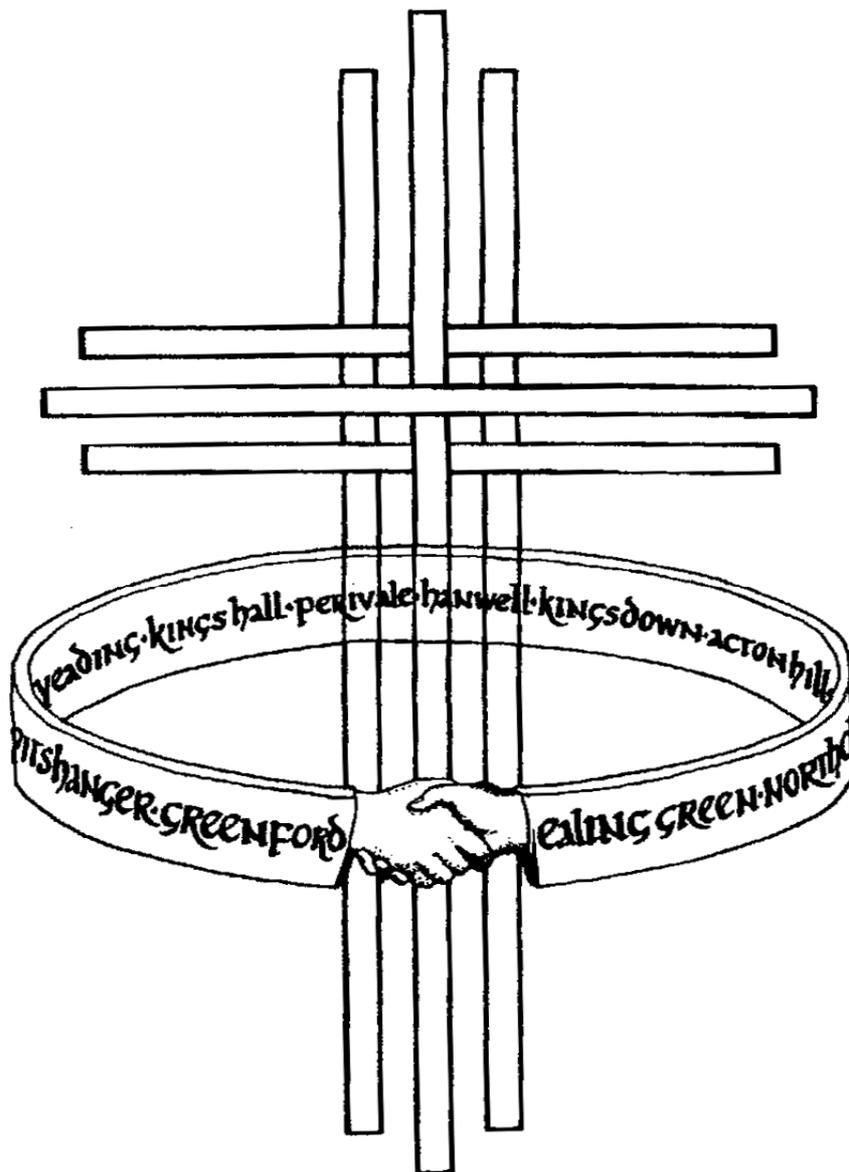


In-touch

No 65

September - November 2013



The magazine for *all* the Ealing Trinity Circuit.

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Circuit website
www.ealingtrinity.org.uk

Front Cover designed by Marion Narain

From the Superintendent

Welcome to the September edition of In Touch, our Circuit magazine! After the thrill of hosting an ordination at Hanwell and the relative quiet of summer, we are back to school and work; a truly creative time. Congratulations to all those people taking up new roles as stewards, pastoral visitors, and assorted other positions in our churches, and we will commit to pray for each other during the ongoing year.

I have been reading a little about the theories of the now dead economist, Albert Hirschmann. He made a lifelong study of economic renewal and development in cultures across the globe, fascinated by how post-conflict or impoverished situations could be renewed. He was most interested in the unintended consequences of great schemes and developments that had not worked out as anticipated, but where adaptation had led to fruitful outcomes. Creativity, he argued, could never be anticipated. It would always be a surprise, something '...we dare not believe in until it has happened.' Thus Hirschmann counselled action, and appropriate risk, taking steps to call forth creativity from people and institutions.

I find his thinking reflects my experience of church life. God is infinitely faithful, and people are infinitely creative given the right building blocks and nurture, and permission to test and try new approaches. To paraphrase Isaiah 55, God says *'My Word will not return to me but that it has accomplished that which I purpose, it will be bread to the eater and seed to the sower.'*

On that note, we have interesting news from the Circuit - remember the Parable of the Talents? Have a read of Matthew 25:14-30 if you need reminding. Our Circuit of Methodist churches is keen to change the mission culture, to encourage us to take a few risks in growing our churches, and perhaps try something new and maybe even have a bit of fun.

