

Focus



Winter 2024



Andy's Letter



Dear friends,

The theologian Marcus Borg speaks of there being 3 macro stories in Hebrew Scripture that have shaped our faith and the doctrines of the church as they were argued over by the councils of the early church. The three stories being the Exodus, the story of bondage and liberation, the Exile, a story of going astray and then returning, and finally the Temple and Priestly story, the story of sacrifice in which much of our church language and liturgy is written.

In a very large way that has coloured how we view the Christmas story, the story of the incarnation. It is told as a story which tells us of God's way of saving us from the mistake made by Adam (humankind) which has been the cause of our separation from God, a separation we can do nothing to heal and that therefore requires a saving act of God. We are, the story goes, in bondage to sin and need to be rescued, we sin and go astray and are called back to God, but to make this all possible a sacrifice has to be made and that sacrifice is made by God in '*giving his only Son*'.

But I think there is a different way of looking at the incarnation and that is related to how we might understand Christ and Jesus. One of the first things we need to recognise is that when we use the title Christ this is not referring in an exact way to the person we call Jesus of Nazareth. Christ is a cosmic or universal phenomenon. The cosmic or universal Christ refers to that which is infinite, in all times and in every place, but Jesus of Nazareth lived a finite life for a certain time in a particular place.

As Christians, we believe that in the fully human person we know as Jesus of Nazareth, the Cosmic Christ was revealed in a most unique way and in the fullest expression that the world has seen. We get a picture of that in the first verses of John's gospel which we know as the prologue but it is also there in Paul's writings in passages such as Ephesians 1: 9 - 12, Philippians 2: 5 - 11 and Colossians 1: 15 - 20.

So what might this say about the incarnation? Well Franciscan Philippe Yates puts it this way:

'Christ is the masterpiece of love in the midst of a creation designed for love, not a divine plumber come to fix the mess of original sin.'

And Richard Rohr, a Franciscan Priest makes this comment on it: *'In other words, many of us Christians settled for Plan B, or Jesus as a mere problem solver after we messed up. The Good News is that the Christ is Plan A from the very beginning, and Jesus came along much later to make it all visible, lovable, and attractive'.*

With this way of thinking incarnation is about a remedy for sin, it is the revealing of God, of Love at the heart of all creation and of the way that we should relate to all things, it is a revealing of the way, the truth and the life. Jesus talked about how we could have fullness of life and that was in being one with God in which we put our own egos to the side and allow the Christ to be born in us. When Jesus talks of us he says that all of us, have the opportunity to become Christlike, to reveal Christ to the world.

This is incarnation, that in Jesus the world has seen that which is infinite in finite form. It is no wonder that those who wrote the creeds could only describe him as fully human and fully divine for they had no words that could adequately describe what had been seen and experienced in the Jesus who lived and the Christ who pre-existed and continued to be experienced in that which we call resurrection.

And the incarnation is not a once only event. The Advent season is a reminder of the coming of Christ again, but we do it a disservice when we equate it with the end of times and final judgement because Christ is always coming to us, to the world, regardless of time or season. Christ is always being incarnated.

This indeed is incarnation, that we allow Christ to take root in us and be revealed through us that the world might know the wonder of God's love.

And the Christ came in flesh and lived among us and we have seen his glory.

I pray that our journey through Advent and our Christmas celebrations may be a source of inspiration to help others know the true joy and peace of Christmas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke underneath the name.

Focus: People

Welcome Karen

We are delighted to welcome Revd Karen Bell to our circuit and as Minister for Patcham, Stanford Avenue and Woodingdean churches. On the first day of September a welcome service was hosted by Woodingdean where Assistant Chair of the South East Methodist District, Revd Dan Balsdon, preached the sermon. A wonderful tea was provided and it was lovely to include Karen's parents, her sister and nephews. We wish Karen every blessing in her ministry with us.



Farewell to Dan

Following his last service in our circuit the good folk of Patcham provided a scrumptious buffet lunch as well as leaving gifts to wish Revd Dan Woodhouse and the community farewell. Dan is now happily settled on the Wirral and was particularly jubilant that Nottingham Forrest beat Liverpool FC within his first few weeks of moving.



Farewell to Sue

The Jacobs family said farewell to Hove Methodist Church and our circuit in early August as Revd Sue Jacobs moved to her first appointment in Long Hanborough. Sue said:

"Such an incredible outpouring of love for Team Jacobs as we said farewell to HMC. The service and celebration were both so special. We made a memory that I will cherish forever."

A few familiar faces joined her welcome service into the West Oxfordshire Circuit. Sue said: "I feel blessed beyond measure and know that God has great things in store."

Not wasting any time in her ministry, Sue shared a rainbow themed harvest 'tasting the rainbow' where thanks were given for the diversity of God's creation.



Thank you Alan Saunders



When we put the legend that is Alan Saunders under the Focus spotlight two years ago, Alan said he was privileged that after seventy years as a Local Preacher he was still being perceived as relevant. Well two more years and Alan finally decided to 'retire' and as legends do he led

a farewell tour of our churches to say farewell and receive the gratitude of congregations. Thank you Alan for your amazing dedication and years of service, enjoy the rest.



