

South Kent Circuit Magazine, February/March 2018 edition

If you are using a PC or tablet, clicking on the links below allows you to access the pages or articles that interest you immediately. You could, of course, also just browse through the magazine page by page by scrolling through the pdf.

Page1

Page2

South Kent Methodist Circuit Ministerial Team

Page3

From the Manse

Page 4

Just a Thought

Page 5

With Regard to the Future
Lent Course

Page 6

Circuit Prayers

Page 7

One Week Without

Page 8

Circuit News
Charing
Dymchurch

Page 9

Folkestone
Grace Court

Page 10

Church of the Good Shepherd, Hamstreet
Headcorn

Page 11

St Michael's Methodist Anglican Church, Hythe

Page 12

Kennington
Lyminge

Page 13

New Romney
Rhodes Minnis

Page 14

Page 15

Shadoxhurst
Tenterden

Page 16

Daffodil Day
Folkestone Rainbow Centre

Page 17

Christmas Day Lunch at St Andrews

Page 18

Celebrations

Page 19

Don Keech Obituary

Page 20

Little Lambs Baby and Toddler Group

Page 21

Planning the Plan

Page 22

Headcorn Methodist Quiz
Stepping Stones

Page 23

Dates for Your Diary

Page 24

Circuit Map

SOUTH KENT CIRCUIT MAGAZINE

February/March 2018



The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice and let the oppressed go free Isaiah 58:6

The **Methodist** Church
South Kent Circuit



South Kent Methodist Circuit Ministerial Team

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1 Revd Kevin Taylor will usually work Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and EITHER Friday or Sunday each week.

450 The maximum number of words for articles to be printed in this magazine

This is a publication of the South Kent Methodist Circuit, including the United Reformed/Methodist Church meeting in Ashford & the Anglican/Methodist Church meeting at Hamstreet and Hythe. Items for publication will be gratefully received, but may be edited if necessary or omitted if deemed inappropriate. No anonymous articles will be printed. The views contained in this magazine are not necessarily the views of the editorial committee.

**DEADLINE for articles (450 words max) and dates of events
for April May issue: 3 March 2018**

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PLEASE CLEARLY MARK ALL ITEMS 'MAGAZINE'

From the Manse

Dear friends

I write this letter with Easter fast approaching. In the back garden there are earthenware pots with the newly formed heads of yellow, white and blue Spring flowers that have finally emerged after several unsuccessful 'sproutings' earlier in the year when they were totally confused by strange fluctuations in temperature, sunlight, water and wind. For these flowers it seems that this is the *right time* to flourish and develop. They have been misled several times by the 'false prophets' of our British weather and in their natural enthusiasm to seek the sunlight and develop and grow, they risked being ruined by surprise frosts, heavy rain and strong winds. Before the green shoots first appeared (albeit much too early) the bulbs also risked being eaten by the local squirrel population or unearthed by excavating cats, seeking to bury less attractive items than nuts I suspect.

I can't help feeling that we are very much like these plants during our Christian journey through this part of the eternal life that our God offers us. As undeveloped 'bulbs' we have been surrounded by the earth, pots and protective wire represented by the love and care of those who have looked after us. For some people, these protective measures fail and they are left, by varying degrees, to the mercy of the natural elements and 'predators'. Those of us who may manage to reach the point of 'sprouting', can be misled into trying to run before we can walk and it may not be in the safest or most desirable of environments. In the words of my Italian tutor, Giuliana Rosi, God says to us: 'Uno passo a` la volta' – *one step at a time* – but we don't always get the message and like these plants that I'm admiring, we have small marks and scars from frost burns and other damage arising from our enthusiasm having outstripped our physical and spiritual ability. But God always does something positive with our 'negatives'. God can always use us to show the glory of creation – if we are willing to trust and to allow ourselves to be used and to be dependent upon God. And so, spring flowers gently bounce in the breeze and energise our tired and winter-worn spirits with their beautiful, vibrant colours.

Well, during our life and faith journey, we've all had *our* turn at being the bulbs and young shoots that need care and encouragement. Most of us will be at various stages of the 'gently bouncing' and 'colourful' phase of our development (even if we don't always feel like it!) and it's vital that, in a Circuit of this size and variety, that we continue to support each other as much as practicable. The impending (and much deserved!) Sabbatical absence of our Superintendent during April, May and June will inevitably mean an even more thinly spread team of Local Preachers and staff. Many of our churches have already shown great imagination, resourcefulness and Christian generosity in helping to make the most effective use of the trained people that we have to lead our services. Some churches have combined to share some services and others have enjoyed the opportunities of conducting Local Arrangements. Others have prayed and encouraged and that's valuable too. I am sincerely grateful for what you have all done and I will welcome your further encouragement

and support as I (albeit inadequately), try to perform the role of Superintendent during the aforementioned three months.
Please pray for me, as I do for you all.

Kevin x

Just a thought...

Sixty years ago when I was admitted to membership of the Methodist Church, Holy Communion was irregular. Most services were called “Preaching Services” and ministers and local preachers fulfilled their tasks with this in mind. The Liturgical Movement throughout the Churches has significantly altered attitudes to how often Communion should be celebrated. We were reluctant to observe the sacrament too often because we considered it special, sacred, as if frequency of taking Communion reduced its value and importance.

