

Focus



Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit

Summer 2025



Andy's Letter



Dear friends,

Between 1793 and 1805, during the French revolution, a decimalisation of time was tried as part of the French Revolutionist's attempt to replace the Gregorian calendar with their own calendar which was meant to be more secular and rational. What they implemented was a 12 month calendar each with 3 weeks & 10 days. Each day was divided into 10 hours each of 100 minutes with each minute being 100 seconds. This was part of the Revolutionist's attempt to replace the ways of the old regime, to de-Christianise society and to increase productivity. The experiment ultimately failed to get widespread acceptance and was abandoned.

I can't imagine how people would cope with an 8 day working week and the strain it would put on people both physically and mentally over any prolonged period. I am well aware that many of you will have experienced times in your working lives when you might have had to work for prolonged periods of time with little or no time off and those of you who have been, or are, homemakers might even say that every day is a work day but I am sure that we all recognise the danger of not resting, of not having time to recuperate.

The Methodist church have recognised that rhythm of life for Ministers in the way we have a system of Sabbaticals. They are a required part of a presbyter's performance of their duties. They can be extremely beneficial both for the individual minister and for the health of the wider Church and can significantly enhance the ministry of the whole people of God.

For Methodist presbyters, a Sabbatical is a period of release from ordinary ministerial duties, in addition to normal holidays, for the purpose of pursuing an approved programme of study, research, work or experience. It is intended as a time for *re-equipping, refreshment and renewal*.

All presbyters in Full Connexion and stationed in an appointment within the control of the Church are expected to take a regular Sabbatical. The years in which Sabbaticals may be taken are

normally every seventh year of travel as a minister.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to have a Sabbatical at this time following a couple of years of uncertainty and change and am looking forward to doing a lot of reading and thinking which I hope will find expression in the life of our Circuit. Alongside that I am going to spend 10 days on an archaeological dig called the Culver Project near Barcombe Mills as a complete change to my usual routine.

During May, June and July therefore you are asked not to contact me and instead if you need any assistance or a Minister then you can contact Karen Bell who will be acting as the Circuit Superintendent and/or Steve Preston our Circuit Operations Manager. If there is a matter concerning Hove Methodist Church then initially contact J.J. in the Church Office who will assist as he can or pass the matter on to someone who can help. If it's a matter to do with Dorset Gardens admin then contact Angela in the Church Office or for a Pastoral concern contact Deeptima Massey. All contact details are below:

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Of one thing I am certain, I will miss contact with you all while I am otherwise occupied and will look forward to coming back and picking up the reins on Monday August 4th. In the meantime please give Karen and Steve and all the other people who will be doing a little bit extra over these months all your support. One of the things I will miss will be the 8am service on Pentecost Day at Ditchling Beacon and I urge those of you who have not experienced it to try to make this year the time to do that and to pray for God's Spirit to move among us, our churches and our communities in new ways.

May you know God's blessings



Focus: People & Pets

Welcome Kerry Halliday

Hello! I am excited to be joining the Circuit under the guidance of Revd Karen as part of my training to become an ordained Presbyterian.

Let me introduce myself, I am Kerry Halliday, the proud owner of two mischievous mutts and married to paddle and skateboard enthusiast Curt. I was born in Walthamstow, brought up in Essex and studied for my PhD (Psychology) in Bangor, North Wales. I now live in peaceful Bexhill-on-Sea and recently became a Community Chaplain and Outreach Worker for my home church.

Before that, I had the privilege of working for the past five years as a Methodist Homes (MHA) Chaplain. I often consider myself a novice Christian, having looked to objective truth rather than the mystery of the Divine for most of my life, yet this was all to change as God had a different plan. Around 17 years ago I had a profound conversion experience, which was to change my life forever. I have no doubt now that God has a sense of humour, initially because I had never thought that Jesus would be calling me into his eternal loving arms, and more recently, calling me into ordained ministry. After all, I had just got my slippers ready and was looking towards an early retirement. But the Holy Spirit gave me a final nudge to follow my heart to explore the road to Emmaus and see if the call was genuine. And here I am, grateful for each person who supports me on my journey and excited to be coming to your circuit. If you see me, please come and say hello! I'm looking forward to meeting you all.



Kerry Halliday



Remembering Phoenix and introducing Joey

Last Autumn we welcomed Revd Karen and she introduced her two cats Phoenix and Willow. Sorry to say Phoenix passed away in March, just six years old and after a short illness. In April self confessed 'crazy cat lady' Karen welcomed adorable kitten Joey and Willow is gradually learning to share her space again.

Spotlight On....Elin Star

Continuing our feature where in every edition we put the spotlight on one of our Circuit members and perhaps we will learn more about them. This edition we feature the inimitable Elin from Hove.

Here I am (right) aged one and a half, on my mother's lap, pretending to drive a tractor. Fake it till you make it, from an early age. Behind us stands my uncle and cousin, triumphant after felling trees from Mamgu's little forest. We are in Llanddewi Brefi, the church of St David on the river Brefi, where the ox lowed nine times and split the mountain Craig y Ffoellallt. From the kitchen door of my grandmother's farmhouse you get a full view of the Craig; she and my aunt used to foretell the weather by looking at it. My grandmother, her house and Cwm Brefi the valley where sits in were some of my biggest influences, looking back. Rivers, rocks, trees, tracks and mountains, my brother and I knew them intimately. While my grandmother lived, there was no electricity, and we lived in a rather Jane Austen manner, climbing up to the huge feather beds with our child-size oil lamps. Mamgu was the complete countrywoman, making her own wine, bread, medicine, quilts, clothes, butter - I wish I had half her knowledge and expertise. But my mother, forced to study Home Economics instead of Music no sooner qualified than she put her name down to teach in London, and fled the constricting morality and limited philosophy of her birthplace. Her father was a Deacon in a chapel where a teenage girl was expelled for getting pregnant, while the middle-aged man responsible sat there, one of the chapel officers.



