Focus

Issue 79 **Spring 2019**

Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit Magazine and Circuit Plan

A Letter from Andy

Dear Friends

For some people it is the Baptism of Jesus which is the moment when the man Jesus is so infused with the Spirit of God that he becomes the embodiment of the eternal and universal Christ.

It is the first story of Jesus that appears in all four Gospels found in our Bibles which is one reason why some feel that the birth narratives found in the first two chapters of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are additions to the story of Jesus written to underline the special nature of this man Jesus who had been to his first followers the one who had revealed God to them.

Whatever our view on that it is most certainly an important moment as it seems to mark the beginning of his public ministry and a journey which brings transformation. New life and hope to many whilst a challenge to others. And the wonder is that the story still has that same effect today. It is an eternal and ongoing story which still has the power to challenge and transform. And even when we have found truth in the story and been challenged and transformed the ways of Jesus still challenge us daily and still can transform us and the situations we find ourselves in.

In one of the early public appearances of Jesus in Luke's Gospel he is in his home town of Nazareth and was in the synagogue and

he stood up to read the lesson and was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and he read the passage which says

> 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

This is sometimes known as the Jesus manifesto or his mission statement and clearly it speaks of challenge and transformation in every phrase.

Conflict with power and authorities would seem to be an inevitable consequence of a life lived with that purpose alongside the joy that would be felt by those whose lives would be transformed.

And so it proved to be. As lives were changed by the words and deeds of Jesus opposition grows and in time Jesus is arrested, tried with false testimony, and executed as a common criminal.

But that death didn't stop the transformation of lives. The penitent thief and the centurion are stories symbolic of lives transformed through conversation and through witness. And, following the strengthening of the apostles at Pentecost, lives continued to be changed and authorities challenged. And those stories continue today.

My prayer is that we, as people who have been transformed because of Jesus, may also be people who challenge injustice and hatred and work for the transformation of the lives of people around us and the communities and society we live in.

In Christian love,

Andy

Holy Week and Easter

DORSET GARDENS

Thursday 18 April, 6 pm - Maundy Thursday Paschal Meal followed by Communion

Friday 19 April , 2 pm - Good Friday Reflections

Easter Day, 21 April, 10.30 am - Easter Celebration *(HC)*

HOVE

Thursday 18 April, 7.30 pm - Maundy Thursday Service

Friday 19 April, 10.30 am - Good Friday Service

(United Service at Central URC)

Easter Day, 21 April, 6 am - Sunrise Communion at the Beach (Kings Esplanade)

Easter Day, 21 April, 10.30 am - Easter Celebration *(HC)*

PATCHAM

Friday 19 April, 10.30 am - Good Friday Service

Easter Day, 21 April, 10.30 am - Easter Celebration *(HC)*

STANFORD AVENUE

Thursday 18 April, 7.30 pm - Maundy Thursday Service

Friday 19 April, 10.30 am - Good Friday Service

Easter Day, 21 April, 10.30 am - Easter Celebration *(HC)*

WOODINGDEAN

Friday 19 April, 10.30 am - United Service at Holy Cross

Easter Day, 21 April, 10 am - Easter Celebration *(HC)*

News from the Circuit Leadership Team

We are very pleased that Dermot has been offered and has accepted an appointment to minister in the Sevenoaks Circuit. We continue to pray for him and Charlene as they enter this final phase of their time in this Circuit.

We are very pleased that Revd Dan Woodhouse has accepted an invitation to join the Circuit this coming September as Minister of Patcham and Stanford Avenue with some University Chaplaincy work.

We will be celebrating Dan's arrival in our midst by holding a Circuit Service on Sunday 8 September at 10.30 am at Longhill School. This service will also be an opportunity for us as a Circuit to welcome our new Chairman of District, Revd David Hinchcliffe. There will be a Welcome Service at 10.30 am followed by a short 'get to know you' session and then the opportunity to have a picnic lunch (bring your own).

We are in the process of looking at the possibility of employing a Circuit Bursar with the aim of this person being able to take pressure of our ministers and lay people helping in areas of Administration, Property management, Procurement, Human Resources, Health and Safety and other areas as appropriate. This will be discussed at our next Circuit Meeting on Thursday 21 March.

