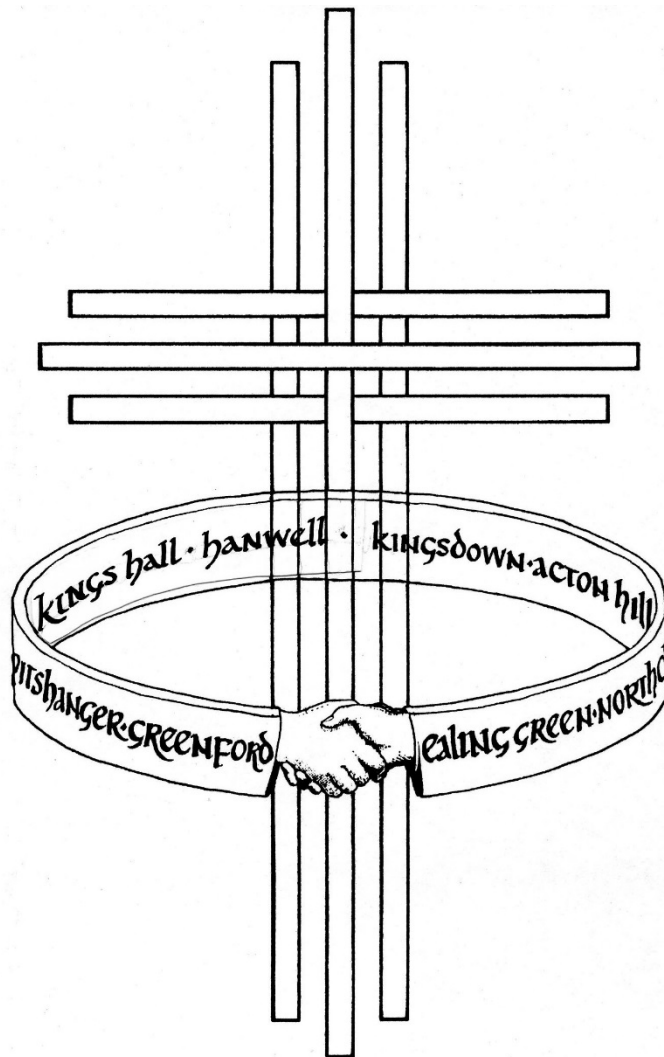


In-touch

No 79

March - May 2017



The magazine for *all* the Ealing Trinity Circuit.

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Circuit website

www.ealingtrinity.org.uk

Front Cover designed by Marion Narain

From the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the February edition of In-touch magazine! First may I say thank you to all who have so graciously offered me good wishes after the unexpected notice of my move this coming summer – in the midst of change, you have shown both grace and far-sighted commitment to each other and the mission of this circuit. And been very kind to me, at a time of unanticipated personal change for me and my husband Keith. Please know I am not moving until August, so there is no need for goodbyes just yet.

I write as two of our training local preachers, Mark Budu-Manuel and Ade Benson come close to the end of their training and move towards accreditation, and as three others continue in study and preparation – this is worthy of celebration! I write also as the Southall Schools Project completes its first 12 months as a Christian support to the RE provision in the secondary schools in Southall, and the Revd Karen Greenidge begins work with the first groups of student `faith ambassadors` and curriculum development across the schools. In addition the MHA Ealing Live at Home scheme is entering a new phase, and many of us are coming to the end of a highly fruitful engagement with the Ealing Churches Winter Night Shelter this winter. We are in a time of great change with much challenge for our wider communities, and seeing the churches step up to be a beacon of hope is a delight.

There is much for which to give thanks – these and many more out-reaches, not least the new members and Confirmands preparing to be received around the circuit. And yet, we still seek a circuit treasurer, and to fill other circuit offices – we need to find vocations among our number for this, and for circuit stewarding. Without these vocations the work of our individual churches will not only suffer, but grind to a halt – it is a real necessity now. I have confidence that God is still calling people into these roles outside the local church – please realise this is not removed from you as you read it, but requires our response together to identify and encourage the right people to feel able to offer.

Elsewhere in this edition, detail is given about changes to ministry: do please look and reflect. In short, the Circuit Policy Group has recommended that Rachel Bending become Superintendent, and also a re-jig of pastoral sections. This is managing for growth, and making the most of what we have – of course Deacon Ramona Samuel will also join the staff from September, and her husband Rev Calvin Samuel (new principal of the London School of Theology) will be around in our churches as well. You are in good shape, in other words. It is a time of risk, but a time of turning over earth for new growth. I will miss this circuit terrifically but I'm also excited to see how God will lead you.

Please look out for notices of our Circuit Lent course, `Remembering Home` and think about coming to at least one of the meetings, your time will not be wasted. I

close with a quote for Lent by Fr. Jean Vanier, from his book `Befriending the Stranger`

*God calls each one of us.
There are many reasons why we go to a church or a group
But we only remain committed
If we realise that we are there because God has called us.
We will continually be disappointed or discouraged
When we encounter the fragility of people in the community
And our own fragility
Unless we discover that if we have become members of a community
It is because God has called us to serve in that way.
Our belonging, our commitment, is a response to a call from God.*

Apt words for all of us as we prepare for Easter and reflect on the life of our churches, and their crucial purpose in the world. Be confident, and celebrate God and one another!

With every blessing, Jen

Circuit Lent Course 2017

“Remembering Home: Christian Faith in Encounter with Other Faiths”

This year's Circuit Lent course is based on a course developed by Churches Together in Britain & Ireland entitled 'Remembering Home: Christian Faith in Encounter with Other Faiths'. The course explores how Christian faith has been deepened and enriched by encounters with people of different religions. It does not necessarily emphasise common ground between faiths nor is it about dialogue with other faiths, but how Christian faith has burned brightly following an encounter with the religious other. There are familiar Lenten themes in the material but with a different approach.

