

# Focus



**Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit**

**Spring 2025**



## Andy's Letter



Dear friends,

Hope is one of the messages of Advent and Christmas. But I am certainly not alone in hearing many people questioning the nature of hope or how are we to have hope in the world today.

As we look at the stories in the gospels of Jesus's birth and life we get a sense of the hope that the writers were trying to convey to their readers, the hope that in Jesus one had come who was going to change the world. We see it in the words attributed to Mary in her song the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), in John the Baptist's proclamation (Luke 3:15-17) and the story of Jesus's baptism (Luke 3:21-22). We see at the beginning of his ministry and in his first sermon at Nazareth (Luke 4:14-23). We sense the hope as he continues to teach and minister to his followers and the crowds despite some opposition (Luke 4:31ff) culminating in what is called his triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple (Luke 19:28-48).

The events of the last week of the life of Jesus, which we will be remembering in April, begin to show a change of atmosphere amongst the disciples as the opposition grows and bewilderment, confusion and despair set in leading to them abandoning the one who they had seen as the hope for the world. Hope it seems is extinguished.

Early in January, at our weekly Thursday discussion and Communion at Hove, one of the attendees, David, read out a quote about hope. The quote came from a website called the Red Hand files where Nick Cave, a very successful Australian musician, singer songwriter, author and actor who has a very complex relationship with faith, religion and God reflects on questions he is asked and the topics are very varied.

Nick has led a complicated life which included the death of his Dad while he was a teenager when he was at a time in his life when he said he was at his most confused and indeed he found out from his Mum as she was bailing him out from prison. He became a heroin addict and later in his life, whilst living in Brighton, suffered the tragic death of one of his sons aged 15 and a few years later

another of his sons died at the age of 31.

As with all of us, his experiences have shaped his attitude to life and his experiences and views make him essential reading for some because of all he has experienced. Many of the questions he responds to are around the theme of grief and other difficulties that life brings. Knowing these brief facts about Nick are essential background to get a full understanding of the depth of meaning in his response to a question he had been asked which was:

**2025 is coming. The world seems to be in such a catastrophic state. Where is the hope? What is hope?**

This is part of his beautiful response:

'I wrote in *Faith, Hope and Carnage*, 'Hope is optimism with a broken heart'. This means that hope has an earned understanding of the sorrowful or corrupted nature of things, yet it rises to attend to the world even still. We understand that our demoralisation becomes the most serious impediment to bettering the world. In its active form, hope is a supreme gesture of love, a radical and audacious duty, whereas despair is a stagnant rejection of life itself. Hope becomes the energy of change.'

Part of the explanation to those words comes at the end of the previous paragraph where he writes:

'We try to view the world not as it is packaged, presented and sold to us but as we imagine it could be. We do not look away from the world, we look directly at it and allow the spirit of hope – the necessary driver of change – to inspire us to action.'

Isn't that the most positive way to look at the world? When we feel fearful and despondent about what we see in the world and in our lives it becomes easy to become passive, to allow things to just happen as we feel helpless in the face of everything. And yet it is the face of those feelings that we are encouraged to 'view the world.... as we imagine it could be.' And let it inspire us to action.

Our Easter story doesn't end with death and despair. Our gospels do not end with demoralised disciples who disappear never to be seen again. The gospels, the story, continue with new hope and new life. We call it resurrection. And the story continues with Pentecost and with determined disciples who fit the description of Richard Rohr who said 'Transformed people, transform people.' And the story continues today and we are called to be part of it so may we be filled with the spirit of hope and may we be inspired to act in ways that offer new life and hope to the people we meet, to our communities and to the world.



# Focus: People

## Appointment of Chair of the South East District from 1st September 2025.

From **Revd Dan Balsdon**, Assistant District Chair:

*Subject to vote at our Representative Synod on 26th April, and the Methodist Conference in June/July, **Revd Conrad Hicks** has been nominated as our next Chair of District. A full reasoned statement, upon which Synod will vote, will be circulated with Synod papers. Please hold Conrad in prayer, as well as David as he works with Conrad and others to ensure a smooth transition the summer. Please also pray for Gibraltar, where Conrad is currently stationed, as they seek to appoint a new superintendent.*



## Remembering John Patching



Our last Circuit Meeting marked the death of **John Patching** at the beginning of November. John was a well-loved member of Stanford Avenue Methodist Church and had also been part of the circuit leadership team. Geoff Harrington also reported that Revd Karen Bell led a lovely committal service on 28th November which set the tone for the whole day. The service was very well attended which was a great testament to John's strong and simple faith.

## Connie Croly

Congratulations to **Connie Croly** who after many years of faithful service as Assistant to the Minister of Stanford Avenue retired from this formal role with a presentation from the congregation on 5th January which included a gift of £100 to the PDSA. No doubt she will continue in her role of providing pastoral care to so many at Stanford Avenue as well as leading worship across our circuit.



**Robert Patching**

## Christmas Carolling

Well done to **Ian Lamb** from Dorset Gardens who was featured twice on BBC Radio Sussex during Dec on Alison Ferns's Sunday breakfast show. He was promoting 'Brighton Pub Carols' a group who sang at three Brighton pubs before Christmas specialising in carols with a Sussex providence or that pre-date 1850. The effort raised a magnificent £2k for 3 charities: CHOMP, Brighton Housing Trust and Clocktower Sanctuary.

## Heartening News

At the time of writing **Alan Saunders** had been unwell and spent some time in Worthing Hospital during January where he had a pacemaker fitted. Courtesy of Deeptima he was able to join the recent Circuit Together service at Stanford Avenue and for anyone who didn't see him there he thanks all friends across the Circuit for their love and prayers.

