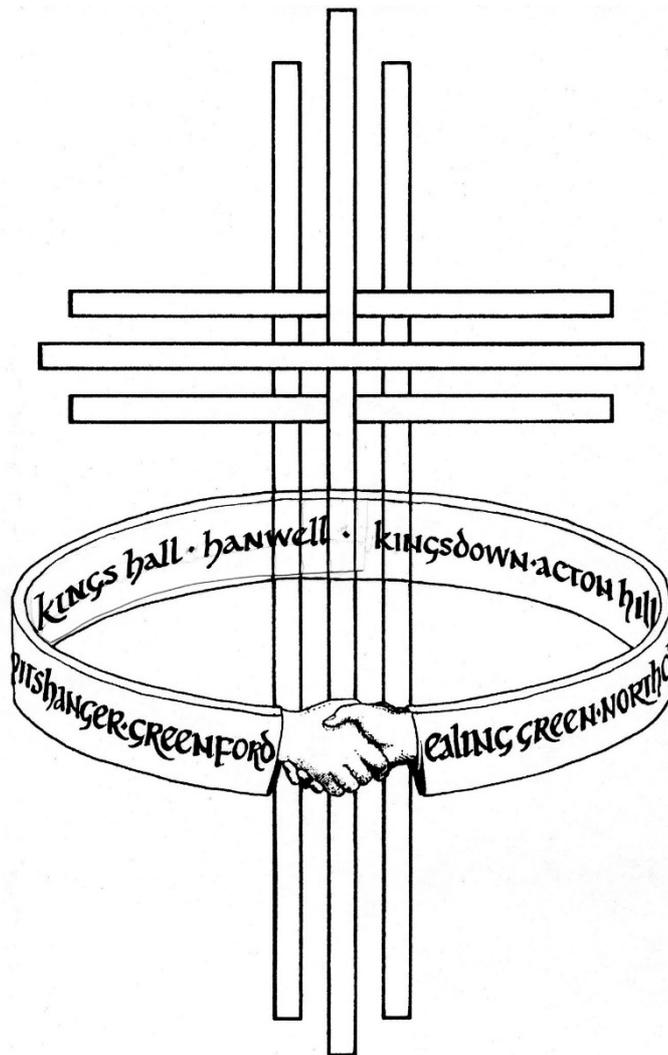


In-touch

No 72

June - August 2015



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 Acting Superintendent

For the last edition on In-Touch I was asked to write a piece talking about why I am a minister. It set me wondering: what would you answer if asked why you are a Christian or why you attend a particular church? What made you choose the job you do? How do you live out your Christian Faith within it?

I've also been thinking about Christian identity. Asylum seekers who are claiming to be under threat because of their Christian faith are often asked to prove they are Christian by the Home Office as part of the immigration process. This is sometimes done by asking questions about Bible stories, and requesting that applicants recite the Lord's Prayer or the creed. I wonder how many of us would be able to answer these questions. More deeply, I wonder whether this is really how Christian identity should be defined.

In the Acts of the Apostles there are many arguments about who's in and who's out of the movement of Jesus' followers that was to become the early church. They wrestle with the question of whether all must be Jewish and adhere to Jewish laws and practice. Is circumcision a mark of membership? Keeping a kosher table? Etc. Arguments raged about what was essential and what excluded others from being part of God's Kingdom.

In the end, as the Gospel spreads and the Spirit leads, baptism becomes the point of entry, and living in God's life and God's way become the way in which that is maintained and proved. Living fully connected to each other and to God's abundant life meant a need to be willing to share all they had with each other so all might live abundantly. Living and breathing God's word of life meant all needed to read or hear the scriptures and worship and pray regularly. Living as God's family meant regular family meals where no one was excluded by dietary laws.

What about today? What are the essentials of being a Christian for us? What are the things that now exclude others? How would *you* answer if asked to show that you are Christian?

Are you willing to take up the challenge? Could you write a piece for the next edition of In-Touch telling your story (why you're a Christian? What your job and faith mean to you. Etc). Come on, have a go!

As you receive this edition of In-Touch Jen should be returning from her sabbatical. I'm sure you'll join me in welcoming her back and praying for her as she returns. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported the Circuit and me as Acting Superintendent over the last 3 months.

Our deacon, Lemia has also returned to work following her operation. It's great to have her back! Please continue to pray for her as her recovery continues.

We have an exciting few months ahead of us with building projects up and running and others being explored, a children's club at Norholt, a project leader for the MHA

Live at Home Scheme taking up post, the Southall Schools Worker being appointed and beginning work, and the Summer Series worship uniting us all as a Circuit....

Have a great summer!

God bless

Rachel

From the Circuit Meeting

During March, the Circuit Meeting met twice – on the 12th and 26th. The reason why two meetings were necessary reflected the number of grant applications that had come forward from within the Circuit. Combined with the normal on-going business of the meeting, there was simply too much to encompass in one meeting.

Firstly, the meeting approved the Circuit's Annual Report and Accounts for the 2013/14 Connexional year. All members of the Meeting have received a copy of the Circuit's accounts, but if you wish, you can also download a copy from the Circuit website – go to www.ealingtrinity.org.uk/treasurers-and-finance/ and click on the link to the accounts.

David Street, our Circuit Treasurer announced an initiative '**Gathering the Harvest**' aimed at considering how the Circuit can support church treasurers with their work. During the summer months a review is to be carried out of the ways in which other Circuits support their church treasurers. This is also designed to help prepare our churches for changes in Charity Law that will come into force in 2020 when each church will have to register with the Charity Commission as a charity in its own right. Currently, churches are exempted from the need to register unless their annual income exceeds £100,000 per year. This exemption will be removed from 2020 and all churches will need to register irrespective of their annual income.

The meeting heard reports on Circuit property. In particular, refurbishment work is in hand or planned at two properties – Flat 2 Havelock House and one of the flats at 37/39 Newton Avenue, Acton. Once completed the flats will be let. Of greater significance for the Circuit is progress on the sale and redevelopment of King's Hall. This is a complex sale as the Circuit is seeking to retain space in a redeveloped building for church/community use. The sale is being handled on behalf of the Circuit by Cluttons LLP and negotiations are on-going with an interested developer. A specialist solicitor has been appointed to handle the legal aspects of the sale and the future relationship with the developer. Architects are also being engaged to draw up plans for the space to be retained by the Circuit.

