



Letter from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

I have never been very good at mathematics, as my congregations will testify – with hymn numbers often read out incorrectly- and my maths teacher would concur – as she tutted seeing me use my fingers to add up in my CSE exam!

I do however like a Venn diagram, seeing how differing things interconnect and relate. There are however two mathematical symbols that really speak of the Christian faith. The first is “plus” +, the second “more than” >.

I have been heard saying to some that there are those who think that being a Christian is a big negative – “You cannot do, you must not do...” but I suggest that being a Christian is having a great big + in your life, for you have Jesus as your friend every day, to shout at, moan to, rejoice with... The Christian life is life with a +.

The Christian life is always > “more than” we can ever imagine. No one is ever “just” Peter, Sarah, they and we are God’s beloved children through whom God can do *immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us*, **Ephesians 3:20**

This means that with God at work, each congregation, each group is far more than we imagine, having an impact far greater than we can conceive. It is more than a craft club, more than a Monday Market, more than a prayer meeting, more than a church, more than a group of people...

We are a “more than circuit”, as are all the rest, with God, that great big plus, equipping and guiding us, working through and at times in spite of us, so that many more come to know life with Jesus, the biggest plus of life.

Mathematical or otherwise, may we give thanks and continue to serve the one who does *immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us*. **Ephesians 3:20**

God Bless you all

Rev Janet Capstick

PS I would like to simply say it has been my honour and privilege to serve in the SW Tyneside Circuit over these past 10 years. Thank you for the generous care, love and support you have given, and the passion to do your best for God. You are an inspiration. May God continue to richly bless and guide you in all the years ahead. With more thanks than I can express

Janet & Trevor



Summer Prayer

Heavenly Father,
As we embrace the warmth and light of this summer season, we thank You for the beauty of creation and the joy of sunny days. Please guide us in using this time for rest. Protect us in our travels and activities, and let this summer be a season of renewal and deep joy in Your presence.



Margaret Hall
DBS Verifier

I have been registered to act as a Document Checker on behalf of the South West Tyneside Circuit

If anyone needs a DBS new or updated please contact me either by email admin@swtyneside.org.uk or Mobile - 07485645892 and I will arrange an appointment to meet you at the Circuit Office in SRMC - Rowlands Gill

Rev Jona Sewell, Chair of the District welcomed everyone to Synod and explained that during Synod we would be trying to see 'The Big Picture'. To that end two visiting speakers had been invited to share their experiences with us - Carolyn Godfrey, former Vice-President of Conference and Liddy Buswell, who had been part of the Methodist Peace Pilgrimage to South Korea. Jona also informed Synod that at each of our next four Synods we will be looking in more detail at the Church's commitment to be growing, inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking.

Synod Business

Circuit Merger

It was agreed, subject to Conference approval, that the East Durham and Chester-le-Street Circuits be merged with effect from September 2026. The new name will be the Hope Circuit. Thanks were expressed to all those who had been involved in the process over the last couple of years.

Finance Matters

The recently appointed District Finance Officer, Linda Smith, was introduced to Synod. The District Policy Committee proposed that Linda also be appointed as District Treasurer and this was agreed. A new model of allocating grants from the District Advance Fund for district roles was agreed. This will be a rolling-funding model which is a more prudent and strategic approach. The roles will be kept under review and there is still a significant sum of grant money available for Circuits and churches.

Review of Assistant Chair Role

It was agreed, on the recommendation of the District Policy Committee, that the role of Assistant Chair should continue. Jona spoke about the benefit of sharing the load and the aim of trying to model good practice, aiming at 12 sessions each week. He consistently does slightly more than this, however he acknowledged that those in Circuits are often working far more than that. Supportive comments from the floor included the additional sense of security that having joint leadership gives.

JON CANESSA - Recovery Church Facilitator

As part of Synod we occasionally conduct an interview with someone who has received a district grant. Rev Elaine Lindridge interviewed Jon who told Synod about the men's group that has been formed as part of the provision of Recovery Church. He explained why this was needed and how valuable a space it is for those struggling with addiction and trauma. There is something about speaking it out honestly and God meets us there. He also wondered how the local church could help men in these contexts. Many are lost and lonely with no sense of purpose and they need brave spaces, trust, honesty and courage in order to work through it.



