lord bless and keep us as we  
journey together toward Easter! Amen.

God bless  
*Sydney*

# NEWS FROM

## HOWARD MEMORIAL CHURCH, CARDINGTON

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### We are trying something new

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On the second Sunday of the month we have begun our “Second Sunday Special” where we encourage people to join us for an informal morning. We begin at 10.30am with coffee and refreshments, and have a time of chatting and catching up with friends. We usually have a theme for the morning, which concludes with a few songs, short prayer and a thought for the week ahead.

In January we invited Jack from SMART who gave us an insight into the Prebend Centre in Bedford – they provide a warm day bed, a hot meal, and a welcoming environment for anyone facing homelessness in the coldest days of the year. We have supported SMART for many years, as one of our former URC ministers, Rev Derek Fitch, was one of the original founders of the charity. We were able to donate £400, being proceeds from our Christmas Bonanza (supported by our youth groups) and our Coffee Morning. Jack thanked us for our support which provided safety throughout the day for those who had nowhere to turn.

You can alert SMART if you are aware of a homeless person by contacting Streetlink: [thestreetlink.org.uk](http://thestreetlink.org.uk)

*Jan Oliver*

# NEWS FROM

## TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH, BIGGLESWADE

Greetings to you all from Trinity in Biggleswade. We are part of the 'Eastern Section' of the Circuit, and have certainly seen benefits in building a closer relationship with the other churches in our two Mission Groups. Under the leadership of Rev Leslie Noon we have joined in some of her exciting initiatives, such as 'Awaydays' and 'Faith and Fellowship' sessions looking at the Bible in very different ways. It's so good to have the opportunity to learn from other people's opinions! Whilst new ventures are good, I want to tell you about two of our successful, existing 'Outreaches'

### 1. "CHURCH ON A TUESDAY"

Our 'Footprints' Coffee Mornings have gone from strength to strength for more than ten years. The fellowship and friendship that has come out of this community morning is heart-warming, with a crossover to church on a Sunday in small ways, and the support of other events.....as an aside it has raised well over £40,000 for 'All We Can'.

### 2. "CHURCH ON A SATURDAY"

In August 2012, our first 'MESSY CHURCH' was held on a Saturday morning at Trinity. It was the dream of Christine Denny (now Scrutton) and with a small team of people we started out.....14 years later we are still thriving.....now with the help of members of Sandy and Upper Caldecote in the 'team' to make it happen.

Families meet on our premises for Christian-based activities and fun, finishing with related worship and a shared family lunch. Crafts and activities have varied over the years; a couple of particularly enjoyable and successful stories come to mind. For example, 'Messy

Builders' (the wise & foolish men) resulted in great hilarity, with children and parents building massively high towers of paper cups, Jenga etc. Another 'fun' time was the story of NOAH when Leslie had the children running outside squirting water pistols at each other to create the 'RAIN'! Her enthusiasm has added so much in recent years.

Lasting relationships are built with children and their parents. At Christmas over 24 Adults & 31 children sat down to lunch!! As long as we are able, we will keep going with God's help to bring families into our church on a Saturday to introduce them to Bible stories and the values of Christianity. We are pleased to have this opportunity to sow seeds and trust God for the harvest.

*Tricia Mapletoft*  
(Senior Steward)



## NEWS FROM



At Lidlington, over the last 12 to 18 months we have started some new activities to run alongside our regular tried and tested ones. We have combined activities that bring our

church family closer together in faith and prayer, with strengthening our links with our brothers and sisters in Stewartby and Marston, as well as reaching out into our community.

### **Tried and Tested**

#### ***Storytellers***

This is based on Open The Book. Our team of four ladies go into the local Lower School once a month and act out a Bible story from the

Storyteller Bible. Sometimes we use a modern-day Christian script that will fit in with the school's current RE studies.

### ***Praying Together***

A few times a year, Lidlington, Stewartby, Vale Community Church Marston and St Mary's Marston meet to pray together for one hour. We pray for each other, our leaders, our communities, and seek God's wisdom for our futures.

