



Maggie May attends services at Stanford Avenue. She lives with Jim but loves company, as Connie will confirm.



Bertie lives with Stella and Nick. He loves travelling and here is supervising the transition through a lock at Bourg le Compte.



**Merry
Christmas
Everyone** 🧡

Copy Deadline

Please submit your articles, jokes and miscellaneous pet pics for our 2022 Spring Edition by Sunday 23rd January.

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Focus

Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit: Issue 87



Winter 2021

Andy's Letter

Dear friends,

Arnold Kellett, a lifelong Methodist, has written numerous poems about Christmas and in one of them he speaks of the struggle John Wesley had with Christmas. His poem entitled Wesley's Christmas goes like this:

John Wesley joined our Christmas Day,
Cried out in consternation:

'Is this not just like heathen Rome?

'Tis nought but dissipation!

Worldly goods are all I see,

No Gospel grace for sinners,

Nor even grace when you sit down

To eat your Christmas dinners!

You serve the God of Mammon still,

With gifts to one another,

And scorn to feed the hungry poor,

Your sister and your brother,

For whom the Saviour came to die-

Yet when he looked more closely,

He saw such intermingled good,

And said, far less morosely:

'Tis true, I own, that some there are

Who live this day in love,

And keep the feast with prayer and praise,



Their minds on things above,
 And hark! They sing with Brother Charles
 Of peace and mercy mild,
 Proclaim that Best of All, our God
 Is with us – as a Child...'
 So, quoting these, his dying words,
 John Wesley rode away,
 Glad of hearts still strangely warmed
 By every Christmas Day.

It seems to me that the art of keeping Christmas is to get the balance right between pagan mid-winter revelry and the spiritual rejoicing which comes from an understanding of how Jesus whose birth we celebrate lived as 'God with us' and is the model for our living and loving.

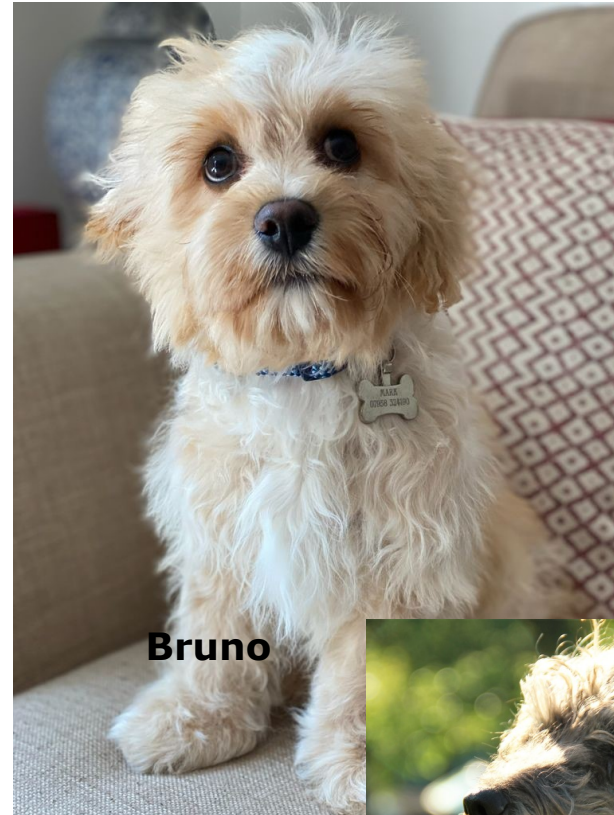
The last 20 months will have brought many changes to your circumstances and Christmas always bring different feelings for us all but I hope that this year you are able to join in celebrations which are freer than last year and enable you to have a time with family and friends with a bit more joy.

Wishing you all the very best for Christmas

Andy

We consulted...

I would like to say a big thank you to all who came to our recent Circuit Consultations on our Circuit and Churches. We found your feedback during the sessions and subsequently to be fascinating and over the next weeks and months as we look at all that has been said we will begin to make decisions regarding our future together. A verbal report will be shared at the Circuit Meeting on November 25th and subsequently will be shared in our local societies.



Bruno

Bruno is six months old and joined Mark & Steve who have recently moved to Hove. They all attended & enjoyed the Hove street party.



Lucy



Lucy who lives with Robert and Angela. She regularly attends service at Stanford Avenue.