You can read more about the course by going to:
<https://ctbi.org.uk/lent>.

There will be 5 weekly sessions at each of Kingsdown, Greenford and Pitshanger. The first session will be on Sunday 5th March at 6.00pm at Kingsdown, repeated on Tuesday 7th March at 7.30pm at Greenford, and on Thursday from 9th March at 10.00am at Pitshanger.

For more information, contact Rev Dr Jennifer Smith or call 020 8579 8114.

Changes to Pastoral Sections

As readers of 'In-touch' will be aware, in December it was announced that our Superintendent, Rev'd Dr Jennifer Smith has been appointed Superintendent Minister of Wesley's Chapel with effect from 1st September this year. She will replace Rev Lord Leslie Griffiths on his retirement and will be the first woman to hold the post, first occupied by John Wesley. The post of Superintendent at Wesley's Chapel is a highly prestigious one within British Methodism and it is a great compliment to Jen that she has been appointed to it.

Following on from Jen's appointment, a number of changes are needed within our Circuit. Firstly, the Circuit Invitations Committee unanimously agreed to appoint Rev Rachel Bending as our new Superintendent Minister from 1st September. When she takes over, Rachel will begin a new 5 year term, meaning that her station will not come up for re-invitation for another 5 years. Secondly, the Committee has re-affirmed its view that Circuit staffing should be maintained as the level of six ministers, ie four presbyters and two deacons. Whilst the Circuit currently has just one deacon following the appointment of Richard Goldstraw to the post of Deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order, a second deacon, Ramona Samuel will join the Circuit in September.

The appointment of Rev Rachel Bending as Superintendent will increase her workload within the Circuit. As a result, it is necessary to re-draw the pastoral sections within the Circuit so that workload is balanced across the Circuit staff. In considering how best this should be done, the Circuit staff and Invitations Committee have taken account of the particular needs and characteristics of our individual churches and how they might best be matched to the strengths of our individual staff members. The following proposal was discussed at a consultation meeting on 18th January involving the Circuit Policy Group and representatives from the churches most affected.

Presbyter 1 Rev Rachel Bending (Superintendent)
King's Hall (Urdu/Hindi), King's Hall Class Meeting, Pitshanger

Presbyter 2 Rev Shirlyn Toppin
Acton Hill, Hanwell and Local Preacher tutor

Presbyter 3 Rev Oluyemisi Jaiyesimi
Greenford, Northolt and support for schools work

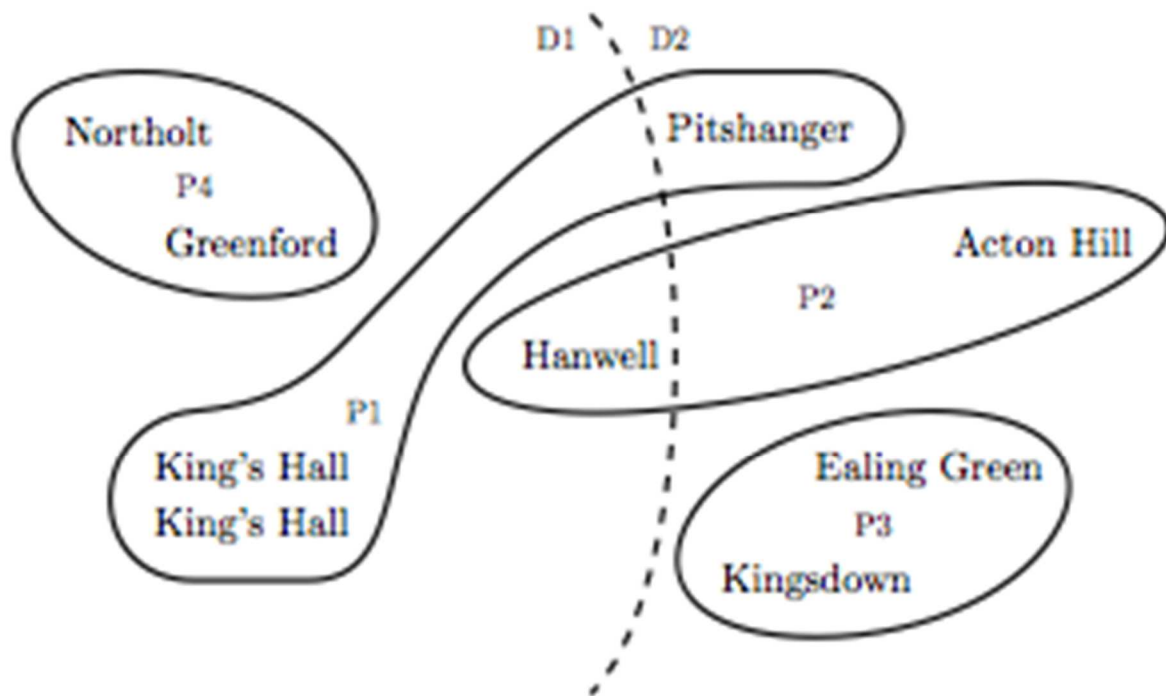
Presbyter 4 *to be appointed*
Ealing Green, Kingsdown

Deacon 1 Lemia Nkwelah
Support churches on the west side of the Circuit - Northolt, Greenford, Hanwell, King's Hall (both congregations).
Circuit-wide support for older people.

Deacon 2 Ramona Samuel

Support churches on the east side of the Circuit - Acton Hill, Ealing Green, Kingsdown & Pitshanger
Circuit-wide support for young people.

Diagrammatically, these proposed sections look like this:



These proposed sections were to be put the Circuit Meeting on 23rd February for its endorsement.

