

# Focus

**Spring 2024**



**Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit**

# Andy's Letter



Dear friends

Some of you will be aware that Easter Sunday is early this year. As a movable festival it is usually sometime in April but sometimes, and this year is one of those times, it is at the end of March.

Although not remarkable in itself it did lead to an interesting situation as I had been planning to lead a 6-session course entitled 'Windows into the First Holy Week and Easter' at our fortnightly Communion and Study group at Stanford Avenue. To make it possible to complete the course before Easter it meant that our first meeting was on Tuesday 2nd January when our subject was Palm Sunday! A quick change of subjects when we had not even reached the Feast of Epiphany or taken our Christmas decorations down. Although I did notice that I had been beaten by one of the major supermarket chains who had Hot Cross buns on display by their front doors on the 27th December!

In a few short weeks we will be remembering the story told in the Bible of the last few days of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. His entrance into Jerusalem, the turning over of tables in the Temple, discourse with Pharisees and Scribes in the Temple Court, a meal in an Upper Room, an arrest in a garden followed by brutal treatment at the hands of Roman soldiers and, following a trial that found him not guilty of any of the charges raised against him, death on a cross.

In acts that challenged Imperial Rome and the local authorities that ruled on their behalf, acts that were cheered on by the many whose lives were being lived at the mercy of powerful and wealthy men, Jesus challenged unjust systems and the people who gained wealth from them and power through them at the expense of others. What is even worse is that these local authorities, the local elite, included the highest religious authorities of the day.

Jesus had earlier called his disciples to walk in the way that he was walking. That was not about walking to death but to living out Kingdom values day by day, caring for each other, supporting those who need support, sharing with others who have less, honouring God by loving each other, both those we know and the stranger. There was nothing new about this, it had been the message of the prophets for all time. But the prophets too had never been popular with those in authority and often suffered for

opposing those leaders who were living in direct contradiction to those God standards.

In this story of the last week of Jesus he challenges the whole of the domination system that existed and the leaders who abused it for their own ends and at the expense of the poor and the marginalised, those who had no voice. In calling us to follow in his way we are called to do the same.

But our story doesn't finish with death, there is the wonder of resurrection. Whatever we make of the resurrection stories we read in the gospels of Matthew, Luke and John, what we do see in the book of Acts are testimonies of the ways in which the events of those days leading up to and following the death of Jesus transform the lives of those who had followed him during his life and others who witnessed those transformations and found themselves transformed as well.

In the fearful days following the crucifixion and after the resurrection the message that Jesus spoke was heard again. Following the day of Pentecost communities of those who saw Jesus as the way, the truth and the life emerged and grew and spoke a new story to those 'in Jerusalem and throughout all Judaea and Samaria', and even to the farthest corners of the earth including here.

This new story is not a call to die for our faith but live out our faith and offer life to others, it was a call to live following the ways that Jesus taught and lived. What is important is not what we believe about resurrection but how we practice it, how we live day by day.

For anyone who is interested I am running the course again at Dorset Gardens on Monday evenings during Lent from 7.30 – 9.30pm:

- 19th Feb: Palm Sunday
- 26th Feb: Maundy Thursday
- 4th March: Good Friday – Betrayal, denial and crucifixion
- 11th March: What does the cross mean for us?
- 18th March: *No Meeting*
- 25th March: Easter

And a final meeting after Easter:

- 8th April: What does the resurrection mean for us?

Finally, let me take this opportunity to thank you all for all you continue to do in your churches and community. At Easter we celebrate that life and love are greater than despair and death. So live in hope and peace and share God's love in all you do and with all you meet.



Andy.

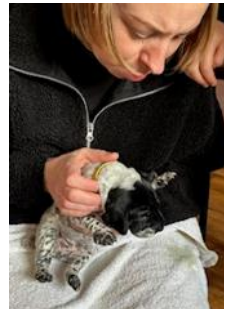
# Focus: People

## Clergy changes

After five years serving the Brighton & Hove Circuit the **Revd Dan Woodhouse** will be moving to the Wirral Circuit from September 2024. The Wirral is a peninsula separated from Wales by the River Dee and from Liverpool by the River Mersey and includes some of the most deprived areas in the United Kingdom, as well as some of the most beautiful. The Circuit currently has a mix of rural and urban churches, 22 in all, including three ecumenical partnerships. The Circuit's strategy is about being viable and vibrant and to reorganise to become single churches on multiple sites. Dan will have pastoral oversight of one church over four sites and a second church, so five in all. He is partnering with the circuit on purchasing and establishing a new community house, most likely in Birkenhead. His dedication to Nottingham Forrest FC will ensure equitable support of the local Reds and Blues!

We are pleased to announce that **Revd Karen Bell** will join the circuit from September 2024 serving as Minister of Patcham, Stanford Avenue and Woodingdean churches. She joins us from the Romford Circuit where she has been a team minister since September 2017 and before that based in the Purley Circuit. She describes her gifts and passions in preaching, teaching, mission, outreach and pastoral care. She enjoys serving in family friendly, all-age environments and has led cafe church, messy church, alpha courses, young people's groups & 24 hour prayer.

Finally congratulations to **Sue Jacobs** who has successfully completed her training and has been appointed as a Minister of 4 churches across the West Oxfordshire Circuit from September 24 and will be living in the small village of Long Hanborough. Also joining them is new puppy Grace (*Good excuse for cute puppy pic right*).



## Congratulations

To both Terry Hammond and Kushma Massey (left) who have both recently celebrated milestone birthdays.



Have you seen latest TV star Tony Leonard? He is featured in *Miners' Strike 1984* on Channel 4 relating events forty years ago from those directly involved.

# Introducing Revd Daniel Balsdon - New Assistant Chair (Southern)

## Preaching at Circuit Together Service at Patcham on 26th May

"Hi, I'm, Dan Balsdon, and after the 9th house move of my life I find myself living in Leatherhead where I serve the South East District as an Assistant Chair (replacing Deborah) and in the Dorking and Horsham as presbyter for Leatherhead and Effingham Methodist and Cobham United Church (United Reformed and Methodist Ecumenical Partnership).

