



Letter from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

I can still picture the scene in my mind's eye. I was in my first year of training to be a minister. I was having significant back problems and was preaching that Sunday morning in a church in the Warrington Circuit. I knew it was not a very good sermon, but it was the best I had managed to write in the circumstances of essays, placements etc. To cap it all my tutor turned up to assess my service! GREAT!!!

Two days later the inevitable feedback came. I recall one sentence in particular. "Well Janet, that wasn't a good service, but you got away with it, as you are a good communicator!" Back handed compliment or what?!

Now do not get me wrong, I am certainly not saying communication trumps content, but it is worthwhile considering, that even if you have the most amazing information, the most astounding content, if it is not communicated well...

Our eldest son works in communication and is often heard saying "It's all down to coms mam, its all down to coms!"

What enables a Circuit to work well as a Circuit, is good communication, something which can always be improved. This is why you may have noticed in the last Newsletter there was a summary of the Circuit Meeting. At the Circuit Meeting we usually have a report from the September synod, and hopefully there has also been circulated the Highlights of this years Methodist Conference. This sharing of information is important, for, if you do not know what is going on, how can you be involved, make a difference, share in the good things that are happening across the Circuit, attend an event that really piques your interest....

Of course, it is not only sharing the content but doing it well. Not everyone is computer literate or has a mobile phone where they know how to access the internet on or are able too. Paper notices, even monthly ones, are still worth doing even if in limited copies.

In addition to content and communication, is remembering! "I'd like to go to that. I'll put it in my diary, write it on the calendar, put a reminder on my phone..." Recall also, varies for people. Trevor remembers quotes, facts, words, I often say he is my walking concordance – thank you Trevor, but I work in pictures, so, if I have driven somewhere, once or twice, I can often recall the route.

In short, as a Circuit, in order to function even more efficiently as a Circuit, we need to communicate all that wonderful content well. For so many of our churches are doing amazing things. Please can churches therefore let Margaret Hall [Circuit Admin] know well in advance of particular events happening in your church so others can at the very least pray for that event. Send the months ahead events to Margaret so she can compile a "Month around the Circuit" information sheet, info on the website, Facebook posting... This may hopefully result in you bumping into someone from around the Circuit, saying "I didn't get to... but how did it go, or that Strawberry tea at your church was wonderful, I am so pleased I was able to go to ..." each affirming our connectedness with one another, and reinforcing the mission of us all to share the love of Jesus wherever we are placed.

May we all try our best to work together as a Circuit, for the glory of God and God's the Kingdom, sharing God's Good News, our news, with all.

Best wishes,

Rev Janet Capstick



PEN PORTRAIT FROM REVD. DR STEPHEN LINDRIDGE



What a difference a year makes! After 30 years in ministry, it felt like I'd served something more like 50! I was ready to retire. However, by God's grace the space gifted me by the Methodist Church of this past year, has renewed my heart and head. It has given me fresh energy and restored my love for people. So I am delighted to be joining the South West Tyneside Circuit at SRMC, the church on two sites, Chopwell and Rowlands Gill.

As a pen portrait, that's a little of where I've come from and where I am now. So to a little of who am I. I was born in London, and my first brief home was in the grounds of Chester House, the Methodist Association of Youth Clubs Centre in Muswell Hill, where both my parents worked. We moved to Hull within months of my birth and for the next 22 years I developed a soft Yorkshire accent.

Elaine and I met at Cliff Bridal, sorry Bible College, and offered as a candidate for ministry in my 2nd year at Cliff. Before going to train in Durham, for ministry, Elaine and I got married in Birtley in 1991. Ironically three years later we were stationed just over 1 mile from Birtley, to serve Wrekenton, Springwell and Eighton Banks. During those next fifteen years we saw the beautiful additions of Ruth and Samuel, and the building of the Angel of the North. Ruth as a toddler always referred to it as "Daddy's Angel" because I and it were so big, in her eyes.

Having job shared for eight of these years while the children were little, Elaine and I then went full-time when I started to serve the District as Evangelism Enabler. This was a fantastic role, encouraging ordinary folk to find confidence in sharing who and what they were in Jesus with those around them in their neighbourhoods. These were the years when we realised the church was in significant decline and woke up to the fact that, things could not be business as usual. It was a time of lots of new initiatives, projects and prayer.