There are a number of options for appointing a new presbyter for Ealing Green and Kingsdown. Whilst it is too late for our Circuit to join the 'stationing round' that appoints ministers to new positions starting 1st September, it is always possible that the process may yet throw up a suitable presbyter – indeed, because of the timing of Jen's appointment, our Circuit has high priority within the system. However, the Circuit Staff and Invitations Committee are clear that we should seek the best 'match' possible rather than seek to fill the position as quickly as possible from the pool of people currently available. This means that we may well opt to wait until the next 'stationing round' in order to get the best person possible. If that is the case, the Circuit will seek to appoint an 'Associate Pastor' to cover the position for a year until a new presbyter can take up the position. This could be a retired minister willing to take up the role or a new one-year lay appointment.

Change inevitably brings a degree of unsettling uncertainty. It also brings opportunity in the sense of calling us to rise to the challenges it poses positively and creatively. Please remember the churches most affected by these changes in your prayers.

Dancing in the Desert

Rev Rachel Bending

After 10 years and then every 7 years thereafter the Methodist Church gives its ministers an extraordinary gift - a three month sabbatical, which we are required to take. It is intended that this be a time of refreshment, spent doing something other than the usual tasks of ministry. It's a time to take stock, find fresh inspiration and rebalance.

As many of you will already know, I will be on sabbatical from the beginning of April to the end of June this year. I will be spending much of the time in the USA with the main focus being time in the New Mexico desert. While I'm there I will be looking at the work of the artist, Georgia O'Keefe who spent much of her working life in the desert painting what she saw. I look forward to seeing the richness and the beauty of the desert and seeing how that affects and changes me. I hope that I will have the space and inspiration to create some art of my own on my return.

While we're in the States, Thomas and I will also spend some time dancing at festivals and clubs. English folk and historical dancing has been a joy for more than 30 years, helping me to express myself and find life in the company of others.

So please remember us in your prayers as we dance our way through deserts and in cities. And thank you for giving us this remarkable gift and for all that you have done to make it possible.

Blessings and love, Rachel

Why am I a Minister?

Reverend Shirlyn Toppin

"Why am I a minister?" A question often asked by non-church seekers and even believers. They ask either in awed speculation, deep desire or for clarification for the questioner's own musing. As simple as the query seemingly appears, the answer is not as clear-cut. To respond, "Because I was called by God," raises another set of questions as to how and why and where. Undoubtedly, I can come up with a theological framework to map out why I am a minister, or adopt an academic perspective undergirded with doctrinal principles. Inevitably that too would fail to give explanation of the key word of the question, "Why?" consequently raising further confusion instead of elucidation.

However, I am a minister not because I had a great desire to serve God in an ordained capacity, nor that I believe that I have the skill of oration or even am basically equipped for it. To hold to such beliefs will inherently reduce me to viewing God's will upon my life as simply a choice I made, rather than what He has

purposed. I say this to point out that my chosen path would have been vastly different from God's. More so, it is further compounded by where I am practicing ministry, Great Britain! However, I hasten to add that there is nothing wrong with the setting, just a point of reflection about God's 'ways and thoughts' as declared in Isaiah 55:8-9. God took a girl from the small island of Tobago from the tiny village of Betsey's Hope and positioned me in an unknown context when I responded in a similar manner to the prophet Isaiah, "Here I am Lord, send me."

Why am I a minister? After much thoughtful interrogation, I am a minister second to being a disciple first. A discipleship that is inextricably bound up with Jesus' dying, atoning and redeeming me for an abundant life. Intrinsicly, I am a minister because of what God has done through me, echoing Paul's words in 1 Cor. 1:27-29 "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God."

Therefore, as a 'foolish, weak, low and despised' servant of the Lord, my commitment to this role is unequivocally unwavering and passionately focussed on ensuring that all God's people will experience His life transforming love and grace. And so, "I press on towards the goal for the prize of the 'heavenly' call of God in Christ Jesus." Phil.3:14.

Christian Aid

Ruby Warne, Kingsdown

Christian Aid Week this year is 14th – 20th May and many of us in our Circuit will be taking part. Christian Aid Sunday throughout the UK will be held on 14th May and will be followed by house-house collecting. Flag Day in the London area is on 20th May and the 'Circle the City' sponsored walk, when you will have the opportunity to discover London's historic places of worship, will take place on Sunday 21st May.

I Was Hungry...

The focus this year is on refugees. Christian Aid was set up by the British Council of Churches in 1945 to support the hundreds of thousands of refugees who had lost their homes and possessions in the Second World War. Christian Aid Week was launched in 1957 to raise funds for this vital work that was still continuing in the long running aftermath of the war.

For 60 years tens of thousands of dedicated volunteers have come together for Christian Aid Week each May to raise vital money for those most in need. Today, more than 65 million people are displaced worldwide. How might it feel to have to flee far from home, not knowing if you'll ever return? Theodor Davidovic received food parcels from Christian Aid as a refugee after the Second World War. He said,

“The people contributing through Christian Aid Week helped me to survive. I feel I owe my life to the cause.” Theodor later came to Britain and now in his 90’s, supports Christian Aid to this day.

According to Nejebar, “It is better to die in a camp than to die in a war.” Nejebar and her family of three children have fled horrors in Afghanistan where her husband Noor was threatened with torture and death for being a government worker. Imagine the horror the family felt when the Taliban announced they would kill anyone like Noor and carried out that threat on another family member. But now they have arrived in Greece, all they have is a tent. They have no other protection against the wind and the rain. There are now five children. Nejebar’s strength and steadiness make her the rock at the centre of her family, holding them together in this difficult and uncertain situation. Despite her circumstances she has welcomed two other children into her family. They don’t know where their parents are, or if they are even alive. Nejebar has welcomed them, giving them refuge as they wait for news. There’s no school for their five children, and they have no certainty or clear idea of what will happen to them now. They thought they would stay for 10 days, but it’s already been six months and there’s no end in sight. Nejebar says, “We still have some hope that one day we will get out of here. Our wish is to get our children out of this situation. We want our children to have an education and to go to school. The most important thing is our children.”