I have a passion for enabling Christian communities to nurture relationships with one another, their communities, their ecumenical siblings, and with the God we worship and partner with in mission and ministry.

After sensing a call to ordained ministry in 2015, I candidated and subsequently undertook 2 years formational training at Queens Foundation, Birmingham, before beginning ministry in 2018 in the West Sussex (Coast and Downs) Circuit serving Bognor Regis, Felpham and Westergate communities.

Before candidating for ministry I spent 6 years running a Christian Bookshop and resource centre, as well as serving in a wide variety of roles in local methodist churches and circuits in Cornwall.



I live with my wife and 2 children, with whom I share a love for Lego and family games. I also enjoy gardening, walking, and a good coffee – all of which Surrey offers aplenty!"

## Spotlight On....Charlotte & Jonathan Gravestock

*Continuing our feature where in every edition we put the spotlight on one of our Circuit members and perhaps we will learn more about someone whom many will have known for a while. This edition we feature our first couple who were given a list of 18 questions and asked to select and respond to 8. Here are their choice and answers:*

### **Who have been your strongest influences in life?**

(Charlotte) My parents, both children of Methodist ministers, have been, and still are, great influences in my life, in different ways. My Mum was quite a rebel. She was expelled from school for the relatively minor misdemeanor of paddling in a pond that was out of bounds. She also refused to sign 'the pledge' not to drink alcohol (expected of all Methodist young people in those days) on the grounds that she was capable of limiting her own alcohol



consumption without needing to sign a piece of paper; this rebellion caused considerable upset at home in the manse. I was really proud that my Mum seemed to be a much more interesting character than most Mums I knew. She always encouraged me to think for myself. My Dad, by contrast, was calm and measured. He considered his words carefully. Above all I noticed that he treated all people, whatever their background, with the same courtesy and respect, a natural attitude of his that I have always admired. I can also say honestly that I am influenced and inspired by many people, both past and present, connected to our Hove church. They really are the most amazing group of people. I won't embarrass anyone by mentioning names, but some of the wonderful qualities they demonstrate are open-mindedness, sincerity, courage, selflessness, commitment, kindness, flair, joyfulness, constancy, thoughtfulness, imagination and wisdom. They bowl me over.

## **Tell me about where you grew up and what your family life was like?**

(Jonathan) I was born the youngest of four and grew up in Worthing, where Charlotte was also born. Both our families belonged to Steyne Gardens Methodist Church where our parents knew each other. Hence, we first met at the age of 3 at the kindergarten which met in my parents' home. We went on to attend the same primary school, but separate secondary schools. By chance we then found that we had been accepted by the same university, where, we belonged to 'Methsoc' and remained friends until graduation. Before Charlotte left, however, my parents bought me tickets for my college Ball, to which I invited Charlotte. As they say, 'absence makes the heart grow fonder' and, after her departure, romance blossomed. We were married at Offington Park Methodist Church in Worthing, since when she has seen me through my finals and given me my own family and the best 50 years of my life. What a friend!



## **What are you most proud of accomplishing?**

(Charlotte) I'm proud of having helped my oldest grandson, whose education was completely disrupted by the covid pandemic, to get through his English language and English literature GCSE exams. He is now in a rewarding apprenticeship at Shoreham Port. I am also proud of contributing to our local interfaith group (IFCG), a small but very committed band, that does a great deal to enhance the life of our city. Thank you Mick Hickman for suggesting that I became the Secretary some decades ago!

## **What do/did you do as a career and why?**

(Jonathan) I've always loved animals, looked after, and wanted to work with them. Although my original plan, to be a zookeeper, was upgraded into being a zoo vet, the nearest I ever got to that was a month spent working for Dudley Zoo's vet. But I never lost my interest in 'exotics' and, after working for 7 years in general veterinary practice, I joined the Peoples Dispensary for Sick Animals in Brighton. There I treated a great variety of species, ranging from a stick insect to a goat, but took a particular interest in tortoises, large numbers of which were being imported from the wild and dying through ignorance of their needs. Not only did our patients vary, but the care they required, from consulting and pharmacy, through diagnostics including



haematology, cytology, radiology, ultrasound and endoscopy, to anaesthesia and most areas of surgery, including dentistry. I was so grateful to have had that privilege of working alongside many dedicated colleagues for PDSA, which cares for the pets of people who can't afford vets.

**What has been the happiest day of your life?**

(*Charlotte*) No contest! The day I knew that I loved Jonathan Gravestock and would always do so. Also the days when our children, Abigail and Thomas, and our grandchildren, Louie, Florence, Arthur and Amaryllis were born. I'm not leaving out our oldest grandson, Lucas, it's just that we weren't his grandparents at the time he was born; we first met when he was 3 years old.

**If you could be or do anything else - what?**

(*Jonathan*) I would love to experience life as a bird, like a kestrel, with its amazing sensibility and its flying ability of hovering over a fixed position in a gale.

**Anne Frank once said that in spite of everything, she believed people were basically good. Do you agree?**

(*Charlotte*) It all depends what you mean by 'good'. If it means being kind and wanting the best for others, then I agree that most people would like to be 'good' and to be thought of as 'good'. However, as we look at ourselves and the world, we can't help but notice that it is very much easier to be kind to people who are like us rather than to people who differ from us, whether by life circumstances, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion, political beliefs or other differences. So while it may be true that most people aspire to be 'good', we all have some way to go in the 'goodness' stakes. Unfortunately, it's not a case of being 'good' simply by being human.



**What's the one thing about you few people know?**

(*Jonathan*) When I was 18 years old I caught acute lobar pneumonia which, but for my mum's prompt action and our GP's immediate visit with antibiotics, would almost certainly have killed me.