God has really blessed this with a regular commitment from all churches resulting in attendance of 6-8 each time we meet. We have seen some amazing answers to prayer.

### ***Friday Morning Homegroup***

Our Friday morning ladies' homegroup has gone from strength to strength, with a regular attendance of seven. We follow a theme and unpick God's Word in fellowship and love. We have enjoyed the most exciting discussions when we can share in safety and confidence our thoughts and questions, and there are many questions.

We have seen our faith deepened as God has revealed more of Himself to us over time.

### ***Weekly Coffee Morning & Monthly Lunch Club***

These events are run by our church but are open to the whole community. Several members of our community have been coming for many years to enjoy unlimited tea, coffee, biscuits, and good company.

We have people come from surrounding villages to taste Diane's delicious lunches. This is a great opportunity to enjoy the company of people we wouldn't necessarily see otherwise.

### ***Joint Worship with Stewartby***

For several years we have been sharing worship with Stewartby once each quarter. We alternate which church we use and we share the prayers, readings and preaching between us. It has been a privilege to be able to share our resources with our Stewartby family.

## **New Bits**

### ***Ladies' and Men's Breakfast***

The Ladies' Breakfast takes place on the first Saturday of every month at The Kiln in Stewartby. We are joined by our Stewartby family and friends from the community. We have a regular group of around 12-15 attendees each month. This has been a most enjoyable addition to our calendar.

The Men's Breakfast takes place on the second Saturday of every month at The Green Man in Lidlington. With a regular attendance of around 8-10, I hear there are lively discussions and plenty of good food.

### ***Fortnightly Evening Homegroup***

This was created for those who cannot attend a daytime homegroup. In this group we have a good mixture of ladies and gents who are

currently getting to grips with God's Word as we work our way through the Bible and share valuable prayer time.

### ***Monthly Corporate Prayer***

In Lidlington, we have always believed that you can never have too much prayer. The very foundation of our church was prayer and we felt that there should be more opportunities to pray as a church. This is slightly structured towards praying specifically for our church, our community, and for revival across the Marston Vale.

### ***Monthly Evening Service of Reflection***

In our busy lives, we felt it was important to sometimes just sit and receive in stillness. "Be still and know that I am God." This service is in the evening of the last Sunday of each month for just 30 minutes. It is a time to share God's Word and sit and listen to Him speak to us, a time of basking in the Holy Spirit, of peace and restoration, preparing and equipping us for the week ahead.

We have found that whenever we have stepped out in faith and tried something new, God has always blessed our enthusiasm. As Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all this through Him who gives me strength." (NIV)

Every blessing to you all,

*Sian Hiscocks*

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# North Beds Methodist Circuit Library

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The Circuit Library has moved!!!! Over 1,000 books now grace the shelves of an upper room in Willington Methodist Church.



If you are interested in borrowing a book, have a browse of the titles and genres listed in the *North Beds Methodist Circuit Library* profile in **Goodreads.com**. Once you have an idea of the title you want, then get in touch with Jenny Endersby at Sandy

Methodist Church, Keith Lilley at Willington Methodist Church, or attend the Coffee Morning held between 9.00am and 11.00am every Monday in term-time and borrow the book (or books!) you fancy.

Returns can be made by the same route and there is a basket in the room for books recently returned and awaiting registration in the system.

There are numerous Bible study plans and other items that are “ex-directory” as it were because they are not listed on the Goodreads website, including a few titles from the likes of Charles Spurgeon, but mostly obscurer authors like Harold Fisher of Bishop’s Stortford Methodist Church. A verse from his Easter Morning poem:

*Wonder of wonders greeted their sight!  
Deep shatter’d, far scatter’d , proud Death in full flight!  
Impotent, empty, no more to reign,  
The sepulchre evermore broken and vain*

For more information, please contact  
**JennyEndersby2@gmail.com** or **KeithLilley1944@gmail.com**

# *Circuit Matters*

*by Phil Timms*

*Co-ordinating Circuit Steward*

Dear Friends

## **Staffing matters:**

I am pleased to report that since our last meeting two of our three 2026 stationing positions have been confirmed. We have agreed a 1-year extension for Silas, and the Rev Zena Smith will be joining us in the Eastern Section from September. In the Bedford Section, we received a visit from a potential Deacon, but this match was not confirmed. Hopefully we will be selected for another match, so please continue to pray for this process.