I attended this year’s annual Christian Aid Supporters Day in January and saw the usual resources for Christian Aid Week. In addition there are two special free booklets:

Count Your Blessings 2017 – “When I needed a neighbour were you there?” This Lent journey with your neighbours from around the world. The calendar of reflections offers daily opportunities to give, act and pray for your neighbour, and to give thanks for life’s blessings.

Christian Aid Week 2017 – A seven-day devotional based on Matthew 25:31-36 “I was a stranger”. Each day a short Bible reading, a reflection and our response, with stories of refugees.

All resources are available through the Christian Aid Co-ordinator at your church.

Last year, churches in our Circuit participated in the house-to-house collecting, Flag Day and ‘Circle the City’ sponsored walk. The amounts collected came to:-

Acton Hill	£894.33
Ealing Green	£1,815.52
Greenford	£301.36
Hanwell	£1,703.69
Kingsdown	£3,075.50
Northolt	£327.42
Pitshanger	£682.86
Total	£8,799.60

“Every Stranger’s Visit Makes Us Feel Important:” My Visit to Ghana

Rev Oluyemisi Jaiyesimi

“It was one simple phrase that kept coming back to me... Every stranger’s visit makes us feel important, thank you for coming!” These words from the book “A Sense of the Savannah: Tales of a friendly walk through northern Ghana” by Kofi Akpali, a Ghanaian who visited northern Ghana pretty much sums up the highlights of my recent visit to Ghana. The Methodist Church in Ghana was ever so happy to receive the ministerial and lay team of Methodists from Britain and Germany. We did sense everywhere we visited a real sense of welcome, a feeling that our visit made our hosts feel especially important, that we had travelled so many miles by air, rail and road to visit them. In turn, the welcome we received made us feel important too. My account of our journey day by day follows.

After a three hour delayed flight, we finally got to our hotel in Accra sometime after midnight. We were up to an early breakfast at 7.00am and sometime after 8.00am travelled to the Pentecost Convention Center Millenium City to be part of the annual retreat of Methodist ministers in Ghana. One of the things that really touched me at the retreat was a prophetic word from God saying, “You need to impart the youth.” We proceeded from the retreat to visit the Methodist Rafik Orphanage. While there I was pressed to teach the children the song “I am special / God loves me / Jesus died to save me...” Finally we headed back to our hotel in Accra and after supper we were all ready for bed.

On Wednesday 4th January we were up very early to travel to Sekondi calling briefly to visit a church elder who warmly received us with refreshing coconut juice straight from Ghanaian coconuts. We went on to Cape Coast and visited Cape Coast Castle where slaves were kept many, many years ago in very dehumanizing conditions before being shipped off to foreign lands. One of the most difficult places for me was the place called “The Point of No Return” where the slaves left the castle via a narrow passage straight onto the coast and finally onto the ship, with no hope of ever returning to their homeland.

After a long journey we arrived at Sekondi and after checking into our hotel, we went to Calvary Methodist Church for a welcome service. We were all given beautiful gifts. A member the Rev Paul Saunders preached on ‘love’ using 1 Corinthians 13 very effectively – ‘love looks for the best in others’.

On Thursday 5th January we travelled to Nzulezo, a village built on water. I had travelled to this village in 2011, but even then, knowing full well that I couldn’t swim, I sent up some ‘arrow prayers’ to God as we travelled to the village by canoe. Again, the villagers were so happy to see us and we were warmly welcomed.

The following day we made an early start as usual, travelling to Kumasi and after quite a long journey lodged at the Freeman Methodist Guest House. Then, on the Saturday we visited Kwadaso Training Institute for Women which trains young

women for various vocations and is supported by Methodists in Germany and Britain. We had some free time in the afternoon and I was able to visit Opoku Ware School, a Catholic secondary school for boys. One of the students there shared with me a turning point in his life when he appreciated the immensity of God's love for him in giving His Son, Jesus Christ for his, and our, salvation.

On Sunday 8th January we were assigned to preach in several churches across Kumasi. I preached at Bethel Methodist Church Ayigya on the theme 'love never fails' from 1 Corinthians 13:8. Later, we travelled to Tamale, the capital of the Northern Region of Ghana. After a journey of over six hours we were warmly welcomed in Tamale by the bishop. We had a delicious meal before returning to our hotel.

The following day, we travelled to Nagloni Methodist Church, on to Yendi and finally to the site of the old slave market in Salaga. The church building in Nagloni collapsed a while ago and yet the congregation were still joyful in their worship. The roads were a bit rough, but the welcome so warm. The north of Ghana has a larger Muslim population than the south, but only 17 ministers compared to over 1,000 in the south.

On Tuesday 10th January we visited Glawagan Calvary Methodist Church and later in the day some of us went to visit the building site of the manse being built for the bishop. The following day he bade us farewell with native Ghanaian costumes for each of us. We then travelled back to Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. After that we travelled back to Accra and lodged at St Martin's once more. We visited Wesley House, the Headquarters of the Methodist Church in Ghana. We were warmly received by both the Presiding and the Administrative Bishops and again given gifts. We had time to reflect on our journeys, particularly in the north. My desire is that both our Circuit and our individual churches support the training of indigenous Methodist ministers in the north.

On our final day, Friday 13th January we were treated to a banquet at the home of Eve, a Ghanaian Methodist who also lives in Britain. We then travelled back home from warm Ghana to freezing Britain.

