

Hampton Methodist Church News

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Hampton Methodist Church
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Hello and a happy new Methodist year to you all.

I expect that, like me, you have already forgotten that the summer holiday happened as we all settle back in to our termly, workaday commitments and the nights draw in and the weather cools down and it seems almost impossible to remember that long summer heatwave that was so hot and so long that we started to complain!

Certainly for me everything has geared up again with meetings, youth clubs, lunch clubs, Bible Studies and so on. Of course, we are all the same, all busy, and so recently I have noticed a concerning phenomenon. My colleagues in other denominations and those who wish to meet us, aware of the constant calls upon our diaries, have started emailing with offers of a free breakfast. I kid you not – I am now being offered the opportunity to meet (and have breakfast) at 7:45 for 8 am. Since, as we know, most Methodist evening meetings begin at 8pm, this is essentially a request for a 14-hour working day. And as with all these things, some of them are not terribly important and I shall probably decline and others it will be really helpful for me to attend and I shall go. But it got me thinking about the excellent book by Walter Brueggemann, “Sabbath as resistance.” It is essentially an extended Bible study of the Exodus story during the time in Egypt. In it, he argues that in our society output is all, being busy 24/7 is a necessity and we have arrived at a place very like that where those early Israelites were forced, not just to make the bricks, but to spend their down-time hunting for the straw to resource the next day’s manufacture. In such a society, Brueggemann argues, taking time off becomes an act of defiance and insisting on honouring the Sabbath (a day off a week) is not just a keeping of God’s commandments but a necessity for our very souls.

It was a theme which resonates with the speech given by the President of Conference at the Labour Party Conference Prayer Breakfast where she argues that “in a time of universal cynicism, prayer becomes a revolutionary act.” Prayer is a revolutionary act, she says, because it is a declaration that we believe change is possible. She ends with these words:

Prayer is a cry in the dark,
a child’s longing for home
and a hollowed soul’s seeking of fulfilment.

Prayer is a two-fingered salute
to the hopeless cynicism of endless false promises
and a bunting-waving celebration of love in action.

Prayer is a sacred space,
found in the midst of the unholyest of battlegrounds
and in the desolation of loss.

Prayer is a memory
of long-lost conversations with wise elders
and an exuberance of youthful anticipation.

Prayer is a shared longing,
a whispered dream
and an open conversation.

Prayer is a revolutionary act
It is hope in despair
and a grace-filled weaving of love's intent.

(Michaela Youngson, President of the Methodist Conference 2018 – 2019)

Both writers remind us that we are not doing something usual, or even comfortable, by choosing to live this life of calling and doing and praying and resting. But perhaps in the spaces between these things we find God, and in our choosing to hold these things in tension, we learn afresh what it means to be disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ who was a revolutionary and a resistance leader, teaching us to speak out against the injustices of the day and to resist the temptation to work until we drop merely so that others, or even we ourselves, can become wealthy. So yes, in among the doing of the things which help and the protesting against the things which do not, let's not forget this autumn to rest and pray.

God bless

Vicci

Introducing Cooper

Those of you who were at Breakfast Church at the beginning of July will have met the gorgeous little bundle of fluff who was Cooper the puppy at eight weeks. We had brought him home just the day before, and he was small enough to be carried in a puppy carrier which Charlie wore like a sling. Ha! That puppy carrier lasted just one week, as Cooper started to grow, and grow, and grow! At the moment he is putting on about 1.5kg a week, and last week weighed in at a whopping 19.2kg! At 4 months old. He's going to be a big boy!

So why a Golden Retriever? There are lots of smaller cute breeds out there, and some wonderful rescue dogs. In fact, I had always intended to get a rescue dog. But life sometimes throws you a curve ball. Charlie has always longed for a dog, and I'd always held him off saying that we could only consider it when I had the kind of lifestyle that would be fair to a dog – I was working pretty much full time. But in 2018 it all changed. I won't go into too much detail here, it has been the most extraordinarily stressful time, but I am now home most of the week, and Charlie is home educated. We may be cash poorer, but we are suddenly time rich! There was a dog-shaped hole in our lives. In the winter we signed up for Borrow My Doggy, and began to borrow two wonderful very different dogs – a high energy cocker spaniel called Caesar, and an older, slightly arthritic Rottweiler Lab cross called Connie. Those dogs really saved our sanity in the dark days of winter when we so looked forward to walking them and absorbing their calm loving energy. Remember the blizzards? We were in Bushy Park yomping through the snow in our thermals! Then thawing out at Paws for Coffee dog-friendly café with coffee and cake. And looking at dogs of all shapes and sizes to see which might best suit us to join our family.