From September 2026 the Circuit Invitation Committee (CIC) will need to meet to consider a replacement for Silas, to take over from September 2027. The Circuit Meeting has agreed that the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) can appoint the CIC members later in the year.

## **Circuit Leadership Team Update:**

### **PAT Testing:**

The Circuit Leadership Team have agreed a policy of completing PAT testing every two years: this is in line with requirements, so please be aware that these now only need to be completed biennially. Where a church wishes more frequent testing, this will be at the local church's expense.

### **Environmental Audits:**

We are asking all churches to complete the Environmental Audits which are funded by the District. The Circuit Leadership Team feels that, given our very limited resources, we need to consider the long-term sustainability and longevity of a church before committing to provide finance to any environmental projects, and we believe the audits will be a helpful step in that process.

### **Circuit sustainability & longevity:**

This topic is one which I fear is the elephant in the room. It is one that we all know about, but at the same time it is one which we avoid discussing. As I approach this topic with you, I am mindful of one of the hymns that we sang on Sunday during the Methodist Worship I attended; the hymn was "These are the days of Elijah" by Robin Mark. The words that spoke to me were "and though these are days of great trials ... we are the labourers in Your vineyard, declaring the word of the Lord", and with that in mind, we must bravely put our best foot forward.

Those who were at the full Circuit Meeting would have seen from Michael Carr's finance report that, on a positive note, we did manage to close off the 2024/25 accounts with a balanced budget, largely due to the surplus from selling the Shefford Manse compared to the cost of buying the new manse at Biddenham. This activity also concluded our manse strategy where we now have modern and efficient manses that are in use to house our Ministers, many with solar power, and all have alarms, good glazing and efficient heating systems (one of our manses has the highest energy rating in the District!).

The years ahead do look rather challenging. Michael, our Circuit Finance Steward, has met with the Circuit Church Treasurers, and he has proposed an increase of 5% in the Church Assessments, which will cover the inflationary costs of employing our Presbyters and lay staff but does not address the ongoing shortfall between our annual earnings and our expenditure. The agreed 5% increase for this year does lead to a budgeted deficit of circa £50,000 - £70,000, and as responsible charity trustees (which all Circuit Meeting members are) we need to recognise that this is not a sustainable position. It is one which we can probably manage with this year by utilising some of our reserves, but a change in approach is now urgently needed.

In my view there are two approaches for us to consider:

### **1. Lowering our costs:**

Can we afford to replace Silas when he leaves us in 2027?

If we didn't, we would save the value of Silas' salary, plus we would receive income from letting out the manse, which could get us to a balanced budget, and financially it would be a responsible decision. However practically with 25 worshipping sites, this would be very difficult, but it remains an option for us as trustees to consider.

### **2. Increasing our income:**

We would need to raise our income by circa 15%. Increasing our Church Assessments by inflationary amounts alone is not a sustainable position, and at some point we need to make up the difference and balance our annual income and expenditure levels.

I have asked all Circuit Meeting members (the managing trustees of the Circuit) to ensure that this topic is discussed at your local Church Councils:

1. I would ask you to discuss what a future 15% increase in the Circuit Assessment would mean at your church and what steps you can take now to be ready for this.
2. I would ask you to look at your lettings, and other relevant income streams. For lettings, are you covering your outgoings or are you subsidising your users' costs, and if so, is this affordable? Are you charging the right commercial rate?
3. Are you making the most of your assets, are you advertising for new bookings to raise income to enable you to fund your share of the Circuit costs?

