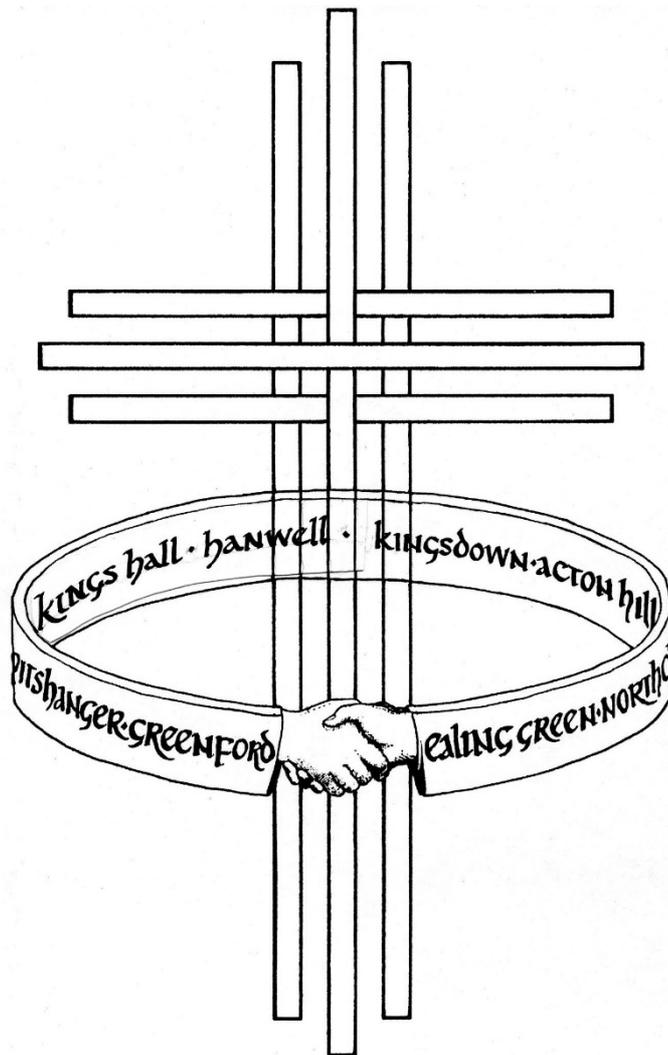


# In-touch

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No 73

September - November 2015



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The magazine for *all* the Ealing Trinity Circuit.

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**Circuit website**  
**[www.ealingtrinity.org.uk](http://www.ealingtrinity.org.uk)**

*Front Cover designed by Marion Narain*

## From the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the September issue of In-touch, the magazine of the Ealing Trinity Circuit. It has been wonderful over these last weeks to share the summer worship series 'Storms and Picnics' across the Circuit, and well done to all who have participated in this. If you feel called to lead worship or to become a local preacher, please speak to your minister. If you know someone who you think has these gifts, encourage them!

Less wonderful, but equally important has been the busy season for the Ealing Foodbank, especially the café based at Greenford Methodist. This, and a number of our Circuit-wide mission projects and involvements (MHA live at home, Ruby and Salaamati projects in Southall, Schools' Worker and Quiet Zones, Acton community meal, etc) have begun to bear fruit in earnest. Ealing Green Church's refurbishment, in which the Circuit has substantial investment, is nearing completion and, after 10 months the church will re-open in mid November. And, as was announced in late July, this Autumn the Circuit will be asking the Connexion (what we call national Methodist structures) to station two new presbyters to replace Peter and Suva Catford, one year earlier than anticipated. The Circuit is also developing a paid finance administrator post, with the idea that this might help church treasurers as well. Finally the re-invitation consultation for my own station has proceeded over this summer in all our churches.

There is surely enough of importance within church administration and infrastructure to keep us all gainfully employed with important business, and entirely locked up in our own affairs.

Having some idea of the momentum of all these concerns, I want to direct the energy of September to something that we all acknowledge is important, but almost always gets pushed down the agenda. That is, our ministry and mission with children. Not only those children who come to church on a Sunday with parents, and not only our support for spiritual growth in schools, but how we introduce the gift of faith more widely. Read what John Wesley had to say to lay preachers and ministers about children in their societies (churches):

*"Where there are ten children in a Society, we must meet them at least an hour every week; talk with them whenever we see any of them at home; pray in earnest for them; diligently instruct and vehemently exhort all parents at their own houses. Some will say, "I have no gift for this." Gift or no gift, you are to do this, or else you are not called to be a Methodist Preacher. Do it as you can, till you can do it as you would. Pray earnestly for the gift, and use every help God hath put into your way, in order to attain it. Preach expressly on the education of children when you make the Collection for Kingswood School."*

What strikes me most, as he sets as clear an agenda for children's faith development as we can imagine, is that it is based in relationship. Talk to them,

relate to them and know them – where they are, not where you happen to be. And not just a named ‘children’s worker,’ or someone who has a particular gift, but all of us. He may have been speaking to those who lead worship, but we can take it to relate to every adult person of faith. “Do it as you can, till you can do it as you would.”

My promise to the Circuit this year is that amidst all the important church business, we will seek to improve our worship and welcome, to grow our churches and share the gift of faith with children and parents. Not just as one-offs or add ons, but at the heart of what we are about. Faith is too important a gift to withhold.

With every blessing,



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## **An introduction to the Mysterious World of Methodist Stationing, from your Superintendent...**

As was announced in late July, Peter and Suva Catford will leave the Circuit to take up other stations from August 2016, one year early. This means that our Circuit will go into stationing this Autumn 2015, asking the Connexion to send us two new presbyters to begin when the Catfords move on, in September 2016. Below, I’ve tried to write a potted guide to stationing: we should feel confidence about this process, acknowledging it is very different from the usual recruitment processes we are used to in other fields.

Methodist ministers are taken to be officeholders, not employees: they are under a discipline of itinerancy, and serve an initial five year term, though they may be moved by Conference at any time. As we know, ministers are stationed by the national Methodist Conference to the Circuit, not to individual churches, and a minister’s pastoral charge often changes during the life of an appointment. That said, Circuit Stewards consult particularly with churches in pastoral charge of a station about how to present the church in the profile documents and on the matching visit. They are very keen to make a match with which churches are content, as you would expect.

- Primary responsibility, and authority, in stationing decisions at Circuit level lies with the Invitations Committee, chiefly the Circuit Stewards in consultation with existing staff and churches.
- For each station the Circuit will prepare a maximum 2 page profile which will describe the staff and working practice of the Circuit, and its community context.
- There is a short description of the particular station – 2 - 3 sentences about the life of each church in pastoral charge, and any Circuit-wide ministry hoped for.

- There is a short section to describe the particular gifts or experience hoped for in a minister matched to the station.
- Profiles are submitted by the end of September: a book of 2 page profiles of all ministers available is circulated to Circuit stewards in October, and they are asked to give a preference list.
- No direct contact is allowed between ministers and Circuits, or existing and prospective circuits.

The stationing matching group meets in late October/early November, and undertakes a first round of matches nationally which are communicated to the Circuit Stewards locally. We are represented there by our District Chair, Michaela Youngson.

The Circuit Stewards then contact the minister to arrange a visit. This will include time with staff, stewards, and leaders at the churches in pastoral charge. The match has already been made and there is encouragement to confirm it if possible - this is not an interview process either for churches, or for ministers. If a match is confirmed, only then is the name announced in the Circuit and a wider introduction of the person made in the church congregations. The vast majority of matches are confirmed, and we have confidence this will be a very attractive Circuit for ministers on the move.