Pooch Corner

And now, in no particular order, an overwhelming tide of canine glory in response to the Autumn Focus cat parade:



Oscar, left, is ten years old, a cousin of Stanley below, and lives with Steve & Mark in Kempton. He enjoys attending Open House@Dorset Gardens, particularly if there is food or treats around. Like Stanley less keen on being bathed. This photo was just after grooming.

Stanley lives with Sue and Paul. Stan loves his food (and anyone else's), quite likes a walk and hates being bathed and groomed. He's always had anxiety issues ever since we adopted him, but after a lot of training as advised by a dog behaviourist, he copes much better. He's 9 years old. He and Oscar like to chew the fat when they meet



Stanley

Of course, as expected, there were differences of opinions in a number of different areas not least in the area of worship. And it reminded me of an article I came across a few years ago in Worship and Preaching (a magazine for Local Preachers and Ministers) and I thought it worth sharing with you:

PERSONAL INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP STATIONS (PIWS) A DISCUSSION PAPER

Introduction: What is PIW

- * PIWS are an American idea. They are widely used in churches there (now often called Corporate Worship Facilitatory Units)
- * A PIW comprises a series of partitioned, soundproofed individual booths, each equipped with a computer screen with keyboard and printer, headphones, reclining upholstered armchair and mint dispenser.
- * The aim of a PIW is to increase the functional flexibility of preachers and congregations. With a PIW there is no need for the preacher to be present. The service is simply programmed into the computer. This is especially useful during Ministerial Sabbaticals.

How the PIW System Works

- * Members of the congregation are separated from each other in soundproof booths, which eliminates talking before the service and creates an aura of quiet, respectful worship.
- * At the commencement of the service the computer will activate itself (thus eliminating the job of the steward) by displaying the theme and the order of the service on the screen. Each member of the congregation is then invited to punch into the keyboard a personal selection of hymns and prayers for the service. An additional hymn may be selected instead of prayers if desired.
- * When all personal selections are complete, each member of the congregation dons headphones. These are equipped with hearing aid facilities, and the first hymn is relayed from compact disc. Each person is able to select from any combination of 300 musical instruments and a comprehensive range of evangelical hymn books as well as Hymns and Psalms. For more traditional churches the Methodist Hymn Book can be supplied at extra cost.
- * The computer screen has a magnifying device for those with poor eyesight (in obedience to the Psalmist's command, 'Come magnify the Lord.')

* At any point during the hymn singing members of the congregation are given the option of singing the last verse again if they feel led to do so. At marginal expense cost this feature can be adapted to form a compulsory element for all final hymns.

* When the 'Ministry of the Word' is reached, the computer links up with a control unit in the church office, which will have produced three sermon variations of the same theme (intellectual, evangelical and children's address) all of which lasts 14 ½ minutes. The words are displayed on the screen and can be magnified if so desired. The armchair reclining mechanism operates automatically and the mint dispenser opens.

* For members of the congregation who wish to sleep this part of the service, a printout of the sermon can be obtained for perusal at home or in the car. An alarm clock facility is provided as standard.

* The computer is linked to the Bank account of each member of the congregation and, when the offering is reached, debits the account as instructed. A cash-point facility can be incorporated.

* The PIW incorporates a message system, whereby the congregation can engage in discussion with anyone else in the Corporate Worship Facilitator Unit.

Implementing the System:

* All existing furnishings are removed as these are encumbrance to full worship concentration. The PIWs replace the PEWS of yesteryear; they are available on lease and are replaced every two years with the latest model.

* Implementation of PIWS means that the preacher's work is delegated to the master computer in the church office. The preacher will become known as the Pastorally Responsible Anointed Worship Negotiator (PRAWN), whose primary task will be to develop new ways of empowering members of the congregation to worship in their own ways, rather than concentrating on the rather old-fashioned idea of actually leading worship.

An article in Worship and Preaching magazine by Paul Stopford

I do hope that we will find those ways of putting aside our own personal preferences in all aspects of our church life so that we can serve and touch the lives of all who enter into our buildings.

Andy

Dates for your diary

There will be **Covenant Services** at each church on the following 2022 dates:

- Dorset Gardens on 2nd January at 10.30am;
- Hove on 2nd January at 10.30am;
- Patcham on 16th January at 10.30am;
- Stanford Avenue on 9th January at 10.30am;
- Woodingdean on 9th January at 10.00am.