For some of our churches, maybe we need to go further. Methodist churches in many cases grew as house groups meeting in people's homes or at community buildings. If you are finding that you don't have the people or the money to sustain your building, is it time for your church to consider meeting at alternative premises like the local village hall. This isn't closing the church – the church people still meet and worship, but it may help take away the stress of running a property. After all, we often profess that a church is not a building, it is the people who come together to worship. In some cases, maybe the building is the burden that is stopping you from attracting new members and growing, especially if people arrive at your place and they see tired surroundings, with tired people struggling to keep things going. This is intended as a point to think about, and I would encourage you to be open to all new ideas within your local church teams.

I appreciate that these are difficult conversations, but this is the time for us to focus on the future and our sustainability, the time for us to choose what being a Methodist in North Bedfordshire will look like. The alternative is that we continue to close a church or two every couple of years, and we run out of funds – that is not the sustainable or responsible choice, and not one that the Charity Commission will tolerate from us as trustees either!

Growth Plan:

Hopefully to finish on something positive!

Firstly, thank you to everyone who came to our first growth session in November: Silas and the Circuit Leadership Team were over the moon at the numbers who came, and thank you for the Growth Plans we have received

from you for Spiritual Growth – lots of things are planned. It has also been really exciting for me during the stationing visits to see how positively the churches who are coming together (Beacon, Ivelside [see page 20] and Bedford) have been, as they are describing the benefits of new ways of working, and having a bigger presence for what they do together for God in our world. Both during my recent visits to these churches and during our full Circuit Meeting I have witnessed real passion and enthusiasm and a sense that we are better working together. This can only be good news for our presence in the places we serve. Thank you to the team at Beacon and Ivelside for their superb and uplifting presentation during the Circuit Meeting (and the wonderful hymn written by Rev Leslie – maybe this is something she should be doing in her retirement!): it was a great reminder of our shared purpose serving God in our local area.

According to the Methodist Church Planning for Growth initiative, growth happens when a church deepens its roots into the love of God and grows outward in love for its community. It's when we become fully alive in Jesus Christ and all that He wants the Church to be. This is why our first step is understanding and growing spiritually.

If you haven't taken a look at the Planning for Growth resources provided by the Methodist Church, I would encourage you to do so: they can be found here: [Planning for Growth - The Methodist Church](#) (this is a live link which you can click on, but if you're holding a paper copy of this magazine in your hands, then you can find it online by searching for *Methodist Church Planning for Growth* on Google – other search engines are available!)

Whilst we have challenges which I have outlined in this report and during our Circuit Meeting, there is still plenty we can achieve if we look out into our communities and show God's love. Look beyond the buildings; if what you are doing doesn't serve the purpose of bringing people to God – why not do things differently?

**“We are the labourers in Your vineyard, declaring the word of the Lord” – no one ever said that this work would be easy.**

Every blessing

*Phil Timms*

Co-ordinating Circuit Steward

# NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE CIRCUIT – OUR CHURCHES

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**Stewartby** ----- Park Crescent, Stewartby **MK43 9NL**  
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# The Doctrine of The Trinity

What fool agrees to write 400 words on the doctrine of the Trinity? This one did, with faith that doctrine can be revealing, and acceptance that no human words ever capture God. Equally, God is so fundamental and saving, that speak of God we must. In doing so as Christians we look to Jesus, in whom God came to reveal and save. Notice God's vehicle to do that was not words but flesh. In Jesus, God revealed God's self in a life, living amongst us, immersing God's self in one place and time, relating to the people, situations and issues around. Jesus shows God is not a distant, aloof God but a God who relates to creation and humankind. That is a lesson the Hebrew Scriptures had already taught: God lives in covenant relationship with people.

Post-Jesus, the early Christians got a rush as they realised God was still in relationship with them even after what humankind did to Jesus. There was a Spirit in the air and, those first Christians realised, that Spirit was God, She was with them, and She was love. Good news indeed! God, the Almighty, enthroned in glory, whose Son humanity crucified, lives not in isolated aloofness but in relationship

with creation, with humankind, loving and saving. God and creation are bound together in an ongoing relationship of love.