Golden Retrievers are big. And hairy. And mud magnets. And shed a lot, clouds of white fluffy puppy hair appearing minutes after I put the Hoover away. And they love water. Preferably smelly muddy water. But they are also the breed most often chosen as therapy dogs used with anxiety and autism, thanks to their wonderfully calm affectionate temperament. We needed that calm energy this year. I need to remind myself of that as I sit here with an eye rolling, heavily sighing teenage puppy who has a deep need to chew anything and everything as his adult teeth come in!

Charlie and I adore Cooper (though Libby the cat is less keen, he has yet to understand that she is Queen), and Charlie's friends are always delighted to come round to play with him, or meet us in the park for a walk. We have met a wonderful community of dog walkers who meet up every evening on Hampton Common/Buckingham field to walk their dogs, and so Cooper has a very wide circle of doggy friends and his tail wags faster and his pace picks up as we approach the meeting point every night. At puppy class (here at church!) there were three distinct groups of pups - the cool kids, who would have worn leather jackets if they'd been human (and possibly graffiti-ed the hall when no one was looking); the nerds who'd done their homework (one literally wore a bow tie to class!!); and Cooper the jock, big and boisterous and slightly dim, up for a game with anyone (the one who'd have got into college on a sports scholarship!). If you meet him in the park, he will fling himself onto his back and show you his tummy, because all he wants to do is play and make friends. And if you knock on my door, he will come sashaying down the hall with a toy in his mouth. Or a shoe. Or something from the recycling crate. Not as a gift, you understand, but just to show you what a good little retriever he is.

Pets encourage you to be mindful, to enjoy the small pleasures in life, to slow down and smell the roses. Or deer poo. The sound of a dog drinking is one of the most calming things I can think of. Watching him have a dream where he is running is the funniest thing ever. His every milestone (managing the stairs! Swimming in the sea! Getting into the car by himself!) is a joy. Walking the dog is where Charlie and I have our best chats, where we put the world to rights, where we make plans and talk about our worries. The fresh air, exercise and endorphins are all good stuff, but there is something about the unconditional love that a dog feels for his humans that is priceless, that reminds us that we are all loved, and loveable, and of priceless value. And that, I think, is where God is. There is a sweet little story about why dogs don't live as long as humans; we are here on earth to learn how to love, dogs already know how to do that, so they don't need to stay as long. How true.

Emma Gale



Fisher family update

I've finally found some time to write a quick update on the Fisher family. It's been a busy summer with lots of trips to the park and a holiday to the Isle of Wight. Oliver has enjoyed any activity involving trains, with lots of enthusiasm for bridges and tunnels. Alice likes dressing up in a fashion parade of outfits and a variety of shoes. Ben splits his time between building Lego models and making huge Brio train layouts.

We've made lots of friends at our local church, with various midweek activities for toddlers and a lively Sunday service. Oliver is about to start pre-school now he's two years old. Ben and Alice are settled at school and have a much better social life than me these days! My husband Lee cycles into London most days for work, preferring to avoid the rather unreliable Southern trains. We all enjoy doing Junior parkrun together at the weekend, although Oliver rides in the pushchair until his legs are a little longer.

We would love to join you again soon for Messy Church. It's such a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and spend a couple of hours crafting, baking and singing.

I've sent a photo of us literally hanging out in our garden. The swing is a popular pastime even when it's raining. It will be a relief once Oliver has learnt to push himself!

Lots of love Jenny and the other Fishers xx



Methodist Conference 2018 – what Denise got up to!

One of my priorities as a Conference Representative over the last six years has been to share the experience with as many people as possible, with definitely more emphasis on the ‘experience’ rather than churning out lots of facts and figures.

The journey to Conference 2018 began with two significant events in the summer of 2017. I was privileged to be appointed Secretary of London Synod – a lay role in the District Executive with particular responsibilities during conference too. I was also asked to be the campaign manager for our Chair of District, Micky Youngson, as she had agreed to be nominated in the election to be President of Conference 2018. I’m sure you will realise that Micky won the vote! Equally thrillingly, Bala Gnanapragasam was elected Vice President, and Jasmine Yeboah is Youth President Designate, both also from London District.

The venue for the conference was the leafy campus of Nottingham University which meant we were in for a week of student accommodation and lengthy treks from one building to another. The main business of the conference was held in a large sports arena and that was where we headed for the first session – the installation of Micky and Bala as President and Vice President 2018-19, and their presidential and vice-presidential addresses launching their themes of Radical Grace and Transforming Hope. History was made by a woman handing on the presidency to another woman, and will be made again next year when in her turn Micky hands it on to Rev’d Barbara Glasson.



Fellow District Chair and Synod Secretary excitedly waiting for the ceremony to begin



Rev Michaela Youngson receiving John Wesley’s own Field Bible and the pectoral cross from outgoing President Rev Loraine Mellor

Sunday morning saw the joys of Conference Worship during which ordinands and others were received into full Connexion by a standing vote and this was followed in the afternoon by their ordinations at various churches in the local area. Always a moving and joyful occasion.