This June, the Circuit meeting voted to make a one off gift of £5,000 (yes, £5,000) to each of our nine churches, and leave it in their care for 12 months.

There are no strings attached except that this be used outside of your church's normal budget and payments, and that it should provoke your church to use it for a mission initiative - either in the present congregation or to grow your church, or for some piece of mission work - your church decides. If at the end of 12 months your church has not used the money, you can simply give it back and we promise no gnashing of teeth.

What is mission for you, what will make your church grow? What will be a gift to your neighbourhood? Might you have better publicity and make it easier for someone to know what is happening behind these big church doors? Might you run a children's holiday programme, or should you stand by the machine and pay hospital guest parking fees for each person December 21 - 22 this year, wishing them a happy Christmas? Should you see about ministry and evangelism in a mother tongue other than English? Help with computer access for the elderly? Special music or a new venue for public worship, or an outdoor celebration? A

better website? A retreat for your congregation to deepen your discipleship? For help thinking, have a read of Matthew 5-7 and chat about it. This will be on your agendas in September, talk to each other, your Circuit meeting reps, and of course, to your minister.

In the meantime, enjoy the summer and enjoy worship at your churches. God is faithful and you are beloved.

Every blessing, Jen

Ealing Trinity Circuit Joins West London Citizens

West London Citizens are the folk behind the living wage campaign and many other community development programmes. Have a look at their website for information - www.citizensuk.org/chapters/west-london-citizens/. They also offer training for members of our churches, free of charge - a 2 day course in volunteer management and encouragement, running effective meetings, press relations and other topics in community organisation... Do you want to build your CV, change direction, or make your church or another community work better? Contact Deacon Richard Goldstraw for more information.

International Evening

Marion Garnett, Hanwell

What a magnificent evening friends experienced who attended the International Evening at Acton Hill on Saturday May 11th. As usual, it was an amazing event with contributions from the churches around our Circuit. Thanks are due to Christina Tom-Johnson for organising such a splendid occasion and to all who helped in any way at all to make the evening such a success. This includes all who performed, all who contributed towards the wonderful food and drink and also to Acton Hill for hosting the evening. It is very refreshing to get together as a Circuit for these social occasions. Thank you to all concerned!

A Message from Graham and Ann Preedy

“We would like to say ‘thank you so much’ to all our dear friends in Ealing Trinity Circuit for their good wishes and prayers during Graham’s time of illness. It made such a difference and along with the understanding and support of our ‘home’ church at Greenford, we felt and do still feel strengthened to carry on the road to recovery. Graham is now at home.”

Circuit Membership and Confirmation Class

The Circuit will be running a Membership and Confirmation class for people interested in becoming church members starting on Sunday 1st September. Classes will run for 6 weeks and will take place in the Dome Room at Kingsdown Methodist Church starting at 4.00pm.

A number of people from around the Circuit have already expressed interest and signed up for the classes. However, if you would like to consider membership, or perhaps a refresher for your membership and haven't already spoken to your minister about it, please do so as you would also be very welcome to attend the classes.

From the Circuit Meeting

The most recent Circuit Meetings took place on 13th June and 16th July.

The meeting heard from Jasper Cain of West London Citizens, which was formed in 1989 to bring together organisations such as churches, schools, mosques, trades unions and others to work together for the common good. At present 10 different institutions in Ealing meet every 3 months to discuss a wide range of issues including safety and social issues and how best to work together. Their core work centres around training to help people, for example to run meetings, to negotiate with people in power, to look at their organisations and how to can engage with the local community. Following Jonathan's presentation, the meeting voted for the Circuit to join West London Citizens and to review how things were going after 6 months.

On the personnel side, Derek Nicholls from Acton Hill was appointed as Circuit Steward, and Win Thompson, Barbara Williams and Peter Chadburn were confirmed as representatives for the Circuit to the London District Synod. Peter has, however expressed a wish to stand down at some point. In a rather different vein, the meeting was given notice that Rebecca Catford from Hanwell is candidating for the Methodist ministry.

David Street, the Circuit Treasurer reported that income and expenditure for the year to date were in line with the budget for the year. Furthermore, the Circuit had received around £1.5m from the sale of Moullin House. The meeting also decided that each church should receive a grant of £5,000 from the Circuit as a 'Talent' to be used in some way for 'mission' – read more about this in 'From the Superintendent' in this edition of In-touch. Next year a special Circuit Meeting will be held for churches to say how they have used their Talent.