Some 30 or more years ago, a minister in the York and Hull District speaking at Synod, maintained that most services should be celebrations of Holy Communion. With few ministers and many churches that could not be achieved easily, if at all! This statement does not undermine the value and importance of lay preaching throughout our Circuit, without which many of our churches would be deprived of regular services. The point I am coming to is this: would our congregations accept that whenever a presbyter is appointed the service could be Holy Communion?

Personally, I would prefer to celebrate Holy Communion, which is the epitome of Christian worship, whenever possible. A monthly Communion is the very least we should provide and as I travel around the Circuit I feel underused in the task to which I am called and ordained. Would it matter if when a minister was appointed there were two communion services one after another? Occasionally there are gaps of 4, 5 or 6 weeks between communions.

Nothing that I am saying should be considered a criticism of those who make the Plan: I am sure it can be a nightmare at times! All I am asking is rather than aiming for regularly spaced monthly communions when we can achieve this, and clearly often we can't, why not ask presbyters to celebrate Holy Communion whenever they are appointed?

Rev. Derek Hancock

[Editor's comment: The circuit leadership team invites any church council who would like to take Derek up on this offer to have more communion services than they currently do, to contact him well in advance if he is planned at your church. The church council might also want to consider having a similar advance conversation with any other presbyter planned to see if they would be equally happy to do this.]

With regard to the future

Technically, I am older than the Methodist Church! Its various separate groups came together in 1932 and I was born a matter of weeks before that happened. If therefore, somebody asked me what I thought about the Methodist church, I am quite well placed to give an informed opinion based on eight decades. It is both an organisation I cherish and one with which I have disagreed. I have served it in various capacities at home and overseas and seen how, over the years, its emphases have changed. One continuing strand has been my admiration for our professional Ministry. Among my regrets is the sequence of college closures and the decline of residential training. As for women in Ministry I offer them unhesitating welcome. The invention of the Diaconate I regard as a master stroke. Here I digress deliberately.

Some years ago I belonged to a political party. At monthly intervals our local branch along with most of the others across the country met to discuss some topic sent from Headquarters. Our collective view from the branch was sent off and blended with the others so as to help the Party develop a national perception. The aim was to anticipate the future and provide guidance on preparing the next election manifesto some years ahead.

Returning to Methodism, I see a Denomination almost invariably reacting to situations. If we are to be proactive where is the mechanism to ensure or at least attempt this? Given the professional demands of Ministry it seems quite unreasonable to expect them to envision the future. We have no real equivalent of the practice I described for a political party and I doubt if we could locate the equivalent of a 'think tank' in the Denomination.

Am I talking about prophets? If I am I need to define prophecy. A prophet is not one, in my view, who foretells the future. Rather, he or she looks carefully at present day events and draws conclusions about the likely consequences.

So, with regard to the future, dare we say that the prophetic tradition among us is alive and well? If not, what is to be done about it? We surely need it.

Geoff Chapman

Lent Course at Tenterden

Mondays 19th, 26th February & 5th, 12th, 19th March

It will be taken by Rev. Robin Blount on 'The Making of the New Testament'.

All are welcome to come, even if you cannot make all of the dates.

Tea/coffee will be available from 2.30pm.

Circuit Prayers

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.” (Mark 1:15 NRSV)

February-March brings us to the season of Lent when we recall the time spent by Jesus in the wilderness, his temptations, and the relevance of this season today. Visits to the wilderness areas of the Negev, and also around Jericho where the temptations traditionally took place, have taught me that desert places can offer a stark contrast to the tensions of regional conflict and the everyday struggles of existence, encouraging reflection on what is truly essential to our lives and to humanity.

To help readers of the Circuit Magazine to prepare for Lent I have chosen a prayer by David Batchelor from *On Eagles' Wings* (United Reformed Church, 2017). It is meant to accompany the scripture passage, Mark 1:9-15.

Lord Jesus, by baptism you align yourself with us;
By temptation you show us the way we should take.

Lord Jesus, you reject miraculous catering
yet show us how to share with the hungry;
and nourish the human spirit.

Be with those who feed hungry people,
and care for the sick in body and mind.
May we all follow your loving example.

Lord Jesus you reject coercion,
and a dictator's power.

A donkey king, who turned the other cheek,
and forgave 70 x 7;

Your weapons are compassionate words and deeds
and the Way of the Cross.

Be with those who reject complacent peace
that ignores the right of the poor and the oppressed.
May we all take the path of costly love.

Lord Jesus, you reject conjuring, trickery
and performances, to hit the celebrity headlines.

You lived and died for others,
as the Servant Messiah;
suffering trial, scourging, nails and spear,

to demonstrate your unconditional love.
Be with those who strive to follow in your way.
May we all humbly resist the tempter,
and focus on your loving and victorious example.

Revd Paul Dean

One Week Without

Sunday 4 March – Sunday 11 March 2018

Put yourself in their shoes.

Could you go without

- Hot showers
- Cooked dinners
- A warm bed
- Your phone, email and Facebook
- Or..... ?

Get sponsored to go 'One week without' and raise vital funds for Porchlight's work with rough sleepers in Kent.

For your FREE resource pack register your church or group at www.porchlight.org.uk/oneweekwithout or call 01227 813199



Porchlight

Changing attitudes Changing lives

'Being on the streets was the toughest thing I've ever had to go through... the cold, the hunger, the lack of sleep, the pain, the loneliness, the fear. You can't really sleep because you're scared. Your health deteriorates very rapidly, both physically and mentally and it's difficult to get the help that other people take for granted. Porchlight provided accommodation and support to help me address the depression and my other health problems. As soon as I had a roof over my head, I was able to start thinking about the future.'