Monday saw the start of the formal proceedings of the Conference and London District had the mixed blessing of sitting in the front row. Many topics were covered and debates had and decisions made.

We spent several sessions in workshops, discussion groups and full conference addressing the issue of Marriage and Relationships and this was undoubtedly the area where Conference made us the most proud. Speakers shared vulnerabilities and their hurt in what was a safe, loving and respectful space. There was disappointment at what felt like delay but the room was full, literally, of hugs and support. The conversation now has to take place in circuits over the coming months so we look forward to taking this forward for Conference 2019.

My personal experience of Conference life was oddly one of companionship and isolation. Being on a campus did create a 'Conference Bubble'. The lack of tv, radio and a very unpredictable WiFi provision meant that I didn't really know what was going on outside it. However that did mean that we inside the bubble formed and reinforced friendships and mutual support, especially in the times when the subject discussed affected us deeply. Many of you will have followed the 'Denise at Conference ...' Facebook groups over the years, but this year it expanded into 'Friends at Conference' with 157 participants both at the Conference and in circuits. It became a place to go to share, be silly, and in a way became our family for the week.

Personal highlights of the week included celebrating the Methodist involvement in the work of Queen Victoria's Seaman's Rest, MHA, and All We Can as they marked milestone anniversaries of their work. I was delighted that Conference passed a resolution to encourage the reduction of use of single-use plastics, and after six years making my maiden speech during a discussion on the training of Worship Leaders.

It was such a privilege being part of the London presence at Conference this year – 22 district reps both presbyterial and lay, ex Vice President and team leader of JPIT Rachel Lampard, Conference Vice Secretary Jonathan Hustler, Connexional Treasurer Tim Swindell, Martin Harker as Memorials Secretary (OK so he's just moved to York!), Naomi Oates as part of the Conference office team, Paul Wood and Ian Worsfold who provide our music and worship hymns and much more, and of course Micky and Bala who will be taking us into what will be an amazing year. I hope you've enjoyed having a taste of what we got up to!

Denise Tomlinson



Lowdown on High Leigh

Have you ever been delighted that you had been proved wrong? Years ago, I saw the trailer for the T.V. series "Father Ted" and I felt it looked anything but funny, however once I watched the programme I was laughing away like the rest of the family.

It happened again the other day. Among a pile of fliers for various events was a rather dull one for the Methodist London District Conference. I was totally underwhelmed. Now I know full well that the word "Conference" is very special in Methodism, but for me the word "Conference" takes me back to my working days when at the annual Local Government Association Conference my task was to chaperone recalcitrant politicians who were less interested in talks on the major issues of the day and more concerned with free meals, free drinks and a bit of extra marital sex.

I was fortunate on this occasion that Vicci was on the organising team for the Conference. She assured me that it was about a subject close to my heart, namely the way that we in the U.K. think about immigration (remember that 37% of Londoners were born outside the U.K.) She also pointed out that the cost of the Conference was being subsidised by the London District and that as Worship Leader for the event she would love to see a few folk there from her own patch. Well, I was prepared to give it a go, even if my expectations were decidedly limited. The good news was that the Duncans and Team Setim were also interested.

So, on Friday 20 July we set off for High Leigh Conference Centre, which is a few miles up the A10 from junction 25 on the M25. In fact, our first port of call was Hoddesdon Town Centre, where we met up for a pie and mash lunch, and then on to High Leigh. Even with the ravages of the heatwave, High Leigh with its extensive gardens is a most attractive place. We were so well looked after and fed to a standard that would make a three-star hotel proud.

We were welcomed by the Methodist President Revd. Michaela Youngson and the Vice President Bala Gnanapragasam and were then launched into our first act of Worship which featured as a keynote speaker Revd. Dr. Inderjit Bhogal. Inderjit is a Past Methodist President and he told us of his family's journey from the Punjab, via Kenya to Dudley, where as a young Sikh he discovered Jesus at his local Methodist Church. He is the founder of the City of Sanctuary movement, designed to encourage a hospitable and welcoming approach to refugees and immigrants. What an excellent start, I thought, yet the next day was to blow my socks off! On Saturday morning we were treated to one of the best speakers I have heard in ages. We were privileged to listen to the poet Padraig O Tuama. He spoke about the Book of Ruth, the Irish potato famine, about himself and about using stories to deal with conflict and blame. It was simply awesome! Frankly, I would have driven to High Leigh just to hear him.

We were treated to two more fine speakers on Sunday. The Revd. Cathy Bird led a Bible study on the whole Bible (yes, I do mean the whole Bible), while Dr. Daleep Mukarji, the recently retired Director of Christian Aid, gave a most impassioned call for a non-hostile approach to immigration.