It is true that there is material poverty in Ghana, but even then there are quite a number who are well off and who use their wealth to help the poor and to support the work of God. The point must be made, however that the Methodist Church in Ghana is rich in worship and I could sense everywhere we visited a people who are in love with Jesus, a church that is investing in its youth, a church that is growing spiritually and numerically and in its social and evangelical witness. It is a church that reminded me of our evangelical roots, a movement burning with 'inextinguishable blaze'. Thank you for allowing me to go and for supporting me. I pray that the Holy Spirit will kindle afresh a 'flame of sacred love' in the hearts of all of us in the Ealing Trinity Circuit. Amen!

Holy Week Services around the Circuit

This year, Palm Sunday falls on 9th April and Easter Day 16th April. Maundy Thursday is on 13th April and Good Friday 14th April.

Acton Hill

Easter Sunday 9.30am Easter Morning Communion

Ealing Green

Easter Sunday 8.00am Easter Morning Communion
11.00am Worship for Easter Sunday

Greenford

1st March 10.30am Worship for Ash Wednesday
Maundy Thursday 7.00pm Agape meal
Good Friday 3.00pm Meditation for Good Friday
Easter Sunday 11.00am Worship for Easter Sunday

Hanwell

Maundy Thursday 7.30pm Holy Communion
Good Friday 10.30am Good Friday Worship
Easter Sunday 11.00am Worship for Easter Sunday

Kingsdown

Good Friday 9.30am Gather at Kingsdown for a Walk of Witness to Christ the Saviour via St Mary, South Ealing for a short outdoor service at 10.45am.
tba (pm) Meditation for Good Friday
Easter Sunday 8.00am Easter Morning Communion
10.30am Family Service for Easter Sunday

King's Hall

Easter Sunday 1.00pm Worship for Easter Sunday

Northolt

Good Friday 11.00am Walk of Witness
Easter Sunday 11.00am Worship for Easter Sunday

Pitshanger

Easter Sunday 10.30am Worship for Easter Sunday

Ruby Ministries, Southall

Ruby Ministries, a group supported by our Circuit is concerned about night women on the streets of Southall. We seek to expose the injustices hidden in the shadows of its streets. The challenge for us is that when we walk the streets of Southall at night, what do we see? As we walk and pray every fourth Friday of the month, we ask God to help us to see the unthinkable so that we can reach out with compassion and help.

You may be interested in walking the streets of Southall in prayer or you may have ideas of how to be church to the night women of Southall. Please join us in our prayer walks, 11.00pm every fourth Friday of the month. If you feel called to this ministry, please get in touch with Deacon Lemia Nkwelah at lemmynkweleh@gmail.com or call 020 8575 5463.

MWiB Autumn Forum 2016

Blossom Jackson, London District Forum Representative

The Autumn Term MWiB Forum took place at Swanwick from Saturday 15th-16th October. The Forum which is the policy making Connexional body for Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) and is comprised of an Executive, headed by Anne Browse and forum members representing the various Districts of the Methodist Church. MWiB is also the British unit of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFM&UCW). Several of those attending the forum had recently returned from the WFM&UCW conference, where one member of the last year's executive team, who was the area WFM&UCW officer up to July 2016, was elected World President. Forum as usual started with worship followed by business throughout Saturday and ended with Communion Service and Lunch on Sunday.

Summary of Decisions and Reports

WFM&UCW - 13th World Assembly and World Federation Day – The Assembly, held in Texas was attended by 830 women of whom 70 were from UK and Ireland. The MWiB fund-raising drive towards funding delegates from Eastern Europe to attend the assembly - 'Tenners for Texas' raised £9,447 and a total of £11,090 was sent to support delegates from those countries. The next Area Seminar will be held in Ireland in June 2018 (Britain, Ireland and Europe) and the 14th World Assembly will be held in Sweden/Norway in August 2021.

Swanwick Weekend 2017 (31st March – 2nd April 2017) is entitled ***Willkommen! Bienvenue! Welcome!*** Bishop Rosemarie Wenner from the Methodist Church in Germany will be the keynote speaker. She will give an account on how Germany is dealing with the refugee crisis. Bookings opened on 1st November.

Epworth Exhibition of memorabilia on the evolution of Network work to MWiB was launched in May this year, but needed ongoing attention. PowerPoint and leaders' notes will be available for use for District meetings and leaflets have been reprinted in larger print. Sarah Braisdell, who was instrumental in putting the exhibition together, will be running a workshop at the Swanwick conference, next year.

Dalit Solidarity Fund Raising - including the Paul Field Concert held in Central Hall this year raised £86,353.44 up to end August 2016. The fund was to be kept open until 31st December 2016 and after that all funds were to be sent to World Mission Fund or directly to the World Church (WCR) Relationships Team.

MWiB Conference Fringe Events 2016 - was planned jointly with WC were successful, though timing for the sequence of events on the agenda was rather rushed. Conference 2017 will be held in Birmingham on **Friday 23 June 2017** - venue and agenda yet to be confirmed. Sandra Goodwin, current MWiB Vice President will be commissioned as President.

Julie Hulme Writing competition 2017 title '**Stepping Out**'. Publicity material will be available from mid-January and the closing date will be 19th April. Winners will be announced at 2017 Conference fringe event.

Visual awareness event, May 2016 – Lynne Ling reported on the event and its outcomes. A PowerPoint presentation and further information will be available by the February Spring Forum and Swanwick weekend.

Shoreline Conversations - Resources are available to be purchased. A **Creativity Day** is planned for Saturday 20th May 2017 – organised by Shoreline Conversations with the title '**Leaving the familiar**' and will be held in Liverpool city centre with morning visits to the Slavery Museum, Tate art gallery, etc as well as in-house options. There will be space during the afternoon to reflect on the morning's experiences. Publicity will be available from January 2017, (120 places available!). For further information, visit www.shorelineconversations.com

Easter Offering Service 2017 – Entitled '**Shine Like Stars**' – Forum representatives were reminded that the liturgy, written by a team from MWiB was a gift to World Mission and has continued to raise a good deal of money connexionally over the years. Order forms, leaders' notes, envelopes and order of service leaflets can be ordered from the MWiB website.