Other Dates:

Saturday 20th Nov: **Christmas Market at Patcham**

Saturday 27th Nov: **Christmas & Craft Fair** at Stanford Ave
11.00am—3.00pm

Saturday 4th Dec: **Celebrate & Remember** Dorset Gardens
3.00—4.40pm

Friday 17th Dec: **Polka Tots Christmas party at Hove**

Saturday 18th Dec: **Singing carols outside Hove MC** with
bbq & hot punch

Saturday 25th Dec: **Christmas Lunch** is back in-house this
year at Hove MC

Diary Dates 2022



Saturday February 12th 2022 at 2pm at Hove

Love Feast pop-up café in the Sanctuary with
Debbie Mantuano and friends providing Valentine
music



Saturday February 19th 2022 at 2pm

**Action for Children Afternoon Concert by
Brighton Male Voice Choir** at Stanford Avenue
Methodist Church

Entrance by donation & refreshments available

Christmas Services

Dorset Gardens:

Sunday 5 th December	10.30am	All Age Worship
Christmas Eve	4pm	Carols & Christingles
Christmas Day	10.30am	Christmas Celebration
Sunday 26 th Dec	10.30am	Circuit Sunday Onsite Service

Hove:

Sunday 5th December	10.30am	Gift Service
Sunday 19 th December	4pm	Carol Service (no morning service)
Christmas Day	10.00am	Christmas Celebration

Patcham:

Sunday 5th December	10.30am	All Age Worship
Sunday 19 th December	3pm	Carols & Service (no morning service)
Christmas Day	11.00am	Christmas Celebration

Stanford Avenue:

Sunday 19th December	6.30pm	Carol Service
Christmas Day	10.00am	Christmas Celebration

Woodingdean:

Sunday 19th December	4pm	Carols & Christingles (no morning service)
Christmas Day	9.30am	Christmas Celebration

Circuit **Christmas Eve Service** will be online, starting at 11.30pm

Sunday 26th December	10.30am	Circuit Sunday Online Service
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COMment Steve Preston

I started as the new Circuit Operations Manager (COM) at the end of September, working the equivalent of three days a week. I appreciated all those who sent messages of good wishes to me. I know I have a lot to learn but am excited to help develop this brand-new role and ensure it provides good value for the circuit. The breadth of responsibility is potentially very wide and will need refining over time.

Broadly I'm looking after circuit property, finances, and lay staff, however, my initial focus has been on some basic policies and procedures including GDPR, safeguarding and ensuring our Methodist Church online records are up to date – there is a lot to do and maintain in all these areas.

For those who don't know me I've been living permanently in Kemptown for the last two years, although I've been a weekend resident since 2006 and Sunday attendee at Dorset Gardens. Most



of my professional career was in human resource roles for global financial firms including living and working in London, New York, Singapore, Hong Kong, Jo'burg and Tokyo. I still do some consultancy work for my last employer, a Japanese bank. I love going to the theatre and often seen walking my dog along the seafront.

I've been spending a different day a week at the Circuit Office with Elin and Andy, testing their patience with my questions and to-do lists and it has been great to get a sense of all the good activity taking place at Hove. I also helped organise the Circuit Consultations, the next Circuit Plan and this edition of Focus, hence why I'm able to occupy space here. You can get in touch with me at steve.preston@brightonhovemethodistcircuit.org.uk or 07802 499157. Please contact me with any ?, feedback or ideas. **Steve**

Not the Same Boat

The theme of this issue is 'connecting people post-lockdown' and to introduce it here is a poem written in response to this extraordinary world we find ourselves in, shared by the author on Twitter in late April and read out at the Day of Compassion service at the Dome. It has been submitted by Ann Collins. We expect it will resonate with many as they navigate their way through each week of new challenges, setbacks, and achievements, whether personal or professional.



Illustration by Barbara Kelley, a graduate of Pratt Institute in New York

I heard that we are in the same boat.

But it's not that.

We are in the same storm, but not in the same boat.

Your ship can be shipwrecked and mine might not be.

Or vice versa.

For some, quarantine is optimal: a moment of reflection, or reconnection.

from the 5 churches in the circuit to put them in touch with the designated Chartered Surveyor so that they can arrange a convenient date between them to carry out the Quinquennial inspections on all properties associated with each Church. The Secretary receives a copy of this inspection for Circuit records.

- Arranging the Quinquennial Inspection with the surveyor for all three Circuit Manses.
- Liaise with the incumbent ministers with any issues that arise at their properties and arrange associated work forces to carry out the necessary work in line with the individual budgets allowed from the Circuit Treasurer.
- Monitor the expenditure throughout the year to ensure that budgets are adhered to.
- If there are any unforeseen large expenditures arising, authorisation is sought from the Circuit Meeting to ensure that there is money available to cover the costs.
- Provide a written report on activities carried out on each Manse for the Circuit Meeting.