The Conference programme gave us time to reflect on the Prayer Stations in the Prayer Barn; to enjoy late night entertainment of a near professional level; and attendance at a veritable feast of workshops. Making a choice on which workshops to attend was the hardest bit, for I heard praise from everyone who attended them.

There were over 170 folk at the event plus all the volunteers. This provided us with a very special delight because you knew that everyone and anyone you met was, like you, a London Methodist. It

also meant that people like us who come from a small congregation could enjoy worshipping in a much larger gathering. And boy was the Worship amazing! Our very own Vicci led a gifted seven strong worship band (which included Mark Davidson -complete with natty Ska hat). The band gave us a stunning diversity of worship music styles. We had at one service lots of modern worship anthems from the likes of Matt Redman while another service featured reflective hymns with Taize songs in several different languages. When we took Communion on Sunday morning we heartily sang traditional Methodist hymns, like "O. for a thousand tongues to sing", and we even had a service with what you might call secular songs about love and relationships drawing on the likes of the Bee Gees, Labi Siffre, Madness and the Beatles. Each different style made our praise worthy of our Lord. It was so heart-warming to be singing with so many African and Caribbean voices.

Alongside all this up-lifting activity for the adults, the organisers ran a youth programme. Diana and Diogo had a whale of a time, and so enjoyed having Bron with them. Bron had a really creative and energetic role as a member of the youth programme team, while we benefited from having Tim and Dain with us, with Dain joining Mark D in wearing glamorous head gear. It was also clear to everyone just what a skilled young man Rodrigo has become, whether it is navigation, animation or tent-making; he is the main man!

We all felt it was a joy to have Emillie with us, as she kept not only Rubina and Agostinho busy but also Auntie Kathy and Uncle Craig. Emillie made Communion so special for me by falling asleep on my shoulder. Craig was chosen to read the lesson at the Communion service, and with a cheeky grin introduced it with the words "Morning Church!" We have to hope that Vicci will forgive him one day for the slogan on his tee shirt!!

So, brothers and sisters, I was totally delighted to be proved wrong! It was not a dull conference, it was, in fact, one of the most enjoyable and vibrant Christian events I have been to in years. There is talk of another one in two years' time, and if this is the case, trust me, it will be very popular. We kept thinking of Hampton folk who would have loved it. So please be ready to book early next time even if they still call it a "Conference".

Mark Gilks



My friend Jeannie Trotter

I first met my friend Jeannie nearly 60 years ago, when I took my children to Sunday School for the first time. Jeannie was there helping with the very young children, but my children didn't know anyone and wouldn't stay without me – so I stayed, and helped in Sunday School for – I don't know how many years! – and Jeannie and I became good friends. We did so much 'stuff' together, like taking the Sunday School children to Carlisle Park (practice for Circuit Sports); and up to Methodist Central Hall in London to the Sunny Smiles Service (on the train – across Westminster Bridge to the Hall with what seemed like hundreds more over-excited children – then getting them home safely).

Then there was the Sunday School Christmas Party. The other teachers – and there were a good few of us – used to organise sandwiches, cakes and jelly; games; decorations for the Christmas Tree; presents from Father Christmas. Jeannie had what she called her 'Do Book', in which she had written numbers of everything we needed for the party; loaves for sandwiches, how many cakes and drinks, what colour jellies. It was hard work, but we loved being with the children.

The years passed, Jeannie and I started work at Hampton Infants School, still with young children. Whatever we did, Jeannie always knew she had John and her family behind her. Then her grandchildren arrived on the scene, and before we knew – great grandchildren! Jeannie loved her family dearly, and was very proud of all their achievements.

It wasn't all plain sailing, we both had tragedies and heartaches, but we helped each other through, and never lost our Faith. Our Church Family has always meant a lot to both of us. In life, you don't get many friends like Jeannie – I was fortunate that day I took my children to Hampton Methodist Church.

Why hast thou cast our lot
In the same age and place,
And why together brought
To see each other's face,
To join in loving sympathy
And mix our friendly souls in thee?

Goodbye Jeannie, I will miss you.

Olive Natrass

Jeannie died at the end of July and her funeral was conducted at our church on 16 August by Rev Ben Haslam. The photo of Jeannie with Olive and Joan was taken at the Ladies Guild 50th birthday.



Triple birthday celebrations

On a wet and rainy Sunday lunchtime after church at the end of August we took the opportunity to celebrate three birthdays of members of our congregation. Just over 40 of us stayed for a lovely faith lunch to celebrate with Kathy, Doris and Rubina. At times like these you wonder if there will be enough food for everyone or if anyone will bring anything! We need not have worried at all as there was an abundance of sweet and savoury delights to suit all tastes and needs. Not forgetting the enormous birthday cake.

