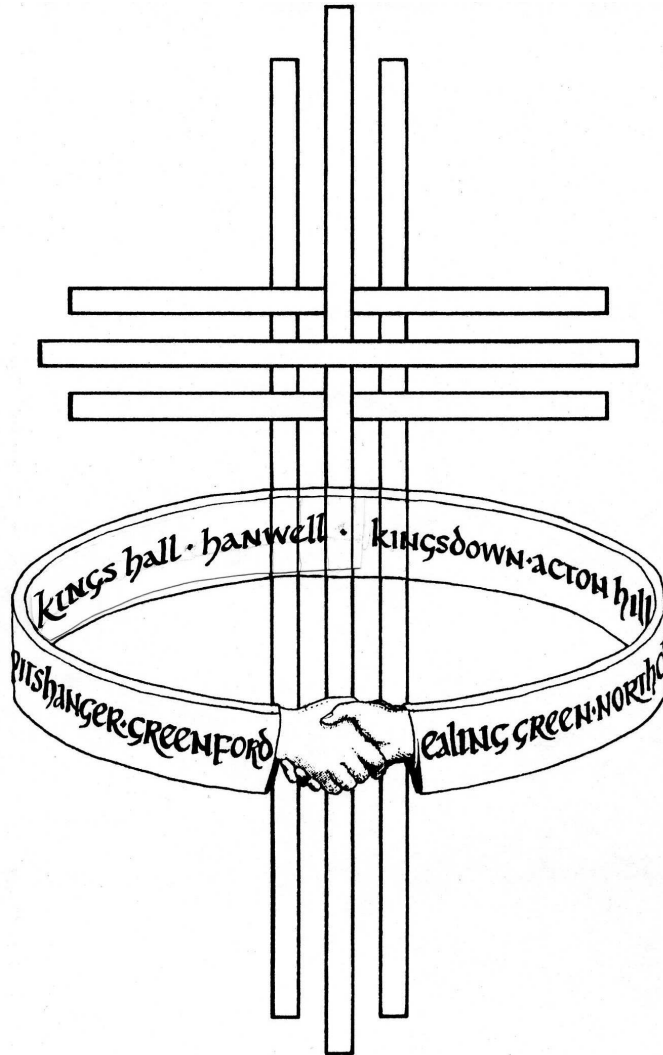


In-touch

No 66

December 2013 – February 2014



The magazine for *all* the Ealing Trinity Circuit.

IN THIS ISSUE

	Page
• From the Superintendent	3
• Rev Chrissie Howe	4
• Rev Dr Jennifer Smith – Re-invitation	5
• New Circuit Stewards	5
• From the Circuit Meeting	5
• Northolt has a Logo	6
• London District Synod 14 th September 2013	7
• Ealing Borough Foodbank	11
• Worship Consultation Meeting at Hanwell - <i>Ray Garnet</i>	12
• World Methodist Council - <i>Rev Suva Catford</i>	13
• Reflections after a Concert - <i>Kathleen Loveridge, Kingsdown</i>	14
• On Being Part of a Family - <i>Gerald Barton, Editor</i>	15
• A Last Beatitude – <i>submitted by Veronica Heley, Pitshanger</i>	18
• Circuit Bible Studies	18
• Remember – Winter 2013-14 – <i>Mary Newman, Pitshanger</i>	19
• Christmas Services around the Circuit	22
• Circuit Directory Update	23
• Ealing Animal Welfare Bazaar	23
• Forthcoming Events around the Circuit	24

Circuit website
www.ealingtrinity.org.uk

Front Cover designed by Marion Narain

From the Superintendent

Welcome to the December - February issue of In-touch, the magazine of the Ealing Trinity Circuit.

If you are new in our churches, or new to the idea of a Methodist Circuit, it is a group of 9 churches who support each other and share mission in the Borough of Ealing. Each retains its own flavour and local governance through a church council, stewards and church meeting, but in a variety of important matters (like ministry, planning worship, and discipleship) they work as a team: the Circuit is the basic unit of mission in British Methodism. All of our ministers are 'stationed,' that is, sent by a national body to serve in this circuit, and then the local circuit Superintendent (me) sorts out how to deploy them in consultation with the churches and Circuit stewards. They all do some cross-circuit work, though most lead worship and act as pastors in two or three specific churches nearby where they live, where they have 'pastoral charge.' You will know we are seeking this Autumn to replace one (The Revd Chrissie Howe) who will finish her time with us next July/August.

Our Deacon, Richard Goldstraw is an exception, and in this quarter's letter I wanted to remind us of his role in the circuit particularly. Richard lives in Southall, just by Southall Park, and some of his time is spent in pastoral support of our King's Hall congregations, English-speaking and Urdu-speaking, and in helping the circuit to develop its mission in Southall. However, he also has a specific remit for '**Welcome and Well-being**' across the circuit, which has three areas:-

1. supporting pastoral care and carers
2. helping churches with their presence in the community and hospitality
3. working for health and well-being ministries as part of our mission

So for instance, in his first area Richard is involved in actual pastoral care in a number of churches, especially where there is a particular situation where perhaps the usual pastoral carers need more support. In his second area Richard helps with Ealing Green's 'Phoenix lunch club' on a Thursday, serving retired people in the community. He also helps with Acton Hill's 'Noah's Ark' carers and toddlers' group, which sees over 50 families a week. In addition to doing actual service, he helps people gently think how to re-position what they do to get more out of their effort, and be able to sustain projects. In his third area of work he has developed the 'living well and dying well' series, and is looking gradually to redevelop healing ministry in the circuit as well. This is not about his coming as if on a white charger to take everything over, but his being alongside to help people develop confidence to do it themselves. He is training as a street pastor, and looking for ways to encourage more people to be involved in the advocacy of the West London Citizens Association.