So I grew up in Dulwich, my mother having decided that Peckham was too rowdy for children. I never loved it as I did Wales; there were too many fences, pavements, all the trees were tamed and unable to speak. We used to play pretend Narnia in the shrubbery of Dulwich Park after church on Sunday; as you may guess, C.S Lewis was another of my influences; I wept for two days when my mother finally broke the news that Narnia wasn't a real place. I learnt a lot of my theology (with a streak of Paganism) from him and Elizabeth Goudge, another children's author who despite being a devout Edwardian spinster startlingly covered themes of mental illness, natural magic, psychic ability and the dark night of the soul in her adult books.

She, St John of the Cross, G.M. Hopkins and the author of the Cloud of Unknowing would be my mainstay and support in a time of great darkness.

Determined that I should be the first in the family to go to university, my mother wanted me choose a London uni and study from home, but it was the Summer of Punk, and I had reached the limits of growing up in such a constricting environment. Both my brother and I were slipping out to punk concerts and parties, in fact he was a barman at the Camden Music Machine for a while before they discovered he was only 15. I still have a Seditonaries bondage top he got me from King's Road. So, instead of plan A, which was to return to Wales and study Agriculture (vetoed by my mother who didn't understand that I adored the country she had escaped from), at 17 I set out, woefully unprepared and ill-advised, to study French and Russian at Bradford. I expected mind-stretching discussion, fascinating reading and guidance, but found myself in a very boring language lab instead. There were too many distractions, from all the psychology books I read in the library instead of the ones I was supposed to read, to boys. I had previously had girlfriends, but baulked of Wales, agriculture and interesting womenfolk, I took up Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll instead. And left-wing politics. The union sent coaches to the Miners' strike and Grunwicks, and I found myself on a coach to protest Torness nuclear power station, with a bunch of hairy Anarchists.



(Left: Studying in Minsk with friends)

Back home this did not go down well, a second class degree (a minor miracle that had me trying to learn Russian in three months - I suffered stress nightmares about the Russian oral exam well into my forties), a live-in boyfriend, and a general

bad attitude after all their sacrifices...my staunch Catholic father was horrified, my mother decreed that I would have to settle for marriage, and did not bother to hide her disappointment. But worse was to come...

Right is a photo of me (in my dad's best trilby) and my new posse at Greenham Common. Having broken off the engagement to my free-spirited fiancé who had somehow morphed into a corporate accountant post-degree, I moved into a feminist household in Peckham presided over by a lovely trans landlady who I rather had a



crush on. I started a Consciousness Raising group, found an office job, and between demonstrations and concerts, inevitably found my way to Greenham. It was a mind-blowing experience. I certainly learnt far more during my time there than I ever did during my formal education. Having hitched up for a New Year's Eve party, I found there was an action planned for dawn on New Year's day - get over the fence and up on top of the missile silo. The BBC filmed us dancing, we were hauled off and my dear, long-suffering parents came and visited me in Holloway, even though my father disagreed entirely about nuclear weapons. He had been stationed in Sri Lanka during the war, preparing to invade Japan, so the bombing of Hiroshima probably saved his and his fellows lives. From Greenham I went to Comiso in Sicily to help start a women's peace camp beside the US Airforce base there, which also housed Cruise missiles, and was lost to view for many months. My parents eventually got a phone call from a helpful BBC journalist to let them know where I was.

After that I spent a couple of years at a wimmin's house in Oxford, knitting our own tofu, DJ-ing for the lesbian disco, helping out at the women's wholefood collective and women's Refuge. We hosted a couple of women from the Pacific on a tour to protest nuclear testing; I will never forget Titewhai Harawira, a queen among women, telling the Mayor of Oxford "I do not hongi with Pakeha", and teaching women at Greenham Maori chants of defiance. I got my first massage client, a Pakistani woman whose husband had tried to kill her with an axe. She survived massive blood loss, but had been disfigured and the back of her skull had knit back together very roughly. She and her children stayed with us till the Southall Black Sisters could smuggle her away from her husband's family to anonymous safety in another part of the country.

This is getting far too long. Suffice it to say, I moved to London with my partner Tanya, who I met on a Christmas Eve sit-in on the steps of St Martin-in-the-Fields protesting apartheid.

We had a friend in common, and she came along to support just after dawn on Christmas Day, six foot tall, scattering pigeons as she roller-skated across Trafalgar Square with a bottle of Baileys in her hand. We rented a council flat in Streatham, I got a job with Lambeth Health and we celebrated by driving across America in her brother's pick-up truck



(see right). My politics had become more international, I shipped home a lot of Black history books (and a few Voodoo primers). Then, at a Persian Boy party with old school friends in Brighton, I met my future neighbours Robin and Paul.

The house next door to them was going very cheap, and London prices being astronomical we bought it, thus establishing a little enclave of five Baker's Bottom gay households over two streets.



(Left: Robin, me & Tanya, Linden en gaie bonhomie)

There was much merriment initially, but I started to feel the strain of commuting, financial responsibility for a house that needed a lot of work, and grief for my father who had died. I had been promoted at work and was

managing a large house for adults with learning difficulties, and it all became too much, despite the best efforts of Verna, my second in command, who fed me endless tubs of home-cooked Jamaican food. I had a mahoosive nervous breakdown, and Tanya and I had a long-drawn out on-off messy split. I was off work for months and eventually left the job

I had a lot of therapy and got diagnosed as deeply schizoid which I used to joke about till my brother was diagnosed years later. I took up rebirthing, had didgeridoo sound baths, went on drumming workshops in iron age huts, all very Brightonian. But it was also at this point, despite being a practising pagan, that I began to turn to God. In my depression I noticed it was only Christian writers that made real sense to me and actually helped.

They understood the dark night of the soul, and I appeared to be lodged right in it - I had no idea mental illness could be so painful. Gradually I came out of it, made new friends, did part-time jobs, took up ceramics, joined a tribute band as backing singer, visited many sacred sites, had other relationships, but never lived with anyone. I continued to practice pagan rituals, meditations and have adventures with my small coven and support group, known as the Black Rod Beddy Chaos Lodge.