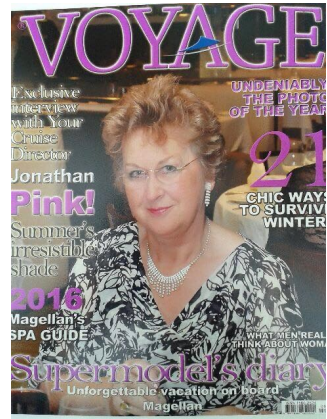
## Spotlight On....Ann Collins

*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. This edition we feature our Senior Circuit Steward Ann Collins.*

I was born and brought up in Brighton. My parents had a grocery shop near Fiveways. There were just three of us – oh, and the cat, Tibby. He preceded me! My arrival was followed later by a tortoise, Tony, passed onto us by people moving into a flat. Tibby was a shop/out cat but could be relied upon to return about 4pm for milk as that's when the kettle went on for a cuppa.

My earliest memory was of Dad constructing a bathroom in the room above the shop and I can remember running in and out of the wooden framework which would later hold the hardboard 'walls'. I was probably two or three. Dad was very adept at handy, DIY stuff.

Having a shop, holidays weren't an option, but on Bank Holidays, and sometimes Sundays, we would go to the seafront, where all the coach firms vied for trade, and pick an outing. Occasionally we would take the train to Littlehampton or even the Isle of Wight







for the day. And on a very special day, Dad took me by paddle steamer from the Palace Pier to the Isle of Wight.

Growing up, I really wanted to join the RAF but couldn't do that till I was 18. And by the time I was sixteen my Dad was very ill from having several strokes, so I needed to find work locally. The first day of being employed by the Council as a trainee accountant, I was assigned temporarily to the Rate Office as a junior. For two weeks. Temporary! Two weeks! I retired from Rating/Poll Tax/Council Tax/Business rates (not all

at the same council) 45 years later. (I had given up on becoming an accountant after a couple of years).

It would be interesting trying to collect monies from those who couldn't or wouldn't pay. 'Couldn't' was rewarding to help them find their way through their difficulties. 'Wouldn't' led to some interesting moments in court! But I learned early on that folk are basically good, as Anne Frank said. And perhaps growing up in a shop in the 50s and 60s had an influence on my views, and dealing with a variety of people.

For the most part I really actually enjoyed my work, but now being a great fan of Repair Shop, I would have loved how to renovate, repair, restore things. Though my lack of formal artistic talent would probably have kiboshed that. But one can dream.

Having always been involved in drama, thanks to church productions from the age of six, I spent many happy and rewarding hours involved in any aspect of theatre. On stage, backstage, front of house, costumes, writing scripts, you name it and I've done it.



And that has given me some really proud moments. One was hearing a real belly laugh

from the audience for the first panto I had written and produced. What a relief and what a thrill to be able to make folk laugh. The poor chap standing next to me suffered a hefty elbow in the ribs as I said 'They've laughed'. A proud 'quiet' moment was being able to hear a pin drop as we reached the last part of rehearsed readings I had written as an Easter service. Another proud moment that came to mind is being in a production at Brighton Little Theatre (and it IS little) and someone I knew in the audience didn't realise it was me until they looked at the programme in the interval. Yippee! All that work was worth it.



A lot of the folk around the Avenue, and the Circuit, know me and the things I do, some successfully, some not quite so! But .....and don't let on to anyone....I can't ride a bike!! As a child playing out in the street, I did used to have a go on a friend's bike.



But having lost control of it down a hill, I grabbed a passing lamp post and the bike sailed on – through someone's open front door and tore their new hall wallpaper. Ooops! When my dad learned of the escapade he was not pleased, to say the least. Over the years, I did try again to no avail and gladly let my husband Derek and my sons go off biking together when we were on holiday, while I made the most of time to myself. Well, that's it folks!!

**Ann Collins**

# Focus: Features

## Law & Order

It really is amazing what you learn on BBC radio. It could, with some justification, be called the biggest 'shuffle' in the world. Before Christmas I hear Annika Rice on Tweet of the day suggested that flying geese are called a plump of geese. However, a quick check on internet suggests that the name can vary with the location: in flight, on the water or on land. The other



terms I came across were a 'skein' of geese, a term that I always associated with wool my mother was winding around my outstretched arms as she unravelled the wool of a jumper to use again and a 'team' of geese. This snippet strangely reminded me that a little earlier I had heard an amazing indictment from an ex-high court judge on the Today program, which was not as easy to check as a collective noun for geese. "In 1975 when I joined the bar, on average a murderer served 14 years and 10 months. The latest figures record an average of 25 years. The consequence of this is that most such people will be released back into society, at the earliest, in their middle age, having never had adult responsibility for their own lives or had adult relationships with women and children. If we think that this release will be trouble free, we deceive ourselves."

I wondered, have the sentences for all crimes risen commensurately? If they have all gone up by the same 40% how does this play out with the current crisis with the prison population and the probation service and the likelihood of any rehabilitation? The justice system is a different matter.

About the same time, I was watching a repeat of Simon Reeve's report on his travels around Ireland and as is his wont, he asks the questions which we would all like to ask but don't feel able to or don't know whom to ask.



Whilst his journey based him temporarily in Belfast the questions that he asked were about the 'troubles' and in particular about sectarian divisions. Firstly, he asked about schools, "what proportion of Northern Irish children attend a segregated school?" The answer that he was given was a report from 2022 when the Irish President told a Peace Conference that 93% of pupils in Northern Ireland attend segregated schools. The consequence is, as one commentator has put it, that "the overwhelming majority of Ulster's children can go from the age of four to 18 without having a serious conversation with a member of a rival creed." To paraphrase the ex-high court judge, if we think that doesn't have consequences for the future of Northern Ireland, we deceive ourselves. Secondly, he asked about peace walls. Apparently, there are more than 32km of dividing walls in 97 locations across the province, but mainly in Belfast, more than at the time of the Good Friday Agreement in 1997. But a survey from 2020 for the UK Government found that 42% of the Belfast population want the walls to remain for reasons of safety and security. If 93% of the population never exchange views with someone from a rival creed should that outcome surprise us.