This is just a small snapshot of what his role is evolving into, but well worth our remembering and building into our church life. Richard is a local preacher and

takes 7 - 8 services a quarter, but no more than that - we don't want him 'locked up' in church and he does not usually sit on committees, but he is able to have time to serve people and help them serve others, in the name of Jesus Christ. It is a ministry in which we all share, but where he has a particular role as a catalyst. Thank you Richard, for your ministry among us!

In the life of the Circuit there are many things on in individual churches this quarter, but I draw your attention especially to the chance for weekly Bible study on a Sunday evening at Kingsdown at 5.00pm - 6.30pm finishing with simple worship. This is for the whole circuit to have a chance to deepen our understanding of the scripture, and feed ourselves for our onward journey. Come support the initiatives you see around the circuit, and dream large in this season of short days.

Every blessing for Advent and Christmas,

Jennifer

Rev Chrissie Howe

On Sunday 27th October 2013 the Revd Chrissie Howe requested and received permission from the Circuit Invitations Committee to curtail her current appointment at the end of this Connexional year. For family reasons Chrissie needs to relocate to the Northwest of England. This means that Chrissie will enter the 'stationing' process to seek a new appointment this Autumn, and will leave our Circuit in August 2014.

The Circuit will also enter the stationing process so that our Circuit Stewards can seek a new minister to join our Circuit from September 2014. The Circuit Stewards have no desire to re-shape our Circuit's ministry again so soon after the changes last June, so will not look to change pastoral sections beyond what is absolutely necessary.

The next steps involve developing 'profiles' of Chrissie's current churches, which will be available to prospective ministers. If all goes well, possible new ministers will visit the Circuit in mid-December.

Although awkward at this time of year because of the need to get into stationing matching as soon as possible, a curtailment is a part of normal life in Methodism. Please pray for Kingsdown and the King's Hall Churches, for our 'on trial' local preachers who have Chrissie as tutor, for the circuit staff and for Chrissie herself as she moves into this next part of her vocation. Of course, Chrissie will continue to serve in the Circuit until next summer, so please make your best wishes known to her.

Rev Dr Jennifer Smith – Re-invitation

The Circuit Meeting voted unanimously on 11th September to invite Rev Dr Jennifer Smith to continue as a Circuit Minister and Superintendent for a further two years from September 2014. Jennifer will now be with the Circuit until August 2016. As this is an 'open extension', during 2015 the Circuit will be able to consider re-inviting her for a further period beyond 2016.

New Circuit Stewards

The Circuit Meeting has recently approved the nominations of two new Circuit Stewards, Derek Nicholls from Acton Hill was elected at the meeting in June, and Blossom Jackson from Kingsdown at the meeting in September. Derek and Blossom join our current team of Stewards - Mike Brown from Greenford, Barbara Quartey from Acton Hill David Street from Hanwell.

There is always scope for more people to become Circuit Stewards – if you feel you would like to serve the Circuit in this way, please contact Rev Dr Jennifer Smith or speak to one of the current stewards.

From the Circuit Meeting

The most recent Circuit Meeting was held on 11th September.

Rebecca Catford from Hanwell was presented to the meeting as a possible candidate for the Methodist presbyteral ministry. Rebecca described her complex journey towards accepting her sense of calling, starting from childhood to becoming a lay preacher, then more recently going to a vocational meeting in the Southampton District and coming away 'not ruling it out'. After talking things through with Rev Jen Smith and her family Rebecca decided to go ahead and since then has had a sense of peace and excitement. The meeting voted to support Rebecca and she will now go forward through the London District 'candidating' process.

Following consultations around the Circuit, the meeting voted to 're-invite' Rev Dr Jennifer Smith for a further two years as a Circuit Minister and Superintendent. She will now be with the Circuit until August 2016. In addition, the meeting approved the nomination of Blossom Jackson as a Circuit Steward. (*See items on this page.*)

Some changes to the way Circuit property is managed were agreed. Firstly a Property Committee will be set up. This will have a representative from each church and will report to the Circuit Meeting. Secondly, the way the Circuit's manses are managed is changing. Recently, manses have been managed by an external agent who also manages the Circuit's let property. The arrangement has not proved

satisfactory for the manses and the Circuit will return to managing them itself. In addition, the Circuit Stewards were asked to consider whether a new agent should be appointed to manage the let properties when the existing arrangement comes up for renewal on 1st November.

With Connexional support and the prayers and pastoral work of Rev Chrissie Howe and Deacon Richard Goldstraw, the situation of King's Hall is gradually moving forward. The current proposal is to sell the building for redevelopment, but to retain some space for use by the Methodist Church. In parallel, there are consultations with the Church of England and the United Reform Church for setting up a base for theological training in Southall. Members of the meeting were also reminded that there is inter-denominational shared worship at Holy Trinity Church in Southall every Wednesday at 10.30am.