James

Circuit News

Charing Jean Murray

The December weather was kind to us for our two carol singing activities and the money raised has been forwarded to Demelza and Action for Children. Our service on Christmas day, led by Philip Luscombe, was very well attended and we were pleased to welcome lots of visitors as well as some old friends. The collection on the day was in aid of Shelter.

Attendance at the weekly Wednesday coffee mornings has been variable due in part to the weather but the monthly board games meetings have attracted several people from outside the village.

The music and praise sessions continue on Wednesday evenings with our music group Laudate. These gatherings are for everyone who enjoys praising God through music whether by playing a musical instrument or singing.

Dymchurch Diana Blackwell

Many of our Christmas trees were again this year enhanced by the handiwork of Jean. Her lovely craft work was once again for sale and she was able to contribute £36 towards Chapel funds. So thank you Jean.

Knitters and Stitchers

Our Knitters and Stitchers Group met together in November for a lovely meal at the newly reopened Ship in Dymchurch. Twenty five of us sat down for our annual lunch and spent a couple of hours enjoying each other's company.

We were sorry to hear of the passing of Elsie, our oldest member, at the end of December. She had been unable to attend for a while but had continued to knit. She would have been 104 years old this month.

Our final figures for 2017 are – 65 blankets, 91 jumpers, 26 baby hats, 113 larger hats and 80 cot blankets, all for Operation Sunshine. Our congratulations and thanks to all our knitters for such an amazing output.

Our Christmas Eve Service was very well attended this year and it was a pleasure to have visitors from other Churches in the Circuit. Sam and Kevin led the Service of Lessons and Carols. We had a lovely warm Chapel, the heating being assisted by about 100 night lights also illuminating us. Many stayed afterwards for light refreshments. Thank you to Beryl for playing the organ.

The Christmas Day Service was led by Jim Wilson.

To any friends who are unwell at the moment our best wishes and prayers. To Penny, we hope you continue to improve after your recent (unplanned) hip replacement.

Our greetings and best wishes to all for 2018.

Folkestone Marjorie Williams

We had a good Christmas at Sandgate Road. Carol singing on the forecourt was a success, we were joined by members of St Andrews and the 'Singing for Health' group, thanks to all. Sam led our DIY Christingle Service, approximately 60 people took part all with Christingles to take home - any left over were given to the Winter Shelter for Christmas Day. It was good to have children at the Christingle Service. There were not so many at the Christmas Morning Service but most stayed for tea/coffee and a chat afterwards.

Our last Service of the year was led by Jim Wilson - a very thought provoking service, with Jim doing a monologue as an innkeeper at the time of the birth of Jesus and when he was crucified. Thank you very much Jim.

At Folkestone our collections from the Christmas lunch held on 17 December, Carol singing and Christmas services this year are going to Action for Children, those collections totalled £552.30.

Following the Christmas break our usual meeting rota will reconvene - Joy of Music - Mondays and Thursdays at 10.30am.

"Light" Aerobics on Monday at 2pm. and Friday at 10.30am. followed by tea/coffee.

Other Aerobic Groups are on Monday at 4pm. and Friday at 6.30pm.

Coffee mornings are at 10 am. till 11.30 am. All welcome.

We wish all our friends around the circuit a Happy New Year.

Grace Court Val Redding

On December 20th residents and Live at Home members were invited to share a Christmas Lunch provided by the Masons at their premises opposite Grace Court. A lovely meal held in a very welcoming atmosphere.

During the past year several members have joined our Live at Home scheme and events and activities have been well attended and, hopefully, enjoyed. The January programme will include a Winter Warmer Lunch and a Fish & Chip Lunch.

As always, volunteers are a vital part of these programmes – for driving, helping at events and also befriending members in their own homes. We are very grateful to all our helpers and would welcome any further offers of support. Contact Mrs Sasha Williams, Live at Home Co-ordinator, Tel: 07545 903611.

Margaret Pratt who is 101 years old is now living in full time residential care with the support of her family. Grace Court will be welcoming a new tenant in January and we hope he will be very happy in his new home.

We would like to send our best wishes for 2018 to all members of the Circuit.

"If you judge people, you have no time to love them." – Mother Teresa

Church of the Good Shepherd, Hamstreet

Bill Miller

Our church's annual toy service was held on 3rd December, Advent Sunday. This is always a popular event both with our church members and the village and district as a whole. The latest service was no exception. The church was absolutely packed with 69 adults and 60 children, a record. The number of gifts donated was a magnificent 140, also a record. The children and young people, plus a number of adults, were set the task of making a Christmas candle in 25 sections. The idea was to open one per day and on Christmas Day there was a prize of "Smarties". This produced a very large number. Along with our usual tall Christmas tree these added to the happy Advent atmosphere. As always the mixture of Advent worship and youthful fun proved to be the right mixture to make this event a great success. Gill and David Smith are to be congratulated yet again for planning and conducting the service and Val Showell for delivering the gifts to a grateful "Sure Start" for distribution to the many needy families in South Ashford.