The aim of this is for us to be able to better meet the challenges that face us as individual churches and Circuit and to free up time and energy that can then be engaged in our work of transforming lives and communities.

Andy Lowe

Christian Mindfulness

Five sessions with a choice of afternoon or evening.

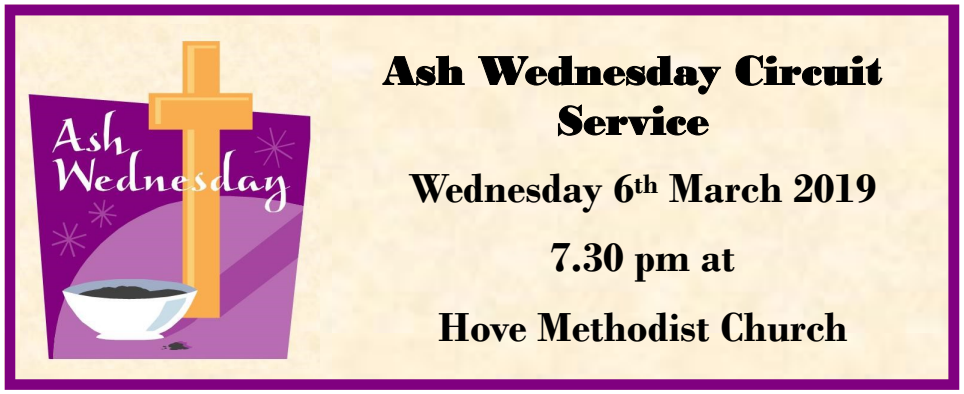
Led by Revd Dermot Thornberry

EVENINGS
Tuesdays: 12, 19, 26 February, 5 & 12 March - 7.30 to 9 pm

AFTERNOONS
Thursdays: 14, 21, 28 February, 7 & 10 March - 2.30 to 4 pm

MEETING AT…
The Manse, 96 Ladies Mile Road, Patcham, BN1 8TD

The sessions will help people to understand the values of Mindfulness as a contemporary movement, but at the same time as old as Christian faith. Participants could experience a positive sense of wellbeing, a developing awareness of God, ourselves, others, and creation. And an improved prayer life. Dermot has completed a Certificate in Christian Mindfulness with the Institute of Counselling. For further details contact Dermot on 01273 508704 or dthornberry750@btinternet.com



Bible Matters

This series of articles looks at a number of matters relating to the Bible. To avoid misunderstanding, throughout the series I shall use 'Hebrew Bible' when referring to the text used in Judaism, and I shall use 'Old Testament' when referring to that part of the Bible when used by Christians.

24 - SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS - THE 'EVIL EYE' - I

In my last article I looked at some recent developments in the study of parables. Here I want to start looking at the implications of a series of books just published on the 'Evil Eye'. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says (in pre 20th century translations), *'If, however, your Eye is Evil, your entire body will be full of darkness'* (Mt 6 v 23). Belief in the 'Evil Eye' is found in many cultures around the world, especially in western Asia and around the Mediterranean. Both Christianity and Islam have spread the idea to other parts of the world.

In order to look at its use in the Bible and in early Christianity Professor John H. Elliott produced, between 2015 and 2017, what will undoubtedly be the standard work on this subject in the ancient world. This magisterial study in four volumes covers: *"Introduction, Mesopotamia and Egypt"*; *"Greece and Rome"*; *"The Bible"*; and "*Postbiblical Israel and Early Christianity"*. One of the problems for us in understanding its use in the Bible, especially the New Testament, is that modern translators have used euphemisms or translated the phrase symbolically rather than reflecting the ideas of the biblical period. It is one of those rare occasions when the King James Version gives a better sense than do modern versions. Elliott comments that the use of the phrase 'Evil Eye', which occurs over 20 times in the Bible, has been *'obscured by most modern Bible translations'.*

In order to understand its use in the Bible we need to be aware of a number of factors. First, until about 1500 A.D. the eye was thought of as an active rather than as a passive organ, as we now believe. People used to think that the eye projected particles of energy or light. The Evil Eye has long been associated with envy, the 17th century philosopher Francis Bacon thought that envy was *'an ejaculation ... of the eye'*.