Please let me know if you are interested or want to discuss further with Martyn? Thank you.

Steve

Face covering guidance

'Yours protects them and theirs protects you.'

Since the 19 July, face coverings are no longer mandatory in most public places and indoor settings, there are exceptions to this such as the NHS which is continuing to require patients, staff, and visitors to wear face coverings in healthcare settings. We are continuing to encourage you to wear a facemask whilst moving about our buildings, particularly in busy and enclosed spaces. **Not everyone can wear a face covering**, so it is still important to be respectful of others. Especially as some reasons for not wearing one can be invisible.

Face coverings help by catching the small droplets we sometimes spread when we talk or cough. These can contain coronavirus (COVID-19) and land on surfaces and other people. If you have COVID-19, even without any symptoms, and are not wearing a face covering the risk of spreading it to others nearby can be as high as 70%. If you wear a face covering, the risk of spreading it drops significantly.

By wearing a face covering you protect those around you, and they protect you by wearing theirs. Thank you for your co-operation and stay safe and well.

Circuit Leadership Team

Buddhism. While the Methodist Church was not called to give evidence at the hearing, it provided written submissions.

The Inquiry's panel, chaired by Professor Alexis Jay OBE, issued its report of the investigation into Child Protection in Religious Organisations and Settings at the beginning of September 2021. The Secretary of the Conference, the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, welcomed the report and said: "The report makes two recommendations; the first on policy, procedures and training and the second around legislation for unregistered institutions providing full-time education. The first recommendation largely reflects our existing policy and procedures and stresses the need for regular updates. We will examine our child protection policy along with the procedures and training as part of our ongoing cycle of learning and review to see what changes might be needed in light of the report. We will await Government advice on the second recommendation."

You can read more at www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding

We as a Circuit are committed to safeguarding as an integral part of our life and ministry. Safeguarding is about the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture. This means we will:

- promote the welfare of children, young people and adults
- work to prevent abuse from occurring
- seek to protect and respond well to those that have been abused.
- We are currently reviewing our policies and processes and will be revisiting the training of all in key roles.

We Need You!

In this edition of Focus I want to highlight a vacancy we have for a vital voluntary Circuit role:

Circuit Property Secretary and Quinquennial Co-ordinator

Martyn Coblenz has done a terrific job looking after this but is stepping down at the end of this year after his move from Brighton to Lancing. We are sad to lose him and thank him for all his hard work, but the good news is he is happy to provide a full handover as well as guidance to the person once newly in role. He describes the role below.

Main responsibilities are:

- Liaising with all the Property Secretaries



Easy, in flip flops, with a whiskey or tea.

For others, this is a desperate crisis.

For others, it is facing loneliness.

For some, peace, rest time, vacation.

Yet for others, Torture: How am I going to pay my bills?

Some were concerned about a brand of chocolate for Easter (this year there were no rich chocolates).

Others were concerned about the bread for the weekend, or if the noodles would last for a few more days.

Some were in their "home office".

Others are looking through trash to survive.

Some want to go back to work because they are running out of money.

Others want to kill those who break the quarantine.

Some need to break the quarantine to stand in line at the banks.

Others to escape.

Others criticize the government for the lines.

Some have experienced the near-death of the virus, some have already lost someone from it, and some believe they are infallible and will be blown away if or when this hits someone they know.

Some have faith in God and expect miracles during 2020. Others say the worse is yet to come. So, friends, we are not in the same boat.

We are going through a time when our perceptions and needs are completely different. And each one will emerge, in his own way, from that storm.

It is very important to see beyond what is seen at first glance.

Not just looking, more than looking, seeing.

See beyond the political party, beyond biases, beyond the nose on your face. Do not judge the good life of the other, do not condemn the bad life of the other.

Don't be a judge.

Let us not judge the one who lacks, as well as the one who exceeds him. We are on different ships looking to survive.

Let everyone navigate their route with respect, empathy and responsibility

Connecting via Hospitality “Put on the kettle, cut the cake and open the doors!”