(Right: Witches go to the Rocky Horror Show)

After a while I was asked to do massage at a self-help group for people infected or affected by HIV. At the time AIDS was killing a lot of people - my old neighbour Robin succumbed around this time in his typically Death in Venice style.



Over the nine years I worked there I became Head of Therapies, and even Treasurer for a couple of years when it turned out my charismatic predecessor had been pocketing funds. Started by a group of strong gay men to provide sanctuary and a hot meal at weekends, it became Brighton Body Positive, with offices and therapy rooms over the Old Market in Circus Street. Another of the greatest learning experiences of my life. You have no idea how dark humour can get till you've sat in with a bunch of dying acid queens. Or imagine how gallant those young men were in the face of death. The whole thing spanned the gamut from tragic to manic hilarious.

One of my dearest clients had worked with his partner for Medecins Sans Frontier in Africa, I'll never forget meeting him with my mother at Brighton station. He was sitting with his mum waiting for a train and after he called me over (protocol dictated BBP staff could not initiate contact with clients outside the centre, lest we reveal their status) we introduced mums and had a good chat. He seemed perfectly healthy, and when afterwards I explained to my mother that he was a client, I think she understood for the first time why I had poured all my energies into the job. She felt so sorry for his mother.

In the end, rather predictably, I burned out. I had survivor guilt, and Brighton was dotted with memories of people who weren't with us any more. My old neighbour Paul lost his entire friendship circle, and moved to London to do patient liaison at Kings. I recuperated in the hills and valleys of Tintagel with an old mate of mine. I had a vision there in the rock tunnel on the beach of a crowned face behind the sun which has stayed with me till this day.

I knew I couldn't go back to working with people at that point, and dithered till a friend prodded me into doing an Arts Foundation at Eastbourne. I had been taking life-drawing classes at the Art college with a truly excellent tutor from Eastbourne college, and off I went. The old meandering building was another sanctuary and just suited my mood; I could sit in the yard wearing Robin's old leather jacket and brood over a coffee and a roll-up as much as I liked. And I was learning again, with demanding tutors who made us loosen up, experiment and explore. I thrived mightily. I wrote a much-admired thesis on Alchemy in Modern Art, and did a final installation on the theme of Light and Dark with latex and plastic screens and three lamps like standing stones made of patinated lead with dark moon-like beeswax lenses. I wanted to show that light can come through what seems dark and be blocked by what seems light. I worked like a Trojan, my flat was covered in drying latex pieces with nary a place to sit.

I might have gone on to do an Art degree, but my brother got arrested for possession of firearms. Typical testosterone overload by the police, they sent a SWAT team in to get him as he swayed home from the pub one lunch time. He had been diagnosed as schizophrenic and hospitalised for a while but would not stop drinking. Eventually his long-suffering wife left him, but still worrying about him, told his community psychiatric nurse about the gun collection in his attic. He got four years, mercifully just for possession, and I got a wake up call. I decided to re-skill in office IT and get a Proper Job, partly to relieve the wear and tear of worry on my poor mum who was worn to a frazzle, now having to visit her other offspring in prison. Actually she had mellowed and blossomed with age, I will never forget her comforting one of the other visitors, a young girl with a baby. No judgement, you could almost see the light shining from her.

At the IT re-skilling centre, one of the tutors, a fellow broken biscuit named Trevor, had had to give up security management and the bare-knuckle fight clubs of South London when he fell off

a roof in Brighton and smashed both arms. This shameless individual, instead of backing off like most straight men when my lesbian feminist past came up, immediately started telling sexist jokes instead, making me laugh more than anyone since my Body Positive days.

And the rest most of you all know, because Trevor and I had a son (Sam)



together, my life became full of boys and sticks and mothering, and we found our way to Hove Methodist Church, a place of goodness which has supported us through many ups and downs. My brother and then my mother died just after Sam was born; Trev's arms took a turn for the worse, necessitating over seventy operations and one amputation; but through thick and thin, the church family has been there. I came to realise that the Christian path was a true one which if followed, would take me somewhere I longed to be. My father's

prayers are answered. And now that the days of mothering are over, Trev and I are going to have a last adventure, and return to live in my Grandmother's house in Cwm Breffni. My plan is to sit outside my kitchen door, listen to the river and look at the mountain, unless God has something else in mind.

Elin Star

Focus: Features

The Challenge of Disability

In 2009 a 47-year-old woman stepped onto a stage in front of an eager audience. She was auditioning for a televised talent show. Her awkward demeanour was immediately evident, and the audience's reactions were clear. This audition was not going to go well – the proverbial train wreck! After a brief conversation with the judges, she announced that she was going to sing 'I dreamed a dream' from Les Misérables. The judges' eyebrows raised – a big song for someone who did not look the part.

Then she began to sing. Her vocal range, the purity with which she sang stunned both judges and the audience. By the end of the song, they were transfixed, and she received a standing ovation.

The woman was Susan Boyle, she went on to become second place on Britain's Got Talent and it launched her career. It was also later revealed that she had autism and had been underestimated and bullied her entire life.



In that moment, captured by the cameras, we saw in real time how people sometimes react to people different to themselves. We are often nervous to interact with people who have disabilities for fear of offending them, saying the wrong words, or our own concern about how that person will interact with us. Our own assumptions and prejudice can negatively affect people with disabilities.

So how do we encourage people with disabilities in our churches to use their God given gifts to the best of their ability whilst challenging the discrimination that disabled people often face?

In 1995 the Disability Discrimination Act was enshrined in UK law. This legally required all public buildings in the UK to become fully accessible to disabled people. This included places of worship. Initially we responded by considering how to make our buildings physically accessible. We put in ramps and hearing aid loops and felt that our job was done. But true inclusion goes beyond aesthetic adaptations to our buildings.

Christians with disabilities long for more than just physical adaptations. They want to feel fully included and welcomed into the spaces able bodied people take for granted.