Secondly, it was held that both humans and other animals could possess and use the Evil Eye either involuntarily or voluntarily. Therefore some people could not help using it unconsciously. Pope Leo XIII (1810, pope 1878-1903) was held to have an unconscious Evil Eye (many cardinals died during his very long pontificate). Although many ancient communities believed that the Evil Eye had some form of malevolent source, in the Bible it was seen as a natural phenomenon. It was only in the post-biblical period that Christians associated its use with demonic powers.

Thirdly, because people like Aristotle thought of the Evil Eye as a natural phenomenon which some people (and animals) possessed it was not thought of as a superstition but as a legitimate subject for philosophical or scientific enquiry.

Belief in the Evil Eye can be traced back over 5,000 years to ancient Mesopotamia from where it spread to Egypt and throughout the classical Mediterranean world including both Greece and Rome. What I hope to do is to show in further articles how this belief is used in biblical texts and how a better understanding of ideas about the Evil Eye may help us better understand those texts.

Mick Hickman

Dorset Gardens Methodist Church
Brighton

Abide in His love

Journeying through Lent in prayer

A selection of interactive prayer stations will be laid out for personal, quiet reflection and contemplative prayer.

Come and go as you please. All are welcome!

Saturday 23 March 2019

10 am to 3 pm

Dorset Gardens Methodist Church

Kindness That Makes a Difference

When I last wrote for Focus I was surprised by how the work is suddenly taking off and getting busier. The trend continues…

It appears that the post of Lead Chaplain for Brighton University is not, now, going to be replaced, so the rest of us will be doing what we can to cover some of the areas that have been neglected. To that end I am taking on a drop-in on the Falmer campus with Dermot although the plan is for the other Chaplains to sometimes cover it. I'm hoping we might be able to sometimes include some simple crafts as part of the drop-in – it's where the teacher-training students are based so I reckon at least some might be interested, and Chaplain Claire and I are keen, even if they turn out not to be!

Andy and I, along with other members of the Chaplaincy team, would like to thank all those who came to help at Sussex University with the Christmas lunch. It was quite a different experience as it was a buffet this time – in the style of a Boxing Day lunch. We put out some take-away boxes towards the end so people could take food home with them and it meant we had very little waste which pleased us all. It certainly made for a more relaxed occasion and so I think we would like to work in a similar way this year… Goodness me! Am I really planning for Christmas already?

Plans are underway for Re-Freshers (another meet the Chaplains pizza event!), One World Week, Fairtrade Fortnight, Reflection and Race and Faith Network meetings and various other events. Phew!

Our next Reflection at Grand Parade is taking the subject of Poverty, in all its forms, and I stumbled across this from the

Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Annual Report on UK Poverty (December 2018):

"In our society:-

Child poverty has been rising since 2011/12;

4.1 million children are living in poverty, a rise of 500,000 in the last five years;

Four million workers are living in poverty - a rise of more than half a million over five years; and

In-work poverty has been rising even faster than employment, driven almost entirely by increasing poverty among working parents."

I found it quite an eye-opener and I hope we will have a stimulating discussion. Of course there are other forms of poverty, but I suspect this will be enough to start with.

There is so much need wherever you look; on our streets people are cold and homeless, in our papers and online there are constant (necessary) appeals from charities that are trying to make a difference – and what amazing work they do.

Sometimes I feel quite overwhelmed and helpless by the immensity of it all, but I know that every hand that reaches out to help, every donation or even kind word, makes a difference to someone, and that kindness, that compassion, that love is what Jesus taught and demonstrated. This is the path to the kin-dom; the time when there is no more want, when people are happy and fulfilled, the kin-dom of which he spoke and which we work towards.

With all good wishes for 2019 (it's not too late to say that is it?)

Sue Harrington
Circuit Student Worker

The Desert Fathers and Mothers

A day of talk and meditation

On **Saturday 13 April**, St Nick's will be the venue for a day of study and reflection on the lives and teachings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, led by Liz Watson. formerly UK Coordinator of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM).