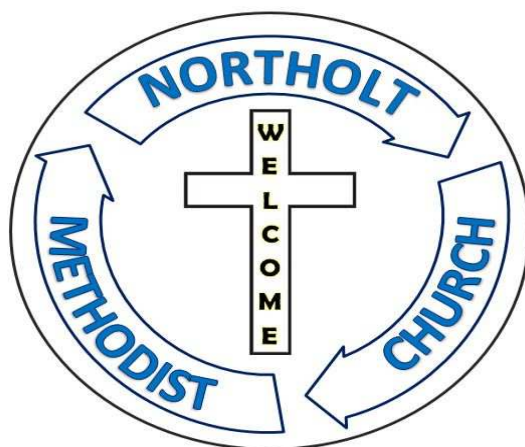
Ealing Green presented an application for a grant of £250,000 in support of the redevelopment of parts of their building. In line with the Circuit's grant policy, this application had been previously endorsed by the Circuit Policy Committee. The proposals include changes to the entrance to the building, refurbishment of the foyer and worship space and some restructuring of the rooms at the rear of the church. These changes are intended to make the building much more welcoming and flexible in its use and resulted from a long process of discussion and prayer within the church. Following lengthy discussion, the meeting voted to approve Ealing Green's application.

The next Circuit Meeting will be at Pitshanger on Thursday 13th March 2014.

Northolt has a Logo!

Margaret McCarthy, Northolt

As part of our 'Mission' within the local community we felt we needed a simple logo to convey our message of welcome to those who wish to join us in church or come along to one of our regular or special events.



During the summer we challenged our congregation (young and old) to come up with a simple logo and were pleased by the response. The younger 'techno brains' came up with some complex and colourful designs with the more mature members being rather more conservative, with a small 'c'! By combining the best parts of two entries from older members of the congregation we hope we now have a logo that conveys our simple message that we aspire to be the church on the roundabout with the big welcome!

London District Synod 14th September 2013

The synod was held at the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster. For the Autumn Representative Session, the opening worship was led by Revd Jennifer Potter of Wesley's Chapel. From our circuit she introduced Blossom Jackson and Revd Dr Jennifer Smith who both took part in the service. The topic of Synod was 'Engaging in Mission' and biblical and Methodist quotes underpinned the service. These were from Matthew 28: 19-20, Acts 1: 8, Romans 10: 14 John Wesley's Journal 11th June 1739 and Wesley's advice to Thomas Coke after he had been dismissed from his curacy in about 1777, '*Brother go out and preach the gospel to the world*'. We praised the global shift in the centre of Christianity away from Western cultures and celebrated the work of the Methodist Mission Society on its 200th anniversary. We were challenged to discuss where God is at work.

In the main agenda we were introduced to the new Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network team (Coordinator, Revd Dr Jo Cox) and the meeting bid farewell to Dr Paul Kybird who had been the District Development Enabler for 13 years.

Keynote address on Engaging in Mission by Dr Daleep Mukarji, Vice President of Conference

Dr Mukarji gave an account of his involvement in mission through his previous work as Director of Christian Aid and multiple reports on the future of mission for the Methodist Conference. He reminded us that mission is the centre of our life, as it was for John Wesley who sent people across the UK and overseas. It was as a result of Methodism's discipleship groups that Circuits developed their prime purpose of mission. The result was to improve the well being of communities.

The World Council of Churches has a definition for mission as sharing the gospel in word, prayer, deed, worship and everyday witness of the Christian life. It was noted that the word 'evangelism' was not used and it is *God's* mission, and His agenda we are working to (Luke 9:1, 2; John 20: 21; Matthew 28: 18). It can be described as –

- Life-giving
- Transformational (of individuals, society and structures)
- Calling everyone to share
- United social action for all people
- One mission for home and overseas

The limitations to our present mission were outlined. It was separated into compartments; it was dominated by power struggles, control and money; the objects of mission were people who should have been equals; mission had become associated with colonisation, westernization, civilisation and Christianity. The vision for our mission was a world transformed by God's love. The challenges were to educate and equip members to be confident and comfortable to share their faith.

The question was how to avoid models that are competitive, triumphant and insensitive; how to reclaim passion and the centrality of mission; how to proclaim God's love and justice in a secular world and make it inclusive and healing.

The opportunities in London were described as follows -

- Dialogues with those of other faiths and none
- Encourage solidarity with the marginalised, outlaw racism, exclusion and discrimination
- Confront poverty, unemployment and homelessness
- Cooperate with other churches and other faith in social change

The future of mission was exciting and church members were reminded to put it on the agenda of every committee.

The question and answer session

Mr Julian Bond spoke about his work with an interfaith group. He emphasised the words used in the bible; evangelism was used 3 times, mission once, witness many times and disciple – yes he thought this was the word – Christians need to do discipleship. He asked can we do mission with other faiths?

Revd Dr Jo Cox spoke about her work with fresh expressions and asked if we were to change one thing what would it be? (She hoped it would not be the flower rota!) We were asked to consider corporate discipleship.

In the afternoon a number of workshops were offered. The following are reports.

Engaging on Estates (Anita Oji)

I attended this workshop because it was undersubscribed yet I found myself thinking about the estates we have in the circuit, that is, high rise buildings in a circumscribed boundary. The expensive flats growing up around Ealing Broadway came to mind as well as the council run flats that have replaced older blocks in West Ealing. The Revd Keith Rowbottom led the workshop and we heard of his work on the Roehampton Estate. His strategy was 'One heart at a time' and his work was held together by prayer. His mission statement was 'Here for God; Here for You'. We were told how to get information about a local area and use it to plan mission. I have a hand out if anyone wishes to get more information. One of the books recommended for prayers was 'Red Moon Rising' by Pete Greig and Dave Roberts ISBN 978 1 84291 095 5. If any 'In Touch' reader has a copy please can I read it?