However, either the minister or the Circuit may choose not to confirm the match and this does happen on occasion – the Circuit Invitations Committee takes church consultation very seriously, and would rather go without appointment than have a wrong match. A minister can also say ‘no thank you’ to the Circuit, and on occasion does.

For both parties, there are times when aspirations cannot be met – as with hopes for particular language facility or experience, or for ministers to be in a particular place, or have churches of a particular size or outlook. This is why the visit process is kept confidential to the Invitations Committee and those individuals with whom they are consulting within the churches.

If a match is not confirmed by either party, the station and the minister both go forward into the second, and third rounds of stationing – this is why the process can take several months, up to and through the winter.

Ultimately, it is Methodist Conference in July that confirms all the stations, and indeed all stations annually for all ministers.

Please pray for your stewards and staff during this time in our Circuit, and by all means address questions to them, to me, or to our District Chair Michaela: a full detailed guide to stationing is available on the Methodist website. And have confidence that we will be well matched!

## Queen's Birthday Honours

Congratulations are due to Joan Jackson-Callen from Acton Hill who was awarded an MBE in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours. Joan has received the honour for service to children and families as a social worker in Kensington & Chelsea.

Everyone at Acton Hill is thrilled to think that one of their members has been honoured in this way. As Rev Jennifer Smith said, "It is wonderful that the dedicated service of ordinary people like Joan is recognised and publically honoured. I am utterly delighted for her!"



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## Circuit Service at Greenford

To mark the start of the new Methodist year, the Healing Service at Greenford on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September at 6.30pm will be a Circuit Service. All are invited!

Please note, however that the Circuit Picnic planned for that day at Greenford has been cancelled.

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## Midweek Services

Starting on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September at 12.30pm Kingsdown will host a weekly short Meditative Service lasting half to three quarters of an hour. The service will be followed by a time of 'Open House' when the church will be open to all-comers.

There is also a midweek service of Holy Communion at 10.30am on Wednesdays at Holy Trinity, Southall Park. Leadership of this service is shared between our presbyters and Anglican clergy.

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## Circuit Discipleship

Starting on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September at 6.00pm there will be a series of Circuit Bible Studies at Kingsdown. The studies are included in the Quarterly Preaching Plan and further studies will be on 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> October, and 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> November. All are invited to attend.

## From the Circuit Meeting

The last Circuit Meeting was held on 11<sup>th</sup> June at Acton Hill.

Rebecca Catford reported on her placement with Citizens UK which formed part of her MA in Community Organising at Queen Mary University. She worked with Northolt and Greenford churches on an issue of direct concern to the churches. The outcome was the provision of insulated mugs for the homeless. These will be given to St Anselm's, Southall. You can read more about her work in Rebecca's article in this edition of In-touch. The meeting decided to renew the Circuit's membership of West London Citizens for a further year.

Work to progress the sale and re-development of King's Hall continues. The Circuit remains committed to retaining a Methodist presence in Southall and an agent, Kingsbury & Co has been appointed to represent our interest in the re-developed building. In addition, the contract for the sale of the building is being re-examined as it is now some considerable time since the agreement was made and market values have increased since then.

The centenary of the opening of King's Hall falls in 2016, an event which the Circuit is looking to celebrate albeit 'in exile'.

David Street presented the budget for the 2015-16 Connexional year to the meeting for approval. The budget includes provision for the maintenance of property owned by the Circuit in line with Connexional guidelines. This should even out some of the highs and lows of maintenance costs in future. The budget was approved unanimously.

A new Circuit Safeguarding Policy was approved although the document requires some further updating as some post-holders have changed.

The main business of the meeting concerned the refurbishment work at Ealing Green. The work has gone well with costs within budget and is on target for completion in mid-November. However, asbestos had been discovered over and above that identified at the start of work and additional work to ensure that any traces left in the building are fully sealed has had to be undertaken. At the same time, a flat which forms part of Ealing Green's building had become vacant, but refurbishment would be necessary before it could be re-let. Income from the flat would help secure the financial future of the church. These additional items of work had placed a considerable strain on Ealing Green finances and the church had applied to the Circuit for an additional grant. Following discussions, the meeting approved an additional grant of £50,000 by a majority vote.

Finally, David Street was elected a Circuit representative to District Synod. He joins Blossom Jackson, Barbara Williams and Win Thompson as representatives.

The next Circuit Meeting will be held on 9<sup>th</sup> September at Hanwell.

## Summer Service Series - Circuit BBQ

On Friday 24<sup>th</sup> July Rev Rachel Bending hosted a BBQ to launch the Circuit's Summer Service Series 'Storms and Picnics'. The title proved particularly apt as the weather was rather stormy that day so the BBQ turned into an indoor picnic.

Drawing on John Chapter 6, the Summer Service Series was based around the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking on a stormy Lake Galilee. As you know, the 5,000 were fed from five loaves and two fish. They might have preferred the fare on offer at the BBQ!



More than five loaves and two fish

Photos: Colleen Hicks



Janet Smith (Kingsdown), David Richards (Pitshanger) and Violet Cordon (Kingsdown) enjoying the picnic

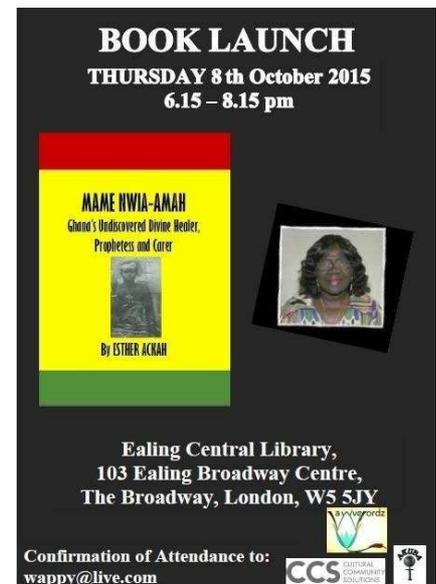
## Book Launch *Mame Nwia-Amah* by Esther Ackah

Grace Quansah

I am really thrilled to be able to announce the forthcoming launch of '*Mame Nwia-Amah*', written by Esther Ackah (Circuit Local Preacher and member at Kingsdown). It's the amazing biographic portrait of her great – grandaunt, a humble wonder worker of extraordinary spiritual gifts, who shaped the lives of many Ghanaians in the 1930's, 40's and 50's.

From her 'Jerusalem compound' in Atuabo, Nkrumah sought Nwia-Amah's personal blessing before becoming Ghana's first president. The book provides personal and collective testimonies about the life and works of Ghana's unsung divine healer, carer and prophetess.

The launch will be held at Ealing Central Library on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015 (6.15 – 8.15pm) as part of *Black History Season*.



**BOOK LAUNCH**  
THURSDAY 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015  
6.15 – 8.15 pm

**MAME NWIA-AMAH**  
Ghana's Undiscovered Divine Healer,  
Prophetess and Carer  
By ESTHER ACKAH

Ealing Central Library,  
103 Ealing Broadway Centre,  
The Broadway, London, W5 5JY

Confirmation of Attendance to:  
wappy@live.com

CCS  
CIRCUIT COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

# Notes from My Sabbatical

*Rev Dr Jennifer H Smith*

Before I went on sabbatical in March I wrote a little about what I would be studying while I was away. As is always the case with such things the reality proved much more varied and interesting than the plans, so I've tried here to say a little about what I was doing, day to day, and why - sabbatical is a time of refreshment, renewal of calling, and renewed equipping for the ministry. And mine did all of those things.