Disabled people have historically been discriminated against and rejected by the church. This caused disabled Christians to wrestle with passages that refer to the discrimination of disabled people in the bible. There are many challenging passages but there are also passages that become redemptive and healing for disabled people. The most powerful image for disabled Christians is that of Jesus' death. On the cross, Jesus became disabled for us. He bore not just physical pain but emotional and mental suffering as well. This, alongside other redemptive passages, helps disabled Christians to assert their place in the worldwide church.

As a church we have a responsibility to allow all people's God given gifts to be used. This might mean we need to think outside of the box and certainly goes beyond the ramp and hearing aid loop!

Maybe your church council could consider doing a church access audit. Is your church fully accessible? Do you have adequate lighting for those who are visually impaired? Do you have large print bibles and books? Have you considered a space for people who have sensory challenges? Do you have any people in your congregation who are disabled that could be part of this conversation? How can we include Christians with disabilities to share in and lead worship regularly?

Christians with disabilities, whether that be cognitive or physical impairment, have a unique perspective to offer the church today. They bring a theology of wholeness, strength in weakness and show the glory of God working through suffering. Our challenge is to help them heal from the discrimination society often enforces on them, to show them that they are made in God's image and allow them to use their gifts as a powerful witness to the injustice disabled people often feel in the world today. Are you ready for that challenge?

Revd Karen

Modern Times *Charlie Chaplin 1936*

This week I had the privilege of sitting at Circuit Meeting. One of the items on the agenda was the circulation of the on-line Circuit Directory. Who should be given the password and what to do about the folk who are not able to access the internet and therefore would not be able see this important document? (a small but not insignificant portion of the expected audience). I can imagine that my grandfather would not have understood what this was all about. A toolmaker and local preacher whose message was always practical and who was clever enough to understand algebra until the equations turned quadratic.

But we live in a time of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Because everything is moving on-line there needs to be a general understanding and acceptance of who is able to see what. No one is going to argue about who is able to see health records or bank details, unless you are a thief. However, as with all things the devil is in the detail.

The problem is that the value of our personal data has been monetised. Because, increasingly, we all buy things on line, those with items to sell, in exactly the same way as a seller in

any outdoor market, they need to 'shout' their wares. They need to know what you are interested in buying so they can let you know what they are offering. The likes of Facebook and Google have made an absolute fortune accumulating and selling all of our individual preferences. Every time we look at something on the internet, a little robot somewhere says "ah Peter (for Peter read my internet address and the number of my device) is interested in 'bloggo' so we will add ads for 'bloggo' to everything else that he reads" and this is where the problem becomes more tricky. How do you control that information about you, which you are not really willing to share? That is where GDPR comes in. GDPR, as I understand it starts from the premise that the information about yourself, which is online, can only be shared with others if you give specific consent and as Hamlet said "there's the rub". We all gaily go about our daily lives using the benefits that that internet brings, with little thought about who is paying the bill. And until GDPR came along the bill was paid because our personal data was sold to the highest bidder.

As the result of a recent legal ruling Facebook has agreed to stop targeting adverts on the person who raised the case, based on her demographics and her interests. Interestingly, since then Facebook has announced a version of their service, similar to the one already available in the EU, where data is not used for targeting advertising purposes, but of course it comes at a monthly cost. Without the sale of your data the cost has to be met by other means.

But this is only the start of the problem. Because criminals and 'scammers' also benefit from your personal data anything which involves a computer and is therefore discoverable is also covered by GDPR. Recently I travelled to Birmingham to see two old friends who had been admitted to hospital. However, when I phoned the hospital to find out which ward, they were on, the very nice lady on the other end of the line told me that she could not tell me, I had to ask a family member. If a burglar could find out when someone was in hospital, they would know that their house was unoccupied and so they could go about their thieving with impunity. Unfortunately, such a blank refusal is not helpful if the relatives are not freely contactable or even worse there are no relatives.

Which brings us back to the circulation of the Circuit Directory. When it was 'print only' all the information about preachers and stewards, phone numbers and addresses was in the Circuit Plan, but now it is online for the world to see, it is much more difficult

to control who sees what. Maybe a member of the Circuit Team is escaping from an abusive relationship and so having their contact details online would not a good idea. The permutations of keeping people and their data safe are limitless and we are really only approaching the foothills of the problem.

Peter Farley

NB: anyone needing access to the Circuit Directory contact Steve.

The Apocryphal New Testament

Continuing our look at some early Christian writings that are not in the New Testament

2. The Infancy Gospels

Last time we looked at the proto-gospels, here we look at two of the infancy gospels: the Arabic Infancy Gospel and the Infancy Gospel of Thomas (which has nothing to do with the Gospel of Thomas which is a completely different text). They reflect a desire to fill in the gap between the birth of Jesus and the account in Luke when Jesus visits the Temple with his family when he was twelve (Lk 2 v 42). Elliott thinks that the theological content is minimal, but Ehrman and Pleše (see the first article re: these authors) think that they were written to show who Jesus was. The 'nasty' streak in Jesus that we see would not have been understood as such in the ancient world: Jesus is portrayed as all-knowing, a powerful miracle-worker, and with authority over life and death. All those who oppose him suffer and fail. Hopefully, we live in a different world to that which produced these texts.

1. The Arabic Infancy Gospel (AIG)

The AIG was probably composed in Syriac (a later version of Aramaic), but is only known in Arabic. Elliott thinks that the stories here are more like 'Thousand and One Nights' than Christian literature. Unlike the IGT the AIG has a number of incidents where Mary, called 'the Lady Mary', is involved. Once, whilst in Bethlehem, Mary was washing Jesus. A woman had a dying son and asked Mary for help. Mary told her to sprinkle her son with some of the water with which she was washing Jesus. The boy was cured.

One day Jesus was playing with some boys. They hid from him in a furnace. Jesus asked some women who was in the furnace and they told him that there were only kid goats there. Jesus called them out and they had been changed into goats.



The women were frightened and asked '*Lord Jesus, son of Mary*' to have mercy on them. Jesus said, '*Come, boys, let us go and play*', and the kids were changed back into boys.