Much of the remainder of the meeting dealt with property issues and, in particular how Circuit property is managed. It was agreed that the Circuit Policy Committee should consider the possible establishment of a Circuit Property Committee and

also the possible employment of a paid part-time property manager. Proposals are to be presented to the Circuit Meeting in September. In addition, the meeting gave its formal approval to the sale of the Perivale Methodist Church site.

The second Circuit Meeting, on 16th July, primarily dealt with property and applications for grants from the Circuit Model Trust Fund.

On general policy towards making grants from the Circuit Model Trust Fund, the following points were re-iterated:-

- i. The policy is published on the Circuit website
- ii. The text of grant proposals must be approved by Church Councils
- iii. All grant proposals must be submitted 7 days before the Circuit Policy Committee prior to the Circuit Meeting at which they will be heard
- iv. A church member would be invited to present grant proposals to the Circuit Meeting

Grant applications were heard from Northolt, Greenford and King's Hall (pm) churches. Northolt had made two applications, firstly towards the cost of asbestos removal and secondly towards the cost of extending their audio-visual system. For Northolt, the meeting approved grants of £4,200 for the first application ($\frac{2}{3}$ of the total cost) and £400 towards the second ($\frac{1}{3}$ of the total cost). Greenford's application was for help towards installing a new heating system and various health and safety improvements. The meeting agreed a grant of £32,500 ($\frac{1}{3}$ of the total cost). The King's Hall (pm) application was for a grant towards the continuing cost of employing Rev Salamat Zindani. The meeting agreed a grant of £1,500 ($\frac{1}{3}$ of the total cost). The congregations of each church will need to raise the remaining costs themselves.

Finally, the meeting heard that the King's Hall Property Trust had agreed to delegate its trustee responsibilities to the Circuit. This avoided any need to pursue the course of action though the Annual Methodist Conference outlined in 'from the Circuit Meeting' in the last edition of In-touch.

The next Circuit Meeting will be held on 11th September.

A Prayer of Blaise Pascal

Teach us, Lord,
to do the little things as though they were great
because of the majesty of Christ
who does them in us and who lives our life.
Teach us to do the greatest things
as though they were little and easy
because of his omnipotence. Amen

The Wesley Walk

Gerald Barton, Editor

Those of you who read or listen to your church notices or perhaps even check the Circuit website will have seen that this year's Wesley Walk coincided with the 275th anniversary of John Wesley's conversion on 24th May 1738. This is how Wesley described the experience in his journal for that day, *"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me, from the law of sin and death."* Being the 275th anniversary and the walk falling on the exact day of Wesley's conversion experience, made this year's walk extra special, so we decided to go along and join the commemoration.

The walk started at St Paul's Cathedral with Evensong. We weren't sure what to expect in terms of numbers, but were a bit surprised to find that people had come from afar, including the United States, Singapore, Nigeria and South Korea to be at the occasion. The area under the cathedral's famous dome and into the transepts was pretty full and there was, of course a large number of people in the nave many of whom were just passing through as tourists. Apart from the Anglican clergy, the President of the Conference, Rev Mark Wakelin, the Vice-President, Michael King, the Chairs of the London District - Rev Stuart Jordan, Rev Jenny Impey and Rev Micky Youngson, along with Rev the Lord Griffiths and Rev Jennifer Potter from Wesley's Chapel and Leysian Mission were also there. So, the company was pretty august!

Following Evensong we all decamped outside to gather around the statue of John Wesley by the north steps to the cathedral for a short 'office' – a couple of hymns, a psalm, a reading from Wesley's journal and the laying of a wreath at the statue by Michael King. At this point, there were so many people coming out of the cathedral that proceedings were well under way by the time everyone emerged. The numbers of people there gave an added sparkle to the occasion, which is more than can be said for the weather which was pretty grim...

Our first 'office' complete, we all moved off towards the Museum of London for the second. This took place at the entrance to the museum at the 'Flame Monument'. The exact place where Wesley had his conversion experience no longer exists but was somewhere near where the Museum of London now stands and the 'Flame Monument' commemorates it. We sang a couple of hymns – *'And can it be'*, and *'O Thou who camest from above'* and Rev Reynaldo Leao-Neto from Wembley read the final part of Wesley's journal for May 24th – part of which is quoted at the start of this piece. The prayer was led by Eddie Fox and a wreath laid by his wife, Mary Nell Fox both of whom had come over from the US to represent the United Methodist Church for the occasion.

The gathering then went onwards through the labyrinth of the Barbican to our third point of call, near Susanna Wesley's grave in Bunhill Fields. By this time, the company had diminished somewhat but still remained pretty sizeable. Following the singing of 'Jesus, lover of my soul' and readings from 'Son to Susanna' by G. Elsie Harrison and from Wesley's journal for 1st August 1742 following his mother's funeral, read by Bishop Sundo Kim from South Korea, the President laid a wreath. We were allowed in groups of 10 to go into the graveyard and lay a flower on Susanna's grave. Numbers were limited because the ground in the graveyard isn't stable – standing on the grass I was warned to keep on the path lest I end up falling through into one of the graves.