The first major grant application to be heard by the meeting was for the proposed **MHA Live at Home Scheme**. Outline details of this scheme were published in the December – February edition of In-touch. The grant application was for funding to

support the employment of a 'Live at Home Manager' for the scheme. The MHA will match funding granted by the Circuit.

In the first instance, the scheme will set up a number of small initiatives for older people based on Northolt and Greenford churches. Healthy Eating and Exercise are health priorities for the Borough and both churches have space for flowers, fruit and vegetables to be grown. The idea would be for older residents who enjoy gardening, but can no longer bend or lift, to tend raised beds to grow vegetables and fruit for their own use and use in a Garden Café that is also proposed at both churches. Exercise will come as a result of the gardening but it is also proposed to offer gentle exercise classes similar to those offered by Borough of Ealing but at a local venue, probably in the churches' halls.

There is also an opportunity for intergenerational working as both churches have children's nurseries which are keen for their children to meet members of the older community (called Community Cohesion in Ofsted speak) and learn about gardening. Closer working with the nursery in Northolt has already led to some interesting initiatives such as sharing Harvest and Christmas. Very few of the children using the nursery are Christian.

Whilst isolation is an issue for local older people living alone, Ealing already has a befriending scheme (through the Volunteer Link scheme). Older people can be linked into this scheme. Although perceived as a priority for older people within the borough, the MHA scheme would link older people to this existing service.

The meeting decided to make a grant of £20,000 in the first year of the scheme followed by £15,000 in each of the next two years. Should the scheme be terminated before the end of this three year period, any money remaining from the grant would be returned to the Circuit.

The second major grant application considered was for a full-time **Christian Schools Worker for Southall** to be supported over a five year period. This initiative is a partnership between our Circuit and the Southall Group Ministry of the Church of England. It has also been endorsed by the Southall Faiths Forum. The post will raise the profile of churches among Southall schools and youth, provide a Christian voice within the school curriculum and help schools deliver their SMSC (spiritual, moral, social, cultural) requirements. It will also promote knowledge of, and encounter with living Christian faith among young people in Southall, and will be a bridge between church outreach in schools and existing congregations so that parents and grandparents in congregations are more aware of the pressures on their youth and community, and can support schools better.

In addition, the Schools Worker would aim to aid community cohesion and the prevention of religious radicalisation of young people, developing curriculum and models for inter-faith understanding including local faith leaders' panels and schools' participation, training of young people as 'faith ambassadors' in schools and witness of a servant Christian faith in the local community. The post would develop models of good practice in London and more widely. The schools initially

involved would include Featherstone High School, Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College, Villiers High School, Guru Nanak Sikh Academy, and independent schools such as Acorn College and Ayesha Siddiqa Girls School.

The meeting voted to support the Schools Worker with a grant of up to £122,000 over the five year term. This will be made up of £42,000 in the first year and £20,000 per year thereafter. Additional funding is also being sought from the London District and the All Saints Trust. Following the meeting, the London District agreed to provide £60,000 over three years.

An application for a grant of £1,500 was agreed for **Northolt** to help them run a **Holiday Club** during the school summer holidays for one week starting 20th July. This is a follow up to last years' Summer Holiday club and Northolt's work with Willow Tree and Northolt High School.

After some research Northolt has invited Family Friendly Churches to run the club for children ages 7-13 based on a workshop entitled '**Jerusalem TV**'. Family Friendly Churches will set up a TV studio in the church and various roles will be assigned to the children each day – director, assistant director, newsreaders, reporters, film editors, camera operators, journalists and on-lookers. The children will experience a different role each day.

Those attending will be invited to imagine they are a news reporter for a TV company. There is a huge story breaking - Jesus, the healer and preacher is on his way to Jerusalem and things are going to happen. Jerusalem TV wants to be the first with news and there is a bulletin in just 2 hours. The tapes need to be edited, reports gathered and scripts written. As 'rushes' come in from the camera crew in Jerusalem, which are in reality digital clips from the 'Miraclemaker', the children will edit them to make a number of 1 minute reports in conjunction with the reporters who are preparing the voice-over to their stories. Meanwhile the news-readers are writing their scripts and the on the spot filming teams are gaining eye-witness accounts. All this is overseen by the director and the assistant director.

All the equipment will be operated by the children themselves and it is amazing how well they do. It is also amazing how hard the club makes them look the story of Holy Week.

Following the closure of the **King's Hall** building, the Urdu speaking congregation has been meeting in Hamborough Primary School, adjacent to the King's Hall site. The congregation is struggling financially as it has to meet the cost of hiring space for worship in the school whilst relying solely on its offertory. Most churches in the Circuit cover their maintenance costs and also some of their assessments from their lettings incomes. Compared to other churches in the Circuit, the King's Hall (Urdu/Hindi) congregation is therefore in a much more difficult position. The meeting voted to make a grant of £6,500 per annum to the congregation until the building at King's Hall has been redeveloped and they are able to move back in.

In July 2013, the Circuit Meeting approved an application from **Greenford** for a grant of £32,500 and a loan of £45,000 repayable over five years to renew the church's heating system. Renewing the system was seen as vital to the church's mission as a cold building is simply an unwelcoming place. Greenford have been able to repay the first loan repayment and have raised a significant sum towards the second, but it has become clear that the need to focus on fundraising is causing their sense of mission and purpose to stagnate. Greenford therefore decided to request the Circuit to convert the remainder of the loan to an emergency grant. This was agreed by the meeting and a total of £30,249.28 will be converted from loan to grant.

Greenford currently hosts a FoodBank café and will also provide facilities for the MHA Live at Home Scheme. The church would like to create an improved 'hospitality' area to support these activities and wish to commission a feasibility study by an architect to determine what can be done. The meeting approved a grant of £5,000 towards the cost of the study.

Finally, the meeting approved some small grants – for Christina Tom-Johnson to attend a safeguarding conference organised by the NSPCC and a grant to Catherine Whitehouse from Northolt to attend a 'Soul Survivor' event in August.