How did our Circuit churches respond following our periods of extended lockdown and social isolation? Hospitality and service of course, with fellowship amongst our church members and by being a good neighbour in our communities. Here is a round up of these critical initiatives happening in all our churches:

Cynthia Park reports on OpenHouse@DG

At the beginning of July, a little crew launched a new venture at Dorset Gardens: a drop-in Open House offering (free) coffee, cake, conversation and crafts to all and sundry. It was almost an instant hit! It had been inspired by learning about the concept of mental health cafes; but joining the national network of such cafes and setting one up was way too complicated for what we had in mind. We just wanted to re-connect with the neighbourhood and have some quality time for getting to know each other and having some fun.

The routine is simple – make the coffee, cut the cake, get out the knitting needles, art equipment and board games and open the door! We have re-connected with folk who had drifted away, met numerous new friends, enjoyed many new games, finished some knitting projects and started new ones, and had a lot of laughs. And this gathering is proving to the folk at Dorset Gardens that we still play an important role in supporting and enriching the lives of those around us. Moreover, further opportunities to reach out and re-connect are being discovered. Dorset Gardens and the Dome Mission have a glorious past. While we cannot live in the past, the past shapes the present, and the present shapes the future. When Methodism came to Brighton in 1804, its followers began a tradition of service to the



17 years, by the grace of God, I continued to teach, read and do all my chores with the 'good' eye.

In 2006, I unexpectedly experienced the same visual distortion in my second eye and was immediately rushed to the hospital. The doctors have since then given almost 42 injections in my 'good' eye and done cold laser treatment to save some vision.

Recently, I was certified as severely sight impaired/blind. Losing sight can be frightening, confusing and heartbreaking. I have lost my confidence to go out on my own, the ability to recognise faces from a distance and to read the Bible in (regular print) Urdu which I have done all my life. What has helped me keep going is the unconditional care of my dear daughter and my faith in God. Every morning I am assured of God's faithfulness and believe in His grace which enables me to see with my limited sight. My precious daughter takes care of me with utmost love and warmth.

I spend a lot of time memorising hymns and Bible passages in case I lose further vision. My favourite hymn which I enjoy singing is:

*Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light*

Jesus is indeed my light, I am never alone, and His presence is with me every hour, every day.

Recently, I have been reading literature in large print provided very kindly by the Torch Trust. I am also grateful to my church leadership team at Dorset Gardens for making our church 'sight-loss friendly', ensuring that I (among others with limited vision) can continue to participate in worship and maintain fellowship with friends. Please uphold me and all those with sight loss in your prayers.

Kushma

Safeguarding and the Methodist Church

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was set up by the Government after concerns that some organisations were failing and continuing to fail to protect children from sexual abuse. The hearing started in March 2020 and was delayed by the Covid-19 lockdown. The Methodist Church was asked to take part along with other religious organisations with a significant presence in England and Wales including non-conformist Christian denominations, the Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, representatives of Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and

After this disappointment I entered the Insurance World which turned out to be my livelihood for the next forty-nine years. This started in Manchester and then London, in the Square Mile.

I have always been a book worm and have never been able to leave a bookshop without at least two or more book purchases. Hence, I do have a very large collection, mostly hard back and in the main auto/biographies. My favourite TV is good quality drama and documentaries and foodwise French and Italian cuisine.

When considering what I would like to change (if I could) it would be to have had the experience of a living father.

Earlier in this article I referred to my lifelong interest in the theatre and in my local days in the North I had the privilege of acting in and directing three drama groups and subsequently two groups when I came to live in Wimbledon. This was in addition to playing for the Wimbledon Scout Gang show and playing the piano for a professional Dancing School, which I did for 7 years.

One the happiest days of my life was in 1963 when I was accredited as Methodist local Preacher.

I think also one of the happiest days of my life was following the direction of a dramatic production of a newly formed group in the North and the critic of the infamous Manchester Evening News reported that I had set them a standard of acting they would find difficult to maintain.

My saddest experience has been the fact that all the Drama groups I worked on in the North and in Wimbledon, ceased to exist within six months of my departures.

Ken

Thank you to Ken for answering our questions, who is next?

My sight loss journey and my faith

Kushma Massey

It is very emotive to share about my sight loss alongside my faith journey.

I was born in India. I have been a Methodist throughout my life; my father was a Methodist Minister and so was my elder brother in a family of 10 children. For 49 years, I worked as a teacher in four Methodist schools in India.

