



THE METHODIST CHURCH
LEICESTER NORTH CIRCUIT

Connexions

December 2016

An update on the future of the Leicester North Circuit

Both the September Circuit meetings in our Leicester North Circuit and the Leicester Trinity Circuit Meeting voted to merge. This is what we now know:

- Subject to confirmation by District Synod and Conference we will become a single Circuit with 19 Churches from 1st September 2017
- The new circuit will be called Leicester Trinity
- The Circuit Leadership Teams are working together in the Stationing process to find a new Superintendent for the new Circuit. This minister will have pastoral charge of the Church of the Nativity and of Christchurch Clarendon Park (south side of the city).
- The Leicester Trinity are also looking for a minister to look after 4 village churches to the South West.
- The details are being worked out by the Circuit Leadership teams with minimising disruption as a key principle. To help with that we are encouraging all office holders to stay in post and work with their counterparts to ease the transition.
- No changes to the number of ministers, the Churches they serve and where they live are planned.

[LAST MINUTE UPDATE] We have been matched with a potential superintendent who will visit on Saturday 12th November

for literacy, improved working and living conditions, the relating of faith and Bible teaching to everyday life, they were a threat to the prevailing class structure and many suffered greatly as a consequence. In the peaceful graveyard are well known names such as Hugh Bourne, but also many unknown saints. A poignant memorial in the garden is in memory of working children and their often short, harsh lives. The Georgian Chapel built in 1828 retains its original box pews and the Museum is full of exhibits, research possibilities; the whole site providing creative learning programme for schools. Must not forget the tearoom and the shop! Both Bethesda and Englesea Brook are well worth a visit – how about a Circuit day out?

Birstall and Wanlip Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

In January 2016 we did something different for the Week of Prayer. Through CTBW we organised frugal lunches at each of our churches. Alongside the simple meal we shared in prayer and reflection on hunger around the world and our unity in the Gospels. People were also asked if they would like to make a donation

In 2017 the Week runs from 18 – 25 January. The 2016 arrangements went very well, but we felt that too much pressure had been put on church volunteers. So in 2017 the events will be held at only two churches. The venues and dates for the lunches will be: Saturday 21 January at Birstall Methodist Church and Monday 23 January at St Theresa's Church, both starting at 12.45.

The Week's theme is "Crossing Barriers" and has been prepared by churches in Germany, based around 2 Corinthians 5:14-20. The recent mass movement of refugees and asylum seekers has brought different Christian traditions to that country and changed the balance between established Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. Barriers have now grown up which need to be 'crossed'. The fall of the Berlin Wall symbolises the hope that, with the love of God, nothing is impossible. (Pete Molesdale)

Welcome Service – Birstall 30th August 2016 - Andy Biggins

We had a Circuit Welcome service at Birstall at 7pm on Tuesday evening to welcome Rev Paula Hunt as Minister at Birstall and Rothley, and to welcome Rev Dave Warnock as the Circuit's new Superintendent Minister.

Birstall church was full for the occasion, with people from all the circuit churches, neighbouring churches of other denominations, churches in Leicester West Circuit, where Rev Paula Hunt has been for the last three years, plus the Mayor of Charnwood with his wife, and the leader of Birstall parish council (Ann Marshall) with her husband. Richard Tinley introduced the service, as one of the Circuit Stewards, and then Reverend Dave Warnock led the opening section. We had a mix of hymns led by the organ and the worship group. There were three readings, read by representatives from Rothley Methodist church, the Local Preachers and Worship Leaders and Birstall Methodist church. The thought-provoking address was given by Rev'd Peter Hancock, Chair of the Northampton District.

Rev Hancock then led the welcome/recognition for Paula and Dave. Civic representatives, and our ecumenical church partners, were then invited to say some words of welcome to Reverend Paula Hunt. All expressed that they were looking forward to working with Paula. She then had a chance to respond. She had been warned she has some 'big shoes' to fill, and will do her best to cope with her size 3's. Paula invited her partner, Cathy, to join her at the front, acknowledging Cathy keeps her sane, or at least on the same level of sanity.

For a busy service, it came as a surprise to many to find that the service had lasted about an hour and a half, somewhat longer than we are used to. Everyone was then invited to the Concert Hall for tea or coffee, and a chance to talk to Paula and either congratulate or commiserate with Dave on becoming superintendent.

We were invited to share The Peace with each other. Having each received a small bread roll, neatly wrapped, as the Offering was taken up, we then gave the bread to the person with whom we were sharing.