Roger Williams was a priest in the Church of England who emigrated first to Massachusetts in 1631, then on banishment in 1636 to what became Providence, Rhode Island. He was an early advocate of liberty of conscience for people of all beliefs and none, and this was written into the 1644 and 1663 charters which established Providence Plantations as a legal entity. At the time, this was unique in the English speaking world. Because of this, and because he was also a best-selling author in London, Roger Williams has been much studied by US historians, and all of his writings published many times over. Several are still in print as devotional guides for contemporary Christians, a fact I find rather troubling if I'm honest.

What I have been working on is a 96-page manuscript about Jacob and Esau from late in his life (1666) which had not been previously identified – I found it 15 years ago, but have now transcribed it, established its authorship, and read deeply in its context. This has meant spending a month in each of two excellent libraries, one in Boston and one in Worcester, Massachusetts, to read sermon notes, correspondence, business and legal records, and other snippets to reconstruct the world of Roger Williams and his 17<sup>th</sup> century contemporaries.

Their voices and the cares of their days leap off the pages. Coming to the end of a folder of letters in a reading room silent with researchers, I would feel like I had been in a noisy market or church meeting. There was a father's letter to John Winthrop Jr., Governor of Connecticut (known as a doctor), thanking him for the powder he had sent for the man's 4 year old son who had passed 28 worms but remained weak, and asking for something to help his infant sleep; panicked text calling for help with the threat of Indian attack; reports of political intrigue in London; lines written in a rage to give one side of an argument before the other could reach the magistrate's ears; and letters detailing disputes about whether to divide up the common land into private ownership or keep it for common use. And of course, the Quakers kept things lively in a colony that allowed their free worship: to protest about the 'soul nakedness' and shame of certain decisions, the women more than once streaked markets or church worship as a protest. Those who think 'zap action' civil disobedience originated in the 1960's take note.

Always, there has been the mixture of hope, responsibility, humour, friendship, and weariness that we would recognise from looking at our own collected church - related correspondence. And all of it helps to understand what Roger Williams was

writing about in his manuscript about Jacob and Esau. How could there be such conflict, such selfish motives in politics and economic life? How could this be in God's plan? In the manuscript, he argued himself into believing that conflict was a healthy part of civil life, and there was a deeper unity present underneath things as long as it didn't rip society apart altogether. This he got from Jacob and Esau's example - brothers who quarrelled and were ultimately reconciled.

Very little is new in the well-ploughed field of US colonial religious history, so finding such a manuscript is an event. (Well, at least for me, and the dozen or so folk who care to read such things.) I hope to publish an edition of it next year, mainly for US academic libraries.

But here's the thing. I arrived to Boston in mid-March with 6 feet of snow still on the ground, and a biting cold worse than any since records began. The freezing weather had destroyed a long bridge between the mainland and an island on the edge of the city where Boston had always housed its homeless: 750 beds and storage with all related services and de-tox facilities serving the whole city. One day, there was no way to return to the island and these people were separated from night time warmth and all their possessions. Daytime temperatures were averaging -10°C, snow kept falling.

The city struggled to deal with the hundreds of homeless men and women without shelter - there is no obligation to house people, nor any medical care and minimal services. I would leave the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society and walk ten minutes back through the centre of Boston's posh Back Bay, stepping over men and women sheltering in the tube stations, moved from one to another over the course of the day.

Two churches opened their basements in a project called 'Boston Warm.' I did the half day training and volunteered at Old South United Church of Christ – a good baffle to eight hours at a desk peering at 17th century handwriting, even in the nicest library.

The thing was, here we were almost 400 years after the English settlement of this place, and I was hearing the voices of the founding fathers and mothers echoed in the conversation and concerns of the men and women in the shelter. Not the leaders and politicians, but the homeless folk. Will you send cloth, and paper? Where can I find some powder for my feet? Is that meat fresh? I don't know if my wife has heard our daughter died. And political talk – what should the US do overseas? How should states relate to each other? Was there any way to get south where it was warmer?

I moved on to other libraries and large Methodist churches in California, and then home to my warm London manse. But the voices from the past and from today continue to remind me how important it is for people to be heard in public life and to feel themselves part of the community. Seen, and heard. I am convinced that God hears our voices even when others do not: one definition of faith is to understand

that my own small joys and concerns are part of God's large joys and concerns, stretching across history.

This is only one impression from my sabbatical, but it is durable for me, and reminds me what I am meant to be about in the ministry. Among other more practical things, hearing people and helping them know God hears them. And that hope is real.

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## **Biennial Festival of Church Music**

*John Collingbourne, Ealing Green*

On Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2015, approximately 400 singers from Free Churches in and around the Midlands and Southern England will descend on Westminster Central Hall for the Biennial Festival of Church Music.

Members of Ealing Green Choir will be taking part in the festival and have been attending monthly rehearsals at Ickenham URC over the past months. Fifty to sixty singers attend the rehearsal and at the first rehearsal some had travelled from Southampton for the evening. Other rehearsals are being held in Newport Pagnell, St. Albans, Hinckley and New Malden all in preparation for the festival.

The theme of this year's festival is "A Living Hope" and a wide variety of hymns and anthems have been chosen for this year's festival.

The evening opens with a setting of 'Born in Song' for choir and congregation by Brian Hoare, a Methodist Minister and past President of the Methodist Conference. The first hymn in the programme is 'Bring to the Lord' with words by Michael Perry and sung to the tune of Parry's 'Jerusalem'.

An anthem 'Look to the Day' words and music by John Rutter is included in the programme. Rutter was invited to write this anthem by Cancer Research UK for their Service of Thanksgiving in Ely Cathedral in September 2007. Other anthems included are by Mendelssohn, Malcolm Archer, William S Lloyd Webber former organist at Westminster Central Hall. The evening will finish with Handel's 'Worthy is the Lamb' and 'Amen Chorus', from 'Messiah'. Among the hymns to be sung during the evening is Charles Wesley's 'And can it be that I should gain'.

The choir will be accompanied by the Hillingdon Philharmonic Orchestra, organist Rufus Frowde and directed by Peter Williams.

The festival will begin at 6.15pm and end about 8.00pm. There is no charge for admission but there will be a retiring collection. Make a note of the date Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2015 in your diary now and come along and have a good sing of the hymns. The nearest underground station to Westminster Central Hall is St James Park.

# Ealing Live at Home Scheme launched

*Deacon Lemia Nkwelah*

Methodist Homes Association (MHA) is a charity that provides services for 16,000 people around UK. It is their commitment to make a difference to lives of older people.

MHA also partners with communities to run 'Live at Home' community services. These have been operational since 1988. Communities develop the 'Live at Home Scheme' in response to identified need. They are supported by MHA and the aim is to help older people in communities to lead independent, active and fulfilled lives.

An idea was started in our Ealing Trinity Circuit churches in 2014. This idea aims to reduce isolation and loneliness by reaching out to older people within the Borough of Ealing. We are proud to introduce our very own Ealing Live at Home Scheme! We had a taster day on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May where we had a great day filled with fun. The activities did go well and good relationships were made.