The Church in a Blanket

Carolyn Godfrey shared reflections from her year as Vice-President including thoughts on the places she had visited and the people she had met. These were ordinary people doing everyday things for God. We were asked – "What is the ordinary thing that you can offer to God this week?" Carolyn had also brought with her a blanket which was made up of a number of separately crocheted squares. Those who had contributed had the same pattern, the same yarn and the same size crochet hook but, everyone crocheted with a different tension, so the squares were uneven. However, once they were sewn together it all seemed to work. Similarly, the Body of Christ thrives when each brings their own gifts. No contribution is wasted, each of us has a part to play. We were created for connection and together we can create something beautiful.

Connexional Day of Outreach – August 2026

Cameron Lee-Hume, a Project Officer with the Evangelism and Growth Team, explained the idea of having a day each year dedicated to outreach and faith-sharing. The hope would be to introduce a rhythm of outreach in the local church. Collective experiences are less common in the world today, so an event that has cross-generational and societal appeal might be welcomed. The last total solar eclipse in the UK was on 11th August 1999 and the next one won't be until September 2090. However, on 12th August 2026 a partial eclipse should be visible from the UK, with about 90% of the Sun covered. The suggestion is to hold a community viewing event where churches can meet members of their community and practise sharing their faith. The spectacle is already provided and just chatting to someone side-by-side is perhaps easier than face-to-face evangelism. Guidance will be published on the connexional website over the coming weeks and there is an 'expression of interest' form on the website which will ensure access to the resources as they are published.

Pilgrimage of Peace to South Korea

Liddy explained that last year she had been selected to be part of this programme. The team was made up of one third Koreans, one third Americans and one third from several other countries. The experience had been very challenging, but also beautiful and had profoundly shaped her faith. Liddy posed the following questions: How do we condemn war without glorifying it? How do we shed light on darkness, on things that our institutions cover up? How do we avoid 'othering' people who are different from us? How do we navigate our own privilege in discussions, particularly around peace? We were also urged to pray for peace in the peninsula, be careful about how we refer to North Korea and to be aware of how war is discussed, particularly around Remembrance services. Could we perhaps consider commemorating peace?



Dunston Hill Methodist Church Closure Weekend



Unfortunately we had to make the sad decision to close Dunston Hill Methodist Church. We decided to make the closing event a weekend of celebration and thanksgiving for the life and ministry of the church.

On Saturday 16th May we had an afternoon tea for members and friends of the congregation. Invitations were sent, a caterer booked, the tables set and decorated and a display of photographs of past events (jubilee celebrations, Christmas tree festivals etc,) was set out.

There was lots of chatter and reminiscing, and we surprised Brigitta with a belated birthday cake and flowers.

On Sunday 17th May at the final service the church was "bouncing". Invitations had been sent to all the churches in the circuit and to former ministers and we were delighted by the support and by the number of people who came – to the extent that we had to bring more seats into the church!

Members of the congregation took part in the service – the oldest and youngest members each choosing a hymn and telling us why they chose it.

Rev Janet Capstick preached a wonderful sermon about Ananias.

It was wonderful to hear the organ being played for the last time and the singing was magnificent. We had two cakes, one to celebrating the past and the other looking to the future in faith.

It was an amazing weekend – sad in many ways, but a fitting send off for the church.

The icing on the cake was that the offering raised £820 for the "Daft as a Brush Cancer Charity".

Members of Dunston Hill



Whitehall Road Methodist Church - Methodist Tapestries Exhibition 24th & 25th April

We would like to thank everyone who visited the exhibition. The people from Weardale Museum, who are custodians of the Tapestries, were very grateful for the warm welcome and attendance; approximately 170 people attended the event. The Tapestries are well worth seeing. More details about the Tapestries can be found on the Methodist Tapestries Project website.

Here are some photographs of the event and artwork from children at our church.

Christine and Michael Hedley



THANK YOU

Dear kind and extremely generous friends,

A huge thank you for all the many gifts and well wishes Trevor and I have had over the last few weeks as we both endeavour to "sit down"/retire properly.

Cards, flowers, chocolates etc are very much present in the home [the latter at a rapidly decreasing rate!] and, your generous gifts of money, which will go towards our new home purchases.

As previously stated, it has been an honour and privilege to work with and serve you all. Thank you.

May God continue to bless you all in your ongoing ministry and witness to God's love for all. Rev Joseph is coming to a wonderful Circuit!

Every blessing
Janet & Trevor!



Digest of Circuit Meeting held 11th June 26 at Spoor Memorial, Whickham.

The weekly Zoom meeting to pray for the circuit has now ceased. Thanks, expressed to those who have supported it regularly.