The church launched into the festive season with a carol concert on 16th December. The theme of the evening was the era of Charles Dickens. Some of those attending were dressed in the style of that time. We sang traditional Christmas carols and we were entertained by some lesser known works by our music group. There was an excellent performance by Jan, Gillian and Alison Kirkland who brought us some traditional music presented in a different fashion. As a break from the music there was a sketch which included several Dickensian characters including Mr. Pickwick, Scrooge, Miss Havesham and, of course, Tiny Tim. Gill Smith was the narrator. Judging by the laughter and applause this interlude was enjoyed by the audience. The evening concluded with a buffet and mulled wine. Thanks to those who provided this. Rev. Rod Whateley, despite the fact that he was still recovering from surgery and only using one arm, conducted the concert in his usual friendly and relaxed manner. The music chosen and directed by Ian Kirkland was excellent. He and the music group are great assets to our church and we are grateful for arranging this concert and for all that they do during the year. Gill and David planned and wrote the sketch in their usual skilled manner. It was an enjoyable evening and, hopefully, it will be repeated in future years.

Headcorn Colin Pearson

The first Friday of the month has now become a special date in the Headcorn calendar. In December, we started a new venture "Cake and Company", meeting for two hours in the afternoon. It is designed for people affected in any way by memory problems, their carers, friends and anyone who enjoys some good company. As the name suggests, the refreshments provide a good start to the afternoon, but there are also opportunities for people to try their hand at jigsaws or other games, or just to indulge in conversation. Such ideas can take some considerable time to

get off the ground, but our first sessions have been most encouraging.

Meanwhile, our fund-raising efforts for our repairs and alterations continue. Elsewhere in the magazine, you will find details of a quiz competition we will be running. It is hoped that copies will be in churches very soon. But the more unusual venture is the CD "Raising the Roof" that has been produced by Bella, our next door neighbour. She has approached a number of local musicians, who recorded the items, and then used her contacts in the recording world to produce a very varied CD. It not only has songs, piano and organ, but also includes an accordion and a harp. It even includes a contribution from the Vicar's dog!

St. Michael's Methodist Anglican Church, Hythe

Dudley Shipton

Once again I need to report with sadness the death of two people who have been part of the congregation of St. Michael's. Sheila Griffiths died aged 87 years at Brampton Lodge with her family around her on 14th November. She had been part of the fellowship since coming to live in Hythe over ten years ago. Sheila was very much involved in local activities and was, until she moved into Brampton Lodge, a regular worshipper in the congregation and a supporter of the Tuesday Fellowship. We will miss her professionalism and amusing wit.

Mention must also be made of Joan Ross aged 89 years who died at Tynwald Residential Home on 20th November. She was very much a part of the former St. Michael's Anglican Church and of the joint Church. A former senior nurse and life-long supporter of the Girl Guides, the brasses at St. Michael's were always a credit to her dedication and resolve.

We have also been informed that a former member of the Methodist congregation, Gladys Joynings has died. She and her husband Cliff were an integral part of the Church until they moved North to be with their son.

On 10th December there was a fitting celebration to mark the life and ministry in Hythe of Revd. Desmond Sampson. Very many thanks for his dedication and service to the Church and community and to all who contributed towards the farewell.

The Carol Service on 17th December drew an increased congregation thanks to the excellent contribution of the Hythe Town Concert Band and their Conductor, Leslie Lake. It was good to involve our local Band which is seeking to re-establish itself in the local community. Very many thanks to all involved. The retiring collection raised £100 towards the Band's expenses and £100 for Action for Children.

The United Reformed Church joined us for worship on Christmas morning which was led by our minister Revd. Kevin Taylor and Revd. Hilary Nabarrow. We were reminded of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service planned for 6.30pm on Sunday 21st January at the United Reformed Church in Hythe.

We give thanks to all who support St. Michael's especially those local people who now come along to join us in worship.

We wish everyone a happy and peaceful New Year.

Kennington Stewart French

At last we have seen the first draft of the plans for our renovation: these will be discussed with the congregation and a meeting has been arranged with the architect in late February to take things to the next stage. Available funding will decide what parts of the proposals can be carried out at this stage, and what needs to be held back for a future time.

By the time the magazine has been printed we should have hosted another Syrian 'get-together' in the church, which allows the Ashford area Syrian community to mix and relax, and enjoy the company of folk from their own background and experiences. They also share their music and food with us, and the food alone makes hosting these sessions well worth while!

Whilst God is blessing us in many ways, we should also remember those in our fellowship who are struggling with health issues: I won't mention them by name here, but please pray for them (and those in other churches similarly affected) and their families.

Lyminge Mary Blanch

Thank you to everyone who supported the concert given by the Haywardians, which raised over £320 and helped kickstart the Christmas activities. The next day a group of us sang carols in Mount Pleasant Close to launch the switch-on of their Christmas lights and a magnificent sum of £460 was raised towards their chosen charities.

Several years ago a group of us read '*The Shack*' by Wm Paul Young, a book described as "having the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* did for his". In the autumn of last year a film was released, which some of our members were able to see and recommend. In December Pam and Ian very kindly issued an open invitation to their home for a showing of the DVD (which 10 of us accepted), at the same time raising money towards our Christian Aid Christmas project. It is a very moving, thought-provoking story and if you have not seen it then Pam and Ian would be very happy for you to borrow the DVD.

One aim of the Christmas project was to write messages to friends in lieu of cards and the amount raised overall was £150. Our thanks to Pam and Ian for arranging this.