2. The Infancy Gospel of Thomas (IGT)

The IGT has survived in many manuscripts, the oldest in Syriac, but this is based on a Greek model. It was one of the most popular of the early Christian Apocrypha, and exists in thirteen languages. One story, '*Jesus and the sparrows*', is referred to in the Qur'an (5 v 110). The manuscripts differ greatly and it is impossible to know what the original, if it existed, looked like. IGT gives a number of isolated stories of Jesus, aged five, seven, eight, and twelve. The story of the twelve-year old Jesus is a version of the visit to the Temple. IGT was probably written as a supplement to Luke's Gospel.

Just a few stories will be mentioned here. When he was five Jesus by word made some dirty water clean and pure. He then took some clay out of the mud and made twelve model sparrows. He did this on the Sabbath. Someone complained to Joseph about breaking the Sabbath commandments and Joseph reprimanded Jesus. Jesus told the clay birds to fly away, which they did. People were amazed.

This is followed by two boys annoying Jesus: instantly one was paralysed, the other died. A teacher promised Joseph to take Jesus in hand. The five-year old Jesus confounded the teacher by knowing more than he did. The teacher asked Joseph to take him home as he was a prodigy. At this Jesus laughed and restored the paralysed boy to health and the dead boy to life.

When Jesus was seven he sowed some wheat. The harvest was a hundred-fold and Joseph gave most to the poor and orphans. When he was eight a teacher punished him and Jesus cursed him, killing his teacher. Another teacher offered to teach him but Jesus explained the Torah so well that the new teacher and a crowd outside were astounded. The teacher praised Jesus who then brought back to life the first teacher whom he had cursed.

3. Influence

The IGT especially was popular as it showed to Christians who their saviour was, above all, he had power over life and death. The story of Jesus making clay models and giving them life was clearly widespread and entered the Qur'an. It might be thought that these stories have little impact now but the 1953 film *The Robe* is based on the idea that something touched by Jesus could heal and this concept still has power. The idea that those who disobey or annoy God will die is very old, and also still powerful.

Mick Hickman

Working for All We Can

I've spent the past 30 years working in social care, as a support worker, a registered manager and then in a national role which was all about ensuring people in receipt of support services were able to have a voice in how they were run by shaping national policy. In the late 90s, I also went on a weird side track joining the punk band Heavy Load, who were made up of musicians with and without learning disabilities.

So unconventional, and dysfunctional, was the world of our band that a documentary was made about us which The Guardian rates as 9th in its top 20 music documentaries of all time. (True fact!) One of the stories in the film was how we were frustrated at seeing many of our fans have to leave our gigs early due to support workers not being able to work late, meaning that the people they supported couldn't enjoy the things many of us take for granted. Like watching the end of a concert, or a film, or just being able to spend a night in the pub with your mates and decide what time you want the evening to end.

So this led to us starting the charity 'Stay Up Late' and that's been my life for the past 15 years. It started as an idea on our back room table and has grown into a charity which saw us awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2022. This was in recognition of the Gig Buddies project, which was my simple idea. Matching up socially isolated people with a learning disability with a volunteer who shares the same musical interests. That way they can go to anything they want to with a volunteer who becomes their friend. I started it small but it had profound outcomes as it enabled people to not only create new friendships but also develop their confidence and learn new skills. It also enables people with learning disabilities to be fully involved in the communities of their choosing, not segregated away at events designed specifically for them.

Gig Buddies became bigger than I could have imagined. It's now been shared with 22 organisations in 8 countries, meaning many hundreds of people with learning disabilities are having great social lives. Something I'd never had dreamed was possible when starting the charity all those years ago. Being the head of the charity has also seen me invited to speak at numerous events around the country and overseas. It's been a wild ride.

However, last year I was feeling that I was being called to do something else and saw an advert for a job at *All We Can* (previously the Methodist Relief and Development Fund).

The advert wanted someone who knew about Methodism, had experience of public speaking and, ideally, some local preaching experience. It sounded right up my street!



Methodist relief and development

All We Can have a unique approach to international relief and development in that instead of funding short-term projects (such as bore holes, new classrooms etc) they instead take a long-term approach working in partnership with organisations in the various countries. This puts those communities in the driving seat. They know what they need to lift them out of the situations they're in and *All We Can* work alongside them to enable this to happen. So often in today's world we hear politicians creating policies that are sound bites, or social media posts, promising quick-fix solutions to complex problems. The communities *All We Can* work with have faced all sorts of problems such as the ravages of war, poor healthcare, lack of education, disease, the effects of climate change, exploitation, gender inequality, the list goes on. There are no quick-fix solutions to these complex problems. What's needed is a long-term approach.

All We Can's approach is all about decolonising aid. Putting the people in those communities first, which was also always my vision at Stay Up Late, so that people with learning disabilities could lead on telling us how best to run our projects and making sure their voices were front and centre in everything we did. So whilst the world of international relief and development is totally new to me, I feel like I've found a home which shares similar values to those that I sought to work to in social care. So I'm the new Engagement Officer for London and the South East which means I'll be travelling round churches all over the area talking about our work and seeking to get more folk involved in supporting our work to transform the lives of people in some of the poorest and neglected communities. I'm up for bookings too!

Paul Richards

p.richards@allwecan.org.uk

Giving in 18th Century Wesleyan Methodism

Being fascinated by history in general, and Methodist history, and family history in particular, it is always satisfying when these interests overlap. There is no evidence that John Wesley ever wrote or said, 'Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can'. However, he certainly acted as if he had. I want to focus on one point in its eighteenth century context, 'to all the people you can'.

As the historian, Brendlinger, noted: John Wesley thought that 'The crucial factor necessary for Christianity to bring a change to society was for Christians to do good to all, and not a select few.' The prominent Wesleyan minister, Alexander Mather, wrote in 1786 to an unknown philanthropist stating who should be helped. Amongst the 'poor' he included, 'Orphans. Fatherless, widows, husbands, wives, children, servants, natives, & strangers. Of the household of faith, & ungodly'. He also listed those, 'having had no work to do, either by the severity of the weather, or scarcity of work, as in long & hard frosts. Gardeners, bricklayers, plasterers, painters, & their labourers, ...'. Note the inclusion of the 'ungodly', which for Mather probably meant most people!