Thank you Andy

August 18th was Revd Andy Lowe's last service as the Minister for Stanford Avenue and Senior Steward Robert Patching writes: "A big 'Thank You' to Andy who stepped in to look after us at SA just under two years ago. I'm sure everyone would want to join in saying to Andy, that you have been brilliant, caring and thought provoking. Of course, we will still be seeing you on Tuesdays and at services in the future, but you came in at a very difficult time, and we thank you for all you have done for us.

If you were wondering (and I'm sure you were) we gave Andy gifts of vouchers for books and DIY."



Robert Patching

Happy Tenth Andy



A decade with Andy. We are so lucky as Hove Methodist Church, that we can boast of 10 years with Revd Andy Lowe at the helm!

This is something worth celebrating, so we thought

it would be nice to have a bring and share lunch after his service on the 8th of September for folk to stay, chat and chill together.

Rachel Richards

Shout out to *Great Hove Baker* Lai Pang for the spectacular cake.



Visit to Cynthia Tudor

On a sunny summer Saturday Deeptima and Kushma Massey paid a visit to Cynthia Tudor in her impressive Chiswick convent home and reports "she is doing well and is happy."



Welcome to Alfie Cornish

Finally congrats to Deborah and John Cornish who in September introduced Alfie, the newest member of their family. We (biased Focus editor) cannot resist including a picture of a gorgeous miniature schnauzer puppy. Happy times ahead.



Spotlight On....Kathleen Richardson

Continuing our feature where in every edition we put the spotlight on one of our Circuit members and perhaps we will learn more about someone. This edition we feature Revd Dr Kathleen Richardson who was given a list of 18 questions to guide her answers:

I was born in 1938 in a small village called Calow, near Chesterfield. My father worked in an iron & steel works that was turned into munitions, so he did not have to go to war.

One of my earliest memories is watching the killing of our pig. The village had a communal pig we all fed from kitchen scraps and when it was considered the right time it was killed on the yard of my friend. Each house had a raffle ticket which we picked out the pig bits we wanted, and the women caught the blood in a bucket to make black puddings. I have never been able to look at a black pudding since!

It was a small village school, but I passed the eleven plus and went to High School in Chesterfield, where I played the school cello and took part in dramatic productions. I decided to train to be a teacher.

My parents had been Methodists but there was no church near enough, so we went to the Congregational Church where I was made a member and where I was introduced to the dramatic society. I discovered that although I was painfully shy, when I immersed myself into a part I could become who I wanted to be.



I became a teacher of religious studies in a school in Derbyshire where there was a Methodist Church I attended, Before long I was involved in its life, became a local preacher and in 1960 applied for entry into the Wesley Deaconess Order.

After two years in the college in Ilkley, I was stationed first to Westminster Central Hall, but it was changed at the last minute and I was sent to Rochdale. My disappointment was somewhat overcome when I met one of the youth leaders there by the name of Ian Richardson. The Order then



was strictly celibate, and marriage was not allowed – what to do? We discussed the problem with the Chair of District – his advice was to get married, that one day the Methodist Church would catch up with what God was doing! (And they did shortly after!) I went back to teaching, then had three daughters. In 1973 I went as a lay worker into the team ministry in Stevenage. The Methodist church entered into a sharing agreement with the local Church of England and I was to help the Methodist congregation through the process. In 1974 the Methodist Church agreed that women could be ordained into ministry and in 1976 accepted me as one of them.

The family moved to Cambridge for my training. I was appointed to a Circuit in West Yorkshire and ordained in 1980. Ian was a psychiatric social worker, but he developed a brain tumour that meant he had to give up work and was often very ill.

In 1986, the West Yorkshire District needed to appoint a new Chair of District. The appointing committee selected me, and I became the first woman to hold such a post. In 1991 I became the first woman to be nominated as President of the Methodist Conference.

The year I spent as President was an amazing experience. I visited each District, many of our overseas Churches, had lunch with the Queen, spoke in Hyde Park to 500,000 striking minors and judged the sand castle competition at Easter people! Ian, however, became increasingly frail and after a disastrous operation went to live in residential care in a Leonard Cheshire Home. (He existed in a half-life and died in 2008)



The Methodist Church reorganised its leadership and I was appointed one of



the Co-ordinating secretaries, having responsibility for the church's overseas work, ecumenical partnerships and relationship with other faiths.

I was elected Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council and one of the four Presidents of Churches Together in England. I was given an OBE for services to ecumenical life and was offered a life peerage in 1998, becoming Reverend

Baroness Richardson of Calow. I sat as an independent peer until I retired from the House of Lords in 2018.

Even after I 'sat down' (which is the Methodist terminology for retirement) in 1999 I 'stood up' again and did two appointments in churches as an active supernumerary.

In 2021 my family suggested that I might need a bit more care in my old age and that a move to Brighton to be near my youngest daughter should be considered. I came to live here in January 2022 and I absolutely love it!

I realise that I have answered few of the 18 questions suggested as a basis for this profile. One of the reasons for this is that somehow my 'profession' became my life. It is only since coming to Brighton I have felt able to consider my own needs & to stop playing the role of a Methodist Minister.