Our Methodist Heritage - Dorothy Hutchinson

One of the insights gained since I became a Conference representative, has been to appreciate more the roots and story of Methodism. When the chance came to join a coach trip to Bethesda Methodist Chapel and then onto Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum, I was keen to go. Bethesda is situated in the heart of the Potteries, Stoke on Trent and is said to be one of the most important Methodist New Connexion chapels in the country. Methodism's history is sadly not without stories of dissent and in 1798 a breakaway movement from the Wesley Methodist Movement called itself the New Connexion. In its heyday when the Potteries industry was booming, Bethesda could seat 2500 people and is still a very striking building inside and out though not in use for regular worship. It gained much publicity as one of the buildings in contention for the BBC's Restoration programme in 2004. It's now in the care of the Historic Chapels Trust which can take into its care buildings of all denominations and faiths (except Anglican churches) which are deemed to have outstanding architectural and historic qualities. The Friends of Bethesda are the day to day custodians of the chapel with their goal to restore the building for new community uses. The Friends host Open Days and welcomes groups for guided tours. Don't expect a pristine interior – restoration is ongoing as and when funds permit. Very different was Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum, a Methodist Heritage Site, which tells the story of Primitive Methodism. Its Director is the knowledgeable and enthusiastic Dr Jill Barber (Vice President of Conference 2015 – 2016) who has many stories to tell of our forebears who did so much to transform the lives of working people in the 19th Century. With their belief that all are equal in the sight of God from which arose their passion for social justice (still a key concern of Methodism), their drive

We also saw a short film showing us the conditions that people live in and a school that had invested in volunteers to provide access to clean water and how the improvements had been seen by the students, how their health and education would help with the community in the future. It made us all realise how fortunate we are to be able to turn a tap and have clean water when we want it.

Rothley Harvest Festival - Sue Moore

Entering the Church on Sunday 9th October, everything looked set for a traditional Harvest Festival in the small slate built church at Rothley. Fruit & veg were laid out at the front of the worship area under the communion rail, tins and dried products adorned the communion table and three beautiful flower arrangements were arranged as a backdrop.

The service (led by Rev Paula Hunt & worship leader Sue Wainwright) was not in the least traditional. Most of the harvest hymns were relatively modern including one to the tune of 'English Country Garden' ('We eat the plants that grow from seed', by Susan Mee). We were treated to a solo by Christine Hall (God, in His love for us, lent us this planet)

The 16 members of the congregation were kept busy throughout. Sue had a large map of the United Kingdom together with cut-out pieces of paper, mostly of fruit & veg. With the Blu-Tak provided, we had to attach the piece of cut-out picture to the part of the country from where it might have originated. However, a Wind Farm, Oil Rig & a Gas Platform were all located in the North Sea. The salmon did not belong in Scotland (it was cod from the colder waters well above Scotland!). This complemented Paula's sermon. Having chosen a passage from Job Ch. 38, she illustrated the way in which every one of us and everything on and above the earth is inter-connected. God's mighty creation!

Messy Church, Schools and Community Worker - James Blackhall

I have now been working in the Leicester North Circuit for almost a month and what an immense privilege it is. Thank you to everybody for making me so welcome and helping me settle in. I am thoroughly enjoying my work here. As your Messy Church, Schools and Community Worker I have a number of current projects, including the Messy Churches at Rothley and Birstall.

My first Messy Church at Rothley went very well with 8 children and 4 parents present. I am also very grateful to the 11 helpers there and must especially thank Ellie and Sian of Rothley Guides who came along to help us. We enjoyed learning to be thankful to God using crafts that Sue and Jane had prepared including making bath bombs, decorating cakes to give away to say thank you to people who had helped them in some way. We also made rain sticks which everyone enjoyed making noises with in worship! In our worship time we sang a couple of songs and the children enjoyed acting out the story of Maisey- the girl who had never been appreciated for the things she does for her friends. This helped us to explore why being grateful to both God and others is important.

Birstall Messy Church families met for a barbecue as their first Messy Church after the summer break. It was held at the back of St James' Church, and we are very grateful that St James' partners us in running the Messy Church at Birstall. It was great to be able to meet everybody and thank you to all those who organised the event, prior to my arrival, to enable it to run smoothly. We had 8 helpers on the day and had 8 children and 10 adult visitors. We all thoroughly enjoyed the food that was provided, with thanks to Jane who bought the food, Sylvia who made the desserts, and to Nick who cooked for us. We also enjoyed the games that were provided-especially the very popular donkey game (if you don't know what that is you'll have to come along next year to find out).

Churches Together in Belgrave & Rushey Mead (CTBRM)

On 16th September over 40 people from churches in CTBRM came along to Our Lady's Parish Hall on Gleneagles Avenue for a Fish and Chip Supper and Quiz. Stephen Thompson was the able Quiz Master despite having recently broken a bone in his foot. Unfortunately the team from Edgehill were unable to continue their winning streak at this annual event!

How's the new job going then? - Jo Kay

I am beginning to wonder if it was a good idea to volunteer to edit Connexions, however after a few initial teething problems I am settling into it! I'm learning lots of computer shortcuts from my current 'mentor', Dave! Some of the problems arose because I'm used to Windows whilst Dave uses Libre office. We now seem to have worked out a reasonably simple technique for the layout, but I'm still learning. Ultimately, my plan is to have Windows Publisher installed on my laptop and to be able to publish the magazine myself, with minimal help from Dave. This plan may mean that I have to initially find a 'publisher' expert to advise me-and that won't be Dave!! Any volunteers? Despite all the teething problems and endless hours leaning over a computer screen (especially for the first two editions) I am actually enjoying it. Hope you all like this mainly Harvest edition and thanks to those who have been very positive with their comments. I'm trying to find different people to write the articles for me, but please don't hide if I approach you.