These proceedings over, we moved on to Wesley's Chapel for the next service of the commemoration (proceeded in true Methodist fashion by tea and coffee) led by Leslie (Lord) Griffiths and Michael King, the Vice-President who preached an excellent sermon on the theme of knowing that we are loved by God, and sharing that love with others. Having come to a personal knowledge of God's love John Wesley felt an imperative to share with love with others. As Michael said in his sermon, we, in our own time, are called to do the same.

A special part of the service was the unveiling of a bust of Bishop Sundo Kim of South Korea. Why, you may well ask.... Beneath Wesley's Chapel is a small, but interesting museum dedicated to the history of Methodism. This museum has just been refurbished and was due to be re-dedicated the following day, Saturday 25th May. The Kwanglim Methodist Church which was founded by Bishop Sundo Kim and now has 85,000 members (making it by far the largest individual Methodist Church on the planet) donated £630,000 to the total refurbishment cost of £1.4m. As the bishop said, *"Methodism didn't arrive in Korea until 1885 – the latest wave of a spiritual tide that began its rise in London over a hundred years before that. There's a simple reason why we've invested seriously in this new museum. The story it tells of the power and the grace of God released through the ministry of John and Charles Wesley is our story too. It's what shaped our identity and challenges us to go on doing God's work in our own day."*

Finally, we moved out into the graveyard behind the Chapel for the last part of the commemoration – a short 'office' and the laying of a wreath at John Wesley's grave.

As we followed the 'Walk' to each location I gradually came to reflect on what we were doing. For the majority of my church-going life I have been associated with the Methodist Church, and although I have read histories of the church and biographies of John Wesley, I don't normally give much thought to our church's heritage. I confess that at times I have wondered what difference it really makes to be 'Methodist' rather than anything else. I am very aware of Methodist structures and the Methodist way of doing things, particularly sharing our ministers, the role of lay preachers and the idea that our churches organised into Circuits should be mutually-supporting. Although in general we should focus on how we move forward as churches, perhaps thinking a bit more about our heritage as Methodists might help us appreciate what makes us really distinctive amongst other denominations.

Why I am a Deacon/Diaconal Minister

Deacon Richard Goldstraw

I never wanted to serve God in an ordained capacity but God had other ideas - I guess! I wanted to be a fashion designer, a florist, a jeweller, a nurse.....

I felt a call at a very early age, but at a very tender age wasn't quite sure what it was all about - the discernment of the call came much later. I remember looking up to the pulpit as a child and listening to the preacher and feeling deep in my spirit that I would be standing there one day. As a choir boy, I remember listening to a very boring sermon in an Anglican cathedral and feeling very arrogantly that I could do better! My Methodist roots in Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire go deep through the maternal side of my family, going back three generations to my Great-grandfather and probably beyond. I watched members of my family and of the congregation quietly and inspiringly living out their faith. I loved going to church and was a Sunday School teacher, youth leader and steward.

With my commitment to Christ coming at age 15, followed by church membership I was encouraged to give my testimony at services and meetings and from there came a call to preach which was discerned by wise ones in my home congregation. I left school at 16 feeling a failure but went to technical college where I trained in residential care and began

to enjoy education. I went to work in a Cheshire Home and loved it. I left the Cheshire Home, after 2 years, to take up Local Preachers' training as a student at Cliff College. It was a great experience and gave me firm foundations for the future. One afternoon, whilst at Cliff, there was a meeting for those feeling a call to ordained ministry - I went to bed and pulled the sheet over my head!

After Cliff I applied to be a lay-worker in Kent but was not accepted. I returned to my job at the Cheshire Home and then worked on a psychiatric ward and, before going to train as a deacon, I worked for the Shaftesbury Society. I loved my work in the secular world and was going to train to be a psychiatric nurse in Sheffield but after having a very vivid dream, which I believe was from God, I tore up my application. God had caught up with me! It was a crossroads moment in my life. I felt a call and pursued the presbyteral candidature. On my second attempt, as a candidate, questions at the candidates committee were asked about my view of the sacraments. My response was poor I felt (another crossroads moment) and I could