The Poor Laws of the period meant that the poor could only be helped financially in their parish of settlement, usually where they were born. Parochial officers would take poor people for whom they were not responsible and who would be a cost to the parish, to their parish of settlement who were responsible for

them. This created much misery for poor families: and much paperwork from which historians, including family historians like me, have benefitted. In 1785 a Stranger's Friend Society was started by a member of Wesley's Chapel, London and it soon spread to other Methodist societies. The Bristol society started in 1786 and stipulated that, the recipients of the charity were not to be Methodists, but, 'poor, sick, friendless strangers', irrespective of religious and ethnic background!

The focus of these Societies was on those who were the 'non-local poor', who were ineligible for parochial poor relief where they lived.

One group who were not to be helped were those, 'who are too indolent to do any thing (sic) for themselves.' The problem of the 'undeserving poor' is one that people and governments have grappled with for centuries, and are still trying to deal with. However, Wesley seems not to have asked that question on all occasions. In early 1763 in an unusually cold winter John Wesley provided food and broth at the Foundry in London for 'great numbers of poor people' at his own expense, and organised a collection for the destitute without apparently asking any questions. Inspired by this example three days later George Whitfield did the same.

John Wesley was not just concerned about his compatriots. From 1756 to 1763 there was a global conflict, called the Seven Years' War. The main protagonists were France and Britain. In October 1759 Wesley became concerned, with the approach of winter, about the inadequacy of the clothing provided for c. 1,100 French prisoners of war, held near Bristol. He raised £23 from collections at the New Room, Bristol to buy them clothes and also made a public appeal through the press.

In a study of welfare in eighteenth century London, A. Levene, commented of Wesley's Methodism, 'This religious group was thus quite distinctive in seeking out poor families outside its own community for assistance.' (author's emphasis). There were, of course, many non-Methodists who acted with great compassion and generosity in the eighteenth century but, as Norris, in his study of the financing of John Wesley's Methodism in that period, commented, 'perhaps, however, the breadth of Wesleyan Methodists' concern for non-members was distinctive.' As we consider our actions in this circuit in the twenty-first century we would do well to remember that we have a worthy heritage.

Mick Hickman, Circuit Archivist

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 already looked at the first ten: Pray, Worship, Notice, Care, Learn, Open, Share, Challenge, Flourish &

Tell. In this edition we look at number **11 Share**. 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/>

11. Share

We share our faith

You get to partner with God.

God involves us in the task of bringing love and restoration. For we are God's coworkers, working together; you are God's field, God's building. (1 Corinthians 3:9)

There are lots of ways to share your faith. Sometimes it's fun to join with other people and put on a community event that has a presentation of the good news and space for conversation. Or you can be creative, using crafts to let people know that God loves them.

"The church had been running a fair for 40 years, with declining numbers. No one felt brave enough to cancel it. But one year, the team started doing weekly Lectio Divina sessions. Lectio Divina is a way of praying with the Bible; listening to a section and then sharing anything that jumps out to the readers. This gave them the confidence to say: 'This is dire, we need to stop and do something different!'



"They cancelled the fair and instead went to three community fairs that were happening in the town. They were intentional in noticing God at the fair, and afterwards they were overflowing with stories! Now, the group partners with a local organisation they met at one of the fairs, doing things together within the community "



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

Simple things to try

1. Using a webpage, coaster or floor map from **the Methodist Way of Life resources**, take a look at the other 11 stations **on the Discipleship Pathways map**. Where are there opportunities to share faith through these practices? <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/evangelism-growth/discipleship-pathways-travelling-together/>
2. Get involved in planning an event with some friends. For example, you could hold an open day to share how you're becoming an eco church, explaining why your faith affects your care for the world, and exploring different ways that people in the local community could also help creation to flourish.
3. Find an opportunity to move a church worship service outdoors where you are more visible to the local community.
4. Share your faith more intentionally on social media, by posting Scripture or hymns and saying why they matter to you, or posting about a spiritual experience.
5. Safely recruit and train volunteers to offer prayer and pastoral conversations at a summer fete.
6. Listen to a Taketime meditation based on Matthew 28:16-20: **The Great Commission**. <https://taketime.org.uk/themed-meditations/the-great-commission/>

Focus: Spring 2025

A look back at recent events:

In February 32 members of **Woodingdean Mens Club** gathered to celebrate its 9th birthday with cake of course, while the recent **Woodingdean Cameo Club** meeting attracted a good turnout to hear from local legend Kathleen Richardson speak.

On Easter Sunday **Patcham MC** celebrated its 90th birthday with a special café style service, an exhibition and of course cake!

At the end of March **Stanford Avenue MC** held its annual Spring & Craft Fair and raising an amazing £878.

In February at **Hove MC** a concert by 'The Cheer Up Mollys' provided an infectious blend of folk, acoustic, & Americana tunes. The traditional Good Friday walk by Hove folk was accompanied by fine weather & celebrated birthdays & wedding anniversaries.

On the next page are a selection of photos recording events:



Woodingdean



Mens Club



SA Artist in Residence



Patcham's 90th birthday



Hove Good Friday



friendship at SA



Hove Messy Church



Kath at Cameo



Stanford Ave Fair



Cheer Up Mollys



Tabletop at DG



Rev'd Sue at Hove



Tabletop at DG

Focus: Mission

Circuit Refugee Project Update:

A recent talk by the Brighton Table Tennis Club at The Dialogue Society's Ramadan Iftar Dinner at the Grand Hotel, reminded us how effective the nationwide City of Sanctuary movement, founded by the Methodist Minister Rev Dr Inderjit Bhogal, can be. As well as being a Sports Club of Sanctuary for Table Tennis, they have branched out into a weekly park run for Sanctuary Seekers, leading to over 20 Sanctuary Seekers running in the Brighton Marathon 2025. Recently, one of the female runners was suddenly moved, with little notice, from temporary housing in Brighton to Hartlepool. The Brighton Table Tennis Club immediately contacted the City of Sanctuary branch closest to Hartlepool. The family reported that within 24 hours, someone from City of Sanctuary had visited to welcome them to Hartlepool and signpost them to what is going on in their new local community.