That is the case not because of any merit humankind has, but because it is the nature of God to live in relationship. For those who formulated the doctrine of the Trinity, living in relationship was part of who God is, part of God's very being. From this understanding, a step was taken: a God for whom relating is so important lives in relationship within God's self; the Son and the Spirit live in relationship with each other and with the Father who was and is in both. When that idea was conceived, it carried deep meaning. Some struggle with it now and might be tempted to dismiss it. That is understandable, but doing so might mean missing something important that our forebears gleaned: God is a God who lives not in aloof isolation but in relationships. Relating is part of the being of God. This has a message. Human beings, made in God's image, are to live not as aloof individuals but in relationship, with God, each other and creation, learning from the Trinitarian God as we do so.

Rev Dr Stephen Heap

## **Change? We don't like change!**

There's a wonderful children's hymn that contains the verse:

*“ The church is not a building,  
the church is not a steeple,  
the church is not a resting place,  
the church is a people. ”*

Those words have been very much in our minds over the past year as five churches in the Eastern Section have been exploring what it might mean to become two multi-site churches.

Let me set the scene. The Eastern Section of the North Bedfordshire Circuit was formed two years ago when the Circuit was reorganised. It stretches from Sandy in the north to Shefford in the south and includes seven churches, all currently served by one Minister.

As we have been thinking about how best to work together in this reality, the five smaller churches in the section began exploring the idea of becoming multi-site churches. If you're unfamiliar with the term, it simply means one church meeting in several different places.

Over the past 12 months we have had many conversations across the congregations. Encouragingly, these have been open and thoughtful. People have listened carefully, asked good questions and reflected on what this might mean for the future.

Of course, any talk of change can make people a little nervous. Most of us quite like things the way they are! But over time, prayers were offered, questions were answered and gradually understanding began to grow. Along the way, a few key principles became clear.

- The things that matter most will not change. Worship will continue in each of our buildings, and the community activities that are so important — Coffee Mornings, events and local gatherings — will continue as well.
- Each multi-site church will have one Church Council. In practice this means one Council Secretary, one Safeguarding Officer, one GDPR Officer and so on. At a time when many churches struggle to fill these roles, this feels like a sensible and supportive step.

- It also has another practical benefit: the Minister will move from attending seven Church Councils to four — which may be the best news of all! (To ensure everyone continues to feel involved, local Stewards will usually hold informal meetings within each congregation ahead of the Church Council so that ideas and recommendations can be shared.)

Now, 12 months after those first conversations began, there is a real sense of enthusiasm. People are excited about working more closely together and discovering what new things God might be calling us to do. One of the most enjoyable moments came when we invited suggestions for names for the new multi-site churches. The response was fantastic, and after some careful voting we can now confirm that from 1st September 2026:

**Beeston, Sandy and Upper Caldecote will become  
*Beacon Methodist Church.***

The name comes from the Beacon on The Sand Hills which could be seen from all three chapels. It also reminds us of Jesus’ call to be a light to the world.



**Henlow and Langford will become  
*Ivelside Methodist Church.***



The River Ivel flows through or alongside both villages, reminding us to pray that just as the river flows through the landscape, so the Holy Spirit might flow through our churches and communities.

So the journey has begun. As we move forward together, we trust that God will continue to guide us. We would value your prayers — for the congregations involved, for the practical steps still to come, and for the new Minister who will soon join the section. Because, as that children’s hymn reminds us, the church has never really been about the buildings.  
**It’s about the people.**

Rev Leslie Noon



## Growth Planning in the North Bedfordshire Circuit

Last November I led a workshop on Growth Planning in the Circuit, and here I give a brief overview of that workshop.