Engaging through fresh expressions of church/worship (Win Thompson)

There were nine workshops at the Synod and I chose to go to the one on 'Engaging through Fresh Expression of Church/Worship'. The session was led by the Rev Dr Joanne Cox.

Under the heading Fresh Expressions were the following things to consider - what are your questions, what changes have happened, what does church/worship look like, what is possible, what is our experience, what are the challenges, where is the Kingdom and what now? We did not get to the last two in the time allocated but much had come up in earlier discussion.

We started by Joanne telling a story and then she asked for our questions which we tried to answer during the afternoon. We discussed the change to Sundays now that shops are open, mothers often working so having to do things on Sundays, one parent families, different cultures, and little knowledge of spirituality and many hungry for it, unemployment, homelessness and poverty. We need to be a meeting of people of different cultures working together and listening to each other.

Many churches are already reaching out to the community with teaching skills such as bread baking which they can then sell, 'Knit and Natter' sessions, and sewing classes where people will often talk in a less formal atmosphere. We can use websites, form after school clubs, join faith groups and try different forms of worship. We can tell our own story alongside scripture. Many other suggestions and comments were made, these are just a few.

Joanne finished with two more stories and said that when you do this people often respond by telling you their experiences

Engaging with carers (Blossom Jackson)

The convenor for this session was Paul Regan, chair of the Social Responsibility Commission. This interactive workshop was well received, with a good attendance.

Two of the important facts that emerged were:- There are about 1.5 million carers in the UK (and we are already aware that people in our own churches, are among that number). The second was that a number carers are unaware of their rights!

After a lively debate and discussion, the following summarises the points that could be taken back to churches/Circuits:-

- Church Councils/Circuits could consider whether '**Engagement with Carers**' should be a crucial part of their church's mission policy.
- If so, It would be important to carry out an audit of carers within a church's congregation:-

- A Wellbeing Group could be established
 - Pastoral Leaders could be trained to carry out such an audit, if this is a preferred option.
 - An audit of health professionals within each congregation, who would be willing to share their expertise, could be carried out.
- Training Considerations e.g. -***Engaging with Carers: A Group Study Guide for anyone involved in caring-*** by ***Chris Morley***, could be a good study resource.
- Share good Practice
 - Share Case Studies.
- A pilot programme could be undertaken and evaluated with a view to expansion within a Circuit
- 20th October designated as '***Wellbeing Sunday***'- within the London District (date closest to St. Luke's Day)
- Resource will be available on the District Web Site, by the end of September, for this year's program.
 - Ministers, Lay preachers and Worship Leaders, could use the Worship resource for the 20th October should they wish to do so.

The Objectives, Resources and Power Point presentation used can be found on Kingsdown and Circuit web sites.

Engaging in an Interfaith Context (Barbara Williams)

This workshop was led by Julian Bond, Director of the Christian Muslim Forum, and Rev Colin Smith, the Minister of Barnet Brookside Methodist church, who has a deep interest in Christian Jewish relationships.

The afternoon began with Colin Smith explaining the importance of Judaism to Christianity, and the common history both religions share. He went on, however, to show how over the last 2,000 years anti-Semitism has been rife, with Jews being persecuted for their role in the death of Jesus. Julian Bond continued with the links between Christianity and Islam, for example, Mohamed had turned to a Christian leader for advice when he believed he had heard the voice of God, and the Koran has chapters not only on the Jewish prophets, but also Mary the mother of God.

There followed practical ways in which Christians could interact with members of other faiths in their communities. These ranged from sharing mission work such as food kitchens, night shelters, homework clubs, discussion groups, mentoring and reciprocal preaching (the latter being undertaken by Colin Smith and the local

synagogue). The message was clear - once relationships develop, suspicion disappears.

There was then an opportunity for workshop members to raise questions about situations in their own Circuits, and also to share examples of successful ventures across the London District.

Ealing Borough Foodbank

In collaboration with the Trussel Trust, a foodbank is being set up in Ealing. With the UK economy at best sluggish and austerity continuing to be the economic order of the day, many people are finding life increasingly difficult, and that includes a struggle to feed themselves and their families. Overall, 13 million people currently live below the poverty line in the UK. Every day people in the UK go hungry for reasons ranging from redundancy to receiving an unexpected bill on a low income. Trussell Trust foodbanks provide a minimum of three days emergency food and support to people experiencing crisis in the UK.

In 2012-13 foodbanks fed 346,992 people nationwide. Of those helped, 126,889 were children. Rising costs of food and fuel combined with static income, high unemployment and changes to benefits are causing more and more people to come to foodbanks for help.

All food is donated by the public and sorted by volunteers. Frontline care professionals such as doctors and social workers identify people in crisis and issue them with food vouchers. Clients can then receive three days of nutritionally balanced, non-perishable food in exchange for their food voucher. Foodbanks also make time to chat and to point clients towards other helpful services.

In Ealing, more than 40 churches, including Greenford, Hanwell and Pitshanger from our Circuit, are working together to set up the Ealing Borough Foodbank. The first centre was opened on 18th October at the Oaktree Centre in Acton High St. and is open on Fridays from 2.00pm – 4.00pm. Hanwell Community Centre is being used to store food and Greenford church is also offering storage space. Donations of food reached one tonne on 1st October following donations of harvest collections from local schools - Montpelier Primary, Ealing and North Primary, Southall, and also from individual churches, including Ealing Green. The first big supermarket collection was at Morrisons on Saturday 5th October, when shoppers at the Acton superstore were invited to add foodbank items to their shopping list.