During the service, in true Hampton Methodist tradition, I had already embarrassed all three by insisting they come up to the front and face the congregation while we sang 'Happy Birthday' to them.

We ranged from older adult members to very young toddlers and we did not leave the church until nearly 3.00pm. It made me reflect how lucky we are at Hampton Methodist Church to have such a wonderful diverse congregation and how blessed we are that we can all meet and share such wonderful fellowship with each other – not just for the different dishes and food (which was so lovely) – but also to relax and talk to each other about the week ahead or anything else that might have been going on in our lives. We had not had a church picnic like we used to have for sometime and this was a reminder of something we used to do at least once a year.

It was a lovely event and hopefully may even be repeated sometime in the future.

Pam Harrison



Ben Haslam moves to Exeter

A while ago Ann, our minister at Crediton Methodist Church, mentioned to me in passing that she had been on an Interview Panel for ministers wishing to move to this circuit and had noted that Ben Haslam, one of the applicants, was previously in the Teddington Circuit. Did I know him? Whoooooah! That really took my breath away! I'd seen a few Facebook posts from Ben since he left Hampton and served in Milton Keynes but didn't realise he was moving on this year. Then to hear that, of the 375 Methodist circuits in the UK, he was coming to Exeter Coast and Country, where I am, was quite amazing.

It's a big circuit here with 28 churches, so Ben will clock up the miles between churches in Honiton and Seaton in the east, along to Exmouth, through Exeter to Crediton and villages in rural mid-Devon, then to the outskirts of Dartmoor for the most westerly church in the circuit. I hope he's practised his reverse driving for when he meets other vehicles coming in the opposite direction down narrow country lanes! And factors in the very real possibility of being delayed behind a tractor when driving to a service or meeting. But on the positive side, how great to be stationed in this beautiful county of Devon and travelling through such stunning coastal and countryside.

Liz and Wendy contacted me earlier this year to ask if they could come and stay during the summer holidays. In order to book train tickets in advance, we agreed a long weekend at the end of August and put it on the calendar. It was several months later that I found out the date of the evening Welcome Service in Exmouth and, what do you know, it was 2nd September, when Liz and Wendy would be visiting!

We decided it would be fun to surprise Ben, so Liz and Wendy didn't mention it when Ben returned to Hampton to take the funeral service of Jeannie Trotter. They also took care not to let slip on social media that they were in Devon. On the Sunday in question we spent the afternoon in Exmouth and were sitting on the top deck of a bus going along the Esplanade, when who should we spot down below entering a café? Ben and his parents! Later on, outside Exmouth Methodist church, we saw Ben approaching and were able to spring our surprise. Excited hugs and greetings all round! It was lovely that Ben's parents, Julie and Paul, were there to support him and nice to have the chance to chat and catch up with them too.



Tower Street Church, Exmouth, was packed to the rafters (literally, as even the gallery was filled to capacity). It was good to hear Ben reading from the Bible and renewing his commitment to the Lord's work in this new area. We pray that his ministry in the Exeter Coast and Country circuit will be richly blessed.

Hilary Everitt



Colin and I were in Amsterdam in April, mainly to visit the special Van Gogh exhibition; we had booked online to make our visit to the exhibition and on the selected day set off early for our timed entry. We walked from our hotel through Vondelpark to the museum and arrived quite early and so had a wander around the area when we spotted this – we were very amused and wondered quite what Willem had done to warrant an area in a prestigious part of Amsterdam being named after him!

On our return to the UK we asked Willem why he had a square named after him and he explained that it was not after him but another famous Sandberg.

The internet reveals the following: Jonkheer Willem Jacob Henri Berend Sandberg (1897–1984) known as Willem Sandberg was a Dutch typographer, museum curator and member of the Dutch resistance during World War II. Sandberg was active in the Dutch resistance movement preparing forged documents for Jews and others wanted by the Gestapo. To hinder the Nazis, on 27 March 1943, Sandberg was among those who took part in planning the bombing of the Amsterdam Public Records Office. Thousands of files were destroyed, and the attempt to compare forged documents with the registry was hindered. Ten people were arrested and executed by firing squad. Sandberg spent 15 months in hiding and avoided arrest. His wife and son, however, were arrested and incarcerated for several months. For his participation in the resistance movement and helping to save the lives of Jews during the war, Sandberg was recognized as Righteous Among The Nations on 26 November 1968.

So we all know now why our Willem has a square with his name!

Oh – and we did enjoy the excellent Van Gogh exhibition.

Hazel Greasby

Memories of my mum

This is a poem that Dad came across at home recently. It was written by me not long after my Mum died. Mum was a long-standing and involved member of HMC. Some of you will remember her and her involvement in the life of this church. Her Christian faith, even in the face of terminal illness, is something that I have tried to express in this poem. For those of you who did not know Mum, she spent the last 2 years of her life in a wheelchair, as cancer had made her a paraplegic. This is referenced in the poem. It is an intensely personal piece of writing, but it ends with Mum's unshakeable belief that, on death, she would be free with Christ; that she would be where she was meant to be. She always made this absolutely clear.