Methodist Women in Britain Residential Conference Swanwick 17-19th April



Blossom Jackson MWiB-Forum member

The theme of this year's conference was "Being One, Being Whole, Being God's" - a challenging subject, which kept the 250 delegates focussed with its varied and well balanced programme. The conference was so over-subscribed that only those who had applied as soon as it was advertised in November were able to get places.

Like all good conferences the advantage is not just the conference content, but the chance to meet, work and have fellowship with women across the UK, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland who belong to the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. {WFM&UCW}

The first evening started with dinner and evening prayers led by the chaplaincy team. This was followed by a presentation from the Methodist Heritage and Archives Task Group. We were invited to send to the group artefacts and any material which would illustrate the evolution of our organisation - from Women's Work to Network to MWiB. The following two days' programme started with a prayer walk around the beautiful ground and lakes at 8.00am, followed by breakfast at 8.30am! Alternative options were prayers in one's room, Zimbabwe Praise and the Liverpool District Praise.

I chose to do the prayer walk, led by Jill Baker on the first day, followed by Zimbabwe Praise on the Sunday morning, as I had already decided to do the 10.00pm circle dance that evening, led by Gillian Pengally - past Network President, which I never miss!

On Saturday after breakfast and morning worship, our key note speaker was the ebullient Revd. Jackie Belfield, who leads a new kind of ministry – ‘**New Song**’ and one could easily see how her innovative ideas and enthusiasm have led to the dramatic growth of her church in Warrington. Some people might have already seen her on TV. For more information, please visit www.newsongwarrington.com.

The rest of the day included attendance at 2 workshops, evening worship and a quiz evening led by the jovial Jackie Belfield

The first workshop was on ‘Human Trafficking in the 21st Century - how can the church respond?’ - led by Revd Denise Harding, who has been involved in churches and community together initiatives in Frodsham. Part of her work has included working with the Salvation Army and International Justice Mission by lobbying the government about the Modern Slavery Bill. I was invited to chair this session and you might already remember that during my presidency in the London District my chosen charities for fundraising were Children Unite and the Adavu Project in Birmingham which works with trafficked women.

My second chosen workshop was ‘Recognising Calling’. Sometimes we think of ‘calling’ as something that happens only to those such as preachers or ordained ministers. Yet as Christians each of us is uniquely called as the person we are to a discipleship journey with and in Christ. The workshop began by exploring whole-life calling and how who we are in the context of our everyday lives is important to God. This leads naturally into thinking about the nature of calling for each of us as the person we are. How do we recognise it? How do we see who we can be in Christ? How do we inhabit it as we learn who Christ wants us to be.

The final day laid emphasis on MWiB & WFM & UCW business and concluded with Holy Communion.

So if you would like to attend next year’s conference, please make your application as soon as Swanwick 2016 is advertised in November, or if you have the finance to attend the Quinquennial WFM & UCW conference in Houston, Texas next year, please look out for further information!

A Low Note

Contributed by Bill Cocking, Acton Hill

From the West Chilton Parish Magazine - *“Tonight the sermon topic will be ‘What is Hell?’ Come early and listen to our choir.”*

MHA Ealing Live at Home Scheme Sponsored Walk – 21st March 2015

David Richards - Pitshanger

The aim of the sponsored walk was not only to visit all the Methodist churches in the Ealing Trinity Circuit, covering a distance of 17.9 miles, but also to raise peoples' awareness of the MHA Ealing Live at Home scheme - a new charity being set up for what is hoped to be a worthwhile cause, and raise sufficient funds to support it and keep it running, or in our case, walking.

We are all living longer and a lot of us would like to stay in our own homes and continue to keep well but be able, with the help of volunteers to do the things in life we enjoy doing.

It all kicked off from Greenford Methodist at 9.00am on what was a cold, windy and overcast day. But were we down-hearted? Not a bit of it!

We were determined to enjoy it and savour it. To begin with there was Rev. Peter, Joyce, Celeste, Edna and Yvonne from Greenford and Micky, Sunny and myself from Pitshanger. Rev. Suva made sure there were no false starts and off we went.



At Greenford



At Pitshanger

Our first point of call was Pitshanger and we were greeted with refreshments by Micky's wife, Lisa and Colleen. It was only a 15 minute break but it was worth it, next stop Acton Hill. Yvonne, Micky and Sunny stepped down.

Thanks to yours truly, our journey to Acton Hill was made more interesting by the fact that I wanted to go to the toilet. I got to West Acton station, no problem, but when I came out of the station my fellow walkers had disappeared. Where they were

I hadn't a clue, but thankfully we did meet up again at the church, where we were greeted by church members and more refreshments. Thank you. Next stop Ealing Green.

We got to Ealing Green a tad earlier than planned and caught them holding music exams. We saw David Groves and then went on our way to Kingsdown, where more refreshments awaited



At Acton Hill

us - thank you Rev. Rachel, Kathleen, Kath and Janet for your hospitality. On the walk to Hanwell we were joined by Gerald, Sue and Rita.

At Hanwell, we were met by a large number, because they were doing an Easter Egg hunt and yes, you guessed it, more refreshments - thank you everyone. Gerald and Rita dropped out, but Sue stayed with us.



At Ealing Green

Next stop King's Hall, Southall where we saw George Lafford outside, and because we were outside, we did not stop long as the weather looked no better than when we first set off from Greenford.



At Kingsdown

We walked the whole of Lady Margaret Road and came to Northolt, where we saw Margaret, Elizabeth and Janet. They plied us with so much in the way of refreshments, we were almost tempted to finish there and then. Thank you everyone. Not only that, but I had developed blisters on the heels of my feet and the back of my left leg was seizing up on me. But I kept going for the

last leg of the walk back to Greenford with those of us that were left. We arrived as planned at exactly 6.00pm, and had a final cup of tea and refreshments. Thank you, Greenford.

I was pleased with my efforts, even though I was limping at the end, because I had not done a sponsored walk since I did one for Hanwell in aid of Christian Aid around Richmond Park and that was over 25 years ago, I think!

I was impressed by Joyce, Celeste and Edna because they, like me did the complete walk from start to finish. Well done, I hope next time we have more young people, like them, taking part.