Further foodbanks are planned across the Borough and there's plenty of scope for people and churches to participate— to find out more visit the Ealing Borough Foodbank website at <http://ealing.foodbank.org.uk>.

Worship Consultation Meeting at Hanwell

Ray Garnet, Hanwell

On Tuesday 30th October, Hanwell held a worship consultation meeting of church members to highlight and discuss points of interest arising from our worship services. The consultation highlighted aspects of the services at Hanwell that were felt to be done well and others aspects where improvement was possible. The aspects which were felt to be done well were:-

- The music
- Listening, reflecting and thinking together
- Wrestling with different points of view
- The use of the projection facilities
- The variety of speakers
- The standard of the liturgy and service when well prepared and well structured.

Areas which were highlighted as needing more work included:

- Ensuring the sermons were always interesting, meaningful and uplifting. It was thought they were particularly likely to be helpful when they related to real life and everyday experiences
- Having more time for reflection and silence built into a service
- Choosing hymns/songs from other sources besides *Singing the Faith*
- Some members would like more "chorus" type of hymns and songs
- More acknowledgement of children and youth members when they join the main congregation in worship
- More use of Hanwell's projection facilities other than simply for the text of hymns and readings
- More indication of where we are when using books such as the Methodist Service Book.

It is hoped that by including this feedback in *In-touch* people in other churches in our Circuit and those members involved in preparing worship can use, develop and expand on these ideas in their own service preparations.

World Methodist Council

Rev Suva Catford

The World Methodist Council came home to its roots in September 2013. In 1881 an Ecumenical Methodist Conference was held with over 400 delegates from around the world. This year the numbers were fewer- if you've a copy of the Methodist Recorder for 27th September you'll be able to spot me amongst the gathering!

Members are elected to the Council for five years and my term began in 2011 at the World Methodist Conference in Durban. My appointment is to the Family Life Committee which has a remit to highlight some of the issues that affect families world-wide – all families are included whether of one, or many! For my part I'm researching the joys and challenges of single parent families, so I'm hoping that if you have experience to share we can arrange a time to meet.

The World Methodist Council is an exciting meeting, because we have a common purpose to work towards unity, to worship and pray together. For many this involves working in a second or third language, so nothing is done too quickly as each person is given time to speak. Even this reminds me that God values each person and how really listening can be instrumental in our healing. There are representatives at world level involved in dialogue and theological discussion, with Christian and other faith leaders, including those serving on the World Council of Churches. Being Wesleyan and Methodist we cannot avoid initiatives such as 'Stop Hunger Now', and this year we spoke about foodbanks in Britain! There is not room here to list everyone, however, the words that will remain with me are from an offertory prayer, which began, "*Take the gifts that we are...*" Acknowledging ourselves to be gifts for the body of Christ, alongside our brothers and sisters, means that each one has a place, which we need to fill, not based on power. Sometimes that might mean sharing resources - time, experience, training, voices, and also receiving what poverty has to teach us.

The World Methodist Council has a website, www.worldmethodistcouncil.org which has the up-to-date information from the Council. Also the General Secretary, Bishop Abrahams sends out THE FIRST FRIDAY NEWSLETTER. This is the monthly point of contact, which for many will be received electronically. It is through sharing our stories that we can hear each other, represent each other, bless each other as we seek to serve God in whichever corner of the world we live. The first speech of the week invited us to move beyond considering other members as distant cousins, but being brothers and sisters with different mothers. At first this might feel strange, but perhaps gives us the permission we need to understand our diversity, including our own culture, to wrestle with the issues important for us and allow ourselves to be transformed into the people of God.

Bishop Abrahams said, "We need to be less self-sufficient, inward-looking, institutionalised, sanitised and bureaucratised and leave more room for the Holy Spirit to disrupt our well-prepared agendas and plans. I know that the Spirit blows

where it wills (John3:8) but when we invoke the Spirit we cannot expect it to be business as usual.” As part of the host committee it was a privilege to welcome leaders from around the world and get to move beyond formalities as we worked together, prayed together and ate together. John Wesley would be smiling to know that the world, that was his parish, came home.

As a Circuit, part of London District we pledged to raise 50p per member for the Achieving the Vision Fund, which supports the work of the Council. How we achieve this will be announced later. In the meantime, if you would like to receive a copy of the FIRST FRIDAY NEWSLETTER, or have a story to share, please let me know by email - suva.catford@methodist.org.uk.

Reflections after a Concert

Kathleen Loveridge, Kingsdown

I've never been to a fully Humanist funeral, though earlier this year one came close. No mention of Jesus Christ, and we didn't hear the word 'resurrection'; no prayers for the dead or for the living, but we sang two hymns – well, at least one or two of us sang along with the choir on the CD.

Don't get me wrong – it was a good occasion; perfectly in tune with the feelings of most of the grieving family, and probably that of the deceased as well, even if those amongst us who have a Christian faith found it incomplete, as if something important had not been said.