For many months the Knit 'n Natter group and other friends were busy knitting angels and on Saturday, 23rd December, along with Sam, Kevin and the dog, nearly 400 were 'dropped' around the village with messages of love, joy, peace..... attached. The reaction has been amazing, with wonderful comments like: '*This evening I was overwhelmed when I discovered an Angel on our fence.... I discovered that many hand-made angels have suddenly appeared around the village all delivering a different message. Now that's the beauty of Christmas! .I love this village. It is full of so many wonderful people....' '...A lovely thought over Christmas. Thank you.'* 'It made

my Christmas'!

With the church beautifully decorated, we celebrated with two services on Christmas Eve, including a candlelit Carol Service. This was very ably prepared by our worship leaders and led by Christina, with the congregation choosing their favourite carols, including a few new ones, and readings, expressing the viewpoint of the innkeeper, a shepherd, a Bethlehem resident and a rat, which gave us something to think about!

We have had another Elham Valley afternoon tea service and a further meeting has been arranged in January to discuss future planning.

Many of us were able to attend the Thanksgiving Service for Ian Andrews and we continue to hold Daphne in our prayers, as we do so many who have lost loved ones in recent months. Jean has suffered complications following her cataract operation and we pray for Alistair and Ron and their families as they continue to deal with their health problems.

New Romney Colin Hancox

Christmas here started off with a total of 1042 knitted angels appearing around the area having been knitted and stored throughout the year by our ladies. It was estimated that it took about 1500 hours to knit and distribute them. Many thanks to Gloria and everyone else who brought a bit of the Jesus story to New Romney this Christmas. It produced a lot of excitement among youngsters on their way to school, and a lot of positive comment on social media. Our local community church even used the platform of their candlelit carol service to thank us. We very much appreciated the help of Sam & Kevin in distributing the angels. Thank you both for coming, not only for your physical help but also for the encouragement it gave to a small church.

In our Carol Service 2 full grown angels helped with humour to bring home the story of Jesus birth to us. We were also blessed with 3 youngsters in the congregation, and what a difference their presence made to the service. Our Christmas Eve service was led by Rev. Peter Firth and this year it was the turn of Dymchurch to host our united Christmas Day service, though illness prevented some of us from attending.

Finally, Happy New Year everybody and God Bless.

Rhodes Minnis Chris Tutton

Everyone at Rhodes Minnis was saddened to learn of the death of Ian Andrews on 17th November, 2017 following health problems over a period of many months. Throughout that period Ian continued to attend Sunday worship whenever he was able to and continued to have his ready smile and sense of humour. Over the last few years, Ian had been involved in many of those "behind the scenes" jobs needed to keep the Chapel going – helping with the mowing, doing the little jobs of repair

etc. - he went quietly about his business helping us all in all sorts of ways.

When I last saw him a few days before he died he was a little quieter than usual but had lost none of his interests or humour. The day I visited he had been trying to follow the passing aircraft on his laptop (a hobby which had become more and more regular once he had become more tied to his chair by the window at home) and had complained that the visibility for the last few days had not been conducive to spotting aircraft as they make their way over Lyminge to and from Gatwick and Heathrow. In the last few months Ian had been forced to reduce the time he spent with his stamp albums, he found that sitting bent over was not helping his breathing problems so the stamps took a back seat and the aircraft spotting became more and more his daily hobby after reading the paper and doing the crossword.

On 8th December, following a family service at Barham Crematorium, a memorial service was held in the Chapel at Rhodes Minnis when over 70 people attended – not only was the Chapel full but so was the kitchen! Rev. Kevin Taylor led this service and afterwards refreshments were served in the village hall. Ian, you are being missed so much – not just by Daphne but also by the rest of us at Rhodes Minnis.

A number of us were able to attend the MWIB Advent service on 1st December at Elham when Richard Blackwell led a very interesting service. Our Carol service on Thursday, 14th December was quite well attended including some folk from the village and afterwards we were able to send £60 to Demelza House charity for children.

One of our members, Ronnie has recently had an operation on her hand (which came at a bad time as she continues to deal with other health issues) but I am pleased to report she is making good progress following surgery.

At the time of writing this article, we are about to have another meeting of the Valley churches to discuss the progress made of working and sharing worship with each other on a monthly basis and to discuss the way forward in trying to maintain a Methodist presence in the Elham Valley. We pray we will continue to be inspired with ideas and dare to think “outside of the box” of not how we used to do things but more of how can we do things. Change is never easy but unless we do change the ways we operate, we will be left to wither without any signs of new growth in the Valley.

Thank You

Thank you most sincerely to everyone for all the sympathy cards (over 100 received) and for all the beautiful bouquets of flowers given to me. Thank you also to those who came to Ian's Thanksgiving service, a wonderful turn-out. In my 65+ years of attending Rhodes Minnis Chapel, I have never seen it so full and I probably won't again! Many thanks also to those who gave donations in Ian's memory for the RNLI and the Kent Air Ambulance, to date these have raised nearly £700. Last but not least, thank you to Kevin and Sam for their love and support.

Daphne Andrews

Shadoxhurst Lisa Cooper

For Café Church in Advent, the journeys of Mary and Joseph, the Shepherds and Wisemen, were recalled using a powerpoint and story - and then we turned our thoughts to our own journeys through Advent to once again meet Jesus. We made Christmas decorations to take home – stars made from beads and pipe-cleaners – and at one point the church fell silent as a little cherubic toddler began to sing ‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star’. We had several visitors, 2 of whom attended for the first time and said they’d come again.