Finally, the new District MWiB chains of office, uniformly designed and previously agreed at Spring Forum and paid for by a legacy, were issued to be taken back to be presented to current District presidents.

Truth and Anything but the Truth

Gerald Barton, Editor

I try, as far as I can, to be a seeker after truth. I take the view that truth is objective and doesn't depend on whether I agree with it or not. At times it can be elusive, especially when there is little hard evidence to be had. Nonetheless, I believe we should think our way through the issues that confront us and come to the best conclusion we can, full in the knowledge that we may be mistaken and may have to change our view if and when more information becomes available. However, over the last year or so I have become all too aware of the notion of 'post-truth politics'. The term has been used in relation to the Scottish independence and EU referendum debates and, perhaps more so in relation to the US presidential campaign. Wikipedia defines 'post-truth politics' like this:

Post-truth politics (also called post-factual politics) is a political culture in which debate is framed largely by appeals to emotion disconnected from the details of policy, and by the repeated assertion of talking points to which factual rebuttals are ignored. Post-truth differs from traditional contesting and falsifying of truth by rendering it of "secondary" importance.

The first element is the appeal to emotions rather than reason. Slogans such as 'Make America Great Again', have a direct appeal, but it is often not entirely clear what they really mean. Such slogans tug at a whole host of underlying feelings, emotions and assumptions which can, of course be different from person to person. In many respects, people interpret slogans in ways that suit their preconceptions of what they think they ought to mean – they can mean different things to different people. The people putting out the slogan can thus tap into a wide range of feelings without having to explain precisely what they are really intending.

The second point is the use of 'talking points' which ignore factual rebuttals. In short, politicians say things and keep saying them irrespective of factual information that disproves their point. Donald Trump has been a proponent of the 'birther movement' which casts doubt on whether President Obama was born in the United States, despite it being demonstrably true that he was. Similarly, certain politicians in the EU referendum debate continuously repeated statements which were demonstrably incorrect or ludicrously far-fetched despite clear rebuttals. In addition, doubt or aspersions are also often cast on the motives of people and organisations presenting counter information. Typically, information was to be ignored on the basis that it came from the Westminster or, in the case of the US presidential election, Washington 'elites', or because the organisation (generally a think tank) providing counter information had received some funding from a government or EU-linked body. Disparaging opponents is a common tactic (just think of the knock-about of Prime Minister's Questions), but does not amount to reasoned argument and, if anything is an indicator of weakness since it seeks to avoid justifying the position being taken.

At this point, it is worth considering for a moment how we, as human beings deal with new information. We have a natural tendency to 'filter' information we receive. That is, we interpret new information in terms of what we already know. At one level, this is very useful as it allows us to quickly relate information to our pre-existing knowledge and thus make sense of it without too much effort. The downside, however is that we have an awful tendency either to filter out or reject information that doesn't fit, or to 'shoe-horn' it into the wrong category and thus misinterpret it. Without necessarily realising it, we are all prone to paying more attention to information that fits the way we see things and to filtering out information that might cause us to have to re-evaluate what we think. 'Post truth' plays on this natural tendency by treating factual rebuttal as irrelevant and telling us we can ignore the sources of information that run counter to the message.

In short, practitioners of post-truth politics regard 'truth' as merely whatever they want it to be, that counter arguments and information are irrelevant and to be ignored and that opponents can be safely dismissed as belonging to some disparaged organisation or group. The end result is little more than a shouting-match. This strikes me as a pretty poor and depressing basis for conducting our democracy.

In complete contrast in the midst of all this, it was an absolute delight to listen to this year's Reith Lectures given by Kwame Anthony Appiah, Professor of Philosophy and Law at New York University. Reasoned argument at last! The Reith Lectures, incidentally is a series of annual lectures broadcast on the BBC World Service and Radio Four which was inaugurated in 1948 by the BBC to mark the historic contribution made to public service broadcasting by Sir John Reith, the corporation's first director-general. Covering a wide range of topics, the lectures are given by leading figures of the day, not all of whom are philosophers or scientists – the 2013 series was given by Grayson Perry, for example. The 2016 series was titled 'Mistaken Identities: Creed, Country, Colour, Culture' and looked at how each of these four are used in shaping our identities, even though on closer inspection they may not be quite what we thought they were. I was particularly struck by the last lecture, on 'Culture' because some of Prof Appiah's conclusions seemed apposite to 'post-truth politics'.

I'm not going to try to summarise the whole lecture, but it's worth picking up a few of the strands in Prof Appiah's argument. He looked at the idea of 'Western civilization' in particular arguing that this is a relatively recent idea the genesis of which is not as clear cut as we might suppose.

It has long been considered that the basis of Western civilization and culture comes from the Greeks via the Romans. By the Middle Ages this had become a commonplace and was given the name '*translatio studii*', the 'transfer of knowledge'. Embodied in this is the notion that Greek philosophy and learning not only forms the basis of Western culture, but is intrinsic to it. In other words, in some

way it gets passed down through the generations like a 'golden nugget' and is something that is always with us, informing our thought and values.

From the 8th century AD, Christendom, as Europe was then called came under increasing pressure from Islam. In early 711 the Umayyad dynasty crossed the Strait of Gibraltar into Spain and within 7 years much of the Iberian Peninsula was under Muslim rule. The northward expansion of Muslim control was finally checked at the battle of Tours in 732 when Charles Martel, Charlemagne's grandfather defeated the forces of Al-Andalus. It was not until 1492 over 750 years later, however that Christian sovereignty was re-established throughout the Iberian Peninsula.