But I was struck by the confidence with which the leader – a member of the crematorium staff – assured those present that, though Marion had finally succumbed to the cancer that had been her burden for six months, she was still 'with us', still 'part of the family', would not only be remembered but could be conversed with and consulted. Her continued 'presence' might be invisible, but was nevertheless certain. Of course each of us had our personal feelings about what was going on, but it seemed that it was impossible for anyone to accept that death had been the end. And yet, almost everyone there would have denied being a Christian, denied believing that Jesus was the Son of God, denied his resurrection from the dead.

As one does, I soon forgot these apparent contradictions; I can still know that Marion is safe with God whether she or any of the mourners does or not. But I was reminded of them recently, reading the programme notes for a Prom concert which featured the 'German' Requiem, by Brahms. Its title is almost always written like that and I learned that this is probably because Brahms himself was unhappy with the name he had originally given it. He later wrote that he 'would gladly have left out 'German' and substituted 'Human''. This reflects Brahms' increasingly humanistic view of life but, of course, a requiem is choral music for a funeral and would have been unthinkable – and unmarketable – without acceptance by the church.

Protestantism, deep-rooted in Germany from its beginnings, gave him the opportunity to set his music to words from the Lutheran translation of the Bible instead of the traditional phrases of the Catholic Mass. It begins with words from Matthew's Gospel, 'Blessed are they that mourn', and uses both Old and New Testament passages to offer a hymn to the process of mourning, while holding out hope for eventual recovery from loss. The words 'Jesus', 'Christ' and 'resurrection' do not appear here, any more than they did in Marion's funeral oration, nor references to judgement and the fear of Hell; the objective of the requiem is an acknowledgement of human mortality, its grief and resolution, not a homage to any specific deity.

But the affirmation of eternal life, of something beyond this world's existence, is clear, almost strident. 'The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs' (Isaiah 53); 'for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come' (Hebrews 13) ; ' the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised' (1 Corinthians 15). One can't get away from it, however loose one's ties are to a position of Christian faith.

The leader at Marion's funeral knew that the mourners would appreciate, even need, this confident assumption of life beyond the grave, for the same reasons that lead most grieving families to seek a religious minister to take charge of the funeral service and often a church 'service' as well. Surely we must not be critical of those who seek to use our premises only for funerals; they may not know what they are seeking, but there are needs being expressed that demand us to respond in sympathetic welcome. We know that few will return to us to explore their beliefs more deeply, but it seems to me that these are clear signs of God at work in his world, and it should be more than we dare not to acknowledge them.

On Being Part of a Family....

Gerald Barton, Editor

Of late, I have been reflecting on what it means to be part of a family. This comes of watching the effect on Rita, who grew up in Romanian state orphanages, of living with us. For quite a few of the other children in the orphanage, there were other relatives, parents even, who took them out at weekends, so they did have the benefit of some family connections. Not so Rita.

This feature of Romanian life came about because back in the 1960's Nicolae Ceaucescu, the head of state, decided that the population was too small. In order to increase it, he banned contraception for pretty much everyone. As a result, the population surged, but the economy was too weak and the people too poor to support all these extra children. In consequence, many people abandoned or put the children they did not have the means to support into state orphanages. The policy was disastrous and the orphanages often dreadful. However, not every child

was completely abandoned and many had the benefit of at least some family connections to help them along.

Rita was put into an orphanage at an early age and did not have the benefit of family connections thereafter. Given her very sociable and friendly personality, however she must have been brought up in a loving context during her initial few years. Not surprisingly then, being part of a family is incredibly meaningful to Rita as, until now she's never had that experience. It's not, however only a matter of living in a loving context with people who are about the age her parents would have been, but seems to me to go rather beyond.

Firstly, by placing herself in the network of our extended families, Rita is also placing herself in relation both to others and in time. It's not that she's taken to thinking we're somehow her blood relations, but by knowing that so-and-so *would have been* her aunt, uncle, cousin or whatever *had she been* our daughter, gives a sense of relation to other people and across generations. She's never had this kind of sense before and I can see that it's really quite important to her.

When I think about my family over the generations – my mother, father, grandparents and so in, I have a sense of myself as belonging in a family extended over time. This contributes to my sense of identity – who I am and where I fit. For instance, both my mother and father were born in Bristol, although my mother's family were from Devon where they were agricultural labourers, and my father's family from Lacock in Wiltshire where they were bakers. This gives me a sense of being part of a continuous line of family. If you literally have no knowledge of your forebears, where do you start? You seem to have appeared from 'nowhere' and don't really belong anywhere. Placing yourself becomes, perhaps more keenly important.

In a way, I have a sense of this as many years ago, during the mid-1980's I went through a period when I felt very alone. At that time, I came across some old family photos which I had copied and put on my lounge wall. Having done that, I found myself feeling a bit more connected and a little less 'alone'. At that point I began to realise a little more the importance of belonging to a family.

I have sometimes wondered why people who were adopted as children often have a great desire to know who their 'real' parents were. Now, however I begin to appreciate a bit more why it can be so important, as knowing really does say something about who you are and where you fit into the line of generations. Having grown up, like the vast majority of readers of In-touch, in a family, it all seems so natural that I haven't appreciated how important it is to my sense of myself. Observing Rita fitting herself into our families gives me a greater sense of how important it really is, especially as she's never had a family and has no knowledge of any other relations.

Thinking about families leads me to think about broader communities. Beyond our families, we feel ourselves a part of our local community, and beyond that our country and ultimately part of the whole human race. As Christians, we are also part

of our church families and for most, if not all, of us these will be very important to our sense of 'belonging'. We spend time together in various church-related activities and we worship together, which is vitally important for reinforcing and underscoring the faith which we have in common. From time to time we may also share in worship, or other activities with other church families, thus broadening our sense of belonging both to the wider church and to our faith as Christians.