Tuel Lane Methodist Men's Meeting 1912
Richard's Great-grandfather is second from the right on the back row

see from the committee's body language that all was not well. After the committee, which I attended suffering with a kidney stone, one of its members came out of the meeting and spoke to my minister and me. On the committee was a deaconess, Sister Jean Stephenson, who said that "this lad is called to be a deacon!". This was echoed by my Chair, Kathleen Richardson. I had never met a deaconess and was not aware of the Methodist Diaconal Order, which was only a toddler at the time (1988/9). So off we went and pursued the candidature to the diaconate and from then on the story is history; it felt like a pair of gloves that fitted or a pair of lovely well fitting shoes. There were frustrating periods of waiting and tears, but it was all in God's time and I am a great believer in God's good time. God is a gracious God and His grace has upheld me "through all the changing scenes of life". I trained in Birmingham on the Selly Oak Federation of Colleges for two years, living for a year at Kingsmead College. I have served God as a deacon in the south for 21 years. At first I was dreadfully homesick but the Methodist church community wrapped its arms of love and welcome around me and gradually I began to settle and have not left yet for the hills of the North! I was ordained in 1994 - the same year as Peter Catford was ordained presbyter. A colleague from a previous circuit was also ordained that year - Methodism is a small world!



Ordination, Leeds 1994

I love being a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order. Each year at convocation, our annual gathering as an Order, we renew our vows and re-affirm our call to diaconal ministry. As an Order we have done a lot of hard work about our identity and calling. I'm asked frequently what a deacon is, and when am I going to become a "proper minister"? To the "proper minister" enquiry my response is this - what is "proper" ministry? Have I been "improper" or a fraud when I have led acts of worship, officiated at marriages, taken funerals, been a chaplain three times, made hundreds of pastoral visits/encounters, served on numerous committees. etc? This is a question about what it means to be ordained, be it deacon or presbyter and about ministry as a whole.

Whatever your calling, lay or ordained, rejoice in it and embrace it! We are all called to serve. Celebrate the God who calls us all to varieties of service within the Body of Christ.

A Quiet Garden in Hanwell

Gerald Barton, Editor

During the summer, Suva and Peter Catford threw open the garden at their manse to all of us in the Circuit on Wednesday afternoons as a 'Quiet Garden' which we could visit for prayer and reflection. The inspiration for creating the garden came from Suva's love of gardens and the effect on her of contemplating the various flowers and plants, which is not just a sense of the peace and beauty to be had in a garden, but also, as Suva put it, the 'unthinkingness' she finds there.

The garden contains five prayer 'stations' including a labyrinth created by mowing the lawn in a spiral, leaving some un-mown grass to mark the rings. The first station invited us to tell God whatever was on our hearts and then to tie a ribbon to the washing-line as a symbol of your prayer. When we went, Sue, Rita and I couldn't help but give thanks that since Rita has come to live with us, or as we feel, God sent Rita to live with us, we have formed a very happy family of our own.

The second station invited us to reflect on the barren places in our lives and to reflect that God is always with us, even in the barren and arid places and times.

The third station was the labyrinth. Walking a labyrinth is an ancient practice. When the great cathedrals were built in the middle ages, a labyrinth would be built into the floor of the nave and, on entering the cathedral pilgrims would follow the lines of the labyrinth as an act of devotion, sometimes on their knees. In following its lines in the grass to the centre, we were invited to prepare ourselves to pray, to offload the pressures of the day, and then, following the lines back out to invite God's presence into our daily lives.



Prayer Station 2
The barren places in our lives



Prayer Station 3 – Walking the Labyrinth

At the fourth station, we were invited to sit awhile, reflecting on those things in our lives that burden us and weigh us down. Then, we were invited to offer them to God by dropping a glass pebble into a stone bowl.

Finally, the fifth station invited us to express of our experience of our time with God in the garden through

words, through pictures or however we might wish to do so.

We can, of course, spend time praying anywhere and at any time and many would say that we don't need special places to be with God. However, special places such as Suva & Peter's Quiet Garden do help us still and focus our minds for a period of reflection and prayer. I'm sure all those of us who visited the garden found the experience deeply worthwhile, I certainly did.



Prayer Station 4 – Dropping a pebble in the bowl

Thanks to Suva and Peter for offering us the opportunity to spend awhile in their garden.

PS – That's Rita in the photographs.

The Great Partnership

Gerald Barton, Editor

I've read several books by Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of the British Orthodox Synagogues. I've always found them to be lucid and very well argued. He's not a Christian writer, of course but the last book of his that I read - *The Great Partnership: God, Science and the Search for Meaning*, I found gripping, almost like a novel in fact. In a world where some 'scientific' writers see science as supplanting religion, and where some religious fundamentalists regard science as having to conform to their version of religion, Jonathan Sacks' analysis is refreshing to say the least.

The book is about the relationship between religion and science and their separate, but complementary spheres. In developing his ideas, Sacks also spends quite some time considering the role and importance of religion in society, and what happens when societies begin to lose their religious moorings.