When we talk about Growth Planning, such growth can be spiritual, missional or numerical. The focus for the Growth Plans for 2026 is spiritual growth. We spent some time listening to God through prayer and to each other as consideration was given to how well our churches are doing with each of the 12 elements of a Methodist Way of Life.

After a short break, time was spent dreaming about the best-case scenario of increasing spiritual growth and the worst-case scenario if spiritual growth declined. Thankfully when asked which direction folk wanted to travel in, it was for increased spiritual growth.

In the final session churches were encouraged to make a start on writing a Growth Plan. Those churches moving towards merging or just working more closely were encouraged to write a joint Growth Plan. The plans were to focus on spiritual growth, have no more than one or two priorities for the year ahead, with actions listed, who would be responsible, and when would it happen. Finally, what would be the expected outcomes? The final guide was that it was to be no more than one side of A4.

The deadline for Growth Plans to be sent to the Superintendent was 14th January 2026, and a good number were received. Feedback was provided and a few needed some more work, but to have most of the churches with a plan for spiritual growth is a good outcome.

The focus on spiritual growth was decided as a first phase, as we need to be clear what we are inviting newcomers to join with. Is it to be part of a community group who happen to meet on a Sunday,

or is it to enter into a relationship with Jesus and help them grow in faith?

Once the plans were written, then the work of putting the plans into action started :

*How is that going?*

*Are you reviewing the plan at each Church Council meeting?*

*Where are you noticing God?*

*What have you felt led to change about your plan?*

*Perhaps to do more or less?*

An important part of any Growth Plan is review – hence it should be considered at every Church Council. There will be an opportunity to review and share information as a Circuit in the autumn, as well as to plan for the next phase – missional growth. If we can maintain our spiritual growth and add in some missional growth, then numerical growth should follow.

**Saturday 17th October 2026** is when I am booked to run the missional growth phase, venue to be decided. It would be great to have every church represented on that day.

Now you may be reading this and thinking, “I’ve not heard anything about a Growth Plan.” Well, not all churches have them in place at the time that I’m writing this article. The LEPs in the Circuit don’t, but most other churches have. If you are not aware of it, then speak to your Minister or Church Stewards and they will be able to advise you, as we all have our part to play in church growth.

Finally, a reminder of that date in the autumn:

Saturday, 17th October 2026,

to review our spiritual growth together and plan for missional growth.

*Angela Turner*

District Discipleship Enabler  
Beds, Essex & Herts Methodist District

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# Welcome to a Supernumerary Minister

## Rev Nigel Bibbings

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Dear New Friends,

During late August 2025 Bernadette (Bernie), my wife, and I moved into our little home in Silsoe, one of the most southerly communities in this, our new Circuit.

Oh, and of course, Tilly, our eleven-year-old spaniel came too.

We had only travelled less than eight miles, from Toddington in the South Bedfordshire Circuit, where I had mainly served the smaller village churches for nine years.

Retiring ('sitting down') as a Minister is every bit as challenging as it is from any other occupation.

I have to say that, so far, I have found it hard.

The welcome, from Rev Silas, and the churches of the Greensand Community Church has been warm and undemanding. We feel loved and are so thankful for that.

Yet we are still in the settling time, seeking God's grace and wisdom as we explore what active retirement might look like for us.

I say for us, because Bernie is still working, and is employed as a Chartered Accountant by a firm north of the river in Bedford. I am therefore enjoying engaging with some of the duties of a house-husband, although, of course, we share all things.

I decided that I would like to ask for six months free from preaching and leading worship before I offered any dates for the Preaching

Plan. This has been good, and now the current Plan (March-May) sees the end of this Sabbatical, and so, in a less pressured way, I begin again.

Elisabeth and I were married for thirty-four years, and were a team in ministry, before the Lord took her home. Our son, Jonathan is now thirty years old and lives with his fiancée Anna in Bedford.

Bernie and I were married in August 2024, some nineteen months ago, and we are so happy that we were led to one another. We have parents (and in-laws) that we try to visit regularly in Peterborough, Sutton Coldfield, and near Bath.