These early Christians from the third and fourth centuries lived in communities of varying sizes which eventually became the model for monasticism. They were widely consulted for their learning and wisdom, but for them learning and prayer went hand in hand. Evagrius, for example, thought 'the theologian is one who prays; one who prays is a theologian'. In the early fifth century John Cassian, who had lived among them for some time before settling in Marseille, distilled their teachings into his Conferences, one section of which on prayer is of particular interest to us today. In the tenth Conference Cassian describes a system of non-discursive meditation based around focusing the mind on a simple word or phrase. This "poverty of verse", as he described it, leads to the poverty of spirit of the Beatitudes, in other words, letting go of the ego in order to experience God's presence within us. This type of "pure prayer" continued for many years in the Christian church, particularly during the Middle Ages where we see it described in works such as The Cloud of Unknowing. But it fell out of general use until the twentieth century when people such as Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating and John Main re-discovered the practice and began to introduce to the laity.

Liz Watson has taught widely on the Desert Fathers and Mothers and we are very fortunate that she is able to lead our day for us. She will describe the lives and teachings of these extraordinary people and lead us into periods of meditation. The day will start at

10 am with coffee and end around 3.30 pm. The normal Saturday midday Eucharist will be held during the lunch break at 12 noon, which participants are welcome to attend.

If you are interested in the day, please send your details to **felicity.stimpson@btinternet.com**.

We shall be providing teas and coffees, but please bring your own packed lunch. There will be a charge of £10 to cover costs, payable on the day. This event has been arranged by the Preston Park WCCM Group which meets every Monday evening at 7 pm in the Cassidy Centre behind St. Mary's Church in Surrenden Road.

Felicity Stimpson

Around the Circuit

Dorset Gardens

Sun 17 Mar: Church Council, 12 noon after morning worship.

Fri 22 Mar, Fri 5 Apr & Fri 12 Apr: Lenten Conversations, 2 pm.

Sat 23 Mar: Prayer Day, 10 am to 3 pm - See page 8 for details!

Sun 31 Mar: Mothering Sunday: 9 am, Morning Communion; 10.30 am, All Age Worship. Led by Revd Cornish.

Sun 31 Mar: Community Lunch, 2 pm for 2.30 pm lunch.

Sat 6 Apr: DG Away Day (to consider our direction/purpose) at The Meeting House, University of Sussex.

Sun 14 Apr: Brighton Marathon - Access routes may be restricted.

Sun 5 or 12 May: Annual Church Meeting and Lunch, 12 noon.

Sat 18 May: Coffee Morning at Lyn Maine's, 10 am to 1 pm. In aid of the Martlets Hospice and the Circuit Project.

Sat 1 June: Gift Day Coffee Morning.

Sun 2 June: Church Anniversary, 10.30 am. Preacher Revd Peter Shilling. Followed by a Faith Lunch.

Bible Conversations: Last Wednesday of each month, 2 pm
Tearaway Tots (Parent & Toddler): Thursdays, 10 am to 12 pm **+**
Midweek Service of Prayer & Praise: Thursdays, 1 pm
Cameo (Come And Meet Each Other): 1st & 3rd Thursday, 2 pm *****
Art & Craft Club: 2nd Thursday of each month, 2 pm *****
Book Club: Last Thursday of each month, 2 pm
Knitting Group: 1st Friday of each month, 10 am

***** *Except during January and August.* **+** *Term time only.*

Hove

Weds 13 Mar to 10 Apr: "Lent Chocolat" Lent Course, 7.30 pm.

Sat 23 Mar: Martlets Fund Raiser, 12 noon.

Sun 12 May: Annual Church Meeting.

Monday Guild (fellowship & friendship): Mondays, 2.30 pm
Hove Luncheon Club: Tuesdays, 12 to 2.30 pm
Interfaith Prayer Vigil: First Wednesday of each month, 6 to 7 pm
At the Bahai Centre, 19 Stanford Avenue, Brighton.
Midweek Communion: Thursdays, 10 am (coffee & chat, 11 am)
Lunch Club: Thursdays, 12.30 pm.
Loving Hands: Fridays, 10 am.
Polka Tots (Parent & Toddler Group): Fridays, 2 pm.
Men's Social Club: Fridays, 7.30 pm.
Film Night: First Friday of each month, 7.30 pm - All welcome!