Over the following 2 weeks several people, including the children, put Christmas Angels out around the village. We do not have many public areas – no shops or schools where there is a lot of footfall – many of our roads don’t even have pavements! Nonetheless, we wanted to be in on the action, inspired by Dymchurch’s angels last year. Several members had been busy knitting angels, or making them from felt, or, in the case of the children, clay and an angel shaped cookie cutter (they then painted them). Labels were written with good wishes for Christmas and saying ‘please take me home, a gift from Shadoxhurst Methodist Church’. Because of wet weather the angels were tied up in little sandwich bags before going out into hedgerows and onto benches and street signs. Those that were not found by anyone were rounded up and distributed to visitors at our services on Christmas Eve.

We were delighted on Christmas Eve morning to have 15 visitors in our service, including 5 children. Three members from Appledore joined us rather than have an LA, and the other visitors were families from the village who had received our flyer advertising ‘Christingles & Carols’. Everyone made their own Christingle and we sang a carol with the candles lit and said prayers offering ourselves to shine like lights in the darkness of our world. Towards the end of the service we had our traditional visit from Father Christmas who gave gifts to everyone.

Our ‘midnight’ service was not so well attended as it sometimes is – perhaps because it was a Sunday with many opportunities to go to church on that day. Thank you to Philip for leading the service and to Robin Blount for playing the organ.

We now look forward at the start of a significant year – the 150th anniversary of our current building. How will we celebrate? How do we encourage those who have lived close by for ages and never been through the door to come and meet us? How many visitors might we attract to our special services? We trust in God who will do great things – so watch this space.

Tenterden Christine Endersby

Our Christmas Tea went well, with around 25 people attending. We were able to make use of our new coffee area and Dorothy entertained us with some Christmas recollections. Our Carol Service was arranged by Rev. Alwyn Knight who also managed to play the organ as well. The Service consisted of Carols and Readings selected by Alwyn and read by members of the congregation and then

Alwyn gave us a thought provoking address. This was followed by tea and cakes which was enjoyed by everyone. We did not have a Service on Christmas Day but both Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve Services were well attended. During December we have had a small kitchen area installed behind the pulpit in the Church and one of the toilets has been re-configured so that it can be used as a separate unit if necessary. This means that we will be able to use the Church building, and possibly let it out, even when we have the Busy Bees meeting on the premises. We are indebted to David Cox who has project managed this. We hope that with the completion of many of the new houses in the Town we will soon be able to welcome new members to our congregation.



Daffodil Day

This year Daffodil Day at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, will take place on Monday 5th March.

It is hoped that the circuit will once again run a coach, picking up in both Folkestone & Ashford. Whether you have been before or would like to give it a try for the first time, please contact me to book your place tel: 01303 243102. All welcome. Eileen Morgan

Folkestone Rainbow Centre

The Winter Shelter has now been running since the beginning of December, although sadly there are 20 rough sleepers and only 13 beds, with one client needing residential care. Please continue to pray for this wonderful work, that provision will be found for the homeless, and for the staff and volunteers, who work so hard.

There has been another increase in families accessing the Foodbank, but 2 tonnes of food was donated by Tesco in their Christmas Collection – a wonderful response by customers and supermarket. Waitrose also had a collection point. The Foodbank is now being accessed by people on the Marsh, so we are very grateful to all who regularly buy food for this venture.

We are also thankful for all the financial support given by individual churches as well as support for various events. The Big Sleep Out raised £5,500, Count Your Blessings £1,000 and a Sausage Sizzle event at Bunnings (Park Farm) raised £257, plus a valuable opportunity to promote our work. The Sponsored Walk of the Kings took place on the 6th January and it is hoped there will soon be a date for the annual Knit-In and Quiz. Watch this space!!

Many of you may be considering a New Year 'spring-clean' and we would like to remind you that the Rainbow Shop in Cheriton would be very grateful to receive

good quality ladies' clothes and bric-a-brac in particular. We can only raise money if there is sufficient stock!

We hope the new leaflets, which should now be on display in your church, are proving useful, the latest newsletter is available and the new website is www.rainbow-centre.org.

Thank you all again for your continuing prayers, especially for the appointment of a new CEO to replace Jon Wilson after Easter and the three new Trustees (see newsletter).

Mary Blanch

Christmas Day Lunch 2017 at St. Andrews Methodist Church

Dear friends,

In this our fourth year a number of people were referred to us from several organisations, these being The Crisis Team, Winter Shelter, Local churches, people from our community who would be alone at home and a number from Sheltered Accommodation.

The chefs from last year, who are Kent Army Cadets adult leaders, joined us once again in the kitchen and with the support and enthusiasm of volunteers both old and new we collectively set up the hall, prepared the food and entertainment and shared in the many tasks needed to create a time that would both benefit and leave good memories for all who took part. As one of our helpers pointed out "the continuity and commitment of people helps others to feel they are special and have a part to play in society."

The hall was set out with that same love and care and to quote a guest, "what one saw on the peering into the hall was the most beautifully decorated room one could imagine, divided into different areas. An overall reception area with inward facing chairs, (that later became the carol singing area), a corner for the musicians, and the tables for the guests after the singing. ...An army of cheerful welcoming helpers swung into action. (This is not to forget the hours spent spud bashing the previous day). Between courses there was a quiz (with the table covered with choose your own prizes)."