I am grateful to the Circuit for including me on the plan and sometimes letting me into the discussions about Circuit life. But I do other things that give me joy, have made new friendships, and my daughters are now living closer to me than we have ever been.

But I will select two questions from the profile list:-

What has been the biggest obstacle in your life and how did you overcome it? One of my mother's favourite expressions was 'Don't draw attention to yourself'. It has taken a long time to realise that being myself is OK – and you are helping me in this.

If you could change one thing in your past, what would that be? I would dearly love to have had Ian walking with me through life and into old age.

Thank you Kathleen for answering these questions and sharing your special thoughts with us.

Focus: Features

Chocolate

It is suggested that the closest Sunday to the 20th October each year should be remembered as Freedom Sunday, to try and make sure that people are aware that slavery is not only an historic problem but also a current one. The International Justice Mission regularly publishes figures about the extent of the problem and current global estimates suggest that 50 million people are trapped in slavery today of which one in four are children. And it is not as if the problem is lurking in dark corners because more than 75% of UK companies believe that there is a likelihood of slavery somewhere in their supply chain.

But I thought that I would think about just one aspect of this problem, one that is close to my own heart, chocolate. I have noticed on numerous occasions media reports about child labour in the production of cocoa beans and also occasionally chocolate wrappers referring to cocoa produced without child labour.

The use of child labour in cocoa farming is driven by the economics of the production. About 90% of the world's cocoa is grown by smallholders with under five hectares of land. For oldies like me a hectare is a unit of land area 100m by 100m and in old money almost 2.5 acres. The produce from these plots is sold on to various 'middle men' who are presumably more or less scrupulous about the percentage that they keep. Illustrated by the fact that in 1970 the cocoa farmer received about 50% of the value of a chocolate bar; today this has gone down to about 6%. This is probably the reason why cocoa farmers earn, on average, only 40% of the local living wage and so generally live in abject poverty, below \$1 a day, which is probably the driver for the use of child labour. Together Ivory Coast and Ghana produce about 70% of the world's cocoa. It is suggested that in



these two countries over two million children, mainly between the ages of 12 and 16, but some much younger and of whom about 40% are girls are involved in cocoa production.

But the thing that I find most difficult is that since 2001 the big chocolate companies – Hershey (Cadbury), Mars and Nestle and five others, have supposedly been working with growers to eliminate the use of child labour and what have they achieved is precious little, except that cocoa farmers now probably earn even less.

The big chocolate companies all say that they try and buy some certified non-child labour cocoa – Mars 50%, Hershey 80% but the inspections, carried out by third party inspectors, only have to include 10% of farms and inspections are usually announced in advance!

As Christians we believe

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.

If this passage from Luke Chapter 4 means anything to you, should it alter, in any way, the chocolate that you buy?

Peter Farley

The Apocryphal New Testament

This new series of articles will look at some early Christian writings that are not in the New Testament

1. The background to the Apocryphal New Testament

Over the past few months three different preachers at Dorset Gardens have referred, either explicitly or implicitly, to the stories or books found in the Apocryphal New Testament (ANT). Some time ago I wrote one article on this area, together with an article on Gnostic writings. It now seems appropriate to explore this literature in more detail and consider what it may mean, if anything, for our life and faith.

The word 'apocrypha' means something that is hidden or secret, but when applied to biblical literature it is a misnomer as, with one exception, they were not 'hidden' at all. That exception is 'Gnostic' literature which taught that there was a secret knowledge, 'gnosis', available only to 'insiders'.

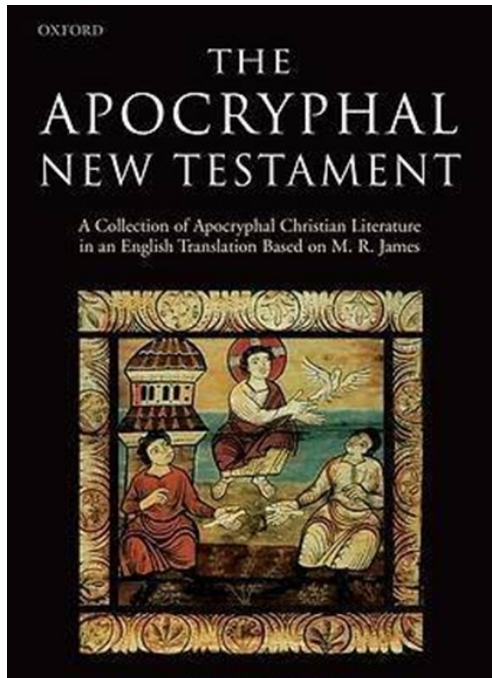
The Old Testament Apocrypha consists of Greek writings from before the time of Jesus which did not find their way into Jewish scripture, but which are found in Roman Catholic or Orthodox Bibles and some Protestant Bibles. The ANT is not like that. This is a collection of writings, often called 'the Gospel of ...' or 'the Acts of ...', that have hardly ever been thought to be scriptural. However, some of the ideas expressed, e.g. the elevated status of Mary and some stories, e.g. that Jesus was born in a cave, have become part of our tradition. These are found in the ANT.