In 1989, I suddenly started to experience visual distortion in one eye which led to medical examination and the diagnosis of age-related macular degeneration along with early signs of glaucoma. However, the diagnosis was too late and advanced treatment was not available, so I lost all central vision in the eye. Thereafter for

people of Brighton which has not been broken. The first building in Dorset Gardens was opened in 1808; the second in 1885 and the third in 2003. The style of those buildings has varied greatly; but the spirit that fills the Methodists who have served – and continue to serve – within them, has not. The faithful service of Dorset Gardeners and the desire to reveal the love of God to all continues, unabated.

But DG need not be singled out in our circuit. I recently took a student to another of our Methodist churches. She had never heard of Methodism, but when I told her the casserole joke, she instantly warmed to it. And when we attended worship, the friendliness, the inclusivity, the links to the community, the ethos and the space to grow, convinced her. She'll be back. We may think nobody cares about the church anymore; but that is just untrue. The community is as needy for love and companionship as it ever was. We just need to connect again. So, put on the kettle, cut the cake and open the doors! And the rest will follow. (And if you want to hear the casserole joke, give me a ring). **Cynthia**

Ann Collins asks if we want to Craft 'n' Chat at Stanford Avenue?

We are delighted that post-lockdown we have restarted our regular actual meetings. Through lockdown we have kept meeting via zoom, but it's not been the same! So, if you've ever thought of going to a Knit and Natter group but haven't found one locally, or would enjoy that sort of a group – but don't knit? You have other interests or hobbies? You will be very welcome.

The group meet on the second and fourth Thursday every month at Stanford Avenue Methodist Church (use main door) between 2 and 4pm for a very friendly time of 'craft', chat and a cuppa (biscuits and/or cake available!) Some come just for the cuppa and natter. And that's fine. Fellas: it's not just a 'female' thing!!!! If you have a creative hobby that is 'bringable', come along.



'What do I bring?' Yourself – and anything you are interested in or are in midst of!

Some draw or colour-in, some have brought laptops and were engaged in Family Tree exploration. We have knitters, crocheters, card makers, embroiderers; we've even had an afternoon of folding old hymn books to make angels and hedgehogs!

Everyone is willing to help and share so if you want to have a go at something you're not sure of – come and join us. It's truly a drop-in so no rigid time, and you don't have to 'sign up'.

We're always delighted to welcome new friends from the local community around the Fiveways and Preston Park area – and indeed from further afield. The no: 52 bus stops outside. So, check the Church Diary at <http://www.stanfordavenuemeth.co.uk> and do pop in if you are interested. We look forward to welcoming you.

PS Our Community Lunch Club meets on Wednesdays from 12.30 - 14.00 for everyone over 60. The cost is £3.50 and you will receive a very warm welcome from the people who will prepare a hot and very good two course meal, plus a nice cup of tea or coffee. It is open to any individual whether you are from the Church or not. You can also experience some lovely chat & friendship from all. Why not try it?

Ann

Beulah Fletcher tells us about Coffee Shop at Woodingdean

What can one say about our Thursdays when we meet one another and chat: I was thinking not much since we all know what happens at coffee mornings! However, I then did a double take & realised that I have been running this with quite a bit of help over the past years. How many years? Well, it must be almost 17!

I know this since I started it when our daughter's first child was born, and he is now 17 years old. I used to teach but having promised our daughter that I would have the baby every Thursday & could no longer give full weeks to teaching and so I decided that it was the right time to give up going into schools. Over the years many have helped me serving the coffees and teas. Then this year as soon as things started up a bit after the

Spotlight on Ken Smith

We are introducing a new feature to Focus where in every edition we will put the spotlight on one of our Circuit members and maybe we will learn more about someone whom we have known for a while. The person is given a list of 18 questions and asked to select and respond to 8.



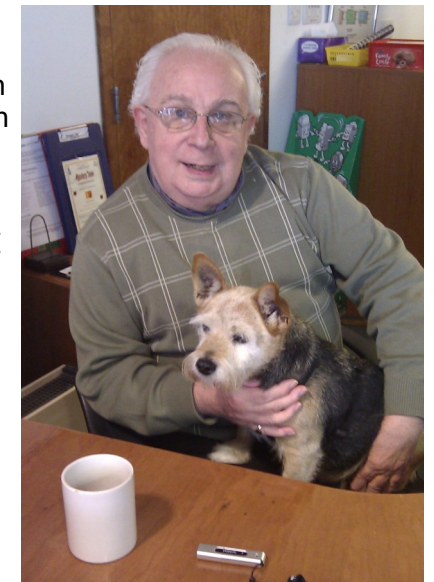
Ken celebrating his 50th birthday at a party thrown by his friends

First to have a go is Ken Smith, well known and loved across our Circuit and this is what he had to share.....

