

Rejoice!

Jesus is risen!

April 2018



The Magazine of the West Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Some words from Deacon Irene.

I have a Management group that I meet with once a month to talk about the work that I'm doing. My Management group consists of Rev. Andrew Maguire, Sheila Johnson, Maggie Blowers, Ralph Perkins and Lesley Dent. Sometimes Rev. Maurice Stafford joins us. They are there mainly to offer support and guidance and I'm grateful for the time they give to travel and meet with me and to offer their expertise and advice.

At the Circuit Leadership Team meeting on the evening of the 21st of February at London Road. Rev. Andrew had asked me to say something about my first year in the Circuit. He kindly offered some guidance by suggesting three topics on which to talk. First was about the highlights; second was about where I thought the greatest potential was for developing the work and third was about any particular things that I felt might hinder the work. I'll summarise what I shared with that meeting regarding the highlights and maybe a bit more.

The Highlights

One of the biggest highlights for me is being in the West Norfolk Circuit. One of the first things I did in the first few months of arriving, was to try and familiarise myself with the context I was going to be working and ministering in. I travelled around Downham Market and visited some of the surrounding villages. I went to Kings' Lynn and instantly fell in love with the Hardwick Retail Park with one of the biggest Tesco's I have seen... and I have seen a few including the one at the Ricoh Arena in Coventry and on the Great Horton road in Bradford. Recently my brother and his family visited and he said that the Sainsbury's at the Hardwick Retail Park was one of the biggest he had seen and I think he was surprised mainly because it is in a rural setting.

We have been to Hunstanton and we've enjoyed time by the beach. We've also been to Hunstanton Methodist Church for an Aviation Mission event where Nathan and Petra enjoyed spending time on the flight simulation trying to land planes on the airstrip.

A few weeks ago, during the February school break Nathan, Petra and I went to Ely to the Cineworld to watch the movie: Black Panther. We were all in agreement that it was one of the best movies we had seen! Wakanda Forever!

My children; Nathan and Petra have settled in very well and they like Norfolk. We go to Downham Market Methodist for worship and we've settled in well there as well. Petra enjoys being part of Junior Church and JMA and Nathan usually helps with projection of the slides.

Petra is now in Year five at Hilgay Riverside Academy. Before the school closed for the Christmas break, she invited me to All Saints, the Anglican church next door for the school's Nativity and Carol Service led by Father James. The village is always buzzing with one event or the other at locations such as the churches or village hall. We planned a number of exciting events at the Methodist chapel including a Pancake Party and a Celebration for Mothers amongst others.

Nathan is in his first year of high school at Downham Market Academy. Although it said to have poor outcomes for pupils, with results well below the national average, things are looking up. It has been taken over by the Cambridgeshire Educational Trust and has been teamed with Chesterton Community College that is slightly smaller in number with around 960 pupils. Downham Market Academy had 1370 pupils coming from as far as Thetford. Chesterton Community College is situated in the centre of Cambridge city and has recently been rated as outstanding by Ofsted. I have been in contact with some of the staff at Downham Market Academy and I'm hoping to get some of the local churches in Downham Market to join me in leading assemblies there. I will be

going to the Churches Together meeting at Downham Market Methodist Church soon to hear what they think.

I led the Mothering Sunday Service at Downham Market. It was All-Age as well as a Parade Service for the uniformed groups. It was an action-packed service where Boys Brigade helped with a reading, the Girl Guides also helped with a reading and led the Thanksgiving Prayer. Junior Church helped distribute the flowers to all the ladies present. Some of the toddlers helped collect the Offering and the Choir sang a beautiful song about angels that was very moving. And 'the beat goes on' as they say, I cannot believe it's already been a year and a half.

Deacon Irene

I'd like, on behalf of my family, to thank you for the many prayers for my great nephew Matthew. Sadly, Matthew past away at Claire House, Birkenhead, Merseyside on February 28th -aged 8. As I write I am preparing a text to read at his funeral on March 20th.

This year has not had the best of starts but I thank God that Graham continues to recover from his heart attack. My father in law is out of hospital.

I am so grateful for the love and grace of God, and the blessings of many people in this District. May God's peace and love be on you all.

Heather Brown

Did you know?

Rev. Anne Richardson comes to Downham Market with the Deaf Community that she leads in worship. She signs and some of us have even worked out how to say Good morning!