In short, science explains how the natural world works, religion, on the other hand, is about meaning, the 'why' of things if you like. Science does not deal with meaning, religion does not explain the physical world. In very simple terms, it is possible to explain *how* a car gets from A to B in terms of wheels, engines, gear changes and so forth. Explaining *why* the driver decided to go from A to B is another matter entirely. For that we need to know something about the driver's

motives. These have nothing to do with the wheels, the engine or any other part of the workings of the car or how it was driven. They are outside and beyond all that.

In considering the 'meaning' that lies behind creation, Sacks argues that the meaning of any system is to be found outside of that system (rather like the driver's motives in my little example in the last paragraph). As an example, he cites the rules of football. Studying those rules won't tell you what football is all about. To understand that, you need to stand back and view the game from outside. The rules articulate the game, but of themselves don't help you understand what it's all about. So, to begin to get a sense of the meaning of life, we have to stand back, to look beyond life to something that transcends life, in other words, to God.

It has often struck me that as people we are, in a sense, 'meaning machines'. We make and need 'meanings'. Sometimes, of course the search for the 'meaning' of something can lead us right up the garden path. Some people love conspiracy theories, for instance, but these are often groundless when exposed to scrutiny. Nonetheless, meaning is central to our lives. This was recognised most clearly by Viktor Frankl (1905 – 1997), a Viennese psychiatrist who survived the Nazi concentration camps. Frankl developed a psychiatric therapy based on people's need for meaning.

The question Frankl would often pose to his patients was 'what is life asking of us now?' When he was deported to the concentration camps he lost a valuable manuscript that he had been working on. However, he painstakingly reconstructed the manuscript on scraps of paper during his time in the camps. Doing that was what, in a sense, life was demanding of him at that time. This gave meaning back to his life and he realised that having a sense of meaning in one's life is central to psychological health and well-being. Frankl did not assert that therapy based on establishing what meanings might underscore a person's life at any given time could solve all psychological problems – other therapies also have their role. However, he did recognise that meaning is central to our lives, and that lack of meaning is detrimental to our well-being.

Funnily enough, as a student of psychology in the early 1970's and subsequently after I left university, I did not come across many writers in the field of psychology who talked about what a person's life might mean and how it might impact on their sense of well-being. Perhaps 'meaning' was just too elusive, or perhaps too 'religious' a concept for the scientific community to deal with.

Religion, argues Sacks, reflects society's shared meanings. Worship in the broadest sense is a coming together to share in and reinforce those meanings, which is one reason why public worship is important. This can, of course apply to any religion. Jonathan Sacks writes as a Jew with a Jewish perspective. He sees Judaism as being just for Jews and not as a religion for all (unlike Christianity or Islam), but as having a particular role and place in human history. However, Sacks argues that central to the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) is the idea that people have unique value as individual persons, loved and valued by God. Therefore, in many respects religion is about celebrating and underscoring our

value as individual people because that's how God views us. It isn't about reinforcing power, whether state or church over individuals, but about confronting authorities when they become over-bearing, oppressive and de-value people as individuals. This, argues Sacks was the role of the prophets and, we might add Christ in emphasising God's love for us as unique individuals.

What happens when societies lose their religion? Religion, Sacks believes plays a central role in binding societies together. It also points us beyond ourselves, towards a transcendent God. Our norms aren't just man-made or 'cultural', but are rooted in revelation – think of the Ten Commandments which we have been studying during the recent Summer Series of services. We are, in a sense perpetually called to account, asking ourselves how we measure up against the norms given by God. Sacks argues that when societies lose their religion, it is not long before they lose themselves. When 'anything goes', nothing really matters any more. The sky may not immediately fall in on a society, but the sun sets all the same. Perhaps a takeover by another religion or philosophy awaits – atheistic experiments such as the French and Russian revolutions or Nazism don't inspire confidence. As a society, Sacks argues, we lose our religion at our peril.

Sacks sees the current wave of attacks on religion by some atheistic scientists as not just misconceived, but positively dangerous to both religion and science. Such attacks, he believes, erodes not just the value of people as unique individuals and members of society, but also the foundations of the shared meanings and values on which society is built. As a result, space may open up for some fundamentalism opposed to both religion and human as well as scientific freedom to move in to fill the vacuum left by the erosion of shared values and meanings.

Certainly, 'scientific socialism' did great harm in the Soviet Union and elsewhere as people were no longer regarded as valuable in their own right, but as subordinate to the state and lumped together as members of social 'classes' with uniform 'objective characteristics'. Similarly, theocracies seem little better as people are coerced into conforming to the demands of their religious rulers. This view may seem overly pessimistic. We may feel that we just want to live peaceably with all on a 'live and let live' basis. Sometimes, however the need to defend our values and shared meanings may be thrust upon us. Without a shared belief in values that transcend us, especially the importance of a God who loves and values us all in our individual uniqueness, this may prove difficult.