And Dave on the new job as Superintendent:

Aaarrgghhhh!!!! Accompanied by sound effects of me drowning while apologising for everything I'm not managing to get done. Fortunately there are many kind, grace filled people in the Circuit supporting me and encouraging me to take care of myself. Thanks to you all.

Harvest All We Can at Syston - Margaret Leftley

Our Harvest Celebration this year made use of All We Can (MRDF) materials, with the theme 'Make a Splash'. Margaret Young and I introduced the theme and lead the prayers and Rev. Steve Hoggar preached a wonderful sermon on the 'The woman at the Well', pointing out the amazing grace of God for all of us. During the service we explored the vital importance of water to communities around the globe, including our own. Our Harvest gifts were presented, recognising the wonderful gift of water which is vital to growing our food.

We discovered that even in the 21st century, 1 in 10 people around the world do not have access to a clean water supply and sanitation. We watched a DVD which introduced us to a community in Nigeria where children collect water from a polluted pond and become sick with water-borne diseases. Consequently they miss school and cannot achieve their potential. All We Can, working with their local partner Voluntary Action for Development (VAD), has provided a clean water supply and toilets, which the community feel safe to use. The children now attend school regularly and are working towards fulfilling their dreams. Our envelope collection came to £222, a generous response to the Harvest appeal! Doing All We Can means others are helped to do All They Can.

Syston Harvest Festival—' view from the pew' by Sue Alexander

Our Harvest was led by Rev Steve Hoggar assisted by Margaret Leftley. Produce was taken to the front during the first hymn. Then Margaret introduced the theme of Water unfit for human consumption being used by people in the poorest countries of the world. This was illustrated by a small bottle of sludge coloured water which made us shudder. Girls would spend hours walking daily to collect this. 1 in 3 people are affected by unclean water.

We enjoyed her service very much, and getting to know her afterwards while having our usual coffee and biscuits. She introduced us to a new hymn sung to the tune of “In an English country Garden” and this was well accepted as we could all sing the new words to the familiar tune.

The flowers and the gifts in the church were beautifully arranged by Carole and Brian Cottam, and to them we extend our thanks.

The Harvest Supper was attended by approx. 50 people. Again Carole and Brian worked very hard to give us all a lovely meal of Chicken, vegetables and potatoes, followed by Blackcurrant cheesecake and cream. The choir entertained us, and everyone said how much they enjoyed the evening. Our thanks go to anyone who helped in any way to make this evening such a success

Harvest Festival and Soup at Birstall - Graham Tennant

At harvest we celebrated God’s generosity and bounty in our lives, and in particular for the food which has been growing during the year. At the start of our service Paula invited everyone to bring their food gifts to the front of the church, getting down on her knees to ensure all they were neatly arranged. Our worship was focused on sharing what we have, in the land of ‘milk and honey’ that God has promised us.

This was illustrated so well by an enthusiastic performance from the Sunday Club, of the drama Stone Soup. The props and the involvement of so many young people made the performance entertaining, whilst also ensuring the message from the stranger making the stone soup was clearly explained. The message from the story is that if each of us share just a little of what we have, we can achieve a lot.

During the Sunday Club session in the Coffee Shop they actually made some soups, tomato and vegetable. And at the end they all had a taste of their own creation. The soups were also offered to the congregation after the service, gratefully accepted by most, and very tasty it was too!

Index for photos (left to right from top left)

- Paula receiving Harvest gifts at Birstall to make sure they looked neat and tidy (so I was told)
- Making ‘stone soup’ at Birstall – this is based on a story about folk sharing vegetables etc to make soup
- Harvest Gifts at Birstall
- Sunday Club eating soup. As far as I know the stones had been removed!
- Fish and Chips Supper at Edghill with members from St Gabriel’s and other churches
- Harvest gifts at Edgehill.
- Harvest Lunch at Edgehill—Andy looks in his element!
- Harvest gifts at SMC –presented during a service about the need for clean water—see article
- Syston Art Group hard at work-probably singing or telling jokes to be honest. Not much painting going on
- Syston Art Group. ‘Harvest and Autumn’ exhibition in The Hub Café in Syston
- Cycling on a Golden River with Jules Richards from SMC-Autumn leaves on the cycle path
- Looking forward to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with this great slide!

HARVEST CELEBRATIONS FROM AROUND THE CIRCUIT

Edgehill Methodists @ All saints Harvest Festival - Brian Pearson

We enjoyed our Harvest Festival Service on 2nd October which was led by Andy Biggins. We were pleased that Andy and Lynne and other friends from around the Circuit were able to join us for lunch afterwards.

Harrison Road Harvest Festival - Beverly Sweetman

We had the church service on Sun. 18th September and the Harvest Supper on Sat 24th September. The service was led by Rev. Paula Hunt who we have recently welcomed to the circuit. This was her first visit to us at Harrison Road.