We aim to start a 'Grow and Eat Garden', befriending services, social activities and lunch club! Keep watching this space!! There will be flyers at the back of every church in this circuit on the back of which will be all the contact details you need.

All are welcome to be involved as members, volunteers or make a donation. If anyone requires any more information please feel free to contact Rev Suva Catford, Rev Peter Catford or Deacon Lemia Nkwelah directly or use the contact details at the back of flyers.

We give thanks to Greenford Methodist Church for their hospitality on the 9<sup>th</sup> May. We continue to serve God as He pleases.

We give thanks to all our Methodist Churches in the Circuit for continued support. The Ealing Trinity Circuit family is increasingly getting involved with the Ealing Live at Home Scheme.

A big thank you to all of us who were there on the 9<sup>th</sup> May; who were involved; those who helped to set up and those who came to fellowship with us and those who were thinking of us and praying for us wherever you were. Thank you! 'So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.' Galatians 6:10.

## **Ealing Churches Winter Night Shelter**

*Deacon Lemia Nkwelah*

Ealing Churches Winter Night Shelter (ECWNS) has been accredited with the Housing Justice Shelter Quality Mark for excellent practice. Well done everybody who played a part in this excellent team! We are part of excellent team in the Ealing Borough.



This winter's Night Shelter begins on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2015. We all start to prepare for the coming Night Shelter sessions in prayer. We continue to offer excellent hospitality to our friends in need. We give thanks!

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## **The Mahabba Network run by Rev Malcolm Finlay St John's, Southall**

*Deacon Lemia Nkwelah*

The Mahabba Network seeks to motivate and mobilise ordinary Christians to love and welcome their Muslim neighbours and to help churches encourage and multiply dynamic communities.

Sharing the love of Jesus can be challenging and it may feel particularly difficult to share the love of Jesus with those who have a Muslim faith.

In the light of all that is happening with IS and Boko Haram, we may (or may not) be finding it difficult to share Jesus with our Muslim neighbours. Or we may have a Muslim friend but wonder how we may chat about Jesus' unconditional love despite all that is happening around the world. Yes, sometimes chances may be there but we are not sure what to say.

A meeting will be held on every third Thursday of the month starting September. This meeting will look at factors that may prevent Christians from sharing the love of Jesus with those who have a Muslim faith. Interesting and inspiring discussions will be held in this meeting that will help us to build each other in this diverse Ealing borough. We also pray for these discussions and situations around the world that involve extremists.

We are all invited to join this meeting which takes place in Southall. I will be attending this meeting and nearer the time I will post some details of the location for anyone who would like to join me.

## Ruby Ministries - Southall

*Deacon Lemia Nkwelah*

This is a group concerned about sex workers on the streets of Southall, and seeks to expose the injustices hidden in the shadows as far as human trafficking and abuse are concerned. The challenge for us is that when we walk the streets of Southall what do we see? We need to have our eyes opened for God to help us to see the unthinkable so that we can reach out with compassion and help. Tim Uthmann of Ruby Ministries based at St John's Church in Southall is running this kind of an organisation that looks to help women get off the streets, and to learn how to live a different life.

Ruby Ministries involves going out on the streets every other Friday. We meet with the girls and follow the Spirit on how we relate with them. I find it amazing that they are aware of our presence with our flasks of coffees and teas and cookies. Where the Spirit permits, a Word of Scripture is shared, a little message of Christ's love and hope is said and if they want to, a prayer is said. It is uplifting that the awareness they have of our presence may be turned by the power of the Holy Spirit so that we represent the presence of Christ who is present in all dark and light places. All are welcome in His Kingdom.

If anyone is interested in sharing the love of Christ with our friends on the street, do let me know. I am involved with this group. You could join us!

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## London District Synod

The District Synod is open to all and the District would like to encourage as many people as possible to attend. The Synod will be held **from 10.30 – 16.00 on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster and will have a theme of "Leadership in London"**. The day will combine worship, testimony, conversation, business and key note addresses. People who are not formal members are welcome to come for the whole day or just for the morning or afternoon session as follows:

**10.30 - 12.45 Leadership in London:** Worship, business of the Synod and keynote address by Sir Simon Hughes "Issues which Civic Leaders in London must address"

**13.45 – 16.00 Leadership in London:** Business, stories from around the District, a celebration of Holy Communion and keynote address from the Rev. Jenny Impey "Reflections from a Sabbatical Journey around Britain in a 46ft Yacht"

Refreshments are available during the day from Wesley's, the Central Hall Café in the Basement.

# What it Means to Me

*Gerald Barton, Editor*

In the last edition of In-touch Rev Rachel Bending made a challenge to us all: to say what it means to each of us to be a Christian. Having routinely asked our ministers to write a piece describing why they became ministers, I can hardly allow myself to dodge this particular challenge. In fact, it has crossed my mind from time to time to make such a challenge to you, dear readers myself. After all, if we are to engage in 'mission', we need to be able to explain to people why we believe being Christian and being part of the church is positive and life-enhancing. However, having presented you with that challenge, I'd certainly better not dodge it myself!

I have titled this piece 'What it Means to Me' rather than 'Why I am a Christian' purposely. The latter tends to drift towards *how* I became a Christian, which for this purpose I think is rather less important. The point, if we are challenged is to be able to say why it is important to us, what difference it makes to our lives to be part of this faith community.

Whilst I was brought up in a good Methodist home, I have not always been part of the church. From some time when I was at university until about 20 years ago I did not count myself Christian or part of the church. For quite some time I was still connected to the church because I was an organist and played fairly regularly in various churches. However following my divorce in 1984, I hung up my organ shoes and dropped out completely for around about 10 years. During that time I toyed with atheism but could never quite convince myself of the non-existence of God – to that extent I have at times described myself somewhat tongue in cheek as a 'failed atheist'.

Having got through my divorce I developed new friends, new involvements and new interests. Life was satisfying, if hard at times. For no particular reason in about 1992 I found I wanted to look again at faith. When I met my wife, Sue in 1993 and discovered she was a Christian and a regular church-goer I thought to myself, "Good, I can go along with her." That is roughly how I stepped back into the church. Having done so, I found a subtle but profound difference. Whilst life as a single person outside of the church had been fine, it felt a bit dry and arid at times. Put simply, life was all about 'me' and 'my life', which is not to say I ignored everyone and everything around me, far from it. However, my central concern was my life and my relationships. Beyond that was a bit out of sight.

In starting to follow faith again, I felt a subtle sense of connection, not just to the people in the church I happened to be attending, but more broadly, to the whole human race if you like. Life was no longer just about me, but about how I fitted into a much greater family. It's a bit difficult to put into words, but I hope you get the idea.

The second strand in 'what it means to me' relates to a sense of 'wonder' which I feel for the universe around us and our place in it. Having delved a bit into the

nature of the universe I am left with a deep sense of mystery as to why anything should exist at all, let alone me with my consciousness on this minor planet (which Douglas Adams famously described in the 'Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy' as 'mainly harmless') in a far-flung part of the galaxy. I have long given up on 'the God of the gaps', ie the idea that God explains all the bits that science can't (or doesn't at the time) explain. However, removing God from the picture seems to slam the door on the question 'why does anything exist and why are we here'. Should we just accept that the universe is a brute fact and nothing more, and that our lives are essentially without meaning? Such a position leaves me feeling deeply unsatisfied. I sense something behind and beyond it all. I call that 'God'.