*Thank you Charlotte & Jonathan for answering these questions and sharing your thoughts and wonderful recollections.*



## **Tribute to Ken Hopkins**

### **27 September 1933 - 1 November 2023**

#### **'The Ken I knew'**

Ken loved words! He had a good command of words and knew how to deliver them in that clear voice of his and with that distinctive Hampshire 'burr', so I think he would appreciate these:

"They say there are seven ages of man: SPILLS, DRILLS, THRILLS, BILLS, ILLS, PILLS AND WILLS".

Here are 7 pairings of words that just begin to sum up the admiration and friendship that I enjoyed with Ken.

- Belligerent and bombastic.
- Careful and considerate.
- Knowledgeable and kind.
- Challenging and confrontational.
- Attentive and affirming.
- Entertaining and enthusiastic.
- Charming and comforting.

I first met Ken towards the end of September 1990. I had been appointed as a part-time lay worker at Hove Methodist Church to support the minister, Rev. Martin Broadbent through a transitional year at HMC.

I was at that time a 'rookie' Local preacher 'on note' and an electrician in my working capacity. My brief was to visit those who found it difficult to get to church and 'adherents'.

As a member of staff I worshipped at Hove and on one morning after the service I was having 'a cuppa' in the Narthex/ fellowship room and could see this man striding towards me 'purposefully'!

The conversation went something like this:

"Good morning Mr. Harrington. When is the Parson going to visit my mother?"

My reply was "I'm sorry but I don't know you". "Hopkins is the name. You've both been here for a month so when is the Parson going to visit?"

"Does the Parson know that your Mother is unwell?" I replied.

"I don't know about that but she needs a visit!" said Ken.

"Leave it with me and I'll arrange for Martin to call and see her", and Ken duly swept away!

I duly visited and made the said arrangements and during our conversation Ken's mum said "It's lovely to see you dear and who asked you to visit me?"

"Your son suggested I call to see how you are doing".

"Oh I'm fine dear. My Kenneth.....stupid boy !" She said it with that same twinkle of the eye that her boy inherited and carried for the rest of his life.

So a couple of weeks later, again after the Sunday morning service, this 'Hopkins' came striding towards me and this time I was ready for him! He raised up both arms just in front of me and said, "Mr. Harrington, I was wrong and owe you an apology!"

*IT TAKES A BIG MAN TO PUBLICLY SAY HE WAS WRONG.*

And that was the start of a wonderful friendship that lasted over 30 years- I truly wish it was longer.

It was through Ken's love of church, 'chapel' as he would put it that I discovered so many of the passions that we shared. Family....friends....cricket....and lunches!! When I had the opportunity of worshipping with Ken and Joan at HMC I would usually sit next to them in the gallery. Ken and Joan had fine voices, and it was like being in a choir when we sang, especially some of the old Methodist hymns with difficult tunes.

Ken and Joan would often read the lessons, always with their strong and clear voices, reflecting their preparation for reading. Ken did a wonderful impression of John Arlott, the cricket writer and broadcaster and I always wanted to do a service at Hove based on the laws of cricket, with Ken reading in the 'Arlott' style, but sadly that never came to pass.

Ken served his church as an extremely diligent property steward/secretary. His organisational skills were put to good use, along with practical support. On one occasion I was changing some light bulbs atop a 60 foot ladder with Mr. Hopkins 'footing' the ladder. There is a photograph somewhere of this event with Ken with one foot on the ladder and looking earnestly at his wrist watch, no doubt wondering how much longer the job would take! When I retired from running my electrical business I became a life member of Sussex County Cricket Club and got to see a lot more of Ken, and very occasionally was his guest, along with my wife Esther, in the committee room. His hospitality was generous and full of fun. This was also the place to see how loved and admired Ken was by the whole cricket family at Sussex and an opportunity to meet some cricketing heroes of mine- Jim Parks, John Snow and John Barclay to name but three.

At church meetings Ken would often ask probing and sometimes difficult questions- the kind of questions some would hesitate about asking. His managerial skills and ability to read annual accounts clearly fitted him for this questioning.

He was a stickler for being dressed properly at cricket and church. Always jacket, shirt and club tie and latterly acquired a particularly natty striped blazer, which I teased over saying he was 'wearing a deck chair'!

I mentioned lunches! Our lunches together were something else I treasured. Whether at the County Ground or latterly the Deep Sea Anglers Club. The journey to whatever dining table we

arrived at was interminable- he seemed to know everybody! There was never a dull moment or lack of conversation- church, sport, politics and pretty much everything else and you were lucky to get away in under 4 hours!

Through the COVID pandemic we spoke most days and both Joan and Ken were lively supporters of the Circuit online services.

And so to the final few months and Ken's health issues, which he bore so bravely and with good humour- I never heard him moan about the many procedures he underwent.

I was honoured to be invited to Ken's 90th birthday party at the County Ground but his worsening health prevented him from attending. There's a saying 'THERE WAS SO MUCH LOVE IN THE ROOM', and that was absolutely the case on that day.

After drinking a toast to Ken, a number of his committee colleagues and I took Ken's cards, celebratory cake and gifts to 'Welbeck Mansions' and there he was, immaculately dressed in his deck chair blazer, but clearly quite unwell.

The following day Ken was admitted to 'The Pines' care and rest home. I visited a few times and during one conversation the subject of the recent film 'The Great Escaper' came up, based on the true story of Bernard Jordan escaping that same home. I'm sure that familiar twinkling came back to Ken's eyes, planning his own escape! Being an ex RAF serviceman, you could see him thinking "I'll build my own aeroplane", with the cover of all the building works and noise going on at 'The Pines'.

I can hear the theme music playing now: 'That magnificent Ken and his flying machine'.

So in conclusion, some more words.....an acrostic.

**K**ind  
**E**ntertaining  
**N**osey  
  
**H**umorous  
**O**rganiser  
**P**raise  
**K**nowledgable  
**I**nformed  
**N**atural  
**S**tylish.

Ken loved and was loved all who knew him and loved by the God whom he knew loved him, and whose love he shared so naturally.