Following on from last year, and previous years, the impact of this day continues to have a profound effect on both guests and helpers. One example of this was shared by two of our helpers about two guests from last year who at that time were 'rough sleepers'. These guests have turned their lives around and now with their own accommodation and one in permanent employment, were able to share their experiences with others still on the streets. Another guest expressed how the Christmas lunches had challenged them into socialising once again rather than shutting themselves away from society.

It wasn't all perfect however, and we did have guests who didn't stay long

because they found it all too much, were very angry with life in general and who struggled to socialise at such an event, despite the love and encouragement the team offered. We need to keep these people especially in our prayers asking that God would break through and touch their lives in a special way. All of us are created in God's image and so when we serve people we serve as unto Christ. I believe, as a team, we once again achieved this.

Anya Goldsack

Celebrations

I am currently reading a book by Jeff Lucas (one of my favourite authors) who highlighted something from Deuteronomy chapter 14 where, in the middle of talking about tithing etc, God says, through Moses: - have a party! The context is as follows, with my emoldened text of where God tells us to let our hair down a bit:-

*"Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always. But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the Lord your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the Lord will choose to put his Name is so far away), then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the Lord your God will choose. **Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice.** And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own."*

Although I had frequently read this verse, the concept of God saying - "Go on, have a party" during the big feasts had never struck me before. Whilst there are times that it is right to be quiet, and thoughtful in church, our God really wants us to have fun in his presence as well, whilst not neglecting those less fortunate than ourselves.

What a wonderful thought.

Stewart French

GIVE ME A BREAK

An atheist was spending a quiet day fishing when suddenly his boat was attacked by the Loch Ness monster. In one easy flip, the beast tossed him and his boat high into the air. Then it opened its mouth to swallow both. As the man sailed head over heels, he cried out, 'Oh, my God! Help me!' At once, the ferocious attack scene froze in place, and as the atheist hung in mid-air, a booming voice came down from the clouds, 'I thought you didn't believe in Me! 'Come on God, give me a break!!' the man pleaded. 'Two minutes ago I didn't believe in the Loch Ness monster either!'

Obituary

Don Keech 1922-2017

Don Keech, known to many in the former Ashford circuit as a lay reader, died on 27th November, aged 95 years. Don and Margaret became full members of Bank Street church in 1949 and it played a significant part in their lives and they made many good friends. Both had many roles in the church at different times and Don was Sunday School Superintendent for many years, and was very involved in the transformation of the church into the Centrepiece. He also became a lay reader and, with Margaret assisting with readings and poems, led services in many chapels around the circuit, always adding his own anecdotes and visual aids, and meeting new friends.

Don and Margaret enjoyed performing in the plays and pantomimes with the Bank Street players. Don excelled at Pantomime dame and being an Ugly sister, and also played Scrooge and many other parts.

He liked to use his carpentry skills as a father and grandfather and also in the church. He made forts, farms, dolls' houses etc. out of odds and ends of wood, at the kitchen table or in his shed. At Bank Street, he helped to construct a whole Victorian street for a Christmas bazaar and he was always available with his paint-brushes and tools, to help with any project.

Cubs and Scouts were another aspect of his life. Through Margaret's role as Akela, he became involved in training Cubs and awarding sporting badges at Cub camps. He was awarded his own silver thank you badge for his contribution. They made lifelong friends among the Cub and Scout leaders and enjoyed lots of barn dancing with some of them.

After Margaret died in 2008, Don survived for 4 years at home, supported by his sons, Alan and Roger and their wives until mobility issues made it increasingly difficult to manage and he became very unhappy. He had spent his life enjoying talking to people and a respite spell in Sevington Mill proved to everyone that he preferred to live with other people, so he moved in. He was well cared for and had great fun teasing and being cheeky to the carers and district nurses. He took an interest in where they lived and who they had in their family. He was very happy there until, after several hospital stays in the last couple of years, he needed nursing care and was admitted to Halden Heights for convalescence, then moved in permanently. Excellent care saw him through to a dignified and peaceful end, shortly after his 95th birthday.

In his own words: "I've had a good innings and we've had some fun!"

Alan, Roger and their families would like to thank all those who sent their condolences and made contributions to the church, in memory of Don.

"The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us." — C.S. Lewis

St. Andrews Little Lambs Baby and Toddler Group

Since our last article in the Circuit Magazine an amazing grant was awarded that covered the whole of our estimated start-up costs. So, Janet, my co-leader from the Cheriton Pentecostal church, and I went shopping for toys. I think if the truth be known we both went back to a second childhood.

We opened on 2nd November and were very pleased to have two of our Cheriton Councillors join us. We now have 36 babies/toddlers registered with us. We are gradually building up our relationship with the parents/carers and they were all invited to the 'fun afternoon' service at St. Andrews. Two families came and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Our first half term has gone very well. There has been good teamwork and a friendly environment for all, with very positive comments being made by the parents/carers. We have provided a wide range of craft activities, equipment and toys for a stimulating environment for the children. Every week as a part of their snack the children enjoy fresh fruit donated by a local supermarket. The sessions end with everyone dancing to action songs and the children playing instruments along with the music. As we have built relationships with the parents/carers they have started to offer help in a number of ways, which is very encouraging as it shows signs of them beginning to own and feel part of the group.