To have meaning, however this God has to be somehow involved in our lives in the here-and-now. If God were just the initiator of it all with no on-going involvement, I would not think such a God worthy of much attention. God has to be involved, and involved at a personal level in our lives.

For me, this is where Christ comes in. *"For in as much as Christ was both true Man and true God, He forms the bridge between man and God"*. The quotation comes from "The Orthodox Church" by Timothy Ware which I read many years ago. Whatever one makes of the formulation, for me this is where God reaches down and touches us and shows his close involvement in our lives and also shows that we have access to Him. Holy Communion, the central ritual of the Christian church, symbolises this for me. Whenever I take communion I feel 'heaven touches earth' in a deeply meaningful way. When I felt myself outside the church, for this reason I would not take communion, because to take communion is to accept this central meaning and also to acknowledge that one is part of this thing called the church.

When it comes to matters of doctrine, there are many things that leave me questioning or which I put to one side because I find them strange or don't know what to make of them. I am inclined to think that these things reflect people's attempts down the years to grope towards the truth, where the truth is always a bit beyond us. However, I do believe that the truth of the matter is, so to speak whatever the truth of the matter is. What I, or anyone else thinks does not alter that truth. So, I have trust that God will forgive my errors of thought or belief, and He will accept that the views and beliefs I hold are honestly held even if they don't entirely conform to church doctrine.

That broadly sums up 'what it means to me'. Now, what about you? What would you say? Write a short piece, a paragraph, or even just a few sentences and send them to me by e-mail or post at the Circuit Office. If you like, you could even call me and dictate something over the phone. It would be a great to include something of your thoughts and experience in the next edition of In-touch.

I'm looking forward to hear from you!

## Massacre in Charleston - a Point of View.

*Blossom Jackson, Kingsdown*

I cannot believe that there can be anyone who has not been appalled to see, hear and read about the killing of nine people who were at Bible Study in an African-American Methodist Church in North Carolina through various forms of the media. Moreover, what beggars disbelief, was that the young man who carried out this heinous crime had earlier taken part in the Bible Study in that same church, but had carried a gun with the sole intention of killing 'black' people, as he later revealed.

When I first heard of the event, my comment on Facebook included the observation that the reason for the perpetrator's action might well be far more complex than race hatred and I was right! Further articles this week have revealed something of this young man's situation. Reportedly, he had black friends, had been a church goer since childhood, lived in a trailer park, had taken drugs and exhibited anti-social behaviour etc. This however, does not lessen the dastardly act of depriving the church, community and the victims' families of people who were making positive contributions to society.

In perspective, this crime is no more dreadful than those carried out on Christians throughout the ages up to present times. Nor is it any more a shameful act than the killings at Belsen, Dunblane, the young people at a camp in Norway more recently, ethnic cleansing, black-on-black killings and many more horrors that are brought to us in our sitting rooms via TV almost on a daily basis.

To return to the subject, that the killing was a racially motivated crime, we have to face the fact that racial injustices have not gone away. It is very much alive and kicking and permeates every stratum of society and organisations, including our churches. The sad fact is that the UK's Race Relations Act of 1962, aimed at eliminating racial discrimination, could not and cannot eliminate prejudice from the hearts of an undesirable number of people even though they purport to be Christians, so much so, that their sins are not only those of commission, but more often than not, those of omission at the subconscious level.

We who profess to have a Methodist identity – both black and white people, need to wake up and look into our hearts to see what we are doing that could perpetuate this unacceptable trait in the human situation and try to find ways in which we can truly call ourselves brothers and sisters in Christ, and try to engender a spirit that enables us to love our neighbours, as ourselves!

## Children Unite: Marathon Walk - 21<sup>st</sup> June

*Blossom Jackson, Kingsdown*

Yes! I was able to complete the Marathon Walk planned by the Consortium of Street Children on behalf of Children Unite, an Organisation founded by Helen Veitch and Jonathan Blagrough who between them have over 40 years' experience in the field of children's rights and child labour.

Children Unite works in partnership with organisations to protect child domestic workers from exploitation and abuse and promote their rights worldwide.

Helen Veitch has over 20 years of working in the field of children's rights, focusing on the sexual exploitation of children and participatory work with children. Helen began her career in children's rights working with a community of street children in Indonesia in 1994, then spent eight years working with children's rights advocacy group ECPAT UK (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking).



### **The walk**

The registration fee was £20 plus additional travel costs to and from Windsor on the day.

Our final instructions included the information that the walk would be 12km instead of 10km. So, when Jonathan, with whom I was walking along with Helen, their 13 year old daughter Mia and two aunts who had thought they were older than me, checked his pedometer at 9km and we hadn't reached Bourne End, we all found out that the distance was most probably double! And so it turned out to be. It was a '½ marathon' as we discovered on checking the distance on our return after a couple of detours, because we were only given maps and there was inadequate signage!

The scenery was picturesque; the Thames – undulating and tranquil, the breeze - gentle, the weather - just right, the light lunch – good. And it was good to hear each other's life journey stories as we meandered our way along the dirt tracks. However, by the time our medals, which had 10km on the disc, were given to us, we were exhausted and had to cope with rebellious muscles which played an orchestra that was most unwelcome to us having not had training for the increase in the distance! Nevertheless, I have no regrets and now the pain and stiffness have gone I am glad of the good the walk has done including much good for my health!

A thank you letter came from the organisers yesterday, apologising for the distance and stating it was on account of the failure of an application that gave the wrong distance! So I am sure that their planning will be better next time as they have asked for comments with a view to improving their performance next time!

My thanks to everyone who has donated online or otherwise from the Circuit and elsewhere.

I will of course, let everyone know the full amount raised.

The money raised will go specifically to Angel Benedicto, a former child domestic labourer, for her project to support child domestic labourers in Tanzania. Angel has done much as an advocate for child domestic rights and in advertising these children's plight. She received an award from HM Queen Elizabeth on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

In the statement of their *raison d'être*, Children Unite, which has taken on the fight for the rights of child domestic labourers, says -

*"This is a great opportunity to challenge ourselves and be inspired by children who hope for a better future. A street child in Tanzania offered this piece of advice: 'I would tell all the children not to give up even if life is hard. One day things will change and everything will be alright'"*



# My Placement with West London Citizens

*Rebecca Catford, Hanwell*

Though Ealing Trinity Circuit joined West London Citizens in 2013, my involvement began at the beginning of 2014 when I met Jasper, an organiser. I was interested in doing the 2-day training leadership course that Citizens offered. Instead I found myself becoming involved in the Local Election Accountability Assembly.

About the same time I found out that I hadn't been successful in candidating to be a Methodist minister and wouldn't be going forward for ministerial training. I wasn't sure what to do. I didn't feel that candidating was over for me; it still felt important but I couldn't reapply for a year at least so I needed something that would give me some practical training, some skills, some way of developing me. It was then that I heard about a two year part-time master's course in Community Organising run by Queen Mary University. I successfully applied for the course with some help with funding from the Circuit.



Sanctuary Vigil at William Perkins School  
on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2015

The main attraction of the course for me was that it offered practical training and experience through a five month placement with Citizens UK. My placement was based in Northolt and Greenford Methodist Churches with the aim of getting a team of people to make a difference around an issue the churches felt strongly about.

My first step was to hold about thirty one-to-one conversations with people from both churches mainly at their homes but also at work, church, café and even on

the Tube. I then invited people from the churches to a Sanctuary Vigil at William Perkins School.