At Hanwell

Finally, you may like to know I raised a total of £144. So thank you to everyone who sponsored me.

nb Peter Catford says the total raised by all participants was well over £400.

On Memorials and Remembering

Gerald Barton, Editor

As a student in Exeter I often walked passed a statue of Sir Redvers Buller VC. Now, there's a name, if ever there was one to conjure with. Sir Redvers sits proudly astride his horse, cocked hat on his head facing towards the city centre on a traffic roundabout near St David's church.

Sir Redvers Buller was born in Crediton in 1839. After school at Eton he joined the King's Royal Rifle Regiment and rose to the rank of general. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery in the face of the enemy during the Zulu War of 1879. He then served as Commander-in-Chief of British forces in South Africa during the early months of the Second Boer War and subsequently commanded the army in Natal until his return to England in November 1900. His career was not entirely crowned with success, however. Forces under his command suffered a series of defeats during the early part of the Second Boer War, although he was successful in defeating the Boers' later in the war and correctly predicted that the Boers would turn to guerilla tactics following their defeat.

Although he was popular as a military leader with the public, his reputation was damaged by that series of defeats at the hands of the Boers. Following criticism in the press of the performance of the British Army during the war, he was finally sacked from the Army in 1901.

Buller has gone down – not entirely fairly - as “one of the bad jokes of Victorian military history”. There is a famous verdict that he was “an admirable captain, an adequate major, a barely satisfactory colonel and a disastrous general”.

Nonetheless, Sir Redvers Buller got his statue, erected in 1905 by public subscription. He died in 1908 and is buried at Holy Cross church in Crediton.

There are many such statues to past military leaders, politicians and statesmen up and down the country. More poignant are the war memorials put up after the First World War to the many who lost their lives in that conflict fighting for king and country and subsequently also to those who lost their lives in the Second World War. As we approach the centenary of the ending of the First World War in November 2018, a group of enthusiasts is building a new LMS 'Patriot' class steam locomotive to be named 'The Unknown Warrior' which they hope will be ready for the centenary.

More poignant still is the Neue Wache in Berlin. Built as a guard house in 1816-18 for the royal palace by Frederic William III of Prussia, the Neue Wache was rebuilt and re-opened in 1960 by the East German government as a 'Memorial to the Victims of Fascism and Militarism'. The remains of an unknown soldier and a nameless concentration camp victim were enshrined in the building. Following the re-unification of Germany it was re-dedicated in 1993 and now serves as the 'Central Memorial of the Federal Republic of Germany for the Victims of War and

Dictatorship'. It houses an enlarged version of a sculpture by Käthe Kollwitz - *Mother with her Dead Son*. In the form of a 'pieta', the sculpture is placed directly under an oculus in the roof which is open to the sky, so it is exposed to the rain, snow and cold of the Berlin climate, symbolizing the suffering of civilians during World War II.

It seems to me that the Neue Wache reminds us to remember all who suffer or die as a result of war. Not just the people who serve in the armed forces, but also the millions of civilians who die as a result of bombing, dislocation and displacement. Not just in the past, but now, ongoing.

But then I came across this poem in my Bible reading notes -

A soldier fulfils his duty
loyally, professionally, courageously.
if he is lucky
he will die in action and,
rightly so,
we will remember him;
we will remember him.

A carer sets aside
the life she might have had,
endures a loss of sleep and,
perhaps, a loss of laughter, joy and peace;
becomes a witness and companion to decline.
she learns to balance on diminishing hope
and sometimes falls –
yet climbs on board again to give and give
and give....

will we remember her?
will we remember her?

Ian Fosten, reproduced with permission

In recent years we have remembered the dead of the two world wars more keenly, perhaps because the generations that were caught up in those conflicts are now passing. But what of the people whose sacrifice of time, energy and opportunity is about caring for the living? There are many who have dedicated themselves to the work of caring both professionally and unpaid within their own families, whose sacrifice is about *giving* life.

War and conflict are voracious machines that relentlessly devour the people caught up in them, and it is right that we find ways to remember them, as much as anything as a spur towards eliminating war and conflict in human affairs. It is also right that we should remember those who care for others, not just in war and conflict, but now, ongoing. Will we?

A Great Revivalist

Donald Burling, Acton Hill

From about 1739 onwards a spiritual revival, known as the Great Awakening, swept the American colonies and much of Protestant Europe. Such movements if genuine must be the work of the Holy Spirit, but individual leaders usually play a part.

It had begun somewhat earlier, with the American preacher Jonathan Edwards prominent. But the outstanding evangelist of the time was a young Englishman named George Whitefield. Born in 1715 the son of a Gloucester innkeeper, he had a remarkable flair for acting - as a child, he would sometimes stand outside his parents' pub and re-enact sermons he had heard.

Some friends enabled him to go to Pembroke College, Oxford, but only as a "servitor". This meant he had to do menial tasks for other students to earn his tuition. While there he met with the so-called "Holy Club" started by Charles Wesley and led by his brother John. During an illness he cried out to God and felt a new-found sense of relief. He became eager to preach to others what he had experienced.

Returning to Gloucester he was ordained by the Bishop and preached his first sermon there at the age of 22. It was reported that fifteen people became "drunk in the Spirit", while others were angry that "the boy parson" had caused such disorder.

He wanted to follow the Wesley brothers to the American colony of Georgia, and was invited to become priest in Savannah, but only stayed there three months. However, he was impressed with the need for an orphanage there and decided to return to England to raise funds for it. Finding himself unwelcome in churches he began to preach in the open air, initially to miners at Kingswood near Bristol, with remarkable effect. (It was here he later introduced John Wesley to that "strange way of preaching in the fields"). His theatrical gift was well used - the famous actor David Garrick is reputed to have said, "I would give a hundred guineas to be able to say 'Oh' like Mr Whitehead". He had a voice which it was said could be heard five miles away. Wherever he went, in Britain or America, he attracted crowds - and also fierce opposition, which sometimes turned violent.

Whitefield died in the parsonage of Old South Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, Massachusetts on 30th September 1770 and was buried, according to his wishes, in a crypt under the pulpit of this church. John Wesley preached his funeral sermon in London, at Whitefield's request.