I was born in 1938 and when I reached the age of five and six, I had the experience of beginning to notice the activities of the Second World War. This was quite vivid as near to the vicinity of our home was the

Manchester to Liverpool main Railway line and this was one of targets of the invading German forces.

I experienced a happy childhood with my mother and grandmother, this being due to the fact that whilst my mother was carrying me in pregnancy she was widowed. I had good local education at schools terminating up to the fifth form of Urmston Grammar school. From an early age I have always had a keen interest in the theatre and in readiness for leaving school I had planned and achieved a provisional position as a stage manager at a local professional repertory theatre in the neighbouring town of Sale in Cheshire. I was due to start in July 1954 but alas it was not to be as in May that year the theatre went into receivership never to reopen.



This sole Old Testament reference, with its poor translation, has led to a general historical misunderstanding. When I was a student in the 1960s the author of one of our standard texts on biblical history, in discussing the fate of the inhabitants of Samaria (the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel) after its defeat in the late 8th century B.C. by the Assyrians, referred to foreigners being re-settled in Samaria by the Assyrians who, *'brought their native customs and religions with them'* and *'mingled with the surviving Israelite population. We shall meet their descendants later as the Samaritans.'*

This idea, that the Samaritans at the time of Jesus were of mixed-race ancestry and practised a syncretic version of Yahwism, has sadly proved very powerful, and is only now recognised to be wrong!! It is a good example of how just one word can lead to a false historical narrative. That this narrative continued is partly because in c. 110 B.C. John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean king of Judea destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mt Gerizim. If one country destroys the sacred site of a neighbour they must obviously have as 'very good reason' for doing so! Consequently Jewish polemical writing argued that the Samaritans were really pagans only pretending to worship Yahweh.

The Jewish historian, Josephus (37 – c. 100 A.D.), is a good example of this. In his book *The Jewish War* (c. 75 A.D.) his goal is to defend Jews and counter hostile writing: in his later book *Jewish Antiquities* (c. 94 A.D.) he tried to tell his Greek and Roman audience that Jews can be relied on, whereas their neighbours, the Samaritans cannot. In *War* his writing is free from animosity towards the Samaritans: in *Antiquities* it is not. This is simply because Josephus, like everyone, has a purpose in what they say and write.

In fact both Jews and Samaritans have generally regarded themselves as the true Israel from which path the other has gone astray. However, as Plumer points out in a recent and thorough study of Samaritan history, *'all the evidence shows that the Samaritans are not a sect that broke from Judaism, but rather a branch of Yahwistic Israel in the same sense as the Jews.'* Next time we shall look at what can be uncovered of their history, and of their situation both at the time of Jesus and the early Church.

Mick Hickman

last lockdown, we opened up again on May 20th (socially distanced). However, during lockdown, we did keep going using Skype.

I suppose the average number of those who attend is around twelve. It seems to be a real life-line for some, and it was especially in May and June this year after being 'locked away' for so long. We have of course the regulars, but others pop in from time to time. One of our members comes with her three little dogs! The other week someone who was working across the road came and asked my husband whether he was the owner! Do pop in and join us sometime.

Beulah



Kay Harwood reports that life is gradually returning to normal at Patcham

with many of their groups which hire the church hall or upstairs rooms returning to their regular slots. These groups include Monday Circle - a social get-together for ladies; EXTEND gentle exercise class to music on a Tuesday afternoon; Short Mat Bowls recommencing from 17th November and Singing for Pleasure, a community choir on a Thursday afternoon. Drama group, Barnstormers are presenting a new production entitled "Best of Barnstormers" which looks back at the last 20 years of Barnstormers, featuring numbers from the many





excellent shows they have put on over the years, such as Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, Sister Act, Anything Goes etc. **Kay**

Meanwhile much happening at Hove Methodist Church where **Elin Superstar tells us about their Chatty Café and recent Street Party**

"We have more in common than that which divides us." Jo Cox

This has been a guiding principle for our community doings. Rachel our Community Worker and Jacqui from Lunch Club consolidated a series of pop-up cafes into a weekly Chatty Café in the Sanctuary on Fridays at 10.00.

It has evolved from a bereavement support group into more of a village square where people wander through stopping to chat, or sit down to have a cuppa and catch up with friends. Or come and make new friends. Jenny, Lucy and Pat are there doing the church flowers, I wander through to adjust the heating, Andy gets embroiled in theological dispute and so it goes. Comfortable chaos with time to make links. This November Anna from Brighton Digital Inclusion joined us to share IT skills.