The purpose of the vigil was to ask Stephen Pound MP to commit to ending indefinite detention for asylum seekers. The evening started with song, a stirring story from someone who had been detained indefinitely, and Stephen Pound being asked if he would commit to work with Citizens to end this atrocity. Then the group formed a circle outside holding candles with candles in the centre laid out in the shape of the hands of a clock as we stood in silence waiting with those who were being detained. Nine people from Ealing Trinity Circuit were present at the vigil.

From those who came to the vigil and others from the church, we formed a team to take action – not on immigration but on the issue chosen by the group: homelessness. We met several times as a team to plan and listened to people in the churches and those who had been homeless to get a better idea of what we could do. After speaking to Eric, a Big Issue seller, we decided that one of the ways we could help would be to buy insulated mugs to give to people who were homeless so that they could keep soup/a hot drink with them during the day. The team went back to the churches to raise money to buy mugs aiming for £25 from each church and raised £61. Since collecting the money, we have also had two extra mugs donated. We hope to give the mugs to Father Gerard at St Anselm’s Church, Southall, who works with the homeless.



Insulated mugs donated and bought with money raised by Northolt and Greenford Methodist Churches.



Representatives from Ealing Trinity Circuit: (from the left) Catherine, Sally, Nicole, Mark, Vanessa, Angela and Rebecca.

My placement officially ended in May when I went with a group of people from Northolt and Greenford to the General Election Accountability Assembly on Bank Holiday Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May at Westminster Central Hall. 2,200 people packed the hall from a programme that included singing, music, a history lesson, poetry, and personal stories. The main part of the programme was when the three main political party leaders were asked whether they would work with Citizens UK to make a difference on four issues: improved social care, an end to indefinite detention, a fairer credit

system and a living wage. It wasn’t just about making demands - the work that politicians had already done with Citizens was recognised and they were thanked. Also, key leaders that have played a part in Citizens UK were recognised and they literally handed batons to the Citizens UK Young Leaders to acknowledge their role in organising. It wasn’t all about the people at the front particularly when representatives from the alliances (groups set up by Citizens in different areas of the country) asked for people from their alliance ‘to stand up and be counted’. West London Citizens were well represented, as was Ealing Trinity Circuit with seven people.

Even though my placement finished in May, I hope to continue working with the team and with others around the circuit. For London Citizens the next big event will be Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016 from 6.00 - 8.30pm at The Copper Box Arena, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, where 6,000 people will be packed to hold to account the

mayoral candidates. West London Citizens have started a listening campaign to find out problems people are having around housing to take to this event.

From just two churches thirty three people have got involved in the organising process with thirteen taking part in actions. How much more could we achieve if all the churches from the circuit got involved? It is time we stood up and were counted.

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## **Heart Strangely Warmed in a Pink Wig!**

*Ade Benson, Greenford*

I had a pink wig on! Something close to what Charles Wesley would have worn but not in the same circumstances! His was blonde!

I stood on a box in front of the WW1 memorial in Greenford Broadway. I had on a bling bling jacket, jeans and trainers and preached the Gospel!

The elderly walked by looking at me strangely! The adults smiled and walked past. The youth were more curious, and they drew closer.... In the crowd I noticed the teenager with a sexually provocative belly top beside the non-English speaker that understood nothing of what I was saying said! Yet he drew closer to hear what I had to say.....

With a bible in one hand and the other hand in the air, I told my congregation of the love of God! I looked up suddenly and saw a private jet flying past! Inside the plane was my superintendent and London Course Coordinator!

"I am in trouble," I whispered to myself and froze! I have been caught preaching in a pink wig! Charles might not have minded a blond one, but John might have objected as he kept his natural hair!

I opened my eyes and realised I was dreaming! Thank God! What a relief! Phew! Sweat was running down my forehead!

"I wasn't sure street preaching still existed in Methodism!" I said aloud, talking to myself in the middle of the night. Or field preaching as was common for John Wesley and George Whitefield

I had just come back from the third weekend away on the London Course<sup>1</sup>, I was filled and stirred with thoughts of my "Methodist Identity". So much to learn in so little time!

One presentation started with the history of the royal family and its connection to the Church of England, the history of the Bible, the Wesleys, their family and

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<sup>1</sup> The London District Course for Local Preachers which Ade is doing.

friends, the Methodist society and the church as a whole. I have heard most Methodist ministers talk "posh educationalist" from their mental achievements. Proud of their Oxfordian academic inheritance from the Wesleys but I have rarely heard much about the "warming of the heart"!

"Heart strangely warmed" .....mmmm. I rolled the words on my tongue again and again. Heart strangely warmed....with love. John Wesley was born Christian and had perhaps been preaching from the mind. After the "warmth", he became a "heart" preacher. Was that what the presenter had been saying? Mmmmm.

As I lay in my room, I looked at the time. It was midnight and I was afraid to go back to sleep. I was having a nightmare of some sort based on what I had learnt over the weekend away. All I wanted was to grasp the basis of Methodist identity but I had learnt more, much more than I could imagine. As I pondered these things, I drifted back to sleep.

I was standing behind the pulpit like in a court. Sitting on the table in front of me was my superintendent with her soft blond hair and warm eyes, my mentor with golden light around her, my co-ordinator with a halo on his head and my tutor sitting on a seat similar to a 'Wesleyan seat' ..... I was being judged for street preaching. It was the discipline seat In the Methodist Conference. I was breaking out in sweat, butterflies in my stomach and birds in my head!

I woke up again! I thanked God for such wonderful people but thanked God it was just a dream! I wasn't going back to sleep for I didn't want to know how they had reviewed my preacher's training and how they were going to judge my walk of faith! Not now, I am too nervous. Maybe later. Much later.

My mind continued to juggle with more words, each leading to another - names, dates and places. Calvinism? Alvinism? Lutheran? Protestants? Catholic faith? Reformed? Dhort meeting? Mmmmmmmmmmm...

Back in London and I am still pondering and wondering about the fullness of the meaning of my Methodist identity and the touch of God "warming my heart".

As I was standing at the bus-stop, waiting for the bus to drive by, the Tube strike having prolonged my wait, I decided not to get stressed but to enjoy some warm sunshine on my face. The bus came and drove past me! My jaw dropped in amazement! On the side of the bus a review of the film "Danny Wilson" said it was "heartily warming"..... I might go and see that.

The world was warming to the sun and also to my Methodist identity! Great! So....., this wasn't a new thing, it has just been strangely renewed. Everything simply fell into place! A heart that is warmed by God to preach to a world that is waiting to be warmed. But perhaps not in a pink wig!

# Dark Shadows and the Power of Ideas

Gerald Barton, Editor

Looking back over my life time so far, it seems to me that we have almost always been living under a deep and menacing shadow. For much of this time, until about 1990 or so, this was the shadow of 'the bomb'. It seems inconceivable that anyone would really have risked putting into effect a strategy of 'Mutually Assured Destruction' (aptly given the acronym 'MAD'), although there certainly was a real risk over the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962. With the ending of the Cold War, the shadow receded and nuclear stocks diminished. There are still more than enough to destroy the world several times over however, so the shadow hasn't entirely gone away.

Closer to home, from the late 1960's until the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 there was the shadow of terrorism arising from the Northern Ireland 'troubles'. Living in London we may not have been at constant risk (unlike parts of Northern Ireland), but I remember the awful sound of the bomb blast that blew apart a bandstand filled with the band of the Royal Green Jackets in Regent's Park in July 1982, and some years later having to evacuate my office at King's Cross because of an IRA bomb nearby.