Solving a problem like the troubles will obviously take many years. There was a suggestion that all of the walls should be removed by 2023, part of the 25th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement which bought peace to Northern Ireland. However, the breakdown in devolved government finally put an end to that ideal.

As Christians we believe that we are all made in the image of God. Then whether we are a fan of St Paul – neither Jew nor Greek or a fan of St Peter - we should not call anyone impure or unclean, there is no difference between us.

Is there anything more that we could do to further the ideal that we are all made in the image of God in Northern Ireland, except to start from where we are now? Holding a skein of used wool between our outstretched arms, to stop it falling into a jumble, before using it again as we practice being an inclusive congregation, which tries to reveal the love of Christ by accepting everyone as fellow images of God.

**Peter Farley**

# The Apocryphal New Testament

*This series of articles will look at some early Christian writings that are not in the New Testament*

## 2. The Proto Gospels

Most books combine the proto-gospels and infancy gospels into one section. For reasons of space we will look just at the Protoevangelium of James, and The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, both of which fed the popular medieval Christian imagination. They were written in part to defend the faith against attacks by pagans, for example that Jesus came from a poor background. Joseph was a carpenter and Mary had to spin to make ends meet. This was vigorously espoused by Celsus in the 2nd century to which the first great Christian biblical scholar, Origen (died c. 254), wrote a rebuttal, *Contra* (Against) Celsus. Another purpose was to tell stories of Mary before Jesus was born, an aspect of increasing Marian devotion.

### 1. The Protoevangelium (Proto-Gospel) of James (PJ)

This was written in Greek, probably in the 2nd century, Origen knew of it. PJ has survived in over 150 Greek manuscripts and a similar number in Slavonic (eastern Europe). There are many others including Coptic (Egypt) and Ethiopic (Ethiopia), but not Latin! The name 'Protoevangelium of James' is not original and was first used in a Latin translation in 1552.

Jesus is shown as having 'brothers' who were sons of Joseph by a previous marriage. However, the western Church was coming to the view that not only was Mary a perpetual virgin, but Joseph had no children either, so Pope Innocent I condemned PJ in 405. Consequently, PJ remained little known in western Christendom until a translation in 1552, hence no surviving Latin manuscripts. It was far better known in eastern Christendom.

Its historical value is insignificant. It tries to counter people like Celsus. Joseph is no longer a carpenter, but a building contractor and Mary spins, but not to make money. PJ begins with an account of Mary's birth to Joachim and Anna, who were childless. To respond to the gift of their daughter, Mary, they dedicate her to the Temple when she was three years old. Mary remains in the Temple being fed by an angel. When she reaches twelve and puberty the council of priests look around for a suitable man to



marry her, and by lot chose Joseph. There follows an expanded version of the annunciation, and the journey to Bethlehem. Mary is expectant, so Joseph puts her in a cave and goes to look for a midwife from Bethlehem. Jesus is born and the midwife certifies that it was virgin birth. This is followed by an expanded version of the visit of the magi, with Herod's reaction, concluding with a very odd story about Herod ordering the murder of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. This was probably added to PJ.

## **2. The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (GPM)**

The title, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, stems from an error in an edition published in 1853, but for sake of convenience it is still used. GPM is a Latin reworking of PJ, dating from the 8th or 9th centuries, and there are over 180 manuscripts. However, its influence is wider than that. Ehrman and Pleše (see the previous article re: these authors and Elliott) note that it was reworked in books like *The Golden Legend* which was, 'the most widely read and influential book of the late Middle Ages, down to the Reformation.' Elliott comments that 'Much medieval art is indecipherable without reference to books such as *Pseudo-Matthew*'. GPM reflects an increase in devotion to Mary in western Europe in the age of Charlemagne (748-814) and his successors, and a growing interest in the monastic, celibate life.

GPM broadly follows PJ and tells that, from the age of three and her life in the Temple, Mary lives an exemplary life: any sick person who touches her was healed at once. The priests chose Joseph to be her guardian, not her husband. On the third day after the birth Mary left the cave and came to a stable where she placed Jesus in a manger. An ox and an ass both bent their knees and worshipped him. The visits of the shepherds and wise men are expanded. GPM replaces the material concerning John the Baptist and Zacharias with a lengthy description of the journey into Egypt with the infant Jesus performing miracles on the way.

## **3. Influence**

When we sing the medieval carol, 'Good Christian men ...' with the line 'ox and ass before him bow': look at wall paintings in medieval churches: discuss with our Catholic friends the status of Mary: buy/receive Christmas cards by the Brighton born artist, Eric Gill, with Joseph, Mary and Jesus in a cave: we are, probably unknowingly, in touch with ancient stories recorded in the Proto-Gospels of the Apocryphal New Testament. They have had a greater impact on us than we might imagine. Next time, the Infancy Gospels.

**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. We have previously looked at the first nine: Pray, Worship, Notice, Care, Learn, Open, Share, Challenge & Flourish. In this edition we look at number **10 Tell**. 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/>

## 10. Tell

**We tell of the love of God  
Your story matters.**

It's natural to want to pass on good news – a new baby or grandchild, a new job, passing an exam, getting on a team. Evangelism is about passing on the good news of Jesus' love for you, and it flows out of our excitement about what we have discovered.

Sandra makes up Hobbit Rabbit stories to pass her faith on to her grandchild and other people she knows.

<https://www.thestoryproject.org.uk/stories/2RCLVV>

You've got a story to share about how God's love has affected you, a story that might make all the difference to another person.



"Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you" (Mark 5:19)

Evangelism is something many Christians think is difficult and scary. But once you try, you

might be pleasantly surprised by how good it makes you feel.

### **Pause for thought**

Interested in having conversations like this with your friends, neighbours and community?

Buy [Conversations against Mundanity](https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk) now.  
[www.methodistpublishing.org.uk](https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk)



### **Simple things to try**

1. Talk with other Christians about your faith – it's a good way to get started.
2. Do you find it easier to talk about faith with friends or strangers? Think about why this is.
3. Be open with your friends and family about what the good news means in your life. You could talk about a specific church project so they understand more about how you spend your time.
4. Ask people their stories. This might just be: "What's happened to you this week that's given you hope?"
5. Take part in Everyone an Evangelist or Evangelism for Leaders, courses which are designed to help you grow in confidence as you authentically and appropriately share your faith with others.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/evangelism-growth/practise-evangelism/equipped-for-evangelism/everyone-an-evangelist/>

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/evangelism-growth/practise-evangelism/equipped-for-evangelism/evangelism-for-leaders-course/>

6. Recruit two to three people in the congregation who can talk to 'enquirers', or anyone who is 'spiritually seeking', to meet with them and speak to them about their faith, answer their questions and bring them into community.
7. Listen to a Taketime meditation based on John 44:39-42, The Samaritan Woman (part 4).

<https://taketime.org.uk/themed-meditations/the-samaritan-woman-part-4/>



# Focus: Winter 2024/25

## A look back at some recent events:

### **Elftastic treat from Barnstormers.**

Performed on 29th/30th November & 6th/7th December 2024 at Patcham Methodist Church



Elf The Musical is a heart-warming stage adaptation of the family favourite holiday film, following Buddy, a human raised as an Elf, on his journey from the North Pole to New York City in search of his true identity and the spirit of Christmas.

It proves to be a touching story about love and friendship, it's a festive feel-good experience that will leave you with a smile on your face and the joy of the season in your heart.

Louisa Taylor wonderfully recreated her vision of this slickly irresistible and fizzily enjoyable confection of a show and marshalled the vast cast and back stage crew.

Acknowledging this was a huge team effort and impossible to mention all but shout-outs to: Seb Harrington who carried the



lead role with charm, cuteness and constant smiles; Tony Betts a natural and touching Santa; Joseph Barber a future star in the making and other strong support from the talented Sandra Dry, Astrid Fox, Anastasiia Bohdanova and Billie Early. I've never heard the band



better form. As Russell himself says in the programme "our talented band has brought this score to life beautifully, adding sparkle and depth to every scene", I cannot put it any better. Audience member Rachel Richards said: "An absolutely awesome production by the Barnstormers, there were smiles and laughter on and off stage, thoroughly enjoyable with an equally brilliant band, it certainly put us in the Christmas spirit." Geoff Harrington said: "A thoroughly joyful and accomplished production by everyone and the band were brilliant". Overall this was a pre-Christmas treat with catchy songs, beautiful costumes, lively choreography, and a comic script. Well done all.

Roll on the next production of Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat in May.

**Steve Preston**

## **Festive creativity by Earth Church**

On Sunday 8th December as part of the Patcham Methodist Church Family Fun Day, Earth Church had a table stocked with all sorts of natural things to enable folk to create decorations the earth-y way and beautify our homes during the festive season. Thank you to Cynthia Park for organising this.





## Hitting the right note at Woodingdean

This turned out to be a special Saturday, **The Women of Note** choir of ladies came to Woodingdean, and entertained about 70 folk, with their amazing voices, and brilliant selection of songs. The audience were spell bound with the performance, many

asking us to invite them again, next year for another show. When the singing stopped the afternoon continued with cakes and tea supplied by the good ladies of the church, whose performance matched the singing. The spread of cakes and

goodies was excellent, and just as good were the donations split between the "The Women of Note" charity and the church.

A lovely afternoon for everyone and money raised for the Trussell Network of Food banks.

**Terry Hammond**

## Men's club Christmas lunch

On 17th December 27 members of the Woodingdean Men's Club, sat down to what is now our traditional Chinese or Indian take away Christmas



lunch. We started our Tuesday afternoon session, with the normal rang of activities i.e. Snooker, Cribbage, Rummyme and Short Mat Bowling, and the usual mugs of tea and chat, but at 4.30pm the hall was cleared and tables set for the take away meals, which were due to arrive at 5.30pm.

While waiting for the meals we had, our afternoon quiz, this time a photo quiz on the overhead screen, with pictures of celebrities from our youth, all known and recognised but sometimes difficult



to name.

When the food arrived our brains needed replenishing, so we tucked in the meals, followed by mince pies and ice cream. A happy afternoon, but can you name the old guy with the mop of grey hair and beard?

**Terry Hammond**



# Winter Warmer

Saturday 22nd 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 Mollys**. Everyone welcome.

Suggested donation **£10 (cash only)** – raising funds for **Nam Yang Brighton** transforming lives through martial arts, mindfulness, and community

## the cheer up mollys

"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



# A pictorial look back at recent events:

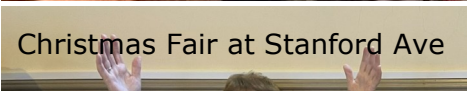
The build up to Advent and Christmas was as usual busy with a wide variety of events and services held in all our circuit churches. Here are a selection of photos celebrating some:



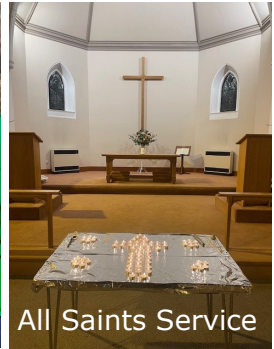
Christingles at Patcham



Maya's Christening at DG



Christmas Fair at Stanford Ave



All Saints Service



Martlets Christmas concert at Hove



Christmas Market Fair at Patcham



# Focus: Mission

## Circuit Refugee Project Update:

**Thank you very much, thank you very, very, very much ...**

We have just one more year to run as The Circuit Refugee Project and we want to make the most of it! People around the circuit have been so supportive and generous, it has enabled us to have really helped the charities who have in turn made real differences to people's lives. Thank you.