In February, family and friends from Turkey visited Ruth & Ibrahim's home and gifted them a surplus of baklava. So Ruth took some baklava to The Jollof Cafe in Brighton. They were very pleased to add this to their menu for the day, which was a delicious pasta main and a fruit salad dessert.

March has been a busy month for the project. Three bags of food and toiletries were donated by Patcham MC to the Voices in Exile foodbank. £15 was made at a Circuit Project stall at Dorset Gardens' Table Top sale. Hove donated clothes, shoes, a backpack & £40 to the Care4Calais appeal for sanctuary seekers housed in the hotel for single women and families in Hove. This is currently the only



Sanctuary Seekers' hotel in our local area. The Network of International Women (NIW) have told us they currently get 30 to 40 people, mostly from this hotel, each week at All Saints' Friday Sanctuary afternoons. A Hove seafront walk once a week is also being organised by NIW and if it's popular, Ruth plans to join one of the walks in May.

The NIW's Sewing Collective had a stall at Stanford Avenue's Spring Craft Fair. These skilled craftswomen make beautiful gift items and bags from recycled fabrics. Stanford Avenue kindly waived the table fee for them. Our Circuit Refugee Project also had a free stall, right next to NIW, where we sold items crocheted by Mark Brogan, including hats, blankets, wraps and scarves which he had generously donated to us. We took £60. We all enjoyed the community spirit of clapping together whenever Cath Odd-Hayward rang the bell for another 'big prize winner' at her 'Pick-a-Card Game' opposite us!



Sewing collective at their workshop receiving fabric and textile donations from Hove MC.

The NIW Sewing Collective wish to thank Patcham and Hove church for some beautiful fabric and sewing goods donations. Ruth also picked up and donated gorgeous off-cut fabrics and discontinued fabric sample books from The Curtain Workshop opposite Hove Lagoon. The owner says she is keen to continue to support her fellow creatives at NIW in this way. 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 NIW Sewing

Collective will be at Hove MC's street fair again this July.

On March 17th, Circuit Refugee Project Rep for Patcham, Kay Harwood, reports that Paul Richards gave a very interesting talk to Patcham's Monday Circle about his new role as Engagement Officer at the Methodist International development and relief organisation, All We Can. While our Circuit Refugee Project has evolved to date supporting Sanctuary charities local to Brighton & Hove, we are always interested to learn and share about

international aspects of the refugee crisis. All We Can has served some of the most marginalised communities on earth for the last eight decades - since a group of Methodists answered the call of refugees in Europe in the 1930's. The charity's scope has widened over the years, their story is about the inherent value and potential in all people. Whether children fleeing tyranny, communities facing extreme poverty or injustice, or families hit by disaster. They answer through partnering with local innovators, projects and churches to unleash inherent potential and respond to John Wesley's call to 'Do all the good you can.' The Patcham Monday Circle donated £50 to All We Can.

In late March, we used some funds from our Circuit Refugee Project to purchase chocolate, nuts and dried fruit treats for Voices in Exile Brighton's Foodbank. This was for Easter/Eid celebrations for the 100 people (including 46 children) in the 35 households registered there. Stephen and Colin at ViE said 'Please say thank you to everyone who contributed to this wonderful donation - some lovely treats for our families!' Ruth also donated a few food shaped toys for children from the Middle of Lidl! (Photos available of Colin receiving donations, the food shaped toys & / or some of the chocolate and dried fruit)

The same week, some shoes, clothes, a backpack, chocolate and dates were dropped into NIW's Sanctuary afternoon at All Saints, Hove. Chocolate was also donated to the foodbank at the University of Sussex, used by several Sanctuary seeking families.

Sue went to a Together with Refugees /JPIT Zoom in March, which included information on how to write to your MP and make visible displays of support which would grab your local community's attention. It was part of the Constituency Action Network. They aim to have at least one church join from each parliamentary constituency. The aim is to hold MPs to account and let them know churches' position on supporting refugees & asylum seekers.

Ruth went to the Hybrid Meeting (In person at Brighton Town Hall & also via Microsoft Teams) of the Brighton & Hove Refugee & Migrant Forum where a range of BH Council workers spoke



about various initiatives to support the range of Sanctuary Seekers in Brighton & Hove. For example, with help from central government funding, a few large Afghan families have moved here under the Refugee Resettlement scheme. There were also updates on 18 month visa extensions for Ukrainians and other support for our local Ukrainian community. Sanctuary on Sea and the Library Service gave an update on their plans for Refugee Week in June (Refugee Sunday is June 22nd - watch church notices for more details).

Our Circuit Project Co-leads attended Voices in Exile's (ViE) 'Celebration of Impact' event in April at their Brighton base, the Fitzherbert Community Hub. ViE shared their Impact Report 2024 (copies available on request from Ruth or Sue). They also said goodbye to their amazingly experienced Director Mel Steel and welcomed their equally inspiring new one, Alison Kelly (previously their Head of Services). ViE shared moving stories and gave a powerful overview of what the charity has achieved and experienced in its 20 years so far. Nick, the Chair of Trustees, made the point that while the environment they work in is constantly changing, due to government policies, world affairs and wars, Voices in Exiles' values have always and will always remain the same: respect, justice, inclusivity, openness, solidarity and professionalism. Delicious food which we highly recommend, was served up by the Real Junk Food Project Brighton, who run The Fitz Cafe at the Fitz Community Hub, BN2 1AP every Tues - Fri 10am to 2pm.

Ruth plans to go to the May meeting at Redhill Methodist Church, of the District Sustaining Hope Gathering, for people supporting Refugees, Migrants & Displaced Persons. This is organised by Revd Hazel Forecast.