Now, as we are only too painfully aware, we live under another shadow – the threat of attacks planned or inspired by Al-Qaeda or so-called Islamic State. The shadow here may seem dark, but nowhere near as dark or deadly as in many countries across the Middle East and Africa.

It is easy, and tempting to look at these shadows as a simple question of 'good' and 'evil', with the perpetrators of terrorist acts as simply evil people with evil objectives. But does that reaction help us to understand what's going on, leave alone find long term solutions to the underlying problems? Are all the people involved in those groups simply wicked, or are there other more complex explanations?

Thinking about this recently led me to re-read a lecture given in about 1956 by the philosopher Karl Popper. During the lecture (which was entitled *A History of Our Time: An Optimist's View*<sup>2</sup>), he suggested that *"We are good, perhaps a little too good, but we are also a little stupid: and it is this mixture of goodness and stupidity which lies at the root of our troubles..... What is wrong with us is that we so easily mislead ourselves, and that we are so easily 'led by the nose' by others...."* Remember that these words were written not long after the end of the Second World War and the evils of Hitler's Nazism and within a few years of the death of Stalin, both leaders whom it is easy to see as purely evil.

Popper, were he still alive, might argue that we should not see the perpetrators of terrorist acts as simply 'evil', rather as people who perhaps started out with good intentions searching after the 'truth', but who have for various reasons allowed

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<sup>2</sup> Published in 'Conjectures and Refutations: the Growth of Scientific Knowledge' by Karl R Popper (1963)

themselves to be led, or misled, into accepting sets of ideas and ways of thinking that result in evil acts. As he suggested in the same lecture, "*The power of ideas, and especially of moral and religious ideas, is at least as important as that of physical resources.*" Ideas have power, including "*false and pernicious*" ideas.

The great '-isms' of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fascism, socialism and communism (we might also add capitalism here) were powerful sets of ideas. In many respects they are similar to religions in that they could provide clear and coherent narratives through which to view and understand the world, how and why things were as they were, how things should be, and what should be done to achieve that vision. In fact, it is arguable that any system of thought has characteristics in common with religion in that all systems start from some fundamental assumptions that are taken to be axiomatic, that is, 'true' without proof, or indeed the means to prove them.

I have long suspected that some people, perhaps dissatisfied with their lives, or unhappy with the way the society in which they live works, can be drawn to a vision of a way of living that offers direction and certainty, or a way of structuring society that seems to eliminate social wrongs and establish a 'just' society. Once drawn in, many things can seem to fall into place, many things can suddenly become clear, a 'conversion' experience if you like. There is nothing to say that this new way of thinking won't be based on wrong-headed thinking, or ideas that are pernicious. I'm sure many people drawn to communism, for example started out inspired by a vision of a better society. The same is probably true of many in the chaos of the French Revolution, in China under Mao Zedong or even in Hitler's Germany.

Popper also believed in what he called '*the war of ideas*'. Seeing this as a one of the most important 'inventions' ever, started by the Greeks, Popper saw the ability to fight with words rather than swords as the basis of our civilisation and all its legal and parliamentary institutions. At the time, however there was a potentially more dangerous 'war of ideas' between the communist east and the liberal democratic west. Not so much a struggle between an 'evil empire' as Ronald Reagan would have it and a virtuous west, but between two competing visions of how society should be run.

Whilst Popper believed that liberal democratic societies represented the best that had ever been (but not, however that they were the best of all possible societies), he believed that it was a mistake to think that this was self-evidently true. Far from being clear for all to see, truth, he believed was hard to come by. In other words, he rejected what can be called the 'manifest theory of truth'. In short, this theory asserts that truth is obvious for what it is. Once seen, it cannot be denied. Show a man the truth and he must see it. If he cannot see it, there must be something wrong. He must have been misled by others, or he must be perversely denying it even though he really knows it to be true and is therefore wicked. He who is not for us must be against us.

Thinking that truth is blindingly obvious when you see it was one of the mistakes neo-conservatives made in pushing for 'regime change' in Iraq. Remove the despot, they thought, give people a liberal democratic system and they are bound

to grab it with open arms because it's so obviously better than what they had been used to. I needn't dwell on the result. The same mistake is made when people get sucked into radical or fundamentalist ways of thinking. Once things have fallen into place and they fully see the world through the prism of that way of thinking it can seem so obvious that it's all true and they can't quite understand how they never saw it before or why other people don't see it that way. Things become all the more certain if this way of thinking purports to have God at its root, that this is God's one true way, the way all men should, nay, must live.

From there, it is not a great step to believing that because you know and are following God's one true way you are superior to all others and furthermore, whatever you do must accord with God's way. All manner of atrocities then become possible. When the Roman Catholic Church first set up the Inquisition in 12<sup>th</sup> century France, I'm sure they believed they were doing right by rooting out heresy. However repugnant we may find it, I'm sure the radical clerics, scholars and others who provide the inspiration for so-called Islamic State believe that they are doing mankind a service by supporting the fight to establish a caliphate in Syria and Iraq (not to mention everywhere else).

Ideas, including ideas that are wrong-headed or pernicious are powerful. Because we cannot take it that truth is obvious, ideas, including our own must be argued for. In his lecture, Popper argued that the liberal democracies needed to make their case as to why their system was better than communist or autocratic systems. They could not assume that they had won the argument merely because they had produced greater material success. In like fashion, the same needs to be done today by liberal, tolerant, open societies. Security measures and military action can't do that alone. The principles on which our society is founded need to be argued for and the other man's ideas shown to be wanting. In the process, however we might find that the faults in our own ideas are exposed and just criticisms demanding change are laid at our door.

In this article I have argued that we should not simply see 'terrorists' as necessarily 'evil', but as being people like any other who have been misled or misled themselves into wrong-headed ways of thinking and acting. I'm certainly not saying that is a complete explanation of the issue, nor that presenting and discussing ideas is the solution, although I do believe it is a vitally important part of it.

What of the church in all this, including us as individuals? Christianity is a set of ideas like any other religion or system of thought. Like any other religion or system of thought, it needs to make its case. Whilst we may believe that we have a unique revelation of the nature of God through Jesus Christ, not everyone sees it that way (any more than I see it that the Prophet Muhammed *pbuh*<sup>3</sup> was God's final messenger to mankind and that the Holy Qu'ran is the inerrant word of God). We too, need to make our case for what is most vital and important in our religion. In doing so, however we need to respect the other man's view and accept that in making our case, and listening to his, we may be changed.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Peace be upon him' – usually added by Muslims when referring to the Prophet.

## Remember in Autumn 2015

*Compiled by Mary Newman, Pitshanger*

Your righteousness reaches to the skies O God, you who have done great things.  
Who, O God is like you?

*Psalm 71 v19*

O Lord, I will always sing of your constant love;  
I will proclaim your faithfulness forever.  
I know that your love will last for all time,  
that your faithfulness is as permanent as the sky.

*Psalm 89 v12*

One of the most tragic things I know is that all of us tend to put off living. We dream of some magical garden over the horizon instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our window today.

*Dale Carnegie*

If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste adversity prosperity would not be so welcome.

*Anne Bradstreet*

### Some Thoughts on Beauty

Beauty is how you feel inside, and it reflects in your eyes. It is not something physical.