The last line and the sentiments behind it were influenced by some words by John Bunyan which were given to me by my Grandma Rhona. Grandma Rhona, with her strong Christian faith, was also of crucial influence in my life. Bunyan was particularly significant to her, as he was imprisoned for his non-conformist beliefs in Bedford, where she lived for much of her adult life and was a local preacher in the Methodist Church there. On my 8th birthday, she gave me a children's version of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, which she inscribed with the following words, "From an old pilgrim who is near the shining gates, to a young pilgrim just starting on the way." Mum passed through those shining gates in 2003 and Grandma in 2011.

Here are Bunyan's words, which inspired the ending of this poem, "The pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber whose window opened toward the sun-rising. The name of the chamber was Peace, where he slept till break of day and then he awoke and sang."

When I was young, I heard her voice
Calling. Calmly by the Cross.
Stern and chiding, but somehow
That made me feel safe inside.

As I grew up, I heard her voice
Calling. Cradling the Cross.
Softly suggesting,
Wisely silent. Waiting for me
To make the choice she might have made.

When I was grown, I heard her voice
Calling. Child of the Cross.
You are my friend, not just my daughter.
We can laugh and fight, and you can
Bury your head on my shoulder
When things get too much.

When she was ill, I heard her voice
Calling. For help. A dropped pen,
A smashed cup. Clinging to the Cross.
Tears in her eyes, as she lifts her gaze
And says she can take no more.
Moments that soften, then turn
To frustration, anger, and in me

Bitter-sweet, jealously-given duty.
Now that she's gone, I hear her voice
Calling. Cradled by the Cross.
She tells me she loves me, that
She would have done the same in my shoes.
She says she understands.

And now it's my turn. It's taken
A lifetime to respond. Too late
To meet her soft brown eyes
And speak those words, lingering
But kept buried,
Spoken to myself in precious
Carefully-wrapped moments.

My pride was those words not spoken.
Yet she read my innermost thoughts
And cradled me when through it all
She sensed I could not stand either.

Now that you're gone, hear my voice
Calling. That sound you could have heard
Had I wished.
Mutti: simply, honestly,
No cover, no protection,
No more stupid waffle.

I'm sorry. I love you. I have
Always loved you. I could not tell you then.
I whisper now.
As you awake and turn your gaze
To the sun rising.
As you awake
And sing.

Ruth Sandberg

Being a Circuit

It's very easy to see being a Circuit as a functional thing which works together because that makes things like affording a minister or sorting out how to comply with new regulations easier (GDPR anyone?) But at its heart, this is not why we are organised like this but because we have always been a connexional people, seeking to work together, in obedience to God, in order to make a difference in the world within communities and the lives of individuals. We see this worked out practically in projects at Hampton such as the Bike Hub and the Extra Mile where we have received donations from across the Circuit, at Tea and Memories and Insights where we have visitors from across the Circuit and in the Ladies Guild where Hampton meets together annually with the other guilds across the circuit. And Messy Church is of course a part of a world-wide movement of messy churches serving many different communities and ages of people. But we should also be asking ourselves, "What does it mean to be a connexional people, shaped for mission in the context of this circuit?"

One of the ways in which we affirm our connexional nature one with another is through Circuit Services and in early September, Hampton hosted a Circuit Service led by the Local Preachers and Worship Leaders of the Circuit with Preacher Caroline Ogunsola, President of the London District of Methodist Women in Britain. Taking the theme suggested by the Local Preachers “Christ among the poor”, Caroline reminded us that Christ is not seen as someone spreading largesse among the poor. He does not give money away in the Bible. What he does is teach, heal and feed and above all, treat all people with dignity. There was a wonderful buzz in the halls afterwards as we all tucked in to delicious cake and many people asked more questions about the projects we had heard testimonies from (Bike Hub, The Extra Mile and Baby Basics).

As well as worshipping and meeting together, it is also great to spend time together more socially and to that end, Sunbury’s Geoff Buckingham has written a brand new pantomime “Old King Cole.” This Circuit Panto, in which we hope to have performers from all the churches, will take place at Sunbury in May. Do speak to Vicci or Geoff if you want to be involved and don’t forget to keep your eyes and ears open for when tickets go on sale. You don’t want to miss out! Oh no you don’t!

The Circuit Panto will be a great way to see connexionalism at its best, if you are still not sure what it means. None of the churches has enough actors, singers and dancers to put on a panto on their own, but join together and we will have something truly special.

Vicci

It’s a kind of magic!