This series of articles will look at some of the writings in the

ANT but before we start we need to recognise that this is different from the writings of the early church fathers [if there were any women who wrote they have not been recorded] which are called the 'patristic' writings. Books by Clement, Irenaeus, Tertullian, etc. are not in the ANT as they do not claim to be Gospels, Acts, Letters, or anything else by the Apostles.

People, like the rest of nature, abhor a vacuum. The New Testament tells us almost nothing of Jesus before he began his ministry. There are two birth-stories and one brief account of him as a boy visiting the Temple: so people asked what did Jesus do as a child? What happened on the journey to Egypt? Where did Joseph and Mary come from? Similarly, the Acts of the Apostles focusses mainly on Peter, then on Paul: so people asked what did apostles like Andrew or Thomas do?

Some ANT writings try to fill some of these gaps. Some have survived only in fragments, but most of them state that they were written by one or other of the apostles. To give the name of a great person of the past to a current writing was not thought wrong in the classical world. One way of categorising these books is to put them into geographic areas, the Christian communities for whom they may have been written.



Another way is to put them into their different types of writing and that is the method that will be adopted here. I have followed Elliott's structure:

1. Proto-Gospels
Stories of the lives of Mary and Joseph before the birth of Jesus. These can run into:
2. Infancy Gospels
Stories of Jesus as a boy.
3. Gospels of Jesus' ministry and passion.
4. The Pilate cycle
5. Apocryphal Acts
6. Apocryphal Epistles
7. Apocryphal Apocalypses
8. Stories about Mary

For those who wish to read further there are a number of good books available. I mention here only collections of books, not commentaries on individual books, nor have I mentioned collections of Gnostic texts.

Some suggestions:

- J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford University Press, 1993), this updates:
- M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford University Press, 1924)
Both of these books give the translations of many of the books under discussion
- Fred Lapham, *An Introduction to the New Testament Apocrypha* (T & T Clark, 2003)
- B. D. Ehrman & Z. Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels, Texts and Translations* (Oxford University Press, 2011)
This gives both text in its original script and translation of all the books, it has no index.
- S. Gathercole, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, (Penguin, 2021)
This gives the dramatis personae of each translation of two or more pages and also includes two modern forgeries/hoaxes. There is an index.

The ANT is a vast literature, and we can only look at a few examples. We shall start with two Proto-Gospels: James and Pseudo-Matthew, both of which have been more influential than is usually recognised.

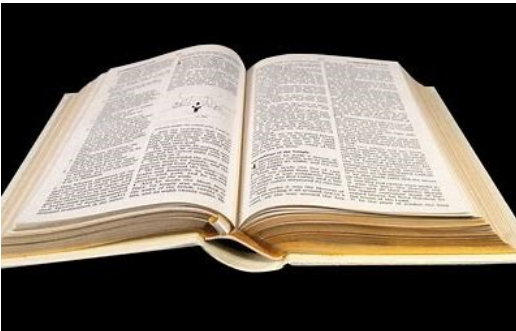
Mick Hickman

How Do We Understand the Bible?

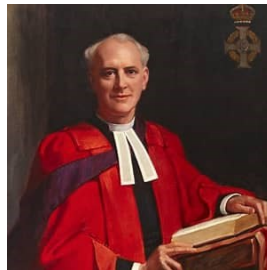
I always look forward to reading the Focus magazine when it arrives at DG, and the autumn edition was no exception. Andy's letter particularly attracted my interest. I was not brought up to take the Bible literally, either by my parents (both of whom were former Salvation Army Officers) or at Sunday School. I confess that I have not read Marcus Borg's 'Convictions', but Andy's references to the book, however, reminded me that each new generation seems to have to discover for itself things which its predecessors took for granted.

As a child and adolescent, I attended a Primitive Methodist Chapel in the West Riding of Yorkshire from 1942 until 1958 when I was called up for National Service in the Royal Air Force. Our Sunday School Superintendent provided me and my peers with a thorough grounding in all the points Andy mentions about using and understanding the Bible. He was a local preacher and, in the 1940s and 50s, phrases like 'literal-factual' or 'historical-metaphorical interpretation' would never have crossed his lips. Nevertheless, in preparing us as teenagers for the annual Circuit Scripture Exam, he explained in everyday language the background to how the Hebrew and Christian Bibles came to be written and circulated. He informed us that both Bibles have multiple authors whose writings span millennia and human beings, even when inspired by God, can still get things wrong. In emphasising that we should respect Scripture for the truths it contains, he cautioned us not to take things literally, but to tease out the essence of each individual story. "The Bible is not history! What message is the storyteller trying to get across?" he would ask, usually followed by "God has given you a brain and if you refuse to use it, you insult your Maker."

He was largely self-educated through reading voraciously. He talked to us about the difficulties involved in translating one language into another without losing the exact meaning and in trying to understand how customs change over time. That really resounded with me as I was studying French, German and Latin at grammar school.