The life of George Whitefield was celebrated at an open air service in the grounds of Gloucester Cathedral on Sunday 17th May 2015. The preacher at the service was the Revd. Lord Leslie Griffiths.

‘Speak Up for the Love of.....’ *Climate Change Event*

The things we love are threatened by climate change – but we can protect them by urging politicians to act.

Now the election is over, there is a unique opportunity to get climate change right to the top of the political agenda. Meet your MP and tell them why fighting climate change matters to you.

On **June 17th 2015**, we’ll all have the chance to celebrate and speak up for all the things we love that could be lost to climate change.

What’s happening? An unforgettable day of climate action. Thousands of people will come to London to meet their MPs in person and ask them to commit to taking strong action on climate change, for the love of all we hold dear – from our families to our food and our futures.

When is it? The event will take place on Wednesday 17th June 2015. Meetings with MPs will take place between 1.00 and 4.00pm, with a rally finale at 4:30pm.

Where is it? The lobby line will start outside the Palace of Westminster in Central London. To find out how this will work download the **‘lobby guide’** (see below).

What else is going on? There’ll plenty to keep you entertained while you wait to see your MP, with street performers, musicians and artists adding to the day’s festival flavour. There will also be ecumenical church services before the lobby, an interactive art installation and interfaith space in nearby Archbishop’s Park from 2.00 – 4.00pm, and an inspirational rally finale.

The ecumenical church services will take place simultaneously at 12.00pm at Emmanuel Centre, Marsham St and St Margaret’s, Parliament Square. The main speaker will be the Bishop of Salisbury, the Rt Reverend Nick Holtam, with contributions from Ruth Valerio, Andy Flannagan, and staff and partners from Christian Aid, CAFOD and Tearfund. The main speakers will speak at both services.

Where can I find out more? The **‘lobby guide’** is full of practical information about the day, as well as tips on lobbying your MP, a template for making your own bunting, and more!

To download the **‘lobby guide’** go to <http://fortheloveof.org.uk/on-the-day/>

To sign up for the day go to <http://fortheloveof.org.uk/speakup/>.

‘For the Love of...’ is organised by the Climate Change Coalition.

Ebola 2014/2015: Reflections of a Scientist

Annegret Pelchen-Matthews from Kingsdown volunteered to work in a diagnostic testing centre in Port Loko, Sierra Leone and was there from late January to the end of February this year. This is the article she wrote about her experiences which was included as a supplement to the April edition of the Kingsdown Messenger.

Annegret has written a brief update to the situation as at 9th May – this follows this article on p20.

West Africa was ill-prepared for Ebola, one of the deadliest viruses which punishes any acts of compassion by family members, healthcare providers or friends who at least want to give the victim a decent funeral and end up being infected through close contact. An outbreak in the remote Forest Guinea area soon spread through three West African nations, with nearly 25,000 cases and 10,000 deaths, though these numbers may be underestimates.



Ebola Virus Disease in West Africa

It all started in December 2013, when two-year old Emile Ouamouno died with a fever and bloody diarrhoea, and soon his sister, mother and grandmother also succumbed to the mystery disease characterised by fever, severe diarrhoea and vomiting. Retrospectively it seems that Emile was infected while playing in a bat-infested tree near his home in Meliandou, Guinea. The disease rapidly spread to neighbouring villages and the larger towns of Gueckedou and Kissidougou. By March 2014, when around a hundred cases had been described, tests on blood samples sent to Europe for analysis revealed the presence of the Zaire strain of Ebola virus. In April 2014 the disease reached the Guinean capital Conakry, while neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone officially reported their first cases in April and late in May, respectively. Sierra Leone has been the most severely affected by the outbreak. Infection rates increased rapidly, so that between September and December 2014 around 400 to 600 new cases were reported every week.

Unfortunately the response to the Ebola epidemic was slow and patchy initially. Although Médecins Sans Frontières, who were instrumental in responding to the initial outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in Gueckedou, called for international intervention and humanitarian aid for West Africa in May 2014, the global community did not really respond until several healthcare worker and missionaries from the USA, Spain and the UK became infected and were medically evacuated in August 2014 – it took a threat to western health to push things into motion.

The Ebola Diagnostic Laboratory

When the international community eventually did respond, Britain took a leading role, particularly in Sierra Leone, with a now £425 million package “to help contain, control, treat and ultimately defeat Ebola”. British military and humanitarian experts working for the UK Department for International Development have built five Ebola Treatment Centres (ETCs) as well as three diagnostic laboratories supported by Public Health England (PHE) and hundreds of NHS staff volunteered to travel to West Africa. Prior to November, lab diagnosis could take up to five days, a significant delay for suspected cases in the holding centres who can neither be sent home nor admitted to an ETC. The PHE lab at Kerry Town started operations at the end of October 2014, with two further labs in Port Loko and Makeni opening on the 5th and 10th of December 2014, respectively. At the time, this effectively doubled the Ebola diagnostic capacity of Sierra Leone.

Towards the end of November the UK Department of Health issued a call for volunteers to staff the three UK funded diagnostic laboratories in Sierra Leone, to which I responded, and I was deployed to work in the laboratory at Port Loko from 21st January – 25th February 2015.

Port Loko is a town of about 25,000 located inland about an hour and a half’s drive from the capital Freetown. The ETC there is now run by the charity GOAL, in co-operation with the IHP (International Humanitarian Partnership) and DEMA, the Danish Emergency Management Agency. There is a Youtube video on the GOAL website that shows the layout of the ETC just before it opened, where you can also see the PHE lab. As a virologist, I had been following the news about the Ebola outbreak throughout 2014, but it still felt surreal to actually be there, in scrubs in the “green zone”, and see the doctors and nurses getting dressed in their full PPE (personal protective equipment) in the donning tent next-door. Overall, we did not see many of the patients and only learned indirectly of what was happening in the treatment centre. Just occasionally, we could hear the drums and dancing celebrating the release of a recovered patient.