We all know that Jesus performed miracles as part of his ministry. They included walking on water, feeding thousands with only the contents of a lad’s lunch and even raising his friend Lazarus from the dead. In John’s Gospel these miracles are called “signs”, because of what they show about Jesus’s identity. In other words, they told a story in a really powerful fashion. Now, telling stories that illustrate our faith is still vitally important today. Indeed, Bron Coveney has been doing just that as a Lay Worker, Worship Leader and trainee Local Preacher using magic tricks. Many of you will remember her spell-binding performance at our Spring Concert in aid of Ladies Guild. There is no doubt that these tricks have captured the imagination of both children and adults. So, with the encouragement of Vicci and myself, Bron has turned these magic skills into a new piece of youth outreach, called “Gospel Illusions”. This Circuit venture, supported by our Church, is aimed at children aged between 7 and 12 years old, who meet up at our Church on the third Saturday in the month to learn magic tricks, which tell a Gospel story.

The first session, this September, attracted 11 youngsters representing all the churches in the Circuit. There was a real buzz of excitement as Bron, who is a marvellous tutor, showed them how to pass a coin through a solid table and then how to get two pieces of string to join into one. If you hear of any children in this age group who might be interested, do please let me or Bron know and they too can enjoy learning about Jesus in a ‘magical’ way.

Mark Gilks

The Bike Hub Project

I didn't realise when our church became a 'Bike Hub' for the Bike Project, just how popular this would be. We commenced in May this year and by Friday 17 August we were ready for our first collection. A total of 23 bikes were collected by Henock, the lovely van driver for the Bike Project.

We had our second collection of bikes on Friday 14 September when 18 bikes were picked up. So we have donated 41 bikes so far to this amazing project.

My thanks go to Liz Chadwick who has been there for both collections to meet the van driver and unlock the donated bikes. We have already started collecting for the next pick up.

St Mary's and All Saints churches are putting the information about our project in their church notices and magazines and all the churches in our circuit now have the information about our 'Bike Hub'

So just to remind you-bikes can be donated in any condition and the drop off time is on a Sunday between 11.45-12.30 at the halls at the back of the church. For more information see www.thebikeproject.co.uk

Wendy Salmon



Books

Sea prayer by Khaled Hosseini. Illustrated by Dan Williams.

Khaled Hosseini is the bestselling author of 'The kite runner' and 'A thousand splendid suns.' He is also a Goodwill Envoy to UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency. He is one of my favourite authors.

This is a beautifully illustrated, very short work of fiction for people of all ages. It takes the form of a letter from a fearful Syrian father to his young son, Marwan, both waiting on a moonlit beach for the boat that will take them and many others to a safer, new home. He reflects on life in Homs before the war, a time of peace unknown to Marwan.

Khaled Hosseini felt compelled to write this book after seeing the haunting image of three-year-old Alan Kurdi, whose lifeless body washed up on a Turkish beach in September 2015. It is intended to pay tribute to the millions of splintered families, forced from home by war and persecution. Proceeds from the sale of the book are going to UNHCR and the Khaled Hosseini Foundation, set up to help fund lifesaving relief efforts to refugees around the world.

The girl who smiled beads: a story of war and what comes after by Clemantine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil.

Clemantine was born into a comfortable middle-class family in Rwanda. When she was six she fled the Rwandan massacre with her 15 year old sister, looking for a stable existence as they struggled through seven African countries on their own. When Clemantine was 12, she and Claire were eventually granted refugee status in America. Oprah Winfrey publicly reunited them with their parents and the younger siblings they had never met (their 'replacements.')

The reunion proved anything but idyllic. She says, 'The fantasy of reunion was a lie. No lights, no camera angles, no make-up could restore the time we'd lost and the relationship we could have had.'

Clemantine is often angry, bitter and suspicious of kindness, and the relationship with her sister is sometimes strained. As an adult she tries to make sense of the world. She says, 'Survival, true survival of the body and soul, requires creativity, freedom of thought, collaboration. We need to say: I honour the things that you respect and I value the things you cherish. I am not better than you. You are not better than me. Nobody is better than anybody else.' She is fiercely determined not to be seen as a victim and is committed to building a life on her own terms. She says, 'The plot provided by the universe was filled with starvation, war and rape. I would not - could not - live in that tale.'

The title refers to a story her nanny Mukamana used to tell her as a child.

Liz Windaybank

What I learnt: What my Listeners Say - and Why We Should Take Note By Jeremy Vine

Jeremy Vine is a journalist and broadcaster. He hosts a BBC Radio 2 show of his own, presents BBC Points of View and is also the quiz master for BBC Eggheads (a programme for those who consider themselves extremely intelligent and want to challenge other resident clever clogs). He also has hosted Newsnight and Election programmes where he discusses the statistics of what is happening as it happens. Another claim to fame is that he is the brother of the comedian Tim Vine.