These new insights of meeting people who didn't come to church out where they were, became known as the national and international initiative of fresh expressions. I became the Archbishops and Connexional Missioner in 2009 and travelled all over the British Isles and internationally encouraging people from all walks of life to consider how they might, think and practice forming church in new ways that would connect with people who might never attend church as they traditionally had. We saw the number of initiatives multiply exponentially and from independent research it was deemed the most successful evangelist exercise the denominations had invested in. Out of every five people in a fresh expression the research showed two people had had no previous church background and were on the journey in finding faith in Jesus.

In 2014 the whisper of the Holy Spirit stirred me again as Red Leo Osborn announced he was stepping down as Chair of District. It had been yet again a great Synod and I found myself uttering under my breath what a privilege it would be to serve such a great bunch of people. So reluctantly but faithfully I let my name go forward.

The role of Chair of District is relentless, but I recognized in the first few weeks of that role, God's call and equipping. There are many things I encountered in serving the Connexion and District that were deeply wonderful and life giving. It was a huge privilege to be part of that. However, there were parts that I hope others never experience. So, after nine years it was time to rest and refocus, and to hand on the baton.

Within weeks of relinquishing the role, friends and family said they could see a real difference in me. Now my sense of joy in the world is bright, life is full and rich. God's love and peace are brimming. I have loved doing the simple things of life which previously were nonexistent or a bind. Fixing things round the house, clearing out unwanted stuff.

My most significant blessing has been able to be present for family in times of need. This last year has been tough with all our parents suffering significant health issues, often at the same time. Most prominently, in the death my mother-in-law Irene, which has understandably changed our family dynamic and to which we are still adjusting.

The rhythms of the Camino, (a walk to Santiago de Compostela, The Way of St James), which I did in October last year, have stayed with me. You get up, you walk, you eat, you meet people on The Way, you talk, you sleep, and repeat. This is for me a rich blessing and one I'm still practicing.

Revd Dr Stephen Lindridge

BOUNCY CHURCH AT FELLSIDE

Bouncy Church has been going 2 years and the last three months before the summer break saw 60 + people. Last year we had to get a second castle to cater for younger children. This year we are developing a sensory area at the back of church to cater for the children with special needs.

The format is the same each month, lots of bouncing, a 20-minute section where we share a bible story with an explanation how it relates today, a prayer time and then more bouncing. Crafts are available and linked to the theme along with Lego and activities for younger children. Food is served throughout. Please pray for all involved including the 19 families that we have contact with.

HARVEST AT FELLSIDE

This year we have engaged with the community and those who use our building, with a week's focus on Gateshead Foodbank.

This started with Bouncy Church on the 4th October and finished with the evening service on the 12th October. On the 5th October we invited people to our family service followed by a lunch. During the week we encouraged all people that attend mid-week groups to donate to the bank, along with invitations to all the events. Saturday 11th October at 4 we had an old school assembly praise followed by afternoon tea.



News from the Circuit meeting

- Rev Dave Charter stepped into the breach Charing meeting at last minute.
- Financial status was reported.
- Stewards to care for each manse were confirmed, although we are still looking for a **Circuit Property Steward**
- Lyn Cookson appointed as new Quinquennial Secretary.
- Sunnyside sale is ongoing and Hollyholme manse is sold STC
- Grant applications for Dreaming Dreams [Pastoral Support Worker (Third Age Ministry) and Mission and Growth Enabler both part time], to be sent to District Policy Committee
- Grant application for continuing Youth and Community Work at SRMC also to be sent to District Policy Committee.
- Connexional [printed] and Synod reports shared.
- Stationing Profile updated
- Reports from Worship Leaders & Local Preachers, Safeguarding, Property and Circuit Stewards shared
- Sabbaticals of Rev Janet & Rev Dave were noted.
- Meeting closed in prayer with thanks to all who attended

Bereavement Notice – Rev Gerald Beatty

We have received notification from Amy Beatty of the death of her beloved husband, Rev Gerald Beatty, who died in late July in Northern Ireland. Rev Beatty was a much respected minister within our Circuit. A card has been sent to Amy and her family on behalf of the Circuit, conveying our heartfelt condolences and prayers at this time of deep loss.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

AUTUMN – We start the Methodist year with news from the Circuit Meeting, and much more!!

WINTER - Out late Nov so all Christmas events can be shared so we can support one another across the circuit – get your Christmas dates in soon! This may be a shorter Newsletter, but one well worth giving to neighbours, inviting them along to a Christmas event. Most people come to faith through a personal invitation to church, worship a special event. Christmas is the perfect opportunity for “Each one to Reach One.”. Start praying now and ask God to guide you as to who you will invite.

SPRING – After the Circuit meeting in March so the decisions are shared and owned by each church and member.

SUMMER – After the June circuit meeting so the news of the missional focus within the circuit can inspire others.