Patcham

Tues 5 Mar: Shrove Tuesday Pancake Event.

Sat 9 Mar: "Singing for Pleasure" Concert, for Church funds.

Sat 16 Mar: St Patrick's Day Event, at the Patcham Manse.

Sun 24 Mar: Annual Church Meeting, after morning worship.

Thurs 16 to Sat 18 May: Patcham Barnstormers present "Calamity Jane", 7.30 pm (and 2 pm matinee on Saturday).

Monday Circle (Ladies group): Mondays, 7.30 pm
Parents & Toddlers: Tuesdays, 9.15 am to 11.15 am
Lunch Club: First and third Wednesday of each month, 12.30 pm
Girl's Brigade: Wednesdays, 6 pm
Art Group: Fridays, 9.30 am to 12 noon

Stanford Avenue

Fri 8 Mar: Prayer Vigil, 8 am to 7.30 pm. Prayers said on the hour. Refreshments available.

Sat 30 Mar: Spring and Craft Fair, 9 am to 4 pm. For further details or to book a table contact Lis Coblenz (in Circuit Directory).

Sat 13 Apr: Quiz & Ploughman's Supper, 6 pm. Come with a team or join one on the night. Details Lis Coblenz.

Sun 12 May: Annual Church Meeting, after morning service.

Sat 18 May: Gift Day with Domino Drive & Cream Tea.

Sun 19 May: Church Anniversary, 10.30 am. Led by Revd Cynthia Park.

Speakability Group: Third Tuesday of each month, 10.15 am
Tuesday Fellowship: Alternate Tuesdays, 2.45 to 4 pm
Beavers, Cubs, Scouts: Tuesdays, from 6 pm
Feminine Focus: Tuesdays, 8 to 9.30 pm
Midweek Communion: 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month, 12 pm
Lunch Club: Wednesdays, 12.30 pm (new diners always welcome)
Girl's Brigade: Wednesdays, 6 pm
Music and Meditation: Third Wednesday of each month, 7.30 pm
Craft and Chat Group: Alternate Thursdays, 2 to 4 pm.

Woodingdean

Sat 23 Feb: Domino Drive with Soup and Crusty Bread, Tickets £5. Time TBC.

Sat 13 Apr: Concert, featuring the "Brighton Male Voice Choir". Details from Richard on 01273 304812.

Sat 1 June: Cream Tea in the Garden. Upper Lodge, Rinmger. In aid of Church funds. Details from Beulah on 01273 304812.

Woodingdean

United Service with Holy Cross: First Sunday of each month, 6 pm.
Messy Church: Second Sunday of each month, 3 to 4.30 pm.
Monday Club: Second and Fourth Monday of each month.
PenMo Film Club: Third Monday of each month, 2 pm.
Men's Club: Tuesdays, 2 to 5 pm.
Cameo: First and Third Tuesday of each month, 7.30 pm.
Coffee Morning: Thursdays, 10 am to 12 noon.
Lunch Club: Third Thursday of each month, 12 noon.

Circuit Dates

Wed 6 Mar: Ash Wednesday Circuit Service, 7.30 pm at Hove.

Thurs 7 Mar: Local Preachers' Meeting, 7.30 pm at Patcham.

Wed 20 Mar: Circuit Coach Outing: "The Joy of Spring" - Pevensey Bay and Three-Course Lunch at the Moorings Restaurant - Tickets £22 per person (Coach Tour & Lunch) - Contact Alan Cutting on 01273 723349 to book and for full details.

Thurs 21 Mar: Circuit Meeting, 7.30 pm at Woodingdean

Wed 3 Apr: Circuit MWiB Meeting, 2.30 pm at Stanford Avenue.

Sun 7 Apr: Circuit Service, 6.30 pm at Dorset Gardens

Thurs 2 May: Circuit Leadership Meeting, 7.30 pm at the Surrenden Road Manse.

Circuit Pentecost Communion

Sunday 9th June 2019

8 am at Ditchling Beacon