I'm honoured to be numbered amongst his many friends and I shall miss him.

**Geoff Harrington**



# Focus: Features

## A month in Uganda



To cut a long story short, in the mid-nineties, I played bass in a punk band (Heavy Load), which consisted of musicians with and without learning disabilities. A feature-length film documented our chaotic exploits (No.9 in The Guardian's top 20 music documentaries of all time – true story!)

One of the issues we faced as a band was the inequality of many of our learning-disabled fans leaving our gigs early due to their support staff being unable to work flexible shifts, which led to me starting the charity Stay Up Late in 2011.

Fast forward to now, and the charity's work has grown with partner projects across the UK, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia replicating our work. In 2022, the Queen recognised us with The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

It was never in my plans to start a charity; it just sort of happened in a very punk way from the experiences of our band. It's been a wonderful experience and a lot of hard work, and I've had to learn a lot.

The danger of being the founder is that if something happened to me, could the charity's work continue as so much is in my head? Therefore, our trustees kindly agreed to let me have a 6-month sabbatical this year to test this out and determine what other things we need to put in place.

I didn't have a specific theme for my break other than the loose idea of 'pilgrimages', and I also knew I wanted to do something I'd never get the opportunity to do again. I decided to register on Workaway, a website advertising volunteering opportunities worldwide. I've been lucky to travel to many places through work, but I have never been to Africa. So I decided to go

somewhere in the middle, like Uganda and landed on the Whispers of Life Foundation in Namulanda.

It's a school for around 30 children who are orphans or have one parent, all of whom are too poor to attend mainstream school.

I had no idea what to expect, and it was a fantastic experience

where I was completely outside of my comfort zone, living in a rural village for the month. I was teaching a class of children basic maths and English (something I've never done before) and giving their charity some free consultancy.

JJ, from Hove, gave me some great advice before I left. He said he only takes a little when he visits Ghana but asks what they need and buys it locally in the markets. So I decided not to use my luggage allowance on books, pencils, toys and sweeties and instead took my guitar.

I had yet to realise that the school had a solid Christian emphasis, and every morning started with devotions (songs of praise and prayers) and finished after lunch with assembly, more praise songs and prayers. The children had never seen a guitar before, but many of the songs were familiar, and we taught each other songs, not all Christian either. On one very wet and rainy day during a power cut, I taught them the Hokey Cokey, and it was like back in my punk days with the whole classroom (a converted garage) erupting into a moshpit.

After a few days, I adjusted to life in the village, but the singing was where I was back in my comfort zone and the part of the day I looked forward to the most.

One day, I asked my class if they could give me a tour of their village, which I filmed. Seeing their home through their eyes, learning about where they lived, visiting their homes and meeting their families and neighbours were the highlights of my trip.

I could write so much more, and it was the trip I dreamed of. I aimed to go with an open mind, not knowing what to expect, and I certainly had many surprises living outside my comfort zone in various ways. Above all, though the children were so lovely, it was a very emotional time when we all came to say goodbye to each other.



I hope to return, though, also to sample more of their delicious 'Rolex' street food, a chappati filled with salad and fried eggs, all for under 50p.

I didn't need to go on expensive safaris or trips to get a unique Ugandan experience I will never forget. I was just happy to immerse myself in the life of the school and the village for the month. I aimed to live differently from what I usually do, and I certainly got that.

**Paul Richards**

## **People and Groups in New Testament times:**

*This series of articles look at a number of matters relating to peoples and groups in the Mediterranean world in the period c. 150 B.C. to 96 A.D.*

### **16. The Sicarii**

There was more than one Jewish group involved in violence against Rome and its allies. The two best known are the Sicarii and the Zealots. Our main source, Josephus, disapproved of them as counter-productive. When he wrote his history of the Jews, *The Antiquities*, he mentions three main sects: Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes. He also refers to the 'Fourth Philosophy'. This Fourth Philosophy held mainly Pharisaic ideas but thought that the only king was God. They wanted to be completely free of Roman or Herodian rule and were prepared to use violence to bring this about. Their first leaders were Judas the Galilean and a Pharisee, Zadok. These were the Sicarii.

Although they began as an armed group their name comes from their practice of assassination. 'Sicarii' comes from the Latin word 'sica', a small curved dagger, which could be hidden easily under a cloak, used quickly, with the assassin rapidly hiding in the crowd. Its modern equivalent, 'sicario', is the Spanish word for a paid assassin. When the word is used in the New Testament period it could refer to any assassin, as well as to the specific group.

Judas the Galilean was almost definitely a son of Ezekias who had been executed by Herod in 47 B.C. In 4 B.C. Judas led a small army that captured the arsenal at Sepphoris in Galilee but was forced by the Romans to go underground. After Herod's death he led the revolt in Galilee in 6/7 A.D. against the Roman census, which Judas thought unbiblical (II Samuel 24 vv 1-17). This revolt in Galilee, Judas' leadership, as well as its failure, is mentioned by Gamaliel in his defence of Peter and the other apostles (Acts 5 v 37. N.B. Luke gets events in the wrong order as Theudas, v 36, came after, not before, Judas).



Their main targets were not Romans but fellow-Jews whom they thought were collaborating with Rome, people such as Matthew, a tax-collector. Sicarii also



kidnapped important people and held them to ransom. However, some High Priests and Roman officials 'availed themselves of Sicarii talents' to get rid of unwanted opponents. Geza Vermes is probably right in thinking that Josephus rather flatters Judas and his followers into elevating them into the fourth philosophy. Judas' descendants continued to lead the Sicarii. Two of his sons were executed as rebels in the late 40s A.D., and Menahem, said to be a son but almost definitely a grandson, led the Sicarii in the Roman-Jewish War that started in 66 A.D. Menahem was killed by other Jews, probably because he began to wear royal robes and had set himself up as a messianic figure. The Sicarii were not involved in the final defence of Jerusalem against Rome because other Jewish groups, including the Zealots, had driven them out before the main Roman armies arrived. According to Josephus, they lived by raiding villages and robbing and killing fellow-Jews, including a massacre of 700, including women and children, at Ein Gedi.