He urged us to ask questions when we weren't sure or didn't understand and to read as widely as we could. He particularly directed us to the works of the Reverend Doctor Leslie Weatherhead [see picture] from whose writings he had learned so much. This solid grounding as a teenager at home and in Sunday School led me to a lifelong commitment to a radical interpretation of Christian theology, for which I give thanks.



Dr Tony Leonard, Dorset Gardens MC

A Methodist Way of Life

God loves you unconditionally, no strings attached. That's the good news.

A Methodist Way of Life is a way of saying yes to the good news. There are twelve things that we can do as individuals or as a church community. We have previously looked at the first eight: Pray, Worship, Notice, Care, Learn, Open, Share & Challenge. In this edition we look at number 9 **Flourish**. None of this makes God love you any more - but they may help you realise how deeply you are loved. May you be transformed as you reflect on your encounters with God that come through doing these activities.



<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/worship/>

9. Flourish

We care for creation and all God's gifts

The universe is an expression of God's loving, creative nature.

*Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!*
(Psalm 148:7-8)

We are part of the earth as well as the universe, lovingly woven from the same fabric.

We are currently in a climate emergency requiring urgent action, but the good news is that by learning about God's love for creation and our place within it, we can learn to take care of the world we live in.



"I asked everyone in the church service which was their 'home station'. One young girl was the only one to choose 'flourish'. I challenged the whole church to support her and learn from her. Different people can take the lead in different areas, but we all have to be in it together."

As Christians, we believe that God doesn't just promise life, but life in all its fullness. We want all of God's created Kingdom not just to survive but to flourish. God created not just humans, but every animal and plant. It's only by recognising that we are part of creation and caring for the world around us that all creation can flourish.

Sprowston Methodist Church, in the North of Norwich, has a vision to use its grounds and garden for the local community – providing a space for connection with nature, a vegetable bank and opportunities to meet new people.

Pause for thought

What would you do about caring for creation if you knew you couldn't fail?

Interested in having conversations like this with your friends, neighbours and community?

Buy [Conversations against Mundanity](#) now.

www.methodistpublishing.org.uk



Simple things to try

1. Find out about climate change and how you can adjust your lifestyle to help.
2. Grow something – take care of a little plant.
3. Take action, as individuals and communities, to [help all of creation to flourish](#). The Tea & PV project in the Yorkshire North & East Methodist District has seen solar panels, that convert light into electricity, [installed on churches across the area](#).

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/our-stories/the-tea-pv-project-in-Yorkshire-north-east/>

4. Find out your carbon footprint and how you can reduce your impact using a carbon footprint calculator such as [footprintr.me](https://www.footprinttr.me).
5. Run a Bible study focusing on creation care.
6. Climate change disproportionately affects the poorest people in the world. Reducing the impact we have on the environment not only benefits the planet but also helps to challenge injustice. Explore the [Olive Agenda](https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/our-stories/missional-discipleship-and-justice/), connecting environmental concerns with challenging racial injustice. <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/our-stories/missional-discipleship-and-justice/>
7. Take part in the [Net Zero in my Neighbourhood](https://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/net-zero-in-my-neighbourhood) campaign. <https://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/net-zero-in-my-neighbourhood>
Check out resources from the Property Team at: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/net-zero-carbon/>
and speak with Dr Hamish Leese for more information: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/news/action-for-hope-new-implementation-officer-to-help-the-church-reach-net-zero/>
8. The [Joint Public Issues Team](https://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/environment) (JPIT) provide some excellent resources with information and practical advice: <https://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/environment>
9. Listen to a Taketime meditation based on Matthew 25:14-30: [Accountability to a returning master](https://taketime.org.uk/themed-meditations/accountability-to-a-returning-master/). <https://taketime.org.uk/themed-meditations/accountability-to-a-returning-master/>

Focus: Autumn 2024

A look back at some recent events:

Earth church



A delightful August afternoon in rural Rottingdean

Thanks to our lovely Cynthia Park and Earth Church, 10 of us had an afternoon in Rottingdean on a sunny August Saturday,

visiting the serene Kipling gardens with its nooks, herb garden and rose walk while discovering quince trees and vines. As a contrast we walked uphill to Nevill Road to explore Chris and Anne's re wilding experiment garden (more explosive than serene). Folks even gallantly tried my sugar free bakes involving garden beetroot, courgette and apple. Post this event a £25 donation was made to the Woodland Trust? Here's to the next Earth church gathering.

Anne Garrett

(and thanks to Anne & Chris for their fine hospitality).



A Musical Treat with Chris Mannin

A packed church hall at Woodingdean enjoyed a tuneful Saturday afternoon in early October where organist Chris Mannin (formerly Eastbourne Pier organist) played a selection of show music. Accompanied by tea and cake of course.

Terry Hammond



Praying with Dave

Prayer is for everyone, not just the religious. This was the message from Dave Tomlinson, Anglican priest, writer and BBC Radio 2 "Pause for Thought" contributor when he visited Hove MC for the circuit's monthly "Thinking Aloud Allowed" (TAA) meeting.