I was part of “Team 3” at Port Loko, fifteen lab workers from the UK and Denmark, who were all trained at Porton Down in Wiltshire, working to strict Standard Operating Procedures, SOP’s that prescribe all the procedures in the work-stream. Between us we covered three shifts (6 am - 1 pm, 12 noon - 7 pm and 3 - 10 pm) to keep the lab running for 16 hours every day. We received blood samples from patients admitted to the ETC, as well as from Port Loko Government Hospital and the surrounding areas. We also analysed a lot of swabs, mostly from recent deaths, as every death had to be investigated for possible Ebola involvement. Most samples would be delivered in the afternoons, with ambulances and motor-cycle couriers arriving with their cooler boxes from all over Port Loko district and from further afield such as the district of Kambia to the north, near the border with Guinea. Since the samples constituted potentially highly infectious material, the packages were thoroughly soaked in strong chlorine solution (oh the smell!!!) and then handled in glove-box isolators covered with a thick plastic film and run at negative pressure. Here we would unpack the samples, check names and patient

numbers against the tracking forms (struggling with unfamiliar African names and handwriting) and if required run a test for malaria. Then we inactivated any infectious virus with a special lysis buffer followed by further inactivation with either ethanol or heat treatment. In this way, each sample underwent two inactivation steps to ensure it was no longer infectious before it could be further processed on the bench. We extracted RNA and checked for the signature sequences of the Ebola virus, using a technique called RT-qPCR. Finally we inspected the results, ensuring that the various control tests had worked, assigning positive and negative outcomes, always one person reading the results and another validating. All results were then entered into the lab database, cross-checked again and reported. On a good run, the whole procedure could be completed in 5 – 6 hrs.

But identifying the positive samples is only the beginning: The lab results and e-mail reports are sent not only to the clinicians treating the patients, but also to the DERC (District Ebola Response Committee), where the actions against Ebola are coordinated. Whenever a new case is identified, the patient's close family is placed under a 21 day quarantine, and a team of contact tracers are sent out to investigate the patient's movements and close contacts. The quarantined homes are visited daily to check on the health of the occupants, while the World Food Program (WFP) delivers food and essential supplies to them. I was fortunate to be able to sit in on the daily DERC meeting in Port Loko a couple of times. The meeting is run by British army medical staff and attended by representatives of all the major organisations, including the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health, army and police force, WHO, the US Centre for Disease Control, WFP, DEMA, and other agencies such as UNICEF, GOAL, Oxfam and others, who supply the epidemiologists, surveillance teams, swabbers and contract tracers, dead body management and burial teams, social workers and psychosocial support. The meetings usually start with a case-by-case review of current patients and discussion of new incidents such as localized outbreaks or reports of unsafe burials, followed by brief reports from all the agencies. I was impressed by the comprehensiveness of the Ebola response, now that it has got going, and by the efficient way in which all these diverse agencies are cooperating.



Ebola has been stubborn in Sierra Leone. Although the numbers of new infections have declined steadily since mid-December 2014, so much so that travel restrictions and curfews were lifted in mid-January, February saw a resurgence of infections, particularly in the Port Loko area. As a result, the Port Loko lab continues to receive more specimens than many of the other labs in the country. During our five-week deployment, Team 3 processed about 1,500 samples and identified 125 new positives. In addition to these diagnostic tests we were involved

in research studies, including the validation of the new Corgenix ReEBOV Antigen Rapid Test which was recently licensed by the WHO. Unlike the complex procedure of analysing viral RNA, this test detects the Ebola vp40 protein. It involves putting a drop of blood onto a paper strip and waiting no more than 15 minutes for a reaction in a test tube, a procedure simple enough to be used at the point of care. In the future, this test may be able to quickly identify outbreaks, particularly in remote areas.

The wider perspective

Sierra Leone is one of Africa's smaller countries, with an estimated population of around 6 million abutting the Atlantic Ocean to the west and surrounded by Guinea and Liberia. Although the main religion is Islam, there is a significant Christian minority of around 30%. Sierra Leone is one of the most religiously tolerant nations, with Muslims and Christians living and working together in peace and uniting in rebuilding the country after the civil war (1991-2002), and now in the battle against Ebola. It is not unusual for members of the same family to adhere to the different faiths, and Muslims are happy to attend church services or invite their Christian friends to the mosque, with the different faiths praying side by side. This spirit of openness and welcome also extended our team of scientists and to other expatriate humanitarian workers that came to help with the Ebola epidemic.

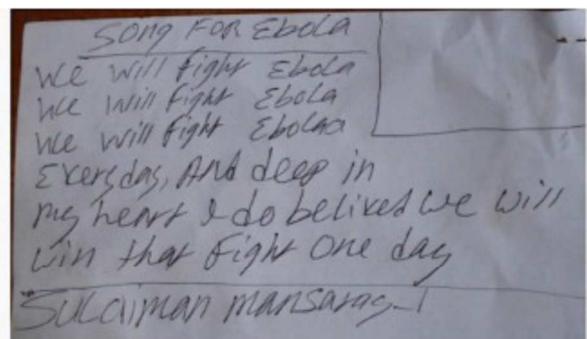
The lowland plains of Port Loko District are crossed by numerous rivers that feed the lush green expanses of palm trees, high grass, dotted with villages and roadside dwellings and businesses. Although the district is one of the regions with high prevalence of EVD and continuing significant transmissions, the area is trying to get back to normal. The "no touch" policy – no handshakes or other physical contact - still applies, and there are frequent temperature checks and chlorine hand-wash stations, but national travel restrictions, roadside checkpoints and night-time curfews have largely been lifted (although this has led to a couple of new localized outbreaks, showing that vigilance is still necessary). The ambulances rushing about and the posters exhorting vigilance are reminders that the Ebola epidemic continues, but on the whole, people are getting on with trying to return to normal life. Schools have been closed since June 2014, but are due to open again in mid-April.

What is also evident, however, is the poverty and poor infrastructure that have made this country so susceptible to the epidemic in the first place. While there is a good network of major roads, recently re-built with funds from the EU, many of the dirt track side roads will become impassable in the rainy season. Outside Freetown, less than 1% of households have piped water or electricity, so a lot of time is spent carrying water from borehole wells or the many rivers that are also used for bathing, laundry, car washing.... In 2012, Sierra Leone had just two doctors per 100,000 population. Ebola has infected health workers disproportionately and may have killed more than 200, including the country's top virus expert, Sheik Umar Khan. Currently, the country has just eight qualified surgeons, seven of whom are over 60 years old and close to retirement. The health infrastructure has all but collapsed,

many hospitals and health centres have closed and there is little treatment available even for common conditions or diseases such as malaria. It is estimated that for every death due to EVD, on average a further 3.8 people died from preventable conditions. Now that the Ebola epidemic is being brought under control – although the final steps toward elimination of the virus are likely to be the most difficult – the health infrastructure needs to be re-built, to provide a lasting legacy. As part of this, there is a plan for the PHE labs to be re-purposed to run other diagnostic tests.