Another descendant of Judas, Eleazar, led the group that captured Masada and held out against Rome there until 73 A.D. This point needs emphasizing because many think that the Zealots were the group at Masada, they were not! The Zealots and the Sicarii were different. The Sicarii at Masada killed themselves because they held that God alone was master, and that death would free their souls. Some Sicarii escaped the destruction of the War and caused problems for Rome amongst the Jewish communities in Egypt and what is now eastern Libya for a few years. After that they are heard of no more.

Some (look at the internet) think that the name Judas Iscariot shows that Judas was a Sicarii. If he ever had been he had renounced the ideology by the time he joined Jesus. One of the main targets for Sicarii assassination were tax collectors. For a Sicarii to have lived in community with Matthew is inconceivable, Apart from the spelling there is nothing to associate Judas with the Sicarii. Next time, the Zealots.

**Mick Hickman**



## A Methodist Way of Life

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

A Methodist Way of Life is a way of saying yes to the good news. There are twelve things that we can do as individuals or as a church community.

None of this makes God love you any more - but they may help you realise how deeply you are loved.

May you be transformed as you reflect on your encounters with God that come through doing these activities.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/worship/>

### 6. Open

#### **We practise hospitality and generosity**

God always gives a warm welcome. We meet God in relationship with people. It's good to be open-hearted and open-minded, generous and hospitable.

*A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26, NRSVUE)*



**Hospitality** is an attitude of openness to others, to learning about them and from them, to widening our understanding and perhaps being changed by the encounter. It's not always us being hospitable to someone else – it's a blessing to receive hospitality too.



**Generosity** is also a basic Christian practice. As we have freely received, so we are to give freely. Though this may involve sacrifice, it is rarely right to give in such a way that we are unable to care for ourselves and our dependents.

It's important to be open to receiving hospitality and

generosity from others because, if we only give, we place ourselves in positions of power over others. God is present with and in all people, in all circumstances, and waits to be discovered. Our task is to listen, recognise and be transformed by God at the margins.

*"Rather than asking our tiny worshipping community to give generously to local projects, we put a message on Facebook asking for donations of clothes, toys and other items from the local community. We were inundated with donations! We saw God in this generosity. One couple asked the minister to lead their wedding; another explained her donations were because of a family tragedy and asked for continued prayers. Hospitality and generosity were a gateway to relationship, mission and worship in that community."*

### Pause for thought

What would we do differently about loving others if we knew the world was ending tomorrow?

Interested in having conversations like this with your friends, neighbours and community? Buy **Conversations against Mundanity** via [www.methodistpublishing.org.uk](http://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk)



### Simple things to try

1. Strike up conversation with a stranger.
2. Give money to a good cause.
3. Invite someone that you don't know very well for a meal. If they ask to host instead, say yes!
4. Explore the Church at the Margins resources to consider how to balance the power dynamics in your community.  
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/discover-church-at-the-margins/>
5. Be inspired by the blog on how Methodist grant making on the global stage has become a mutual practice.  
[www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk)
6. Listen to a Take time meditation based on Mark 6:32– 44: Jesus Feeds Five Thousand.  
<https://taketime.org.uk/>

## Earth Church: Save the Date(s)



Perhaps suitably, like the earth itself, Earth Church has been sleeping since our gathering in September. That meeting was a practical afternoon, working alongside the Friends of Withdean Park and two Park Rangers. The Rangers supplied excellent equipment, advice, encouragement and we followed the suggestions of the Friends about where best to focus our efforts. Our two hours of weeding and cutting back was very satisfying; but given the amount of work that is required to bring the park back into order again, we could easily have quadrupled that – and then some! But we all enjoyed it so much and felt our spirits so lifted – and the Friends were so glad of our help – that we are going back! We are going to greet the awakening earth on either February 17, or March 23. (Sorry, at the time of writing, the date is not yet firm.)



The plan will be as in September: to gather at my house (28 Peacock Lane) about 2:30 and then meet up with the Friends for a couple of hours. We'll then return to my home for a cuppa, a few closing reflections and prayers and adjourn, probably about 5pm. Everyone, any age, is welcome. It would be helpful to know if

you are planning to come along. So, after we have firmed up the date, I'll send a speedy notice around; and if you are coming, please let me know: [cpark1947@gmail.com](mailto:cpark1947@gmail.com) or 01273 640247.

**Cynthia Park**

## Creating Brighton & Hove's first tree trail app and tree map

People living in Brighton and Hove can reel off a list of reasons why they like living here; the sea, the Downs; the city's architecture, the Royal Pavilion, The Lanes with its quirky shops and winding alleyways. But few people will nominate trees as one of the city's best assets.

Yet Brighton has many world class trees which deserve to be much better known.

After a year of enforced isolation in Covid lockdown during which

thousands of residents discovered the joy and value of nature and the outdoors, this is a good time to introduce some of the city's best trees not just to local residents but to a much wider audience. I want people to know our special trees so that we can all admire and love them and protect them for future generations.

I have lived in Brighton for more than 20 years and count myself as a tree lover but I had no idea that my city has such a special collection of elm trees, introduced to the UK by our Bronze age ancestors and now inextricably linked to our heritage and culture. Brighton is the custodian of the National Elm Collection because it has 125 different types of elm, more than any city in the world. Many elms were thought to be extinct but recently, with the help of on-line data, elms not found anywhere else in the world have been discovered thriving here. Dozens have been awarded champion status in the Tree Register, a database of more than 150,000 trees in Britain and Ireland.

**Vivienne Barton**

This year **Urban Tree Festival (13–23 May 2024)** events are mainly in person and also online! Many of the events are low- or no-cost. You are encouraged to sign up to their newsletter for regular highlights in the lead up to the festival.