Although I have to say I don't listen to his show or watch any of his programmes I found the title of his book quite intriguing. People are a very interesting subject, especially members of the public as

you never know what they are going to come up with and can surprise you. I found myself wanting to know what he learnt from his listeners and why we should take note of what they said.

Jeremy has written his book in a very easy style and was a good choice for holiday reading by the pool in Sardinia. He had some very funny anecdotes including the lengths some people will go to so they can get on the radio several times with made up stories. I really enjoyed hearing about all the different characters he had come across as well as things that had gone wrong on radio or in TV studios.

He concludes with what he believes are the three best things in life: Love, Laughter and Learning. I won't tell you what else he has learnt from his listeners, I will let you discover that for yourself!

Pam Harrison

Christmas is coming

Every autumn Janice gives out catalogues for cards and gifts that can be purchased from the Leprosy Mission. She will be pleased to let you have one and will order the goods for you. You can see what is available online at www.tlmtrading.com Ordering from Janice means a bulk order and no postage to pay.

Last year we knitted and crocheted 80 little angels, attached a Christmas greeting and left them around Hampton for people to find and take home. The idea originated 'up north' - the Christmas story is filled with angels bringing messages, and yarn bombing an area was a way of sending these little messengers out to bring unexpected greetings to those who found them. We will be repeating this this coming Christmas, so if you enjoy a spot of knitting, find the pattern at <http://www.christmasangel.net> or pick one up in the narthex and get knitting!

The mission of Operation Christmas Child is to show God's love in a tangible way to needy children around the world, and together with the local church worldwide, to share the good news of Jesus Christ. To create your shoebox gift, pick up a flat-pack pre-printed box from the narthex together with a leaflet to give you ideas about what to include for girls and boys of various ages. Look at the website for stories of children who have received boxes and for ideas of things you can make to put in the box. <https://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child> You can also come along to Ladies Guild on 23 October to hear from someone who has taken the shoeboxes abroad and seen children excitedly opening them.

Bring your filled box to church on Sunday 11 November.

Liz Windaybank



Dates for your diary around the circuit and beyond

Tuesday 9 October – Hampton Ladies Guild at 8 pm. Australia, New Zealand and Fiji – Rhiannon Lewis.

Saturday 13 October – Café Arts at Hounslow Methodist Church. Singer/songwriter Rob Halligan is touring his new album, 'We all write the songs.' There is an interesting bio on www.robhalligan.co.uk He says, 'Preaching didn't convert me. It was people being Jesus to me that made the difference. When we do rather than say, we change the world.' Doors open 7 pm for 8 pm start. Tickets £9 on the door or order in advance from Mark Gilks.

16 – 18 October – Christian Resources Exhibition at Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher. It showcases a range of books, music and resources with keynote speakers.

Tuesday 23 October – Messy Church at Hampton 10.30 am – 12 noon.

Tuesday 23 October – Hampton Ladies Guild at 8 pm. Shoeboxes for Central Asia by Maureen Grew.

Friday 26 October – Full of Life Fair at RFU Twickenham. The day-long event for older people will have over 80 stalls, including one showcasing churches in the borough. Also the opportunity to try out a number of activities and enjoy various cultural performances and demonstrations. Find out more at https://www.richmond.gov.uk/full_of_life

Friday 26 October – Charlotte Gambill and LIFE worship at Holy Trinity Brompton. 7.30 pm. Tickets £15 from <https://lifechurchhome.brushfire.com/cherish-tour/445175>

Friday 2 November – Circuit Fireworks Party with soup and sausages. Bring your own firework. 6 – 8.30 pm at Hanworth.

Saturday 3 November – Charity Christmas Card Sale at Teddington. 10.30 am – 12.30 pm.

Friday 2 November – Fish and Chips Film Night at East Molesey Church. The film will be 'Goodbye Christopher Robin.' Food at 6.45 pm followed by the film at 7.30 pm. Please book in advance to events@emmc.co.uk £6.

Tuesday 6 November – Hampton Ladies Guild at 8 pm. A chap worth knowing – confessions of a university chaplain – Rev'd David Innes.

Wednesday 7 November (and 21 and 28 November) – Circuit Prayer Course at East Molesey 8 pm.

Saturday 10 November – Barn Dance at Teddington. 6.30 – 9 pm.

Saturday 17 November – Christmas Market and Model Railway Exhibition at East Molesey Church. 10.30 am – 3 pm.

Saturday 17 November – Tear Fund's Big Quiz Night at 7.30 pm at Hampton Baptist Church. Come as a team (max 6) or individuals and teams will be put together on the night. Cost is £5 which includes tea/coffee/juice and nibbles.

Saturday 15 December – Cod and carols at Sunbury from 6 pm.

Saturday 22 December – Messy Nativity at Hampton 3 – 5 pm.