PLEASE share your church's news so we can continue to celebrate all the amazing activities across the Circuit and continue to love one another and pray for one another, as a one another Circuit.

SYNOD REPORT 13TH SEPTEMBER 2025 WESTERHOPE METHODIST CHURCH

Synod began promptly at 10 am with worship and the communion service. Rev Stuart Earle led the service, and drawing on his knowledge let us know that the meaning of the word Synod was in fact Shared Journey. Rev Jona Sewell spoke about, our connections, Structural, through church, circuit, districts, regions and on to the Connexion that we know. But also, about our connectedness in God, how, like the body we are connected in Romans and Corinthians but that the connections we have are with God and with love.

Following a short break, we moved into the business of Synod and a view of the District Mission plan (see right).

In the first sheet of rows and columns it demonstrates what the methodist church is called to be. You can see that the first row outlines the growing inclusive evangelistic and justice seeking church. The last row is indicative of some of the things that the district staff team and officers are able to offer and resource.

The plan going forward is that there should be annual conversations with circuits and their CLT to support the churches and groups.

The second sheet is offered as an opportunity to identify what you see happening in your churches and circuit, what you see as ways forward and through discussion how you can further develop with the support of your circuit. Then, in order to fulfil the connections, we have the discussions with the district team can be fruitful.

Questions were invited by Jona and more people than I have ever seen came forward with questions and comments. This led into the Shieldfield Project and involved a conversation between Rev. Elaine Lindridge, Josh Simpson and Adam Wilkinson demonstrating their roles and their connections with Students and people in the local community. A ball of wool was passed around to many people and ended up looking like a giant Cat's Cradle, it modelled the connectivity of many of the people at Synod with the project, even though they might not have already thought of it. Following this, we heard from Fiona Dowson, from MHA, she talked to us about work with the elderly and referred to the new prayer handbook, Our story, Our song. Fiona talked about the importance of story and how we need to tell stories and give opportunities to allow others to tell theirs.

Synod broke for lunch and was followed by video from conference. The conference took place in Telford and as well as the induction of the President and Vice President, there were for me several familiar faces, not least Deacon Natalie Clark who you will know, who was ordained this year.

Much of the rest of the afternoon involved matters from conference:

A budget deficit, The re-invitation of the Rev Jonathan Hustler, Word from MHA addressing the increase in the care they provide and its improvement to reach pre pandemic levels, An encouraging word to think about MHA Sunday, A revision of the Methodist Worship book both digital and printed to make it more inclusive, the intention to have this work completed by 2030, A discussion on Support for Military Chaplains, Discussion on Healing Ministry, Praying and Prayed for, better resources to improve inclusivity, Stationing review which was received and referred for further work, Hope in Gods future, a discussion concerning Theology and Science, Justice priorities in particular Refugees and Asylum seekers. How would this look in your church, Israel and Palestine, Election of Reps to Conference was agreed, Vacancies and newly filled roles, Succession planning, Stuart Earle reinvitation for a further three years.

Reports that Chester le Street and East Durham will merge and become Hope Circuit, PFE report and a new district Treasurer, EPC ratings on Manses which need to be C or above, Apologies from Cathy Bevan video Our church's future story, Mother House report, Recovery Church development where deacon Tracey Hume spoke and an appeal for individuals to help support financially.

Lyn Cookson

DISTRICT MISSION PLAN

As a District our goal is to encourage, enable, resource and support Circuits to be growing, inclusive, evangelistic and justice seeking.

The Methodist Church is called to be ¹	Growing	Inclusive	Evangelistic	Justice Seeking
The District Leadership Team believe that this means, among other things, that we are all called to -	Deepen our spiritual understanding Broaden our experience Extend our learning Grow numerically	Love everybody Develop safe spaces Celebrate differences Remove barriers	Be focused on people not projects Journey together Help all to know that they are loved by God	Transform communities Empower Challenge injustice
Methodist Way of Life practices that underpin this approach ²	Pray Worship Learn	Care Serve Open	Tell Live Share	Challenge Flourish Notice
The District's role is to help Circuits fulfil this calling. This support includes the provision of -	Spaces to learn Methodist Way of Life (MWOL)	Unconscious Bias and EDI training	The Mother House God For All Strategy	Eco Church Network Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity
The District staff team and office holders to support and signpost, some finance through grants, advice and listening, governance support, safeguarding support, the Learning Network and signposting to Connexional resources.				
We aim to accompany Circuits in their mission planning through annual conversations with Circuit Leadership Teams. It is the responsibility of the Circuit to enable churches and individuals to make this happen.				