The full programme with booking links is available below.

<https://urbantreefestival.org/the-programme-2024>



## Focus: Winter 2023/24

### **A look back at some recent events:**

The build up to the Christmas season was as usual busy with a wide variety of events and services held in all our circuit churches. Stanford Avenue and Patcham both held Christmas Fairs providing excellent gift options; Dorset Gardens sang BIG on Advent carols whilst Hove gathered indoors as a community to enjoy festive music. Woodingdean had fun with the skiffle band. Hove reintroduced Christingles and cooked up a magnificent Christmas Day lunch, while Patcham held their ever popular Nativity. Our toddler groups partied at Dorset Gardens and Hove and Santa looked familiar? All churches reported their carol services were well attended. Enjoy our picture montage overleaf.









# Focus: Mission

## Circuit of Sanctuary Refugee Project News

On behalf of the Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit Refugee Project - and our Circuit - our Project Co-Leads, Ruth & Sue along with the Rev Andy Lowe, sent an email of support and solidarity to Dorset South & West Methodist Circuit, where the Bibby Stockholm is moored and following the death of an asylum seeker on board. We received a very appreciative response and offered to include their local community and their community work in our prayers.

In November 2023, Brighton & Hove Refugee & Migrant Forum meeting updated us that the men's hotel in Hove for men seeking sanctuary was being closed and the men evicted to other accommodation. The family hotel in Hove remains open. Some of the men already had Leave to Remain and some of the men had developed strong ties to Brighton & Hove, including education, voluntary work & health care. The Bibby Stockholm was mentioned in some eviction letters, but this uncertainty was only compounded when on eviction day, most were sent to London instead. A small number, because they were enrolled in language courses at the University of Sussex, have been given accommodation at the University of Sussex, paid for from a fund set aside for refugee/asylum seekers, until they complete the course.

A few, six or seven, refused to get on the bus to the alternative accommodation, in effect making themselves homeless. Members of the Brighton & Hove Refugee & Migrant Forum, including Brighton Council staff, rallied round to try to signpost support. They are from various countries including Afghanistan. Members of the Forum are very grateful for our support to foodbanks and our financial donations to supporting charities/organisations and wished us to pass on their appreciation.

**Jollof Cafe Night** has met at Dorset Gardens twice now and are planning another meal on Friday 16th February. It is open to everyone and you can book tickets online. The food is delicious and the atmosphere is warm and welcoming, so do please consider coming along. Here's a bit about them from their Eventbrite site: "We are a group of refugees, asylum seekers and people with other precarious immigration statuses. We have all chosen to re-make our homes in Brighton and Hove. The Cafe is our chance to bring something of our countries of origin to our new city and to share that with our new neighbours. What is a better way to connect across borders than through food?"



Even better than the cheap, tasty food, is the friendly and inclusive environment. It's a place to meet old friends and forge new ones. The atmosphere is welcoming and joyous. Any money that we make goes into our destitution funds. We use those to help people out with little payments, like a taxi from a hospital appointment or a new winter coat. We also organise days out for our members. We spread the love where we go - come and join us!"

After a short break over Christmas and New Year, the Reps had a Zoom meeting on 22 January, planning for the proposed Inclusive Circuit Sponsored walk between all 5 churches deciding a date (spring/summer) and possibly to invite the Network for International Women and other organisations to join us for some or all of the walk. More information will be published in due course.

Ruth Samur hosts a Circuit Workshop '**Speak Up for Sanctuary**' at her home on Saturday 27th January. She is showing a 45 minute recorded webinar on this topic from the City of Sanctuary website, then will feedback/ discuss together over a cuppa and cake. Ruth attended the live webinar and so was the natural choice to lead.

**Community Breakfast at Hove Methodist Church on February 24th** from 9.30 - 11 am, we will re-launch the Circuit Project and celebrate our Sanctuary journey so far. We hope to have a speaker with lived experience come and talk to us. Everyone across the Circuit is invited. Following the two year extension, the Circuit Refugee Project will now end on Dec 31 2025. The human connections & links with local organisations we are making now will surely mean we are just at the beginning of our Sanctuary journey. We will still take an active part of the City of Sanctuary movement into 2026 and beyond.



The poster is decorated with a border of purple and blue dots. At the top, it features the text 'Methodist Churches of Sanctuary in Brighton & Hove' above two stylized human figures holding hands, one blue and one purple, with a rainbow flag in the center. To the right is the 'Hove Methodist Church' logo, which consists of three stylized human figures in blue, orange, and green, holding hands. Below the figures is a white box with a pink border containing the text 'COMMUNITY BREAKFAST' in large blue letters, followed by 'SATURDAY 24TH FEBRUARY 2024' and 'FROM 9:30AM - 11:00AM' in smaller blue letters, and 'IN THE HALL, HOVE METHODIST CHURCH' in even smaller blue letters. At the bottom of the white box is the text 'ALL ARE WELCOME' in pink. Below the white box is a blue box with white text that reads: '• Celebration of our Sanctuary Journey', '• Re-launch of our Circuit Refugee Project for 2024 to 2026!!', and 'Any donations for your breakfast go to the project'.

Methodist Churches of Sanctuary  
in Brighton & Hove

Hove Methodist Church

**COMMUNITY  
BREAKFAST**

**SATURDAY 24TH FEBRUARY 2024**  
**FROM 9:30AM - 11:00AM**

IN THE HALL, HOVE METHODIST CHURCH

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

- Celebration of our Sanctuary Journey
- Re-launch of our Circuit Refugee Project for 2024 to 2026!!

Any donations for your breakfast go to the project

Soroptimists' South East branch are planning a workshop on April 27th at Dorset Gardens to hear our story and learn a little about the Sanctuary movement. Ruth and Sue will be involved, speaking and offering craft activities on the theme, as part of the morning.