If you know of anyone who would benefit from her expertise the next service is on April 22nd.

They will be made very welcome.

Praying together in the Circuit

Jesus said to her, "Mary". John 20: 15

The tomb was empty, where had they put his body?

Mary was heartbroken, overwhelmed with grief, tears flowed.

Then everything changed. Someone she supposed to be the gardener spoke to her, but it was not the gardener, it was Jesus,

She knew that voice, joy unspeakable flooded her being
Jesus was alive, present with her. She had seen his suffering,
witnessed his cruel death and now she knows He is alive.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

We are truly blessed to know the living Christ
and live to share our faith.

May we never lose the wonder of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. His victory over sin and death and all that means for believers.

We pray that the good news of the Gospel as read in Scripture,
and shared with others may be declared in love and truth in the
power of the Holy Spirit and those as yet unsaved may know your love
for them and the message of the Gospel may come alive to them and
they will believe and experience the unspeakable joy of knowing you.

We pray for those who experience persecution and suffering because
they remain faithful and will not deny their living, reigning Lord.
Lord, be their strength and sufficiency, keep them in your peace.
May the eyes of their persecutors be opened to who you are.

God has raised from death our Lord Jesus Christ,
who is the Great Shepherd of the sheep as a result of his blood
by which the eternal covenant is sealed. May the God of peace
provide you with every good thing you need in order to do his will,
and may he, through Jesus Christ, do in us what pleases him.
And to Christ be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. Heb. 13:20-21

Jesus said, I will; never leave you nor forsake you.
May your presence be the reality to all going through difficult times.
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want
he makes me lie down in green pastures
he restoreth my soul.

Prayers have been requested for: -

Derek + Viv, Stephanie, Janice, Amy, Trisha, Linda, Andrew, Mavis,
Julia., Rachel, Judy, Dulcie + Neill, Kelly, Kath, Stephen + Victoria,
William, Tom, Ken + Norma, Brian Osborne, Sarah,

Our thoughts and prayers are with Rev. Catherine Dixon who had to
have her appendix removed during the second week in March. We wish
her a speedy recovery but expect her to be sensible and not do too
much too soon!

"The very first Easter taught us this: that life never ends and love
never dies."

— Kate McGahan

Easter is God throwing everything at death so that I can give
everything to life."

— Craig D. Lounsborough

"Love paid a price so hope could become a reality."

— Susan Gaddi

Have an egg-cellent Easter!

DISTRICT CELEBRATION - SATURDAY 5TH MAY

On the next page is the poster about the 5th May District Celebration at St Edmundsbury Cathedral. It would be great if we could fill the cathedral! The Circuit is arranging a coach with pick-up points at our Hunstanton, London Road and Downham Market churches. Cost £5.00. Leaving in good time to arrive for 5pm and returning after the service. Further details are available from your church stewards. Book the date and a place on the coach now!



A District Celebration

Saturday, 5 May 2018 at 6.30 pm

St Edmundsbury Cathedral,
Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1LS



'Day by Day in Worship and Mission'
with guest speaker **Revd Loraine Mellor**,
President of the Methodist Conference.

- The event is free with tea, coffee and cake provided at the cathedral from 5.00 pm.
- The East Anglia District will cover half the cost of coaches arranged by circuits.
- Suggested car parks are Ram Meadow, Cotton Lane, IP33 1XP and Parkway Multi-Storey, IP33 3BA.
- Disabled parking is available at the cathedral. There is a lift from the cloisters and a ramp from the front entrance.
- The service will be interpreted by a BSL interpreter.
- A worship group from Haverhill will lead worship songs from 6.00 pm.
- The service will start at 6.30 pm.

Come and share in a wonderful celebration!

East Anglia District
of the Methodist Church



Easter April 11, 1784

I
WHEN JESUS bow'd his awful head
And dy'd t'avert our fatal doom,
His friends the sacred corps convey'd,
To the dark region of the tomb.

II
The Angelic host, with wonder saw,
Their sov'reign leave his bright abode,
To vindicate the righteous law,
Promulged by th' Eternal GOD.

III
They view'd him in the sinner's stead
Obey the precepts man forsook;
While woes unnumbered o'er his head,
Like an unbounded ocean broke.

IV
But when they saw the fatal tree,
And there, the son of GOD expire!
(Unknown the ineffable decree,)
Amazement fill'd the heav'nly choir.