### Looking back at the end of 2024 briefly:

Just missing the cut-off for the last edition of Focus at the end of October, Sue, assisted by family, took donations to Care4Calais drop off at Sussex University. They were absolutely delighted to receive the several bags of clothing and toiletries. (See right)



The Network of International Women's sewing collective had a stall at Stanford Avenue's Christmas & Craft Fair on Saturday November 30th where they did a brisk trade. They are skilled craftswomen who make beautiful gift items and bags from recycled fabrics, Stanford Avenue kindly waived the table fee for them.



The NiW Sewing Collective also wish to thank Hove church for the beautiful fabric and sewing goods donations. If you have items to donate for the Sewing Collective's store cupboard in their Brighton workshop, please look out for posters and notices specifying what is needed (new/as new fabric, zips, thread etc) and how to donate.

The Project also had a stall, selling knitted goods and crafts as well as a small stock of NiW sewing collective items for re-sale at Patcham's Christmas Fair on 16 November. We sold items crocheted by Mark Brogan, including blankets, wraps and scarves which he had generously donated to us. We took £45. Subsequently he's been busy making more lovely warm things for us to sell or give out to refugee charities. Thank you Mark!



Also in November we donated as new cutlery to a Refugee Radio, Brighton appeal for a local refugee getting his home ready for his daughter who has finally after many years been granted a family reunion resettlement visa by the Home Office. We also sent £75 to a crowdfunder to receive and accommodate a young vulnerable person. Some clothes and toiletry donations accumulated at Hove MC were dropped into All Saints Sanctuary afternoon.

Thank you from Stephen and the families at Voices in Exile Foodbank. Hove church's Christmas gift service sent donations to Voices in Exile (ViE) of gifts for 35 children and others from families who access the foodbank. We added some of the crochet items we had still available to help keep people warm. ViE were so grateful for our kindness. A ViE volunteer said, 'God Bless you'.

The Sussex Refugee and Migrant Self-Support Group (that runs Jollof Cafe)

cooked up another of their fabulous evening meals on 18th December at Dorset Gardens under the title: "The Freedom to Move & Freedom to Stay: What Next for the Resistance to the Hostile Environment". It was a sell out and the hall was packed. The food was wonderful, as usual, and included jollof rice, plantain, ewa oloyin (honey beans), puff puff and delicious zobo (hibiscus juice flavoured with pineapple), proving that those with open borders and open minds have the most fun of all! Between courses they had some excellent speakers: **Ubah Dirie - Garden Court Chambers** (Immigration Barrister) who discussed the crucial role and limits of the Human Rights Act in assisting those who can no longer stay home because of Western depredation of their environment. **Dr Louise Purbrick – Radio Calais**, who explored the problem of limbo and emancipation from it, questioning what it means to be in transit, why it is problematic and how we resist it. **Sara Alsherif - Open Rights Group**, exploring bureaucracy and surveillance as tools of exclusion and othering. The next Jollof event is a Valentine's evening at a music venue in Hove, but we hope to welcome them back to Dorset Gardens again soon.

Thank you to Hove's Efro for her resourcefulness in sourcing the donation of some new girls' shoes from Tesco. Shared between



Polka Tots parents & carers and one of our Circuit Refugee Project charities, both were very grateful. A big thank you, also, to Christopher Sander for his recent £250 donation to the Circuit Refugee project from a sponsored journey he has done, absolutely amazing!

Below is the summary report from the October meeting of the District Sustaining Hope gathering, at Redhill Methodist Church, which is well worth reading to give us more insight key questions. We next meet in May [see right] if you're interested to come along, please let Sue or Ruth know.

Have you seen the welcome banners which are going



into all libraries across the city. Made with love by the Network of International Women they are a sight to behold. Brighton & Hove libraries have been awarded Library Service of Sanctuary status and their work continues to make sure those seeking sanctuary feel that libraries are welcoming to them. Do go and take a look in your local library if you can.

The Project Reps will be meeting soon to plan for the start of 2025. Thank you for all your support and generosity.

**Sue Harrington** and **Ruth Samur** project co-leads  
*Circuit Refugee Project Reps: Terry Hammond (Woodingdean), Kay Harwood (Patcham), Ann Collins (Stanford Avenue), Ruth Samur (Hove), Sue Harrington (Dorset Gardens).*

## SUSTAINING HOPE SPRING 2025



Are you involved in responding to the needs of Refugees, Migrants & Displaced Persons - or interested in becoming involved?

### The Methodist South-East District 'Sustaining Hope' spring gathering for 2025

will include

- Prayer and time to network
- Keynote presentations on:

- \* *Their Voice* - supporting women rescued from slavery & their babies
- \* *Chit Chat* at St Mary's Guildford - the story so far & into the future

**Date: Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> May, 10.00am - 1.30pm**  
 (Refreshments available from 9.45am)

**Venue: Redhill Methodist Church, RH1 1BP**  
 Redhill Station is 5 minutes' walk away  
 NCP car park on Gloucester Road opposite the church

To register, or for more information, email  
 Rev Hazel Forecast at  
[hazel.forecast@methodist.org.uk](mailto:hazel.forecast@methodist.org.uk)

## **Summary report: Autumn Sustaining Hope gathering**

Two keynote speakers addressed two key questions:

### **“What makes them come?”**

Rev John Howard suggested that above all people are looking for stability - including from the impacts of climate change. He highlighted the many conflicts, often overlooked, which are currently raging - not least in Africa - and are resulting in many refugees, most of whom begin as internally displaced people. He included photographs from his visit to the vast, tented Kiziba refugee camp in Rwanda, with its appalling conditions.