There is a huge amount of work still to be done to support Sierra Leone and indeed all three West African nations affected by EVD and build the capability to deal more effectively with future epidemics. Western nations will need to continue to support these efforts for many years to come through international development programs and the various NGOs and charities.

As we move toward the end of the Ebola outbreak – hopefully it will be over before the rainy season starts in April/May – we can be rightly be pleased with the Ebola response, where so many agencies, once mobilised, have collaborated effectively. It has been great to be a part of this. But the battle has also relied on the huge efforts of the people of Sierra Leone who have pulled together to fight this disease through education – “Ebola is real” campaigns and lessons on infection prevention and safe burial practices. The main work has been done by the thousands of contact tracers, cleaners and sprayers, burial teams, couriers, social workers and educators who work so hard, sometimes without remuneration, risking their lives to fight this virus. Sadly some of these key workers have themselves become infected and died. Ultimately the victory will come from the community spirit, and messages passed on by people like Sulaiman, who teaches the Ebola song to his neighbourhood and sings to anyone who will listen.



Sulaiman, an English graduate now working as security guard at the IHP camp, and his Song for Ebola (to the tune of “We shall overcome”)

There is a striking discrepancy between the treatments that have been provided to Ebola patients in West Africa and the high tech facilities to which infected expatriates have been evacuated. I find it particularly distressing to learn that, for all the talk of vaccines and experimental treatments, essentially none of these have made it to the front line of actually treating patients in West Africa - see for example

the recent article “Ebola: the race to find a cure” in the Guardian*. Even treatment with convalescent blood or serum – shown to be effective in the Ebola outbreak in Zaire in 1995 and offered to all of the medically repatriated westerners in 2014/2015, has not yet been rolled out in West Africa, although thousands of survivors are now available to donate immune blood. Plasmapheresis units have only just been shipped to Liberia, where the Ebola epidemic is effectively over. Now there are plans to transfer them to Sierra Leone. Retrospectively there is so much more that could have been done!

My five weeks in Sierra Leone were an amazing time, so very different from the painstaking research that I am involved in at University College London. It was a privilege to work in the lab at the ETC and to contribute my own small part to the fight against Ebola. Now, as the battle against this disease is drawing to a close, the challenge to the international community is to help Sierra Leone and its neighbours rebuild their health infrastructures and to learn the lessons for preparedness so that the next outbreak of this or another contagious disease will be less devastating.

Links:

Youtube Video about the Port Loko ETC:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SToGzjy1oMU>

Rapid Ebola test: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-31550815>

Guardian article on finding a cure for Ebola:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/17/ebola-race-find-cure>

* *The TKM drug trial did eventually start on 11th March 2015.*

GOAL Global:

<https://www.goalglobal.org>

Save the Children:

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk>

All We Can (formerly Methodist Relief and Development):

<http://www.allwecan.org.uk>

PHE resources on Ebola:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ebola-virus-disease-clinicalmanagement-and-guidance>

Ebola - An Update

Annegret Pelchen-Matthews, Kingsdown

At last the end of the Ebola epidemic is in sight: Today, 9th May, 42 days since the burial of their last Ebola patient, Liberia has been declared free of the virus by the World Health Organisation. Numbers of cases are also falling in Sierra Leone and Guinea. Opportunities for testing drugs and vaccines in the field have largely been missed, but research should continue as part of building preparedness for the future. Treatment centres are being taken down or moth-balled, while the labs are now testing for a wider range of conditions with improved diagnostics. Ebola has dropped out of the news, overtaken by other issues.

Yet the effects of the epidemic linger: It is clear that being discharged from an Ebola Treatment Centre is not the end of the disease for survivors, many of whom develop a debilitating “post-Ebola syndrome” with joint and muscle aches, fatigue, and progressive vision problems sometimes leading to blindness – on top of the trauma and loss they have suffered and the stigma they face in the community. For them, Ebola is not yet over, nor should it be for us: Repairing the damage that the virus has caused will take years. Let us pledge to support Sierra Leone and the other countries as they move on, and let us keep them in our focus, in our prayers, and provide practical and financial support.

Walk in Aid of Children Unite

Blossom Jackson, Kingsdown

“21st June 2015 will mark the Consortium for Street Children’s inaugural Marathon Walk on the Thames Path from Windsor to Bourne End and back. This chosen section of the Thames Path is beautifully scenic and easy on the feet. We have arranged very popular and enjoyable places for your comfort breaks...” I will be doing this 10km walk in aid of Children Unite and especially for the fight against child domestic labour.

Some of you will recall that Children Unite was one of my two chosen charities for fundraising during my term of office as President London District and one of the Circuit fundraising concerts which was held at Kingsdown. If you wish to become one of my sponsors, you can donate direct via my online fundraising page which is now live - here is my unique URL

<https://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/blossomjackson1>

Hanwell: Teddy Bears' Picnic

Ray Garnett, Hanwell

Have you ever been to a Teddy Bears' Picnic? Probably not - but then I'm not surprised. There aren't many around. But with Summer just round the corner lots of bears are planning to gather and meet up for a picnic at Hanwell Methodist Church in the afternoon of Saturday 27th June.

So if you can bear it, why not come along and join them in the woods along with your own bear and lots of friends. All young bears get a free picnic tea and a chance to join in the fun. Apparently the bears are even putting on a free 'have a go at the giant Teddy Bear Hoopla' and 'learn to do a magic trick'. Picnic rugs are supplied.

If your Church has never put on a Teddy Bears' Picnic, then why not visit Hanwell to bearware and see what bears get up to in the woods."