So far, I have joined a choir, returned to exercise in a Pilates class, and continue to offer pastoral care sessions as a volunteer at Keech Hospice in Luton. Much more will follow I'm sure, but it would be foolish to force this, and to take on too much, too early in retirement.

The last thirty-seven years in five different Circuits has been both a privilege and a joy, as well as hard and demanding at times. So now I wait, and trust that, in God's good time, the One who is always making 'all things new' will reveal what He has for Bernie and me in the future.

I will look forward to meeting you as I preach and lead worship around the Circuit in the coming months and years.

Every blessing,  
*Nigel*

# North Bedford Churches Together (NBCT)

## Quiet Day 11th October 2025

### The Breath of God

Who among us does not need a reason to take a Saturday away from the usual Saturday chores? For those who have not experienced a Quiet Day before, it provides an opportunity to spend quality time in prayer, reflection and fellowship, a time which can be both valuable and transformative.

The Stables Christian Centre in Bolnhurst is a small intimate conference centre suitable for a small gathering. It is set deep in the North Bedfordshire countryside with extensive grounds in which to stroll, listen to the birdsong and enjoy the autumn colours, maybe picking up some apples from the orchard or buying some herbs from the garden. This year we were led by Ceri-Anne Ashby, Family and Children's Minister at St Mary's, Goldington, who encouraged each of us to make the day what we wanted it to be. There were several activity stations with craft and art materials, books and finger labyrinths with which to explore your creative side. We even had access to Play-Doh!

The day began with a short act of worship followed by a study of Ezekiel 37, the "dry bones". We reflected on how

the passage spoke to us and what it says about “the breath of God”. Here was time to go outside and enjoy the autumn air and feel the breath of God on us. Prayer comes effortlessly in such a setting.

The lunch break with bring and share food (always a treat) gave us time to get to know each other better and to share conversations. This led into the afternoon session which began with worship and then another time for reflection, this time on John 20 where Jesus appears to the disciples in the locked room and, breathing on them, says “Receive the Holy Spirit”. This linked well with the morning reflection. We considered words and phrases that resonated with us and what God might be saying to each of us in our daily life.

The day ended with closing prayers which pulled together all the varied strands of the day’s journey. We left filled with the Holy Spirit, renewed, refreshed and grateful for a day set aside from the mundane tasks which can so easily fill our time.

The Quiet Day is held once a year in October. Each one is different according to the choices of the leader. Next year we hope to have wider publicity so that others who are not part of NBCT can share the experience.

*Sue Allen*

# The Complaining Monk

*A man joined a monastery where the monks were only allowed to speak two words each year, and those were to the Abbot. At the end of each year, they were given an audience and said their two words. Naturally they were expected to be something along the lines of 'Jesus loves' or some other eternal truth.*

*However, at the end of his first year the novice offered, 'Bed hard'. At the end of the second year he stated, 'Food bad'.*

*At the end of the third year his two words were, 'I quit'.*

*'I'm not surprised,' said the Abbot, 'you've done nothing but whinge ever since you came here.'*

*Source unknown.*

*"Nobody who gets enough food and clothing in a world where most are hungry and cold has any business to talk about 'misery.'" C S Lewis*

## CONTENTMENT

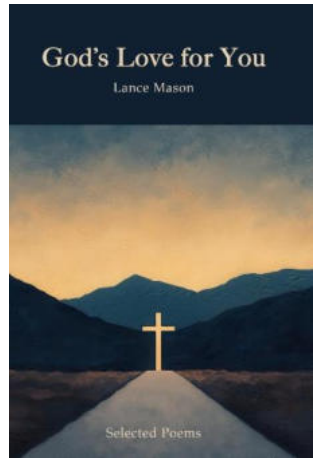
<sup>11</sup> ... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

<sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

*Philippians 4:11b-12 NIV*

A local publisher has persuaded Lance Mason of Greensand Community Methodist Church to publish a book of his poems under the title "**God's Love For You**", covering topics that include Seasons, Nature, The Trinity, Spiritual Living and God's Promises to us.