Then, illustrated with photos and a short video, John spoke of his more recent time in the Methodist Liaison Office in East Jerusalem, during which he visited refugee camps in Palestine and in the neighbouring countries. Many of these were originally established for Palestinians, driven out when the modern state of Israel was created in 1948. Over time refugees themselves have replaced the original canvas tents with solid buildings and developed basic education and health services. The three camps around Bethlehem alone now house over 60,000 people. Many refugees still cling to the UN's recognition of their Right to Return. But meanwhile, constant exposure to violence feeds an insecurity which undermines any efforts to create stable society. John told us that Lebanon and Jordan both now have more refugees than settled citizens. In Lebanon, these include refugees more recently arrived from Syria, especially into the Bekaa Valley, where they are living under canvas and often camped in other people's gardens.

In Gaza, the refugee camps are 'holding places' rather than 'home' as people are being repeatedly displaced. With everyone focused on surviving for the next day or two, there is currently no energy or scope to develop leadership & build community.

John had seen confusion, uncertainty and instability everywhere, but also the determination to find a way through it all, including therapy for the children, who are traumatised. .

**How we can best help?** John said that to deal properly with the refugee situation, we have to address the root of instability. This includes challenging the UK's exporting not just of weapons but also of the electronics that enable those weapons to be used.

He said that to help the situation in the camps you need to identify and engage with agencies working in a particular place, eg. Save the Children and Christian Aid in Gaza.

To understand more, he recommended the book *The Lightless Sky: My Journey to Safety as a Child Refugee* by Gulwali

Passarlay from Afghanistan, and also on Netflix *The Oak House*, based on the true experiences of Syrian refugees.

**What happens when they get here?** Revd Gill Songer, a presbyter based in Folkestone, is one of 1000 unpaid volunteers with the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), which covers every place of detention in the UK, including prisons and immigration centres. Her role is to monitor the treatment of people detained in short-term immigration holding facilities along the Kent coast. She explained that there are monthly meetings with all the organisations involved, and links are being established with key places in northern France. French police have stopped many people getting into boats in the first place, causing the launch of boats further away from Calais and often more overcrowded. French police often face violence and have to deal with the aftermath of failed launches. British authorities do not act until a boat has crossed the line that separates French and English waters, although they track the vessels. Usually it is the Border Force that picks people up in English waters. They try to ensure children under 18 are not at risk, as well as identifying any adult pretending to be a minor.

People are processed on 'the jetfoil', beginning with a medical examination, after which they are arrested for entering the UK illegally. After 24 hours they are usually bailed and dispersed. Unaccompanied minors are taken to the Kent Intake Unit for 24 hours, while Kent Social Services find them somewhere to stay. Independent Monitors are permitted to observe every stage of the process. The IMB produces an annual report, based on what is observed and designed to lead positive changes to people's experiences on arrival, including the facilities and procedures at Manston. Gill shared some recent statistics:

- In 2023, 52,530 irregular migrants were detected and of these, 17% did not arrive on boats.
- The 10 IMB volunteers in Kent had made 104 visits.
- On a Saturday, 973 people had arrived in 17 boats
- Up until 5.10.24, 23,612 people had arrived in 503 boats

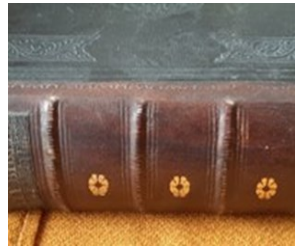
Gill spoke of the kindness of staff that she has seen in the Care and Custody tents. We were struck by how organised the whole process seems to have become and we expressed our appreciation that Gill has got involved with the IMB. The gathering finished with prayer for all those we had heard about - refugees, asylum seekers and those who work with them and seek to make it possible for them to find a safe, new beginning.

**Revd Hazel Forecast**



## Return of bible from Chelsfield Church

In July we were contacted by Philippa Rooke, the Churchwarden at St Martin of Tours CofE in Chelsfield, Kent. They had been having a sort-out prior to some essential building works and came across a large old bible with the following handwritten message on the front flyleaf saying:



*'This belongs to Mile Oak Methodist Church and if not required returned to the B & Hove Circuit  
[M] Illingworth  
188 Mile Oak Road  
Portslade'*

The edition is 'The Practical and Devotional Family Bible' with commentaries by Henry and Scott and was published in the 1850s printed by William Collins of Glasgow. There is no date on the inscription, but the title page is dated 1860.

Circuit Archivist **Mick Hickman** was delighted to hear from Philippa as Mile Oak Methodist Church never 'got off the ground' and we have almost nothing on it and this will be our only artefact. Mick said "Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible was completed in c. 1705 - six volumes, I suspect that this Bible uses the Concise commentary. N.B. John Wesley used Henry's commentary a lot - usually without acknowledging it, a common 18th century habit! These Bibles with Henry and Scott commentaries are quite rare. What a wonderful find!"

Phillipa delivered the bible to Mick in December and a copy of the inscription will be given to the Record Office while the Bible itself will be placed in our Circuit Archives.



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The Methodist Church values every human being as part of God's creation. Everyone has the right to fair treatment and protection from harm.

The Methodist Church 

# Focus: Business



## Circuit Finances or

### How to get a quart out of a pint pot...

As I embark on my 6th year as the 'Interim' treasurer, I wanted to take a moment to share my thoughts on the current financial health of our circuit.