In truth, Sacks concludes, religion and science form a partnership. Neither should seek to usurp the role of the other. Both are needed and both need each other, but in their proper, and complementary spheres.

The Great Partnership: God, Science and the Search for Meaning is published by Hodder & Stoughton price £8.99.

"The most persuasive argument for religious belief I have read" – Andrew Marr

ChurchCheck

Gerald Barton, Editor

A couple of years ago I wrote an article for In-touch titled 'Watch Out, there's a Mystery Worshipper about....' Just recently, almost by accident I came across something called 'ChurchCheck', which is a service offered by Christian Research. This looks to be rather similar to the Mystery Worshipper, but is something churches can arrange to have done themselves. The rest of this piece comes straight from their website, so read on.... Perhaps this is something your church might like to consider when thinking how to spend some of the 'Talent' money from the Circuit.....

Churches can now see how they look through the eyes of a newcomer with ChurchCheck, a new mystery visitor service offered by Christian Research, in partnership with retail research company Retail Maxim. The service, designed to help churches improve, puts the biblical principle of welcoming strangers to the test and gives instant and useable feedback to church leaders.

This research service has been modelled on the Mystery Shopping programmes commonly used to assess shops, hotels, pubs and other branches of the service industry. ChurchCheck visitors are trained mystery shoppers, generally from a non-church background. They are based all over the country and will visit churches of any denomination and in any region.

Blending into the congregation, the ChurchCheck visitor will carefully assess factors ranging from the state of the noticeboard to the warmth of welcome, from the length of the sermon to the ease of involvement, from the after service conversation to evidence of fair trade. Away from the premises, the visitor completes a preset questionnaire that has been carefully designed by Christian Research and Retail Maxim.

All ChurchCheck reports are confidential to the client and will be sent direct via email. As the service becomes established it will also be able to provide benchmarking services, making it possible for Churches to learn from best practice.

Each ChurchCheck visit costs just £90 plus VAT, enabling churches to carry out several ChurchCheck assessments – perhaps to monitor development or measure different types of church service. The welcome extended to a newcomer is recognised as a significant factor in church growth, and we believe that ChurchCheck can really make a difference.

To learn more about ChurchCheck and download a brochure go to www.churchcheck.co.uk, or contact me at the Circuit Office and I'll e-mail you a copy.

Methodist Women in Britain *'Because you're worth it!'*



Blossom Jackson – MWiB President, 2011-2013

The London District Methodist Women in Britain held their biennial Weekend Conference at High Leigh Conference Centre on 19th - 21st July. The Chaplain for the weekend was the Revd. Femi Cole-Njie, Superintendent Minister of the Forest Circuit, past president and MWiB Forum member. The programme included presentations by Helen Veitch on the work of Children Unite, and in particular their work on child domestic labour; Rachel Ashton of Mothers' Union on the early sexualisation of girls; and a thought provoking Bible Study on Rebecca by Jill Baker who is a past connexional president of MWiB.

The craft workshops that were enjoyed by all included card and box making led by Deacon Jackie Fowler, Deacon Denise Creed of Westminster Central Hall and Gillian Oman, a representative from MWiB Sector A, and 'Soap Basket' led by Lynda-Ann Garwood-Warren, Chair of London District Methodist Women's Luncheon Club. In 'Soap Basket', people gave up their free time to complete beautiful baskets!

The talent show on Saturday night revealed that Methodist Women have got talent, and what's more- 'They're worth it!' More of their dramatic skills were shown in the drama 'The Samaritan Women, which was included in our final Communion Service on Sunday, led by Rev Cole-Njie and assisted By Deacon Jackie Fowler - incoming President.

There were discussions on promoting MWiB in our churches and circuits, which we consider to be the bedrock of our activities. This included the need to attract more young and middle age women to the movement. This was considered to be of paramount importance since our prime objective is **'encouraging, equipping and enabling women, to serve God in the church, the community and the world'**.

There was also focus on 'the next chapter' for MWiB with the recognition that there is much more work to be done, as our emergence from the Chrysalis stage has just been completed with the launch of our new logo at conference and our wings are still damp!

We were blest with having pianists Norah Lord from Sector B and Rev. Bonni Bell Pickard, Chair of the Discipleship Forum from Sector C.

We trust that everyone who had the experience of sharing and fellowship, came away with the affirmation **'We are worth it!'**

Finally, we are grateful to the Chairs of the London District for agreeing to sponsor four places to the conference.

Remember: Autumn 2013

Compiled by Mary Newman, Pitshanger

Some Thoughts for Every Day

The Lord is my light, my light and salvation;
In God I trust, in God I trust

Based on Psalm 27 Text Taizé Community

But the truth is that Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised.