Starting in the 14th century, the Ottoman Empire extended itself into the Balkans and advanced further into Europe until 1529 when Suleiman the Magnificent's army was halted at the Battle of Vienna. It was not until the later part of the 19th century that the Ottoman Turks were finally pushed out of the Balkans retaining just a foothold in Europe stretching the short distance from Istanbul to Edirne near the Bulgarian border.

During much of the history of Europe from the 8th century onwards, there was conflict, not to mention the small matter of the Crusades, between Christendom and Islam, each regarding the other as 'infidels'. However, this did not stop the flow of ideas between the two. The palace library in Baghdad of the Abbasid Caliphate held Arabic translations of the works of Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras and Euclid. Furthermore, the translation of the works of Ibn Rushd, a Muslim scholar born in Cordoba in the 12th century and also known as Averroes began the European rediscovery of Aristotle. The work of the Greek philosophers had been preserved by Muslim scholars, so the basis of what is supposed to form the foundation of Western civilization actually came to us from Muslim scholars. To that extent, these works are also part of the heritage of the Muslim world. As Prof Appiah put it, the 'golden nugget' theory that Greek philosophy is uniquely passed down to the West as part of our heritage begins to fragment.

The second strand of Prof Appiah's argument is that societies change over time. The England of Chaucer 600 years ago is not England today. Pre-industrial England was changed hugely by the Industrial Revolution and perhaps even more so by the coming of the railways in the 19th century. The labels – 'European', 'English' etc get passed down, but what they refer to changes. It is a mistake, he argued to think there is something quintessentially 'English' or 'American' or 'Western' that gets passed from generation to generation. We inherit our culture from our forebears, but that culture changes over time as the circumstances facing each generation change. As time rolls on, what we share with our forebears gets less and less.

The idea of the 'West' only really began to emerge during the last decade of the 19th century and developed into how we understand it today during the 20th and in

the Cold War period in particular. The ideas which we now associate with 'Western civilization' can be summed up as individualism, democracy, liberal-mindedness, tolerance, progress and a rational scientific approach to the world. These, however are relatively recent ideas. Until the 20th century democracy was very much the exception in Europe and, laying aside the post-war communist dominance of eastern and central Europe, Spain and Portugal only achieved stable democracies in the 1970's. Similarly, I'm not sure how many immigrants from the Caribbean would have said Britain was very 'tolerant' when they arrived in the 1950's.

This is not to say that the core ideas of what we call 'Western civilization' do not have value, because they do. The point is that we are not imbued with them as some kind of natural 'heritage' merely because we were born in 'Western' countries. These are things we have to care about for them to be maintained.

People aspiring to become British citizens must sign up to a set of 'British' values – democracy, individual liberty, respect for each other, and respect for the rule of law. There is nothing particularly 'British' about these values as you would expect to find them in any liberal democracy. That said, describing these values as 'British' implies a presumption that they reflect how British people in general think and behave. However, as Prof Appiah's thesis suggests, merely being British does not automatically mean, for example we respect each other or respect the rule of law. These are values we must learn, care about and practice.

In a similar vein, not so long ago the former Prime Minister, David Cameron talked of Britain as a 'Christian' country. Christianity is certainly part of the country's history and many people would still describe themselves as 'Christian', at least on census forms. However, to be 'Christian' implies valuing and caring about Christian teachings and values and following them through into the way we think, act and behave. Whilst I'm sure most people would regard themselves as 'decent' people who try to behave well, I am by no means sure the majority of people in Britain really do care about and value what Christianity has to teach us. To that extent, I would not describe this country as 'Christian' - post-Christian, perhaps, but not Christian.

This brings me back to the question of 'post-truth politics'. It seems to me that 'post-truth' does not really care about the values that we are supposed to have at the heart of our society. Certainly, it does not care about 'truth' or about discourse which might get us nearer to 'truth'. If anything, it shows an utter disregard for 'truth' underscored by the implication of underhand motives on the part of anyone who presents counter-arguments or factual rebuttal.

In our day-to-day lives, these things may not seem tremendously important. Relax a bit and the sky does not fall in. However, as Prof Appiah argued, to maintain our values, whether as citizens of a liberal democracy or equally as Christians, we need to care about and practice them. Unless we do, 'post-truth' will gradually erode them away.

Remember in Spring 2017

Compiled by Mary Newman, Pitshanger

Some Thoughts for Spring

A Hymn of Thanksgiving

Give thanks to the Lord,
because he is good;
his love is eternal.
He alone performs great miracles;
his love is eternal.
Give thanks to the mightiest of all lords;
his love is eternal.

By his wisdom he made the heavens;
his love is eternal.
He made the sun and the moon;
his love is eternal;
the sun to rule over the day;
his love is eternal;
the moon and the stars to rule over the night;
his love is eternal.

Psalm 136 V1-9

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
1 Thessalonians 5 v18

Quotations from 'Our Daily Bread, Basics for Christian Living

Our value is not in what we do for God but in what Christ has done for us.
The Bible – eternal truth and never-fading beauty.

Faith sees things that are out of sight.

To be right with God may cause us to be in trouble with man.

The world won't go to the church, so the church must go to the world.

Some Thoughts about Truth

On TBN UK I heard the story of an American realist portrait painter called Thomas Eakins. He was not at all successful and often gave his paintings away, because no one wanted to buy them.

The great portrait painter, John Singer Sargent once went to Philadelphia and said he wanted to meet Eakins. No one could understand why; especially Eakens himself. He asked the famous artist, "You're successful and famous. Why do you want to meet me?"

The reply came; "I just paint what people want to see. You paint what is true."

Gary Wilson, US Evangelist

Mother Teresa (1910-1997)

"By blood, I am Albanian.