For our last session before Christmas, we arranged for Revd Sam Funnell to share the Christmas story in the church, before going on to the party in the hall. The children were encouraged to dress up as characters from the nativity and to bring along the stick puppets they had made the previous week to enable them to join in. There were also large knitted nativity characters which Sam used with the children to help illustrate the scenes. One little girl dressed up as an angel and stood still all through the story simply smiling at everyone and for her part received a well deserved round of applause. The party then moved into the hall which had been decorated for the event. This included an eight-foot blow-up snowman which amazed the children, stopping one in her tracks as she looked up in awe. Bunnings the DIY store offered free face painting through their community project, and games of 'pass the parcel' and 'hunt the elves' were played and enjoyed by the parents as well as the toddlers. The Christmas party was offered free and there was lots of party food which was provided by Little Lambs. Parents also asked if they could help with some providing cakes and waffles which was much appreciated. To end our Christmas party, instruments were handed out for a singalong ending with 'Jingle Bells' and 'We wish you a Merry Christmas'. As the children left Sam gave them each a copy of a colourful booklet telling the story of the nativity together with a nativity scene advent calendar. Some parents commented that it was the best Christmas party they had been to with their children. We're now looking forward to a happy and exciting year ahead. We would ask for your ongoing prayers as we endeavour to fulfil Proverbs 22:6, "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it".

Anya Goldsack

Planning the Plan

Have you ever stopped to think how the Preaching Plan comes to be printed? Well it's not a one person job, there's a small team, lead currently by Rev Kevin Taylor. Kevin, ably assisted by Christine Slater and Lisa Cooper, has the job of marrying preachers to actual Sunday services on a very large sheet of paper.

Then there is me. I collect together all the information provided by ministers and preachers as to which Sundays they are available to take services and how many services they are willing to take on a given Plan. This information, together with details of any special requirements from churches (that's if they bother to let me know), is sent to Kevin who first fills in where the Holy Communion services will be at each church. Once that's done he gets his team together to fill in all the other spaces.

In the meantime I will have prepared a blank centre spread of the Plan with dates, special Sundays and the lectionary and also the front and back pages. Once Kevin has finished I transpose all the information from his large sheet onto the centre spread of the Plan. A draft of this is then sent round electronically to all ministers and preachers to see if any preachers are able to fill any of the LA's on the Plan. Then it goes for printing and sending out to churches. So if you still have an LA when you get your copy of the Plan it's no good trying to get a preacher to fill it as their arms have already been twisted many times in the process of generating the Plan.

Over the next six month planning period we are faced with an additional problem. Rev Sam Funnell will be on sabbatical from 2 April to 1 July and then Rev Phillip Luscombe will retire from 8 July so that's a minister down. To this we will also have lost the services of 2 Supernumeraries (one from our Circuit and one from another) and 1 Local Preacher due to long term health problems. This means that either churches are going to have to have more united services or have more local arrangements.

In the later case help is available from Methodist HQ in the form of notes for guidance to churches and even complete services with prayers hymns, readings and a sermon. You will find a copy of the step-by-step guide to Local Arrangements from HQ included with the March to May plans. Please use it prayerfully to help us cope with a very challenging period for the Circuit Plan-making team over the March to August period.

Jim Wilson

A Baptist preacher went to see a member of the community and invited him to come to Church on Sunday morning. The man was a producer of fine peach brandy and told the preacher he would love to attend his Church if the Pastor would drink some of his brandy and admit doing so in front of the congregation. The preacher agreed and drank up. Sunday morning came and the man came to Church. The preacher recognized him from the pulpit and said: "I see Mr. Johnson is here with us this morning. I want to thank him publicly for his hospitality this week and especially for the peaches he gave me and the spirit in which they were given."

Headcorn Methodist Quiz

Headcorn Methodist Church has a project to repair the ceiling in our worship area and to provide disabled toilet facilities for the benefit of our local community.

Please support our fundraising by purchasing a copy of our Fun Quiz which will be available, price £1.00, in churches across the South Kent Circuit from Thursday 1 March 2018.

Closing date for entries is Saturday 31 March 2018.
Answers will be published after the closing date.

Stepping Stones

**Stepping Stones first meeting for 2018 - 2.30pm February 17th
Wye Methodist Church**

'Radically revising what is meant by prophecy'

The meeting will be an open discussion introduced by a dialogue between Revd. Robin Blount and Geoff Chapman discussing the need for a modern understanding of what we mean by prophecy not confined to the Bible but having far wider relevance to the way we live now. Admission is free and all are welcome.

The Stepping Stones project seeks to reappraise Christian tradition with a view to understanding and interacting with present day secular society. It publishes handbooks, sponsors meetings and has a website at www.southkentmethodistcircuit.org.uk

Dates for your Diary

Mon 5th February – Mission Group Meeting at 7.30pm at the home of Pam & Ian Couchman – new members would be very welcome to attend

Sat 17th February - Wye Methodist Church 2.30pm – Stepping Stones meeting on 'Prophesy'

Thurs 22nd February – Leaders of Worship & Preachers' Meeting – 7 for 7.30pm at Cade Road

Mon 5th March - Daffodil Day – contact Eileen Morgan to book your coach seat

Wed 14th March - Circuit meeting – 7pm for 7.30pm – St. Andrew's CT19 4DY

Lent course – see advert on page 5 for details

Advance dates:

Circuit Farewell for Philip & Laurel, Sunday 8th July at Cade Road, 6.30pm

Circuit Welcome for Rev. Helen Hollands, Wed 5th September, Cade Road, 7.30pm



Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Isaiah 58:6-7