We were sent Voices in Exile's newsletter which makes interesting reading, if you're interested you can look at it online here:

<https://mailchi.mp/edc845877a49/voices-in-exile-newsletter1-12674530?e=%5bUNIQID%5d>

Our Circuit Web page has been updated, do take a look - many thanks to Ruth and Steve for getting it done.

<https://brightonhovemethodistcircuit.org.uk/supporting-refugees/>

We've also recently been asked to write articles for the next Connexion magazine and for the Methodist Recorder. It's so wonderful how word is spreading and we are so proud to be part of this amazing circuit that have made it all possible, thank you all.

We thought you might be interested to know what happens to the donations from around the circuit:

- Patcham and Dorset Gardens continue to regularly donate, including their Harvest Services, to the Foodbank at Voices in Exile.
- DG Gift service 10 December, special food collection, plus scarves and hats also bootees filled with chocolates. All donations were very much appreciated and Voices in Exile wished us to convey their thanks to all those who made such generous donations and continue to do so.
- November 2023 a call was made for winter items for refugees such as coats. Donations were collected at DG and despite the short notice, a good amount of clothing was collected; approx 4-5 bags were taken to St Mary's Kemp Town for Care4Calais. We also made a monetary donation to purchase appropriate clothing.
- Gift Service, Hove MC, gift donations for young people in the family hotel for Sanctuary seekers in Hove. A total of £100 for the Circuit Project was also kindly donated. Ruth took the gifts to the Network for



International Women (NiW) Sanctuary afternoon on Dec 8th. They distributed the gifts and said everyone was so grateful. The beautiful teddy bear Alan Saunders donated was given straight to a little girl in a pushchair, whose family had just arrived in Brighton that cold December morning. They had spent several hours in the cold in the station before support services opened.

- The DG Advent Big Hymn Sing held on Dec 12th raised £25 towards the Circuit Project. Many thanks to Deeptima organising the event.

In December, we donated a total of £1350, shared between the following Sanctuary organisations. We emailed a message of support and thanks for all their amazing work in our local community:

- City of Sanctuary UK
- Network of International Women Brighton & Hove
- Voices in Exile.
- Care4Calais
- T4K (Thousand for Thousand)
- Freedom from Torture
- Jollof Café

### **Looking ahead/Fundraising ideas**



Sue met local artist Alli at a fundraising event when she bought some of our lovely crocheted items. She was so excited as she believes we should be helping refugees and asylum seekers. She told me she will be selling one of her pictures in the Brighton Festival 2024 to raise funds for refugees. She will send us an invitation to the opening. This photo shows her 3 & 6 year old offspring with hats and blanket/wraps Alli bought from one of our tables.

<https://www.swimscape.co.uk/>





Deeptima and her mum, Kushma, have offered a stall of their fresh Indian ready meals at the next DG fundraising table top sale with a contribution towards the project from the sale.

If you have ideas to enhance our project, whether it's about the planned Inclusive Circuit Sponsored Walk, other fundraising ideas or something else, please speak to your local church rep or to Ruth or Sue. Thank you all so much for all your generosity to the project. I can honestly say to you that it is very much appreciated by all the organisations we support. Keep up the good work!

**Ruth Samur & Sue Harrington** Circuit Refugee project Co-Leads and Circuit reps: **Kay Harwood, Terry Hammond Cynthia Park & Bob Winton**

## Focus: Business

### Rental of 155 Surrenden Road

If you haven't heard, the good news is the renovation of the former manse was successfully completed at the end of October and we very quickly secured tenants for 12 months which will help to replenish circuit finances which have been paying for the building work and part subsidising churches during and post the covid period.

Our partner agent Jorge Vieira of Town & City Residential Letting Ltd ably co-ordinated the building work by A.J. Gibbs & Son Ltd and quickly found the tenants. All this was done with the full approval of The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP); not an easy feat.



# Dates for your diary

## Fundraising Events at Stanford Avenue

At the Avenue we like to put FUN into fundraising and our next event will be that! A Murder Mystery Meal on 9th March at 6.30 pm. "Who killed the director?" is the question that you are invited to solve while enjoying a lovely meal at only £10 per person.

Our Spring & Craft Fair is 23rd March from 11am to 3pm where lots of local crafters and Church stalls await you.

We love a quiz and our next one is 13th April at 4 pm with Mags & Dave Bunting as quizmasters. A buffet ploughman's style meal & quiz for only £10 per person. Any questions contact Lis Coblenz at 07730773891 or liscoblenz@yahoo.co.uk.

## Calendar of Circuit Events:

- Wednesday 7th Feb **A Valentine's Celebration of Love and Friendship** - a musical trip through the decades with jazz singer Aneesa Chaudhry 11am - 1pm at Hove MC.
- Friday 16th Feb **Jollof Cafe Night** From 7.00pm at Dorset Gardens
- Monday 19th Feb **Local Preachers' Meeting** 7.30pm at Woodingdean
- Saturday 24th Feb **Circuit Community Breakfast** celebrating our sanctuary journey at Hove from 9.30 - 11 am.
- Saturday 24th Feb **Winter Warmer Concert** with *Cheer Up Mollys* musicians plus tea and cake at Hove church from 2.30 (doors open), concert at 3.00pm.
- Sunday 25th February **Healing Service** 6.30pm at Dorset Gardens. These services are open to all. They will be led by Revd Cynthia Park and Shirley Veater and will be quiet, meditative services that will include communion and the opportunity for the laying on of hands. Next dates 26 March and 28 April.
- Saturday 2nd March **Table Top Sale** at Dorset Gardens from 10.00am to 2pm.