A few copies have been placed in each of GCMC's three mission hubs. Anyone interested may take one in exchange for a donation to church funds. It is also available to purchase online from Amazon, priced at £6.99 or a Kindle version can be downloaded



for £5.00 – 100% of royalties from book sales will go to Greensand Community Methodist Church.

The Amazon link is <https://amzn.eu/d/8oBiWEe> or search for '*Lance Mason God's Love for You*' or enter the 13-digit ISBN which is 9781916604353.

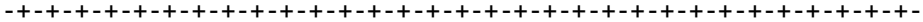


### **JIM RAGLESS**

We were sad to learn of the death of Jim Ragless. For many years, from 2012 through to the COVID years, he was a highly valued member of the North Bedfordshire Circuit Magazine team. He worked hard gathering material for the magazine, and was especially gifted in editing articles which were overlong or unclear. We appreciated his wonderful sense of humour, often understated. On one occasion, when he couldn't attend one of our finalising meetings, he sent us via email a row of spare commas to be used in our proofreading! We were sad when he was obliged to leave the team through ill-health.

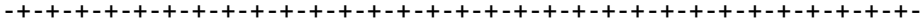
We know that, as a devoted servant of God, he will be much missed around the Circuit and beyond. We give thanks for his life, and express our sincere sympathy to Beryl and the family.

Renewing, sustaining and growing the ministry of  
the **North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit**



**OUR CIRCUIT BIBLE VERSE**

*The **Lord** has told you what is good, and this is what **He** requires of you: to do what is **right**, to **love mercy**, and to **walk humbly with your God**. Micah 6:8 (NLT)*



**Circuit Mission Statement**

We will follow the

**Holy Spirit** who is  
calling us to **LOVE**

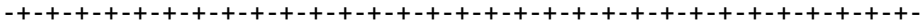
and be

**DISCIPLES**  
**OF JESUS**

working for

**GOD'S KINGDOM**

- **God** with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength
- one another, as **Jesus loved His followers**
- all others, even enemies, as **God** does
- becoming like **Christ**
- behaving like **Christ**
- bringing others to meet and follow **Christ**
- that **God's will** be done
- in the **Church**, and on **Earth**
- for all, as it is in **Heaven...**



**OUR CIRCUIT PRAYER**

As your church in this place,  
help us to do justice,  
love mercy  
and walk humbly with you,  
O God.  
Amen.

## **Ministers in other appointments**

**Rev Chrissie Howe** c/o District Office  
**Rev Terry Wright** *terry.wright144@mod.gov.uk* 07581 009784  
(Forces Chaplain at Chicksands)

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The Methodist Church  
is called to be



God loves you  
unconditionally, no strings attached.  
That's the good news.

The **Circuit Manager** (Stephanie Field) is mostly home based and can be contacted either by email [northbedscircuitoffice@gmail.com](mailto:northbedscircuitoffice@gmail.com) or mobile 07522 928936. She does not work on Fridays.

The **Circuit Finance Officer** (Damilola Obajemu) Fixed working hours are now Fridays 8.00am – 4.00pm, and she can be contacted either by email [northbedsfinance@gmail.com](mailto:northbedsfinance@gmail.com) or mobile 07798 808988.

Both are happy to meet people at the Circuit Office if required.

Circuit Office c/o Putnoe Heights Church,  
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### Magazine editorial information

A meeting to discuss the content of the next issue will be held using Zoom on **Friday 24th April** at 7.30pm  
EVERYONE WELCOME

For Zoom details, contact an editorial team member (see page 31)

All **Articles** for the next edition of the Circuit Magazine to a member of the editorial team  
no later than **Sunday 31st May** please

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Contact details can be found via the Circuit Directory  
or via the Circuit Office on 07522 928936

see also the Circuit website at [www.northbedsmethodist.org.uk](http://www.northbedsmethodist.org.uk)  
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