The event was part of a tour highlighting his new book "OMG! A bad Christian's Book of Prayers" and the audience of 40 listened to an illustrated talk on the subject from a progressive viewpoint, followed by a question and answer session. Afterwards there were refreshments and an opportunity to buy the book and have it signed by the author.



The afternoon was jointly organised by the Rev Andy Lowe who leads TAA each month, usually via Zoom, and Sue Harrington, convener of the group. She said: "This was a highlight of our TAA programme as we were able to meet in person with a wide variety of church and non-church people attending. We were

very fortunate to get Dave to lead us in what was a successful and challenging session. He led us into new insights into prayer, touching on a possible link with ideas taken from quantum theory such as what is called quantum entanglement where everything is inextricably linked."

* Dave Tomlinson's popular weekly "Holy Shed" programmes are available on You Tube.

Paul Harrington

Going Potty at Stanford Avenue (again)

After the success of their last two Flowerpot Festivals and mindful of ways to reduce, recycle and reuse items, Stanford Avenue



Church played host for a third time this September and as the photos show (left & overleaf) there were yet more creative and inventive sculptures on show. This included a Refugee Project flowerpot installation celebrating nightingales & the colours of the Ukrainian flag.

Liz Coblentz



Harvest Happenings

We had our Harvest service at Patcham on 22nd September led by Rev Kathleen Richardson. The day was also our All Age Worship starting with a bacon sandwich breakfast. As well as our regular congregation, there were families with young children and some guests who were visiting Patcham.



Kathleen prepared a World map for us to point out which food comes from which country and we heard her experiences of visiting many countries as an Methodist ambassador



and how the God's blessing appeared in these places in developing countries. At the end of the service, children showed their activity of planting mustard & cress seeds. Everybody appreciated and enjoyed the service. The generous food gifts brought in for the service were donated to the Food Bank.

Kumiko McCabe

Focus: Mission

Youth Matters

In September the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) held a meeting with senior church reps (Dorset Gardens: Sue Harrington & Jennie Lamb; Hove: Rachel Richards & Donald Reid; Stanford Avenue: Robert Patching & Cath Odd Hayward;

Patcham: John Chinchen & Russell Taylor and Woodingdean: Terry & Marian Hammond.

The focus was strategic and forward looking, and attendees were asked to be ready to say something about their own church: its life and ministry and high-level hopes/plans for the next few years. All were asked to think about this with a circuit lens and the meeting proved to be a good exchange of ideas and useful to inform and guide CLT.

The agreed top priority was gathering the young people of the circuit to enable them to meet each other, be more involved in their churches and to aim for a small group to attend **3Generate** <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/children-youth-family-ministry/3generate/>



an annual get together in October in Birmingham (like MAYC weekend) which is great fun and helps build up children's faith. One meeting attendee commented:

'If we repeat that for a few years, we already have a great base for a teenager group in a few years' time. Sometimes small steps in the right direction go a long way to achieving what could at first be considered unachievable.'

To kick things off Cynthia, Russell, Jennie and Rachel met and Andy will lead a family service at Patcham on 19th January 2025 and at Dorset Gardens on 9th February where children from

around the circuit will take part on the worship.



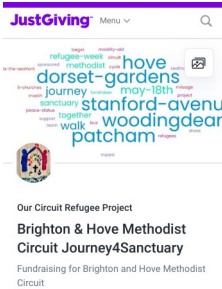
Additionally, at Dorset Gardens Sam Dyke has recently launched an additional Tearaway Tots on a Monday and reports that the new sessions are going well and we have new people coming each week. See the fun left.

Circuit Refugee Project Update:

Brighton & Hove Methodist



Circuit of Sanctuary



In August, during our summer break from the project, our Circuit Project Reps enjoyed an afternoon tea together at Ruth's home in Hove. This summer Hove also dropped some clothing and toiletry donations with Care4Calais and some of our Brighton churches donated food to the Voices in Exile foodbank.

Patcham, Hove and Dorset Gardens also made food donations to the Voices in Exile Foodbank from their Harvest Services this October including several very generous bags of groceries

from DG's Scout Group. Stephen, who runs the ViE foodbank said it was like Christmas coming early for them! 'Thank you to everyone involved. What an incredibly generous donation with so many thoughtful ideas around making culturally relevant food parcels. With this food you will be helping 32 families this week, about 83 people, including 39 children. Brilliant work! Thanks for your support.' So with two deliveries that's over 160 people! We also gave £110 to Care4Calais which was the Harvest money given at DG.

In September, after a summer which saw 20 lives lost in the English Channel, including six children and a pregnant woman, Ruth & Ibrahim attended a Vigil at the Peace Statue on Hove Seafront organised by Care4Calais. Ruth also attended an open event at the Liberal Democrat Conference. Speakers with lived experience from the charity Safe Passage spoke movingly of their work and experiences. Safe Passage UK specialises in providing free advice and representation to unaccompanied refugee children and separated families in family reunion applications under the Immigration Rules or outside the Rules based on Human Rights.



At Stanford Avenue's Flowerpot Festival this October, our Circuit Refugee Project flowerpot installation celebrated nightingales & the colours of the Ukrainian flag. As our Ukrainian friend Olga told us, nightingales are common in Ukraine and their beautiful song is celebrated in Ukrainian folklore, songs & poems.