- Saturday 9th March **Murder Mystery** at 6.30pm A Who Dunnit & meal at Stanford Avenue Methodist Church (see previous page for further details).
- 14th, 15th & 16th March 2024 Barnstormers present **'Legally Blonde'** the musical at Patcham Methodist Church. at 19:30 Tickets selling fast (Matinee fully booked) so get booking before they're all gone. We can't wait to see you there! <https://tickets.barnstormers.org.uk/>
- Monday 18th March 2024 **Circuit Meeting** 7.30pm at Hove
- Saturday 23rd March **Spring Craft Fair** at Stanford Avenue Methodist Church. 11.00am to 3pm.
- Saturday 13th April **Quiz** at Stanford Avenue Methodist Church. At 4pm (see previous page for further details).
- Saturday 20th April, **South East District Representative Synod** on 10:30am to 4.30pm at Redhill Methodist Church, Gloucester Rd, Redhill RH1 1BP.
- Thursday 23rd May **Local Preachers' Meeting** 7.30pm at Hove.
- Thurs 27th June **Circuit Meeting** 7.30pm at Stanford Avenue
- Thurs 29th August **Local Preachers' Meeting** 7.30 p.m. Patcham



Louisa (as Elle) with Bisous (as Bruiser).

2024

WANTON MUSIC Presents

**LEGALLY BLONDE**  
*The Musical*

Thursday 14th - Saturday 16th March @ 7.30 pm  
Saturday Matinee @ 2 pm  
Patcham Methodist Church Hall,  
Ladies Mile Road, Patcham

Tickets £12 (concessions for children and families)  
online @ [barnstormers.org.uk](https://tickets.barnstormers.org.uk) Or  
box office on 01273 307109

Music and Lyrics by Laurence O'Keefe and Nell Benjamin  
Book by Heather Hach  
Based on the novel by Amanda Brown  
and the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer motion picture

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Music Theatre International all authorised performance materials are also supplied by MTI [www.mtishows.co.uk](http://www.mtishows.co.uk)  
All profits will be donated to the development fund of Patcham Methodist Church

# Special Services this Easter



## Circuit Services

Ash Wednesday 14th Feb	7.30pm	Evening Service at Patcham
Easter Sunday 31st March	6.00am	Sunrise Communion on Hove Beach
Sunday 21st April	3pm	Easter Offering Service at Woodingdean
Sunday 19th May	8.00am	Pentecost Communion at Ditchling Beacon
Sunday 26th May	10.30am	Circuit Together Service on Trinity Sunday at Patcham

## Dorset Gardens:

Maundy Thurs 28th March	1pm	Prayers & Communion
Good Friday 29th March	4.00pm	Good Friday Reflections
Easter Sunday 31st March	10.30am	Easter Communion
Sunday 12th May	10.30am	Church Anniversary with Ken Smith

## Hove:

Maundy Thurs 28th March	10.30am	Communion
Maundy Thurs 28th March	7.30pm	Communion
Good Friday 29th March	10.30am	Good Friday Reflections
Easter Sunday 31st March	11.00am	Easter Communion

## Patcham

Easter Sunday 31st March	10.30am	Easter Communion
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## Stanford Avenue

Good Friday 29th March	2.00pm	Good Friday Reflections
Easter Sunday 31st March	10.00am	Easter Communion

## Woodingdean

Maundy Thurs 28th March	7.30pm	Evening Worship
Easter Sunday 31st March	10.00am	Easter Communion



## Lent & Easter Themes



**Unbounded Love** is the 2024 Methodist Church's Lent campaign. The title is taken from Charles Wesley's well-loved hymn, 'Love divine' (*Singing the Faith* 503). Through Lent we will be reflecting together on the transforming power of God's pure and unbounded love offering an opportunity as a community of faith, nationally and locally, to prepare ourselves for gathered worship throughout Lent, and over the whole of Lent to prepare for Easter.

If you are interested you can sign up as individuals to receive Unbounded Love 'daily deliveries' that will be sent electronically each day during Lent. Each week the reflections will focus on a different phrase from the hymn and the lectionary Gospel passage for the following Sunday.

The daily reflections will follow a weekly pattern:

- Monday introducing the week's theme
- Tuesday video instructions for a craft activity, that can be done alone or as part of worship (hands-on activity)
- Wednesday Bible study on the Gospel passage
- Thursday a reflection on justice
- Friday a secular song
- Saturday a magazine-style roundup of the week.

This year Ash Wednesday falls on Valentine's Day, when there will be a light-touch campaign launch aimed at people who are not Methodists.

You can signup via the Methodist Church website:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/lent-and-easter/unbounded-love/>



Methodist Women in Britain, as a justice-seeking charity, has chosen the theme '**Let Justice Roll**' for this year's Easter Circuit Offering Service which will be held at Woodingdean MC on **Sunday 21st April at 3pm.**

"But let justice roll on like a river,  
righteousness like a never-failing stream!"  
(Amos 5:24, NIV)

We will be sharing stories of people standing for justice, persisting in the face of setbacks and taking up the challenge anew as circumstances change. Some stories show how people now have hope because justice has 'rolled' into their lives. Let Justice Roll is a celebration of God's just purposes across the wider world.

The service will include the dedication of the Easter Offering, all of which goes to the World Mission Fund of the Methodist Church in Britain, supporting and working with over 100 Partner Churches and organisations around the world.

More information at <https://mwib.org.uk/>





# Winter Warmer

## Saturday 24th February, 3pm

Join us for a cosy afternoon of tea, cake, and feel-good folk, acoustic, and Americana music with local band **The Cheer Up Mollies**. Everyone welcome.

Suggested donation £5 – raising funds for **Food and Friendship**  
*providing low-cost shared meals for older people  
and adults with learning disabilities.*

### the cheer up mollies

"An infectious blend of  
wonderful melody, harmony,  
musicianship, humour and  
above all, great entertainment."  
*Bluebell Roots*



Doors open 2.30pm  
Music starts 3.00pm

Hove Methodist Church  
Portland Road, Hove BN3 5DR



## Copy Deadline

Please submit your  
articles & photos to  
Steve Preston for our  
2024 Summer Edition  
by 21st April.  
Thank you.

## Circuit Office

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Superintendent: Rev Andy  
Lowe