Let me be clear, I'm not an accounting wizard, and I'm incredibly grateful to Stuart Neate and recently, Natasha Symes, for their invaluable technical expertise. They've made sure that our financial reports meet the strict standards set by the Methodist Church and the Charities Commission. Nonetheless, the last six years have been something of a white knuckle ride.

Every year, the Circuit makes a budget. It estimates how much money it will need to spend the next year. The Circuit has three main areas of spending:

- Paying the salaries of the ministers
- Paying for the houses that the ministers live in
- Paying the salaries of the lay staff and the costs of the Circuit Office
- Paying the Circuit Assessment to the District

To achieve its goals, the Circuit needs enough money to these costs so that the Circuit can keep providing the local churches with the ministers they need to serve their communities.

To put this into cash terms, let's look at what we spent last year:

Stipends and expenses:	£93,000
Manses:	£13,600
Salaries & Administration	£31,800
District Assessment	£42,200
	<b>£180,600</b>

The Circuit gets its money from the circuit churches. Each church gives a fixed amount every quarter. This amount is based on how much money a church earns from giving and lettings; and how much it has in reserves and investments.

CPD states that "*in determining the assessment, circuits must take into account "the needs and ability to pay of each Local Church" (SO 515(3))*

The result is that the more income and reserves a church has - the bigger its contribution to the circuit budget.

Like the churches, the Circuit also keeps a Reserve Fund to allow for any unexpected events that might adversely affect cash flow.

Having set out the way in which the circuit is funded, here are some of the major events which impact on our finances:

- Covid took a significant toll on church finances. To support the churches during this time, the Circuit reduced the assessment payments by using money from the Reserve Fund to pay for day-to-day expenses. This support was provided for 2 years and subsequently reduced the Reserve fund by almost 50%.
- With the reduction from 3 full-time ministers to 2, we were able to let the manse in Surrenden Road. This entailed redecoration and completion of the quinquennial inspection building work.
- We welcomed our new minister in September, but again, the Ladies Mile Road manse required a similar amount of work before Karen could move in - resulting in further reduction of the Circuit Reserve Fund.
- The combined cost of this work was around £100,000.

As a result, we started the new financial year on 1st September 2024 with a Reserve Fund of around £24,000.

We face a challenging time. The increases in the cost of living continue to impact both on individual giving and on the cost of keeping churches open. In addition, most of the Church Treasurers are having to deal with significant repairs to their church buildings, work that will impact on their income and reserves - and consequently on their contributions to the Circuit Assessment.

There is good news. The manse at Surrenden Road continues to be occupied and it provides an income which will ultimately reduce our costs, but until that time, we will focus on ensuring that the Circuit continues to meet its financial obligations and support the local churches in their work across the circuit. And if anyone has any bright ideas or ways we can do things differently - the Circuit Leadership Team would be very pleased to hear from you!

**Stella Goddard**, Interim Circuit Treasurer

## Age UK hub opens new centre in Brighton



Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove (WSBH) opened a brand new hub on the ground floor of 95 Queen's Road, BN1 3XE in central Brighton just before Christmas.

The drop-in hub is open on weekdays from 9.30am to 4pm. It aims to provide a wide range of information, advice and support including: help on financial planning particularly the cost of living, dementia support, helping to access digital services, dealing with scams, fitness to nail cutting. On site customer service advisors are ready to provide the personal touch of talking face to face. Further information: Tel 0800 019 1310 or email [info@ageukwsbh.org.uk](mailto:info@ageukwsbh.org.uk)

## Dates for your diary

### Calendar of Circuit Events:

- Monday 17th February **Local Preachers' Meeting** at 7.30 pm at Stanford Avenue MC.
- Saturday 22nd February **Tabletop Sale** from 10 am to 12 noon at Stanford Avenue MC.
- Saturday 22nd February **Winter Warmer Concert with The Cheer Up Mollys** from 2.30pm at Hove MC.
- Saturday 8th March **Tabletop sale** from 10am to 1pm. at Dorset Gardens MC.
- Saturday 15th March **Brighton Male Voice Choir** 7.00pm at Woodingdean MC. £6.00 suggested donation, entry by ticket. Phone 01273 887618
- Tuesday 18th March **Circuit Meeting** 7.30 pm at Patcham MC.
- Saturday 29th March **Spring & Craft Fair**, at Stanford Avenue MC, including making peace cranes in which you can add the name of a loved one, a small prayer, bible quote or poem inside. These will then fly in the Church.
- Saturday 26th April **District Representative Synod:** 10.30am at Redhill MC.

- 1 May to 31st July **Revd Andy Lowe on Sabbatical.**
- Thurs 15th to Saturday 17th May **Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat** at Patcham MC (*see below*)
- Thursday 22nd May **Local Preachers' Meeting** 7.30pm at Woodingdean MC
- Wednesday 25th June **Circuit Meeting** 7.30pm at Hove MC
- Thursday 28th August **Local Preachers Meeting** 7.30pm at Hove MC
- Tuesday 16 September **Circuit Meeting** 7.30pm at Stanford Avenue MC
- Saturday, 20th September **District Representative Synod** 10.30am Gravesend MC

An Amateur production by arrangement with The Really Useful Group Ltd 2025



# JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT

**Lyrics by  
Tim Rice**

**Music by  
Andrew Lloyd  
Webber**

**Thursday 15th-Saturday 17th May**  
Shows 7.30 pm, Saturday Matinee 2 pm  
Patcham Methodist Church Hall,  
Ladies Mile Road, Patcham

**Tickets £12**  
(concessions for children and families)  
available online @ [barnstormers.org.uk](http://barnstormers.org.uk) or  
via the box office on 01273 307109