Finance report – Peter (Treasurer) referred to report circulated in advance of meeting, and drew attention to: the expenditure on replacement kitchen for Brigitta's manse, which appears to distort the figures, had been previously planned; mileage allowance (ministers and employees) has increased from 45p to 55p, reminded meeting that reserves will run out if we continue to spend them. Trustees Annual Report and Accounts for year ended 31st August 2025, filed with Charity Commission, were approved.

Property report

Blaydon – scheme to develop housing units has been shelved as no one to take a lead

Dunston Hill – to go on market soon (asking price around £295,000)

Centenary – seeking circuit approval to replace roof, to include insulation. Cost c.£45,000. Seeking external grants. Proposed – Trevor Peart, seconded John Blundred Approved on show of hands. CLT to consider financial support from circuit funds

Spoor – now have quotes totalling c.£55,000 to improve accessibility. Now investigating grant applications CLT to consider financial support from circuit funds.

Kitchen updates to manses – kitchen replacement now underway at Ancaster Road (Brigitta's home), and stewards are hoping to progress Mountside Gardens work (Dave)

Ministry

Stationing update – in hand. Welcome service for Rev Joseph and his family to be held on 6th September at 4.00pm at Whitehall Road.

Dreaming Dreams - District have granted the project £165,000 over 5 years, so William now working on job description(s) that will be flexible to adapt to the strengths of individuals and will span work with all ages.

SRMC Youth Romania visit – planned for October 2026, for 14 young people (and 4 leaders). District has agreed grant of £7,000, subject to trip having approval of circuit meeting.

Circuit youth worker – Sam Cree will be leaving in 2027, so need to explore future plans, including links with Dreaming Dreams and possibility of splitting her role

Circuit Stewards report (Lyn Cookson) Thanks to William and the team working on Dreaming Dreams. Welcome to Seb Bees as circuit steward, and Brigitta as she approaches taking over as superintendent. Thanks and best wishes for Janet – and Trevor – on Janet's retirement. Reminder that there will be tea after the welcome service for Rev Joseph.

Safeguarding report – accepted as circulated in absence of Mary Imlah.

Worship leaders & local preachers report – now 6 Worship Leaders in training, some of whom will be willing to lead worship elsewhere in the circuit. Noted Josh Simpson leaving circuit to begin part-time presbyteral training. Agreed to send card from the meeting. The meeting was asked to hold Josh and his fiancée, Sophie, in prayer as they will be marrying at Sophie's family home near Belfast.

Mission Janet reminded us that this should be the main focus of the June meeting and invited reports from around the circuit on activities that are "More than" what is apparent from their name:

More than... a women's meeting – Liz Peart, Centenary talked about their Bible Study, Prayer and Ladies Groups.

Through social interaction and shared experiences, friendships have grown and led to spiritual growth, with deepening understanding of God's word, strengthening the church family and enabling all to live out Christ's love in practical ways

More than... a bouncy castle – Fellside Bouncy Church – now has 18 regular families who come to have fun, hear the gospel, join prayers and songs – and enjoy food together. It is particularly valuable for neuro-divergent children and their parents and carers, where activities are tailored to their individual needs, with a sensory area and a quieter environment for those who need it. A place where supportive relationships develop and a safe place to ask questions about faith through conversations

More than... a market - Rowlands Gill Community Hub. This began as an outlet for rescued food from supermarkets, but has grown to include a café, Citizens Advice provision, with a social prescriber, and has developed its own sense of community. People come for different reasons – some with a passion to prevent food waste, some who are in desperate financial situations, some who come just for the social aspects, but a number of those who come have joined the volunteer teams, and others are now part of the worshipping church

More than... a Warm Space – Ryton This began after the pandemic, when the council introduced grants in an effort to reduce isolation (and also to help with expense of heating homes) It began as a coffee morning, but the team soon realised that there was a need for more, so the team of 7 volunteers (including some from the C of E church) provides a weekly hot lunch and dessert. Around 30 attends regularly. They have also run a children's holiday club in the summer and will continue this year (even though council funding has been cut). The group not only benefits those who come as guests, but the volunteers have established friendships and developed personally too

TRY PRAYING – Ryton There is an annual Good Friday walk in Ryton. This year, they were pleased to be able to distribute the Try Praying booklets to those they met on the walk. They have also been given to those attending their Warm Space

More than ...a paper exercise – District Mission Policy – churches will soon be asked to look at how what they are doing fits in with the District and connexional aims to be Evangelistic, Inclusive, Justice-seeking, and Growing. They will be asked to record this and report back to CLT

Annual appointment of circuit officers – Agreed reappointment of all those listed in the current Circuit Directory (plus any appointed by the Circuit Meeting since that was prepared).