*Sophia Loren, actress*

Everything has its beauty but not everyone sees it.

*Confucius, philosopher*

For every beauty there is an eye somewhere to see it. For every truth there is an ear somewhere to hear it. For every love there is a heart somewhere to receive it.

*Ivan Panin (1855-1942), Russian mathematician*

Beauty is not in the face. Beauty is a light in the heart.

*Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931), philosopher*

### *Audrey Hepburn*

Audrey Hepburn was one of the most beautiful and talented actresses of her time. In 1988 she became the US Ambassador to UNICEF and travelled to countries such as Sudan, Bangladesh and Somalia.

Audrey's beauty came from the inside as well as the outside. When she was older (sadly she died aged 63). She was often photographed in her role for UNICEF. Audrey said she didn't want her face airbrushed. She said, "Don't mess with my face. I earned every one of those wrinkles."

### *Brigitte Bardot*

Brigitte Bardot, another beautiful and very successful film actress gave up her career to open an animal charity in France. These days she is sometimes photographed looking very unlike the glamorous film star she used to be. Her beauty too, comes from inside.

## **A Church**

On a recent trip to Swanage I read the following in the local Methodist Church magazine.

A church should be people worshipping God -  
Not bricks and mortar

A church should be hands outstretched in peace –  
Not arms enfolding only the familiar and safe

A church should be a door flung wide –  
Not shut to those who don't know how to open it

A church should be here and now –  
Not clinging to the past, sinking in tradition

A church should be a group of Christians –  
Not a clique of friends

A church should be open to all –  
Not just those who feel worthy

A church should be whatever people need –  
Not only what we consider right and proper

*Ann Duell (age 16)*

## **How Roger, William and Chrispher found a Loving Home**

In the last edition of "In Touch" I told you how our friends, Barbara and David had adopted a baby, Diana, who was left outside the hospital in Ealing soon after her birth.

My grand-daughter, Louise, read what I had written and asked, "Is it a true story?" It does read a bit like a fairy tale but I assured her that it was true.

The hymn says God works in a mysterious way. Well I have another story to tell of how He had already worked in the lives of 3 young children before Diana was born.

My sister-in-law, Jill, was a child care officer in Ealing in the 50's and early 60's. One day we were talking on the phone and she said, "I don't suppose you know anyone who would like to adopt three brothers, aged 5, 3, and 2, do you? Trying to find a home for the three of them together is not proving easy."

Jill was surprised when I said, "Well, I think I might know someone." (I well remember Barbara's and David's wedding in August 1958, as a few hours before we were setting off for it in Alton, Hants, my husband Bob was taken ill with acute appendicitis!)

A year or so later Barbara was not expecting a baby as they hoped and mentioned that if nothing happened they would like to adopt.

After the phone conversation with Jill I rang Barbara and asked how they would feel about adopting three young brothers. It took them just few seconds for Barbara to say, "Yes, we'll have them. Tell Jill she can bring them down."

That was the start of the process of Roger, William and Christopher being fostered, then adopted by Barbara and David. Roger was the same age as our son, Chris, and he came to stay with us one summer holiday when he was about 7.

They were well loved and had a happy life with Barbara and David.

Sadly Roger died when he was about 30 of a heart attack, leaving a wife and young twins.

When he was an adult William found his birth father in Northolt and helped care for him during his father's last illness.

Christopher got a job in a hotel near Barbara and David and transferred to a hotel in Paddington, where he has worked for many years.

After Roger, William and Christopher, the next to come along was Diana, the 3 week old black baby who was taken by Ealing Social Services to live in her new home in Alton. But that is not the end of the story.....I will tell you what happened next in a future 'Remember'.

## **Sometimes the Pain is Hidden**

A few years ago on a lovely sunny afternoon in June I was mugged. I'd been shopping in London and had more money in my purse than usual. Also my freedom pass, house and car keys, credit cards, library ticket and other bits and pieces were all taken.

A couple of days later I was in the NatWest Bank and when the cashier asked how I was I told her about my experience.

"Well thank heaven you weren't hurt," she said. (This was a perfectly reasonable thing to say, so she may have been surprised at my response.) "But I am hurting" I exclaimed, "It's just that you can't see it."

I guess we come across people every day who are hurting in ways that we just can't see. Perhaps they have lost a loved one through death or divorce. They may have been let down by a friend or had bad news at a hospital appointment. Maybe we should try to be aware of the people we meet every day. If they seem to be unfriendly or angry, maybe they too are hurting in ways that you and I can't see.

## **A Prayer for Autumn**

Heavenly Father, we pray for all who are hurting in ways we can or cannot see. We believe that you know the needs of each and everyone of your children. Show us ways in which we can help them and show them your love by our words, prayers and deeds.

Amen

## **Readings for Autumn**

Luke Ch 22: vv41-45 – Jesus is hurting but his disciples sleep

John Ch 11: vv30-36 – The grief of Jesus and of Mary at Lazarus' death

Ephesians Ch 4: vv31-32 – Paul exhorts his fellow Christians to kindness

Romans Ch 12: vv1-21 – Paul recommends practical duties to fellow Christians

# Hanwell Methodist Church Invites You to Their...

all age Autumn



day

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September  
in the Church  
2:30 – 5:00pm

Bulb planting  
Children's crafts  
Painting competition (look out for the topic) later

Cake stall  
Face painting  
Harvest bee decorations  
and more...

**FREE**  
**Admission!**



We expect you to be there!

## Harvest Concert

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> October  
in the Church  
at 7:30pm

Admission £2.00

*The concert will feature Gareth Knox playing classical and traditional tunes on the piano.*

*The second half of the evening will include favourite musical pieces chosen by the audience.*

*Please contact Michael in advance to find out how to get your favourite piece of music played.*



Tickets available from Michael on 07951 096793, [m\\_pidoux@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:m_pidoux@yahoo.co.uk)  
or Gill on (020) 8567 4018

*There will be a retiring collection for All We Can*

## Forthcoming Events around the Circuit

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

### September

- 6<sup>th</sup> Sun 18.30 **Circuit Service at Greenford**  
*to mark the start of the new Methodist year*
- 9<sup>th</sup> Wed 20.00 **Circuit Meeting at Hanwell**
- 19<sup>th</sup> Sat 14.30 **All-Age Art & Craft Day at Hanwell**  
17.00 *Free admission*
- 20<sup>th</sup> Sun 18.00 **Circuit Bible Study at Kingsdown**
- 26<sup>th</sup> Sat 10.00 **Book Fair at Kingsdown**  
12.30 *In aid of All We Can*

### October

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sat 19.30 **Harvest Concert at Hanwell**  
*Tickets £2.00, also retiring collection in aid of All We Can*
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sun 18.00 **Circuit Bible Study at Kingsdown**
- 18<sup>th</sup> sun 18.00 **Circuit Bible Study at Kingsdown**
- 20<sup>th</sup> Tues 19.30 **Circuit Policy Committee at Kingsdown**
- 31<sup>st</sup> Sat 10.00 **Book Fair at Kingsdown**  
12.30 *In aid of MHA*

### November

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sun 18.00 **Circuit Bible Study at Kingsdown**
- 15<sup>th</sup> Sun 18.00 **Circuit Bible Study at Kingsdown**

Articles for '**In-touch**' Issue No 74 (December - February) 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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**Deadline for next issue: 1<sup>st</sup> November**