All profits will be donated to the development fund of Patcham Methodist Church



# Special Services this Easter



## Circuit Services

Ash Wednesday 5th March	7.00pm	Evening Service at Woodingdean
Easter Sunday 20th April	6.00am	Sunrise Communion on Hove Beach by King Alfred Centre
Sunday 18th May	3.00pm	Easter Offering Service and Circuit Together at Dorset Gardens
Sunday 8th June	8.00am	Pentecost Communion at Ditchling Beacon

## Dorset Gardens:

Maundy Thurs 17th April	1.00pm	Prayers & Communion
Good Friday 18th April	4.00pm	Good Friday Reflections
Easter Sunday 20th April	10.00am	Easter Communion
Sunday 11th May	10.30am	Church Anniversary with Rev Will Fletcher

## Hove:

Maundy Thurs 17th April	10.30am	Communion
Maundy Thurs 17th April	7.30pm	Communion
Good Friday 18th April	10.30am	Good Friday Reflections
Easter Sunday 20th April	11.00am	Easter Communion

## Patcham

Easter Sunday 20th April	10.00am	Easter All Age Worship with Communion
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## Stanford Avenue

Good Friday 18th April	2.00pm	Good Friday Reflections
Easter Sunday 20th April	10.30am	Easter Communion

## Woodingdean

Easter Sunday 20th April	10.00am	Easter Communion
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## **Circuit Healing Services**

On 23rd February, 27th March and 25th April at 6.30pm at Dorset Gardens. Led by Revd Cynthia Park and Shirley Veater. These will be quiet, meditative services that will include communion & the opportunity for the laying on of hands.

## **Circuit Churches Together Service**

### **At Dorset Gardens Methodist Church**

#### **18th May 2025 at 3pm followed by refreshments**

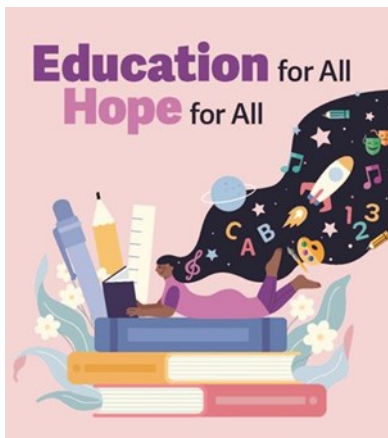
Each year, the Methodist Church holds an Easter Offering dedication service. This tradition dates back to 1883, when women in Manchester collected £32 for missionary work overseas from 'Christmas pennies' at family gatherings on Christmas Day. In March 1884, the London Districts distributed Easter envelopes and collecting bags asking for a penny a head, and collected around £100.

In 1900, Women's Work raised £1,655 for the work of overseas missions.

Since then, each successive Methodist women's movement has encouraged donations in support of God's mission and In 2023, collections from Easter Offering services raised over £190,000.

This quarter, our offering will be dedicated at our Circuit Churches Together Service on 18th May 2025.

We are hoping that someone from each church would be willing to join in the planning and take part in the service, so don't hesitate to speak to us - before we come and speak to you!!!



Recently, Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) have produced an annual service of dedication, which is often used widely around the Connexion as a circuit service.

This year the theme is 'Education for All, Hope for All' and offers us a moment to consider how education transforms lives and communities, opening God's promise of hope and fullness of life for all people - so we have some good material from which

to make a start.

All the money raised through the Easter Offering goes to the World Mission Fund of the Methodist Church in Great Britain for work in our Partner Churches around the world.

**Revd Karen Bell & Stella Goddard**



**Lent 2025** We do not live by bread alone

In the wilderness, Jesus reminded us that people don't live by bread alone. Each week during Lent, we'll reflect on what sustains us, based on the lectionary Gospel passage for Sunday. To receive daily deliveries of spiritual nourishment through Lent, delivered to your inbox, sign up via Methodist Church website.

A colorful poster for a 'TABLE TOP SALE' on Saturday 8 March 2025. The background is light pink with decorative elements like string lights, stars, and a ribbon. A small 'TOMBOLA' tag is on the left. The text includes: 'TABLE TOP SALE', 'Saturday 8 March 2025', '10 am to 1 pm', 'Tombola, cakes, bric-a-brac, games, books, Indian ready meals... and more!', 'To book a table contact Deeptima on 07715 976579 (£5 small or £7 large)', 'All are welcome!', 'Fund Raising for Dorset Gardens Methodist Church.', and 'Dorset Gardens Methodist Church, Dorset Gardens, Brighton, BN2 1RL' at the bottom.

**TABLE TOP SALE**  
**Saturday 8 March 2025**  
**10 am to 1 pm**

Tombola, cakes, bric-a-brac, games, books, Indian ready meals... and more!

To book a table contact Deeptima on 07715 976579 (£5 small or £7 large)

**All are welcome!**

Fund Raising for Dorset Gardens Methodist Church.

Dorset Gardens Methodist Church, Dorset Gardens, Brighton, BN2 1RL

A colorful poster for a 'TABLE TOP SALE' on Saturday 22nd February 2025. The background is yellow with a string of colorful bunting at the top. The text includes: 'TABLE TOP SALE', 'Saturday 22nd February 2025', '10am-12noon', 'Stanford Avenue Methodist Church Hall, Brighton', '£5 per table', and 'Email lissyloucrafts@yahoo.co.uk to book your table'. An illustration shows a stack of colorful fabric, a black boot, a red high-heeled shoe, a teddy bear, and a rocking horse.

**TABLE TOP SALE**

**Saturday 22nd February 2025**  
**10am-12noon**

**Stanford Avenue Methodist Church Hall, Brighton**

**£5 per table**

Email [lissyloucrafts@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lissyloucrafts@yahoo.co.uk) to book your table

Made with PosterMyWall.com



Thank you to Marilyn Richardson for proof reading and for all contributors. Please submit your articles & photos to Steve Preston for our Summer Edition by 17th April 25.

## Circuit Office

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