Later in October, Ruth attended the Network of International Women's (NiW) AGM in Brighton. Videos and talks showcased NiW's wide range of activities, from cooking and sewing classes to Cost of Living workshops. NiW members shared how much the charity means to them and how it brings a sense of welcome, purpose and community into their lives. More than 10 Brighton & Hove City Council members, plus local Councillors, were also present. All of them were very enthusiastic and complimentary about the work NiW do in our community. Many NiW initiatives are part funded and/or organised in conjunction with Brighton & Hove City Council. After the speakers, everyone enjoyed wonderful international food produced by the women. Our Circuit has two copies of a compilation book of poems on the theme of 'Home', written by NIW members this Refugee Week 2024. Our co-leads will bring a copy to circuit events we attend over the coming months, if you wish to have a look.

Jollof Cafe are booked to cook up another of their fabulous evening meals on 18th December at Dorset Gardens. More details in due course. Tickets will go on sale nearer the event, but get it in your diary now so you don't miss a treat!



The Network of International Women's sewing collective will have a stall at Stanford Avenue's Christmas & Craft Fair on Saturday November 30th. They are skilled craftswomen who make beautiful gift items and bags from recycled fabrics, priced from around £10 to £25, so their goods are perfect as Christmas presents.



Our Circuit Refugee Project also has a small stock of NiW sewing collective items for re-sale occasionally after some church services / church events. We also plan a donations appeal soon for new/as new donations for the Sewing Collectives store cupboard in their Brighton workshop. We will specify what is needed (new/as new fabric, zips, thread etc) and how to donate, when we launch our appeal.

The Circuit Refugee Project Stall, selling knitted goods and crafts, hopes to be at Patcham's Christmas Fair in November too! Our Co-leads Ruth & Sue continue to keep updated about community initiatives and Sanctuary Seekers' news via the Brighton & Hove Refugee & Migrant Forum fortnightly zoom meetings, chaired by Sanctuary on Sea. Ruth & Sue read the minutes each fortnight. A Co-Lead (either Ruth or Sue) attends the Zoom approximately quarterly.

Sue Harrington and **Ruth Samur** project co-leads
Circuit Refugee Project Reps: Terry Hammond (Woodingdean), Kay Harwood (Patcham), Ann Collins (Stanford Avenue), Ruth Samur (Hove), Sue Harrington (Dorset Gardens).

Focus: Business

Solar Panels at Patcham

A key aspiration of Patcham Church is to improve its eco friendly profile alongside providing a warm and inviting place for all our building users. This needs to be efficient to run and fund, and have the environmental benefits of utilising renewable energies.

The church recently replaced their defunct heating system; and Margaret Taylor then spear-headed the installation of solar panels, with the support of Alan Imms and Steve Preston (smoothing Methodist consent permissions).

After gaining council planning permission,





this work was recently completed. Additional funding came from the Circuit and the District Grants Committee who commented. *"We were impressed by a well presented application and was satisfied that the application met all of the criteria for the award of a grant."*

Patcham Manse Renovated

The manse at Ladies Mile Rd has been refurbished to prepare for Revd Karen Bell's arrival at the end of August. The builders and contractors had 28 days to replace the two bathrooms, fit a new kitchen, redecoration throughout and new floor coverings. The total investment from the Circuit was £44k for this work. A big thank you to a team of volunteer gardeners: Jonathan Gravestock and Kumiko, Georgie, Alan, Caroline and Helen from Patcham who on a sunny day in August cleared the worst of the weeds, cut back trees and shrubs and tidied up a lot.

Safeguarding Webinar

Our District Safeguarding Officer Claire Coles invites you to join a 2-hour evening webinar on Thursday 21st November from 7- 9 pm and covering **Risk Assessments** via Zoom, open to anyone who wants to attend. It is already open to book onto on Eventbrite. The link is:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/929688361917?aff=oddtcreator>

Social Justice Webinar

Following recent Methodist Church **Equipping for Equality** day events, online evening sessions for anyone passionate about justice, dignity and solidarity is now being offered. Bookings are now open for the first -

"What does it mean to stand in solidarity?" on Wednesday 13th November at 7pm.

Following recent unrest in the UK, Bevan Powell, Director of Inclusion, will head up this evening asking important questions such as: What does it mean to act in solidarity? Are we able to spot injustice in the church? Do we know how to challenge injustice? With no right or wrong answers, we will be exploring possibilities together.