The Project Reps met in March to discuss updates on the Circuit Refugee Project and to plan for Refugee Week and future fundraising ideas. Watch church notices and Autumn Focus for further developments! Thank you all for your continued 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).

Dates for your diary

Calendar of Circuit Events:

- 1 May to 4th August **Revd Andy Lowe on Sabbatical.**
- Thurs 15th to Saturday 17th May **Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat** at Patcham MC
- Saturday 17th May **Beetle Drive/Cream Tea** Stanford Ave
- Thursday 22nd May **Local Preachers' Meeting** 7.30pm at Woodingdean MC
- Wednesday 25th June **Circuit Meeting** 7.30pm at Hove
- Saturday 28th June **Quiz Night** at Stanford Avenue MC
- Saturday 12th July **Action for Children** coffee morning SA
- Saturday 12th July **Street Party** 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

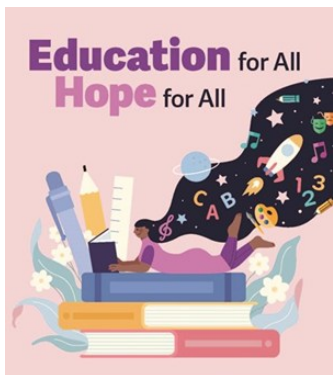
Special Services this Summer:

Circuit Together Service

At Dorset Gardens Methodist Church

18th May 2025 at 3pm including tea & cake

Led by Revd Karen Bell, Stella Goddard & Church reps



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.

Using material from Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB), 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.

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. All circuit church envelopes will be dedicated at this café style worship.



**Don't forget on Sunday 8th June at 8.00am
Pentecost Communion at Ditchling Beacon**

Circuit Healing Services

On 25th May, 27th June, 27th July, and 24th August 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.

July is Bible Month

Bible Month is an annual campaign that celebrates scripture by inviting the whole Methodist Connexion to feast on one particular book of the Bible together. This year the **Gospel of John** is on the menu with the theme: Abundant Life.



Gospel of John invites you to journey through the superabundant life Jesus offers. John's Gospel opens by presenting Jesus as the Word of God – the source of life and light for all people (John 1:1-18). In Jesus, we encounter God's boundless, gracious love, which brings us into a relationship with him as his children. Through Jesus, the fullness of grace and truth is offered to everyone willing to receive it.

To help make John a bit more bite-sized, each Sunday will focus on a particular theme:

- July 6: Embracing God and all reality.
- July 13: Signs, conversations and controversy.
- July 20: Jesus' discipleship course.
- July 27: 'The hour' and the resurrection and our drama.

Psalm of Gratitude

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. I will sing to your name, O Most High.

For you have upheld my right and my cause; You have sat on the throne, judging righteously. You have rebuked the nations; you have destroyed the wicked; You have blotted out their name forever and ever.

The enemy has come to an end; their ruins are perpetual; You have uprooted their cities; the very memory of them has perished. But the Lord sits enthroned forever; He has established his throne for justice.

He judges the world with righteousness; He executes justice for the peoples. The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

Those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you. Sing praises to the Lord, who sits enthroned in Zion! Tell among the peoples his deeds!

For he who avenges blood remembers; he does not forget the cry of the afflicted. Be gracious to me, O Lord! See my affliction from those who hate me, O you who lift me up from the gates of death,

that I may recount all your praises in the gates of the daughter of Zion, that I may rejoice in your salvation.

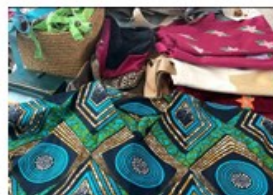
The nations have sunk in the pit that they made; in the net that they hid has their own foot been caught. The Lord has made himself known; he has executed judgment; the wicked are snared by the work of their own hands. Higgsaion. Selah

The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.

Arise, O Lord! Let not man prevail; let the nations be judged before your face! Put them in fear, O Lord! Let the nations know that they are but men! Selah



Sue Harrington



Sewing Collective

Give items to your Circuit Refugee Project Rep*

New/As New Items requested:

- Fabric (Sorry no duvet covers or clothes)
- Fabric Sample books
- Off cuts of fabric
- Lining
- Zips
- Thread



*Circuit Refugee Project Reps:

Sue Harrington (*Dorset Gardens*), Ruth Samur (*Hove*), Kay Harwood (*Patcham*), Ann Collins (*Stanford Avenue*), Terry Hammond (*Woodingdean*).

Holy God, you made us in love,
and each of us bear your image and
likeness,
we are wonderfully restored and renewed
by the work of your Spirit.
Help us to see and value the beauty of the gift of
your diverse creation
and so treat one another with the same
tenderness we receive from you.
May those who are frightened, uncertain or
anxious know your comfort and our support.
Amen

Revd Helen Cameron and Carolyn Godfrey, President and
Vice-President of the Methodist Conference

Stanford Avenue Methodist Church

Beetle Drive & Cream Tea

Saturday 17th May 2025
2-4pm

Adult: £5.00 per Adult Children: £2.50 per Child
To book your space please contact Liz on 01273 430508

Study Day: Speaking of Justice in Worship and Preaching



Rachel Lampard
Director of Social Justice & Social Action for The Methodist Church
She is talking on *Politics in the Pulpit?*



Right Reverend Nick Holtam
Bishop of Salisbury from 2011 until his retirement in 2021.

He is talking on *Study this age, sense its need, preach to its condition – preaching in such a time as this.*

Saturday 11th October 2025 from 10.00am to 2pm
At **Dorset Gardens Methodist Church, Brighton, BN2 1RL** dgmcc.org.uk
Further details at brightonhovemethodistcircuit.org.uk (Bottom of front page)
Please register attendance with Steve at steve.preston@brightonhovemethodistcircuit.org.uk

Thank you to Marilyn Richardson for proof reading and for all contributors.
Please submit your articles & photos to Steve Preston for our Autumn Edition by **22nd July 25.**

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