The Covid pandemic meant that dancing in the street was off the programme in 2020, so we were determined to have a bash in 2021. Originally we set the date in June to coincide with

People and Groups in New Testament times:

7. The Samaritans

Mick Hickman

This is **not** about the group in Britain and elsewhere who help those with suicidal thoughts. It **is** about the group who appear in the New Testament. The Samaritans are unusual in several ways, not least because there are still almost one thousand of them, mainly living around their sacred mountain, Mt Gerizim, where they believe that God gave Moses the Torah including the Ten Commandments. Over the last thirty years, there has been a 'boom' in Samaritan studies. This is not just about new translations and discoveries of ancient texts, but also new archaeological work.



Samaritans celebrate Sukhot on Mount Gerizim

They appear in the New Testament most famously in Lk 10 vv 25-37, the story of the Good Samaritan. It used to be thought that they are also mentioned in the Old Testament, just once, II Kgs 17 v 29. In older translations such as The Revised Standard Version (RSV 1952) the word used is indeed, '*Samaritans*'. However, later translations, e.g. The New International Version (NIV 1990 ed.), the Jewish Study Bible (JSB, 1999), and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV 2007) etc. use the phrase, '*the people of Samaria*' which is a far better translation of the Hebrew.

Grow demonstrates how nature can be beneficial for mental health, why and how it works. So at this time when students, in particular, are under a lot of stress – not only coming to university but also dealing with the impact of COVID restrictions, what could be better than to engage with Grow and their experience of helping people through time immersed in nature? Jo Wren from Grow picked us up in the minibus and on arrival we noticed the most beautiful spiders' webs on the gates, glistening in the droplets the mist had left. After a hot drink and introductions around the fire pit, we went for a guided walk in the countryside around the centre.

In a stand of trees, we worked in pairs helping each other to find our 'dream' trees while one kept our eyes shut, being guided by our partner, then finding it again with our eyes open, it was surprising how much



information you could take in through senses other than sight. We looked at fungi, mist hanging over the trees in the valley, butterflies, all sorts of trees and plants, heard the birds and spent a time in complete silence, noticing everything around us as we walked. On the way back to the centre two students were so uplifted by their experiences they rolled down the slope with the exuberance of a couple of young children!



It was a fantastic day in so many ways, connecting with people through our shared experiences of the calming effect of nature whilst also being energised by a mindful observance of the things of which we might not normally have been aware.

I am so grateful to the Circuit for giving me the wherewithall to provide these opportunities for reaching out to and blessing students.

You can learn more about Growing Wellbeing from their website: growingwellbeing.org.uk.

Sue Harrington, Circuit Student Development Worker

Summer Solstice and the Great Get Together inspired by Jo Cox, but the pesky virus forced us to be sensible and push it back to September.

The day dawned overcast and sure enough just as we got the tables, sound system and barbecue out, it started to drizzle.

Tarpaulins were deployed, Nam Yang moved their demonstration mats back inside and upstairs to the church. Meanwhile undeterred the gang sliced



cakes, hung bunting and blew up balloons regardless.

DJ Chris Love under the gazebo started laying down sounds, Harry appeared in full costume, Maggie & John made everyone bacon sarnies:



The rain gave it up as a bad job and the clouds went elsewhere. The whole church family showed up and celebrated: Nam Yang drummed and fought the dragon; Jonathan from Kingsway Care MC'd and sang; Caroline and the Food & Friendship team ran the cakes and hot drinks stall indoors; the Martlets choir



performed and brought their quilt; Trish from Slimming World won one of the hampers in the raffle; Jenny from Stay Up Late ran the chill-out space with friends; Streetfunk kids (and parents) danced, moments of magic strung together until eventually Deborah and friends played us into the sunset and we had to go

home. So despite Covid, we did finally have our very own HMC Community Hub festival, everyone had a chance to come together and celebrate, and we look forward to doing it all again, even better, next year. **Elin**



Growing together by Sue Harrington

When I saw the theme of 'Connecting People Post lock-down' for this edition of Focus I immediately thought I would tell you about a wonderful Green Wellbeing day we had recently.

The universities are gradually getting back to life being on campus, not perhaps as it was, but a careful and gradual return; not without its challenges, of course. So we decided we would offer students (and staff) a day in the countryside with the Grow project which is based at the National Trust's Saddlescombe Farm.