Open to anyone passionate about justice, dignity and solidarity – If interested contact Kristie on evек@methodistchurch.org.uk



Dates for your diary

Calendar of Circuit Events:

- Friday 1st November **All Saints Service** 7.30pm at Stanford Avenue (see poster).
- Saturday 16 November **YMCA Jumble Sale** 10am to 1pm at Hove Methodist Church
- Thursday 28th November **Circuit Meeting** 7.30pm at Dorset Gardens.
- 29th/30th November & 6th/7th December **Elf the musical** at Patcham Methodist Church (see poster)
- Saturday 30th November **Christmas & Craft Fair** 11am to 3pm at Stanford Avenue Methodist Church (see poster)
- Saturday 30th November: **Martlets Christmas concert** 2pm to 4pm, Hove Methodist Church.
- Monday 2nd December Monday Circle Group and Friends invite you to a **Women of Note Christmas Concert** 7 pm at Patcham Methodist Church. Tea and Mince Pies after.
- Saturday 14th December a **Christmas Concert by Women of Note** 3 pm at Woodingdean Methodist Church. In aid of the Trussell Network of Food banks. Refreshments after.
- Saturday 21st December: **Carols outside the church** & refreshments 4pm to 5pm at Hove Methodist Church
- Monday 17th February 2025 **Local Preachers' Meeting** at 7.30 pm at Stanford Avenue
- Tuesday 18th March 2025 **Circuit Meeting** 7.30 pm at Patcham

BARISTORMERS



Presents



ELF

The Musical

29th-30th November/6th - 7th December @ 7.30 pm
Saturday Matinees @ 2 pm

**Patcham Methodist Church Hall,
Ladies Mile Road, Patcham**

Tickets on sale soon



Book by Thomas Meehan and Bob Martin
Music by Matthew Sklar
Lyrics by Chad Beguelin

Based upon the New line Cinema film written by David Berenbaum

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Music Theatre
International All authorised performance materials are also supplied by MTI www.mtishows.co.uk
All profits will be donated to the development fund of Patcham Methodist Church

STANFORD AVENUE
METHODIST CHURCH
PRESENTS

FREE
ENTRY

Christmas & Craft Fair

11am-
3pm

- HOMEMADE GIFTS
- TOMBOLA
- RAFFLE
- BOOKS
- CAKES
- CHRISTMAS GOODIES & MORE!

COME & SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL
COMMUNITY & CHURCH

30th
November

WOMEN OF NOTE

Christmas Charity Concert

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

EVELYN HARRISON

Saxophone



**FREE
ENTRY**

3PM SUNDAY 15TH DEC 2024

**BRIGHTON UNITARIAN CHURCH
NEW ROAD BN1 1UF**



FREE REFRESHMENTS

**RETIRING COLLECTION
IN SUPPORT OF
THE CHURCH &
THE TRUSSELL TRUST**

In aid of
Trussell
Ending hunger together

Special Services this Christmas

Dorset Gardens

Sunday 15th December	10.30am	All Age & Gift Service
Christmas Eve	4.00pm	Community Carol Service
Christmas Day	10.30am	Christmas Celebration
Sunday 5th January	10.30am	Covenant & Communion

Hove

Sunday 1st December	10.30am	All Age & Gift Service
Sunday 22nd December	4.00pm	Carol Service
Christmas Eve	2.00pm	Christingle Service
Christmas Day	10.00am	All Age Celebration Service
Sunday 12th January	10.30am	Covenant & Communion.

Patcham

Sunday 17th November	10.30pm	Toy Service
Sunday 15th December	6.00pm	Carol Service
Sunday 22nd December	4.30pm	Christingle
Christmas Day	10.30am	Christmas Celebration
Sunday 5th January	10.30am	Covenant & Communion.

Stanford Avenue

Sunday 8th December	10.30pm	Gift Service
Sunday 22nd December	6.30 pm	Carol Service
Christmas Day	10.00am	Christmas Celebration
Sunday 21st January	10.30am	Covenant & Communion.

Woodingdean

Sunday 122nd December	4.00pm	Carol Service
Christmas Day	9.30am	Christmas Celebration
Sunday 19th January	10.00am	Covenant & Communion.

Circuit Services

Sunday 3rd December	3.00pm	World Aids Day Service at Dorset Gardens
Sunday 26th January	10.30am	Circuit Together service At Stanford Avenue Methodist Church

Circuit Healing Services

On 22nd December, 26th January and 23rd February at 6.30pm at Dorset Gardens. Led by Revd Cynthia Park and Shirley Veater. These will be quiet, meditative services that will include communion & the opportunity for the laying on of hands.



Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit

All Saints Day Service



Friday 1 November 2024

7.30pm

at

Stanford Avenue Methodist Church

BN1 6FD

At this service we remember with thanks the lives of those we loved who have died in the previous year. We read out the names and remember via the lighting of candles those whose funerals have been held in our churches or whose services have been conducted by ministers and lay people within our Circuit.

All are invited and welcome, please contact steve.preston@brightonhovemethodistcircuit.org.uk if there is anyone who you wish to remember in this way.



The Methodist Church's Advent and Christmas campaign for 2024 is called **Hush the Noise: Join the love song this Christmas. Christmas is loud, isn't it?**

So much expectation. So many voices. Telling us how to celebrate, what to wear, what to eat and drink, what to watch and what to buy. Instead, this Christmas we're inviting everyone to hush the noise. To listen for the love song that the angels bring, this and every year. They sang it for the first time more than 2,000 years ago, on the midnight clear. They're just waiting for us to join in.



Thank you to Marilyn Richardson for proof reading & David Sharman for some photos. Please submit your articles & photos to Steve Preston for our Spring Edition by 17th January 25. Thanks.

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