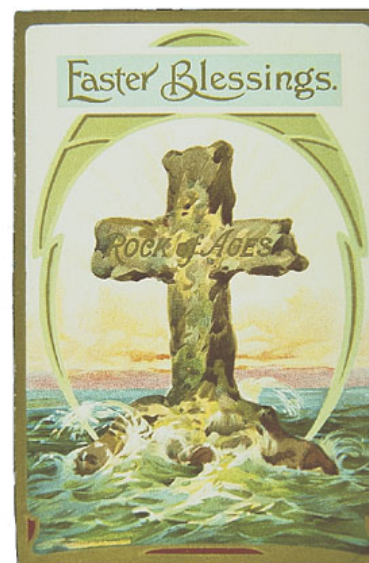
V
And the dejected friendless train,
Who fondly dream't of empire here;
Now mourn'd each expectation vain,
And every hope dissolv'd in air.

VI
Their foes exult, and scoffing, cry,
"And is your boasted leader gone?"
"His pow'r! the power but to die?"
"His kingdom! but a narrow tomb?"

VII
Let earth rejoice, let heav'n resound!
Behold the conquering MONARCH Rise!
From the dark mansion under ground,
To the bright empire of the skies!

VIII
Resplendant, now each promise shines;
Divinity bright each varying scene.
The great TRANSACTION, how sublime!
And LOVE how infinite! to men.

IX
The Angels bow before their KING;
But never hail'd a SAVIOR'S name;
'Tis Man, can a REDEEMER sing;
And dying love exalts his theme.





Circuit Celebration Service

Preacher:

**The Rev. Julian Pursehouse,
Chair of the East Anglia District**

**Service to include the admission of
Mr Thomas Smith as a Local Preacher**

3pm, Sunday 27th May 2018

London Road Methodist Church

followed by refreshments



Terrington St Clement

At Network (MWiB) Mary Houghton welcomed everyone. Jenny Howling did a reading "the Glory of the Garden". Our speaker was Pearl Lewis who shared a selection of the poems she has written. Mary thanked her and presented her with a plant.

Next meeting was an open afternoon with Helen giving us an update on Kenya. It was very well attended.

Knit and natter continues to be well attended on Saturday morning. We are busy preparing Easter.

Linda Howling

Pott Row

On Saturday 3rd March we held a coffee morning in aid of The Norfolk Hospice, Tapping House. It was cold and the snow was still making difficulties for some people, so we were wondering how many would be able to support us. Fortunately, enough folk made the journey and we had an enjoyable time together (and happily swapped tales of problems with the week's weather!) We were very pleased to welcome all who came, enabling us to raise £307.96 for the hospice - many thanks to you all.

Shirley and Bill Hone

Dersingham

Recent activities in aid of MHA have resulted in a total of £225.52 in this financial year being raised for this very worthwhile cause. A very successful and enjoyable Quiz Night, run by John and Rev. Pam Bayliss was held in October which raised £102 and £71 was donated to the Christmas Friendship Appeal, along with 29 Christmas cards to be distributed to those in the Homes who do not receive any cards. Collecting boxes and the 2017 Quiz Sheets made up the total and, apparently, members of the Carpet Bowls Club on a Wednesday afternoon donate their 5p 'forfeits' to the cause, some weeks doing better than others! The Count Your Blessings Lent Appeal in aid of Action for Children is in the process of being done at the moment and the Home Collecting Boxes will be opened in the near future. Meanwhile the Food Bank Box continues to be filled up each Sunday and when overflowing is taken to the Food Bank by John and Heather Titcombe.

A new village centre is being built at the moment in Dersingham and the Parish Council has asked for a short article about the Methodist Church in the village and its activities which will be buried in a time capsule somewhere in the building or surrounding grounds for a future generation to find. Elizabeth Batstone has submitted an article containing a photograph and giving a brief history of the local church, listing its activities and ending with the statement that 'we aim to be a thriving church, spiritually, pastorally, socially, to further the Kingdom of God and show the love we have found in Jesus Christ'. It is fascinating to wonder when it will be dug up and by whom, and what the world will look like then!

We are now beginning to look forward to our annual Flower Festival which will run from Thursday 24th to Sunday 27th May. The theme is Biblical journeys, 'Step by Step' and we are privileged this year to have the Chairman of the East Anglia District, the Rev. Julian Pursehouse, taking our morning service at 10.30am. The evening service at 6.00pm will be a Songs of Praise service as usual, led by the Rev. Steve Oliver.