See next page for full details

Farewell and Welcome

Rev Stuart Jordan is stepping down as one of the London District Chairs

Farewell Service for Rev Stuart Jordan

Central Hall Westminster

6.30pm on 21st June 2015

Rev Nigel Cowgill will become one of the London District Chairs replacing
Rev Stuart Jordan

Welcome Service for Rev Nigel Cowgill

**Hinde St Methodist Church
Hinde St, London W1**

6.00pm on 23rd August 2015

HANWELL METHODIST CHURCH

Church Road, Hanwell, London, W7 1DJ



Saturday 27th June
in our Church
2:30pm – 5:30pm

If you go down to the Church that day you'll be sure of a big surprise!

It will be a...

All bears welcome, young or old!

- ✚ Refreshments available
- ✚ Delicious homemade cakes
- ✚ A variety of children's activities and crafts
- ✚ Learn a magic trick

Teddy Bears' Picnic



Admission
FREE
including bears

Parents are responsible
for their own children

For more information
about our Church and the events
we have planned visit our website
www.hanwellmethodist.info



**Methodist Women in Britain
London District
Residential Weekend**



Transforming Lives and Communities

Friday 24th – Sunday 26th July 2015

**High Leigh Conference Centre
Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire**

Cost: £150

All women are welcome!

Booking forms and further details available from:

Abby Springer: abby10springer@gmail.com

**Jackie Fowler: 020 8861 3686
jacqueline210fowler@btinternet.com**

Remember: Summer 2015

Compiled by Mary Newman, Pitshanger

Dear Friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. And God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him.

1 John 4: 7-9

The greatest love mankind will ever experience is God's eternal love.

Anon

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

Mother Teresa

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up

Galatians 6: 9

Happiness held is the seed.
Happiness shared is the flower.

Anon

The Promise Still Stands

Pastor Steven Furtick was the preacher on TBN U yesterday and his topic was 'faith'. He posed the question. "Will you keep walking even when it (faith) doesn't seem to be working?"

He retold the story of Joshua. God promised Joshua that with the army of Israelite soldiers they would take the city of Jericho. But first they must march round the city for 6 days. On the 7th day they were to march round the city 7 times with their 7 priests going in front with their trumpets. Then the priests were to sound one long note on their trumpets and the men would give a loud shout. God promised Joshua that the city walls would then collapse, allowing the soldiers to capture the city.

Pastor Steven asked how the soldiers would have felt about that. On day 1 they may have thought that by evening Jericho would have fallen TO THEM. When they found that they had to march again on days 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 wouldn't they have been fed up? What was the point of it all? How would Joshua have felt? If they kept going would Jericho really be theirs on the 7th day? Pastor Steven said, "They would need faith to take another lap."

We know from our reading of Joshua Chapter 6 that it worked out just as God had promised. Joshua's faith was rewarded.

Pastor Steven repeated the question, "Will you keep walking even when it doesn't seem to be working? He answered it with the words – "The promise still stands."

A Prayer for Summer

Heavenly Father, we ask that you will hold in your loving care all who are travelling this summer that they may find joy and friendship wherever they find themselves and return home safely.

We especially think at the present time of all Christians who are suffering for their faith in many parts of the world and we pray for the families of those who have died for their faith.

Heavenly Father, we pray for all who have been affected by the recent tragedies in the world. We pray for those affected by Ebola, plane crashes, the unrest in the Middle East and those suffering as a result of the earthquakes in Nepal; that help will be provided to all who are in great need.

We pray too, for those people who live amongst us who are sad, lonely, sick in mind or body and all who are anxious about the future.

We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

The Prayer that does not end at the word 'Amen'

One bitterly cold March night in 1962, a tiny black, baby girl, just hours old was left on the steps of King Edward Hospital in Mattock Lane, Ealing. She was wrapped in an adult's coat.

By leaving her outside a hospital her mother probably thought that she would be found and cared for.

Her birth mother was never found and when she was 3 months old she went to live with Barbara and David Lee in Alton, Hants. Barbara was a friend of mine from our days at Southlands College, Wimbledon. She was the daughter of a Methodist Minister.

Maybe, in a future 'Remember' I will tell how my sister-in-law, Jill and I were privileged in being instrumental in the adoption of Diana (the name that Barbara and David chose for her) and 6 other children.

Barbara and David were both committed Christians and workers in their local church where David became a local preacher.

This is a happy story because, as well as being in a loving family Diana did well at school and university and is now a team manager in Social Services in Somerset.

Sadly, David died last month and Barbara sent me a copy of the Thanksgiving Service for his life.

Diana's daughter, Emma, composed and read a lovely poem, which I should like to share with you. Emma is a lecturer at a college in Somerset.

Tell the caterpillar of all great things
When God sees you are ready
He gives you wings.

Tell the trees that lose their leaves
The fallen fruit plants the seeds.

Tell the light that leaves this place
The other side needs your embrace

Tell the children hush don't cry
Our last exchange was not goodbye

Tell sons and daughters I am not gone
In all of you my legacy lives on.

Tell loved ones, family and friends
The prayer does not end at the word AMEN

Readings for Summer

God is love	1 John 4: 7-21
Thanks for the Gift	Philippians 4
God's promise to his people	1 Kings 8: 54-61

Circuit Directory Update

Forthcoming Events around the Circuit

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

May

30th Sat 10.00 **'Storms and Picnics' at Kingsdown**
12.30 *Reflect on John ch 6 using creative arts. The results will feed into the Summer Service series. Followed by 'bring and share' lunch until 2.00pm*

June

2nd Tues 20.00 **Local Preachers Meeting at Acton Hill**
Preceded by Training Sub-Group at 19.15

11th Thurs 20.00 **Circuit Meeting at Acton Hill**

21st Sun 18.30 **Farewell Service for District Chair, Rev Stuart Jordan**
Central Hall Westminster

27th Sat 14.30 **Teddy Bears' Picnic at Hanwell**
17.30 *Children's crafts, cakes, refreshments*
Admission free (including bears)

27th Sat **Circuit International Evening at Acton Hill**

August

23rd Sun 18.00 **Welcome Service for new District Chair, Rev Nigel Cowgill**
Hinde St Methodist Church, Hinde St W1

Articles for **'In-touch' Issue No 73 (September - November)** 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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