1 Corinthians 15 v 20

May your fence be low enough that you can see your neighbour's smile

James Betalino

A Prayer for Victims of Violence

Remember in your love the victims of violence on the streets of London and other cities in our own country, for their families and for those who perpetrate crime.

We pray for the victims of violence and injustice in Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine and other areas throughout the world where peace does not reign. Amen

No Explanation for the Unfairness of Time

Recently I had the sad task of writing to an old college friend of mine whose son had died following a stroke some months ago, from which he never fully recovered. Thinking about what to say I remember that I had kept some words written by a priest following the death of Princess Diana.

I still find these words very helpful and I hope you will too.

“In all the inequalities of life, and there are many, be they brains or beauty or talents of money, there is one inequality which we find very hard to understand, and that is the inequality of time: why some are left to grow old and senile, and others taken in the bloom of youth. It all seems so unfair. There is no explanation. There is just acceptance, and we who believe in eternal life, have the consolation of this prayer:

“In him who rose from the dead, our hope of resurrection dawned. The sadness of death gives way to the bright promise of immortality. Lord, for your faithful people, life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death, we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven.”

“I was a stranger and you took me in”

Two things recently reminded me of this.

First was the account of how Gerald and Sue opened their home to Rita; which we read about in the June edition of 'In Touch'

The second is a little story about a friend from Pitshanger who was going into church to attend a funeral last month when she was approached by a stranger, a woman with a small child, her grandson. She had come to Ealing to look after him for a week and realised she had locked herself out.

The woman asked my friend for help. What was the latter to do? She could have missed going to the funeral but she didn't want to do this. She could have told the woman she was sorry she couldn't help. But no, she took the woman and the little boy home with her and left them alone in her house while she went back to Church.

To Colleen, I would like to say this, "I hope I would have done the same."

A Prayer for New Beginnings

Heavenly Father, we pray for all who will make a new beginning this Autumn; for children transferring to high school, for young people leaving school and going to colleges, universities or looking for work.

We pray for ministers who are being ordained. We pray for all whose ministry helps the life and worship and mission of the church to build God's kingdom. Amen

I choose kindness...

I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone.

Kind to the rich for they are afraid.

And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me.

Max Lucado

This life was not intended to be the place of our perfection, but the preparation for it
Richard Baxter

Before you speak, it is necessary for you to listen, for God speaks in the silence of the heart.

Mother Teresa

Remember at Evening

Angels sent from up above, please protect the ones we love.

Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.

Corrie Boom

Readings for Autumn

Psalm 27 – A Prayer of Praise

Luke 12 V 22-31 – Trust in God

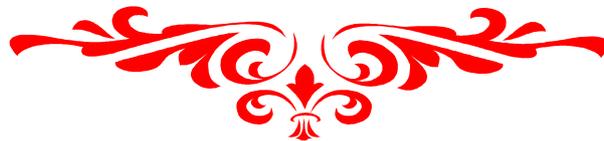
Matthew 25 V. 31-44 – The Final Judgement

**Ealing Trinity Circuit
Hanwell Methodist Church**
will be hosting a...



Wesley Songs of Praise

**Sunday 20th October 2013
at 6:00pm**



Circuit members from other Churches are invited to submit Wesley songs for possible inclusion in the service.

Ray Garnett is collating the submissions which should be received by Sunday 6th October via ray@hanwellmethodist.info

Come along and have a good sing of some of the popular Wesley's Songs and learn something about the man himself.

Light refreshments will be available after the service.



Circuit Directory Update

None this issue

Forthcoming Events around the Circuit

[as notified to, or discovered by, the Editor]

September

1st Sun 4.00pm Circuit Membership Class at Kingsdown

8th Sun 4.00pm Circuit Membership Class at Kingsdown

11th Wed 8.00pm **Circuit Meeting**

15th Sun 4.00pm Circuit Membership Class at Kingsdown

22nd Sun 4.00pm Circuit Membership Class at Kingsdown

29th Sun 4.00pm Circuit Membership Class at Kingsdown

October

6th Sun 4.00pm Circuit Membership Class at Kingsdown

20th Sun 6.00pm **Circuit Service at Hanwell** - Wesley Songs of Praise
See inside back cover of this edition for further details

November

None advised

Articles for '**In-touch**' Issue No 66 (**December - February**) should be sent by e-mail headed '**In-touch**' to the Editor, **Gerald Barton**, or as hard copy to the Circuit Office.

Ealing Trinity Circuit Office
Kingsdown Methodist Church, Kingsdown Ave, West Ealing, London W13 9PR
office@ealingtrinity.org.uk

Office hours: Tues & Thurs 09.00 – 14.00

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