As Methodists, we are part of a church that has 'togetherness' and 'sharing' built into its very structure. Whilst we may be members of particular local churches, we are, by the same token members of a broader community. The organisational levels of Methodism – the Circuit, the District and beyond to the oddly spelt, but aptly named Connexion aren't just a piece of structuring for practical purposes. As a Circuit, we share our ministers and our local preachers. About 8% of the Circuit's total membership forms the Circuit Meeting, our Circuit's prime governing body. We come together periodically in Circuit services. Each Sunday, if the Quarterly Plan is followed, we all pray for a particular church in the Circuit (that's what the 'prayer numbers' on the plan are for, if you hadn't realised). Furthermore, a number of our churches have recently been given grants from the Circuit to support their development. All in all, as Methodists we do quite a bit of 'coming together' and 'sharing'.

Sitting in our individual churches of a Sunday, it's easy to miss all this. Indeed, I have attended churches, not Methodist I hasten to add, which perhaps by virtue of their size, have seemed rather independent of other churches even in the same denomination. Equally, I am sometimes struck by the number of different churches and congregations around us. Many of our churches host other congregations who meet in our buildings but not with us. There may be good reasons why there are so many different churches and congregations, but I can't help but wonder if we wouldn't all be that much stronger if at least some of these different churches and congregation didn't come together a bit more. Think of the Ealing Church Winter Night Shelter or the Food Bank. Acting together, churches in Ealing have achieved something very worthwhile. Had they each tried to act alone, little would have been achieved.

It's worth reflecting, just for a moment at least, that we, as Methodists are by definition part of something broader. The structure we have demands that we share our resources and that we recognise that we are part of a broader family. This is, perhaps something that makes Methodism a bit distinctive compared to other denominations.

I've come a long way from describing how one person is finding the joy of fitting into a family for the first time. However, it's important for all of us to have a sense of belonging both at the family and other levels, such as our churches. Realising that we are part of something much bigger and broader in our extended church families through our Circuits, Districts, the Connexion and into the wider church is equally important.

Evangelism with a Difference.... with Model Railways

From 'The Buzz'

Earlier this year, Wiggington Methodist Chapel in Oxfordshire set up an electric train set for one of its younger members. The model received such a positive response that the young people decided to put up a much bigger one during August.

The congregation dug into their attics in order to pool together 100 metres of track at the back of the chapel (all pieces duly marked with Tippex). Visitors were then invited to come in and admire the finished product.



Steve Haley, church member, said: "Apart from the fact that we have had a lot of fun doing it, the train track has had a number of unexpected results: We have found that people who would not normally come into a church were quite happy to work on the model and play. Some train set owners were particularly happy because they were able to showcase parts which had been gathering dust in garages and lofts!"

The chapel's aim was to make contact with people in the surrounding area. Since the track went on display, new people have been walking through the door. The model was open every weekend until 7th September.

Circuit Bible Studies

As part of our Circuit's Discipleship and Training programme, in December there will be a series of three **Advent Bible Studies**. These will take place in the church foyer at Kingsdown on Sunday evenings on 1st, 8th and 15th December. Studies will begin at 5.00pm and will finish at about 6.30pm. The first and third sessions will be led by Rev Dr Jennifer Smith, and the second by Rev Suva Catford.



There will be a second series – **Winter Bible Study**, each Sunday in February at the same times. All the studies are open to everyone in the Circuit.

Remember, Winter 2013 - 14

Compiled by Mary Newman, Pitshanger

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

Isaiah 9 v6

Go, Tell the Good News

Go tell it on the mountain,
Over the hill and everywhere;
Go tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born

Traditional adapted by John Tearnan

I apologise to any of you who have heard this story before. (I may have included it in a previous "Remember")

A mother was putting away the nativity set after Christmas when she noticed the Baby Jesus was missing. She asked her four year old if he knew where Jesus was. "Yes, but he doesn't want me to tell anyone." "Why not?" she asked, "Because he doesn't want you to put him away with the decorations," he said, Wisdom from the lips of a child!

Taken from the Word For Today 2010/11

A Poem for the New Year

Another year is dawning.
Dear Father, let it be, in working
or in waiting, another year with Thee.
Another year of leaning upon
Thy loving breast. Another year
of trusting, of quiet, happy rest. *Anon*

By the time you read this our Harvest Festivals will have passed for another year. However, there is no limit to the days we can praise God for the wonderful world he created. The Dean of Winchester Cathedral included the following poem in the programme for the flower festival held there in June:

O God of fruit and fragrance,
Of frog and freckled wing,
Of dewy rose and dappled greening;
We are creatures who work in the garden of creation and know
Ourselves as part of your great order.
Sometimes the weeds entangled roots threaten the good growth,
Yet the kiss of the sun is pardon,
And Evensong is heard from the branches of the trees.
As the setting sun casts its glorious red hue,
It seems to promise a world that shall be at peace with itself
And with its maker,
Alleluia! Thanks be to God.
Amen

With thanks to Ann Owen for giving it to me:

Whenever I walk past Ealing Boards and Timber I stop to read the words of wisdom that often appear on a hand-written note in the window. Here are two that I read recently!

“If we don’t forgive ourselves and others for the mistakes we make we carry a crippled body and mind within ourselves.”