By citizenship, an Indian.

By faith I am a Catholic nun.

As to my calling, I belong to the world.

As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus."

Mother Teresa was canonized in Rome on September 4th 2016 after a life of service among the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta.

I quote from a R.C. magazine 'Africa'; "Mother Teresa was known throughout her life for her profound spirituality based on her deep love for God. She saw it as her life's mission to bring God's love to all of humanity, but especially to those who were the least advantaged."

Truly, a life well lived.

Loving Hands

Just before Christmas Bob and I had a visit from our lovely friend Mavis Daniels, over from Columbia Tennessee. Mavis is of Pakistani origin, daughter of a Methodist minister (who came as a missionary, first to Bradford, then King's Hall, Southall. She is now an American citizen.

I thought you might like to hear a bit about the church she attends, the 1st United Methodist Church in Columbia, which has a women's group that meets once a week, from 3.00pm to .5.00pm each Wednesday. Loving hands make shawls, quilts, blankets, hats and gloves. All these items are blessed in church and given to people who are sick in their own homes, hospitals and nursing homes.

Another group in the church meets when someone from the community has died, to provide food after the funeral. The same group packs 10 tons of rice and 10 tons of beans in bags to send to 3rd World Countries.

They have a People's Table where 10 or 11 churches combine Friday lunch times and Tuesday evenings to provide a free meals for 110 – 140 people.

There is an 'Angel Tree' where people can come and choose clothes they need donated by church members.

It struck me that with so much going on at Mavis' church, no one needs to be bored or lonely.

'He's Always a Step Ahead'

On 13th January in 'Word for Today' I read how Wilda Lahmann's husband, Randy, woke up in the night having violent pains in his chest and unable to breathe. Wilda knew there wasn't time to wait for an ambulance, so she got him into the car, where he slumped against the door. His wife prayed, "Please send help Lord" as they set off to drive the 15 miles to hospital.

Just one mile down the road she couldn't believe her eyes when she saw an ambulance with a paramedic standing beside it. They were responding to an accident at the intersection. Randy was treated at the spot for a massive heart attack and was unconscious in hospital for 3 days, before he began to recover.

This story made me think of my own little miracle, much less dramatic than Randy's though. In 2007, I was crossing a side road in Hanwell to get back into my car after visiting a family with a disabled child. In the middle of the road was a green recycling box. I bent down to lift it out of the way but it was dirty, so I gave it a kick, to move it to the edge of the road. What happened next was completely unexpected. I found myself lying in the road, unable to move and with an agonising pain in my left leg. I lifted my head and realised I could be run over if a car came around the corner at speed.

Seconds later an ambulance stopped, just a few yards from where I was lying. It was a non-emergency ambulance, taking a patient home from hospital. The driver contacted the emergency services and I was taken to Ealing Hospital, where I remained for 10 days; having broken two bones in my leg.

The verse chosen for 13th January in 'Word for Today' was:

Before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.

Isaiah 65 v 24

The Message of Easter

I will live again, and you will too.

John 14 v 19

A Prayer for Spring

Heavenly Father, as we wake up each morning this Spring may we offer thanks and our service to you.

We thank you for the beauty of creation and for the signs of new life we see all around us.

We pray for those who are in special need; for the sick, for carers, for those who are bereaved and for all who have worries over their financial situation or other concerns for which they can see no solution.

We pray for all who work for the NHS in these difficult times. We expect many changes this year, which will affect the UK and the USA in particular and we pray for the leaders and governments of both countries, that wise decisions will be made; that world peace will become one step nearer and there will be a fairer distribution of the world's resources.

Amen

Readings for Spring

Psalm 136 – God's eternal love

Hebrews 10 vv 23-25 – Concern for one another



This Lent, challenge yourself to change the world!

All Together for Justice is a 6 week (40 day) resource of reflections, activities and prayers produced by **All We Can**. You can follow it daily as an individual or use it weekly as a small group.

There are also other materials including films, prayers and a talk available from All We Can - if you are interested contact Alan Smith (*AWC Circuit Co-ordinator - 020 8840 4803*) who will arrange to get them for you. The resource takes inspiration from John Wesley's words:

***“Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.”***

These words are a strong call to action and take seriously our ability to change the world together.

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Circuit Directory Update

Forthcoming Events around the Circuit

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

March

- 1st Wed 10.30 **Ash Wednesday Service at Greenford**
- 4th Sat 10.30 **Ealing Animal Welfare Bazaar at Hanwell**
16.00 Admission free
- 5th Sun 16.00 **Iris Axon Concert Series at Acton Hill**
The Kingsway Trio
(£6.00, £5.00 concessions, £2.00 children)
- 5th Sun 18.00 **Circuit Lent Course begins at Kingsdown**
- 7th Tues 19.30 **Circuit Lent Course begins at Greenford**
- 9th Thurs 10.00 **Circuit Lent Course begins at Pitshanger**
See p4 for full details
- 11th Sat 10.30 **Kingsdown Book Fair**
12.30 *in aid of Hope for Southall Street Homeless*

April

- 2nd Sun 16.00 **Iris Axon Concert Series at Acton Hill**
Richard Boothby – solo viola da gamba
- 10th – 17th **Holy Week** - *for services around the Circuit see p12.*

May

- 6th Sat tba **Kingsdown: Concert by Heinz Chapel Choir from the University of Pittsburgh**
- 7th Sun 16.00 **Iris Axon Concert Series at Acton Hill**
Yura Zaiki – piano
- 13th Sat 10.30 **Kingsdown Book Fair**
12.30 *in aid of Christian Aid*
- 14th – 20th **Christian Aid Week**
- 23rd Tues 19.30 **Circuit Policy Group at Kingsdown**

Articles for 'In-touch' Issue No 80 (June - August) 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: 29th April 2017