“If we count our assets, including our shoe laces we will always remain contented.”

Many of you will know the sense of feeling alone and desolate at times, particularly following a separation or bereavement. Christmas and New Year can be especially difficult, when the memories of previous happier times can hit us hardest. Jesus had many friends and followers but just when He most needed them they had gone. In her book “In Quietness and Confidence,” Mary Oakley wrote these moving words: *“Lord you know what it was to be left alone when family and friends were gone. Yet you could say you were not alone, for your Father was with you. Help us to feel your presence always.”*

Apart from the Christian organisations we are familiar with, such as Street Pastors and Night Shelters, there must be many others that we don’t know about. I would like to tell you about one I came across recently. I wonder if any of you have come across ‘Glory Road.’

My husband and I were driving home down the A1 and decided to stop at a service station for a break. To our surprise the service station turned out to be very different from usual; basically a transport café. In the doorway were a couple of shelves of books and CD’s, inviting people to help themselves, free of charge. I took one and inside I found a small yellow card. On the one side was the address and phone number of Glory Road. “Supporting drivers, staff and families in the transport industry.” On the reverse were these words:

Life may be good at the moment –
Plenty of work, plenty of money, easy hours.
Or you may be carrying a heavy load –
Many worries and no one to turn to for help.
There are people who care,
Who know what you are going through,
Who can help.
Keep this card in your wallet
Or give us a call, any time.

Faith

I quite often come across things that people have written about faith. Here are two of them:

The test is to have faith when things are going badly”
Winston Churchill in 1942 during World War II

“Faith is the conviction that God knows more than we do about this life and He will get us through.”
Max Lucado

Remember at Evening

Father in heaven, hear my prayer,
Keep me in thy loving care.
Be my guide in all I do.
Bless all those who love me too.
Amen

For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even to the end.
Psalms 48 V14

Reading for Winter

Matthew ch.1 and 2 - The Nativity

Mark ch.10 vv 46 - 52 – Jesus teaches about faith

John ch.13 vv 34 - 35 - Jesus teaches about love

Christmas Services around the Circuit

As usual, there will special services all around our Circuit this Christmas.

Acton Hill

25 th Dec	10.00am	Christmas Day	Christmas Morning Worship
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Ealing Green

22 nd Dec	6.00pm	Christmas Eve	Carols & Candles
25 th Dec	10.00am	Christmas Day	Christmas Morning Worship

Greenford

24 th Dec	11.15pm	Christmas Eve	Midnight Communion
25 th Dec	10.00am	Christmas Day	<i>Joint service at Northolt</i>

Hanwell

22 nd Dec	5.00pm	Sunday	Christingle Service
24 th Dec	11.30pm	Christmas Eve	Midnight Communion
25 th Dec	10.30am	Christmas Day	Christmas Morning Worship

Kingsdown

22 nd Dec	6.30pm	Sunday	Carol Service
24 th Dec	5.00pm	Christmas Eve	Carols outside the church
24 th Dec	11.30pm	Christmas Eve	Midnight Communion
25 th Dec	10.30am	Christmas Day	Christmas Morning Worship

King's Hall

25 th Dec	09.30am	Christmas Day	Christmas Morning Worship <i>(at Hanwell)</i>
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Northolt

25 th Dec	10.00am	Christmas Day	Christmas Morning Worship <i>(Joint service with Greenford)</i>
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Pitshanger

25 th Dec	09.30am	Christmas Day	Christmas Morning Worship
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Circuit Directory Update

Ealing Animal Welfare Bazaar

**Saturday 1st March 2014, 10.00am – 4.00pm
Hanwell Methodist Church**

Over 32 societies are expected to attend - there will be lots to look at, lots of information and lots to buy as well as lunch, light refreshments and a quiet area in which you can relax and reflect. Admission free

For further details call 020 8567 6739 or visit www.animalwelfarebazaar.info

Forthcoming Events around the Circuit

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

December

- 1st Sun 5.00pm **Circuit Advent Bible Study at Kingsdown**
Led by Rev Dr Jennifer Smith
- 5th Thurs 7.15pm **Training Sub-Group of Local Preachers Meeting**
8.00pm **Local Preachers Meeting** main meeting
At Kingsdown (in church foyer)
- 8th Sun 5.00pm **Circuit Advent Bible Study at Kingsdown**
Led by Rev Suva Catford
- 11th Wed 2.00pm **Living and Dying Well series at Ealing Green**
and
8.00pm
- 12th Thurs 8.00pm **Circuit Policy Meeting** at Kingsdown
- 15th Sun 5.00pm **Circuit Advent Bible Study at Kingsdown**
Led by Rev Dr Jennifer Smith

January

- 22nd Wed 2.00pm **Living and Dying Well series at Ealing Green**
and
8.00pm Rev Colin Smith, Superintendent of Barnet and Queensbury Circuit on
"John Wesley on Living and Dying Well"

February

- 20th Thurs 8.00pm **Circuit Policy Meeting** at Kingsdown
- 25th Tues 7.15pm **Training Sub-Group of Local Preachers Meeting**
8.00pm **Local Preachers Meeting** main meeting
- 26th Wed 2.00pm **Living and Dying Well series at Ealing Green**
and
8.00pm Deacon Denise Creed from Central Hall Westminster.

Articles for '**In-touch**' Issue No 67 (March - May) should be sent by e-mail headed '**In-touch**' to the Editor, **Gerald Barton**, or as hard copy to the Circuit Office.

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