Rosemary Caink

Downham Market

Ladies Friendship Circle

We had a good time at our Coffee evening with an auction of goodies which members brought. Ann was our auctioneer for the night and we made £80,00 for the Deep sea Fishermen's Mission,

The annual lunch was a great success with everyone having a good time. 28 members and friends attended.

Our April meetings are 4th when Mrs Mary Davies is coming to demonstrate Macrame

18th April is Andy Malcolm from Deep sea Fishermen's Mission is coming to talk to us and let us know how the money we raised at the auction is used. He has interesting tales to tell us and we always enjoy his visits.

May 2nd is Quiz evening with Margaret and Ruby.

Our meetings are open to everyone we would be pleased to welcome new members.

Margaret Fox

I shouldn't have complained about the foggy dark days, at least the traffic could keep moving and though we were let off with light snowfalls, some poor folk were seriously affected. Mind you we have had much worse in the past. I remember the Winter of 62/3 when we lived on the outskirts of London at

Woodford. In those days women did not wear trousers but I had some, and some climbing boots thanks to our days of rock climbing and fell walking, so with a coach built pram with a baby inside and a 2 year old daughter on a seat on top I disregarded fashion and my husband's advice that ladies round here did not dress like that and went out in my climbing gear as I was so worried about slipping and letting the pram tip over. Then again in the 60/70s I was driving home from Southend to Thorpe Bay along a dual carriage way open to the wind where it snowed horizontally. The road had been cleared but the snow piled each side was higher than the car so I went very carefully so as not to cause an avalanche. Again, in the late 60s while living some 7 miles from Brentwood we were marooned as the local bus had slewed across a right-angled bend in the country lane, so my husband donned his climbing boots, put his suit in a rucksack and hiked over the fields to his office and then moaned because none of his staff had got in. Let's hope we have had the last of the snow for this Winter but we have had snow in April while camping before now so who knows. I do maintain that our variable weather makes us more resilient and adaptable to change and perhaps is character forming. The snow did stop my efforts to get my new garden sorted but progress has been made as I now have some weed and frog spawn in the little pond. I hope to sort out all the plants which have been hibernating in the Church garden this week. It will be interesting to see which have survived and showing signs of new growth and which will have to go on the compost heap and then I can, weather permitting, start selling plants in front of the Church again. Can't let the supermarkets have the monopoly of selling plants and shrubs cheaper than the catalogues. Sorting out what has survived and what has died makes me think of our Covenant Service and reviewing our Church activities to see what is worthwhile keeping and what can be discarded. We are nearly though Lent for another year but this Lenten thought is rather apt.

Do you want to fast this Lent?

Fast from hurting words and say kind word., Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude

Fast from anger and be filled with patience. Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope,

Fast from worries and have trust in God. Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity

Fast from pressure and be prayerful. Fast from bitterness and fill your heart with joy.

Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.

Fast from grudges and be reconciled. Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

We now have our Easter celebrations to look forward to with all the lovely music that accompanies our worship. Our choir is practising very hard to lead

the 7.00p.m. service at Hilgay on Good Friday and Churches Together has organised the Walk of Witness which will take place in the morning, starting at 9.00 from St. Edmunds and finishing at our Church with hot cross buns followed by the 11.00 service. Then on Easter Day the service will include covering the wooden cross in spring flowers to be displayed at the front of the Church to remind everyone what Easter is really about, not just hot cross buns and Easter eggs.

Easter celebrations have already started for Messy Church at the session last Friday when they made small gardens with the three crosses; they blanked out a cross on paper, filling it all with colour and then removing the cross leaving a white cross amid all the colour as a symbol of removing all sins with the cross and they made some rocky road cake demonstrating a rocky road with an egg at the end for new life. The session finished with a shared meal and the children were given Easter eggs which had been donated to the Church.

As I mentioned, weather permitting I hope to be outside selling plants at the weekly coffee morning. We would really welcome some volunteers to help set up the stalls, especially now I shall need the gazebo erected outside and boxes of plants brought round from the Church garden (we do have a trolley). Do contact John Roust if you can help with this and do pop in and see how you can enjoy our coffee mornings. The bric a brac stall is full of bargains and was a joy to behold last week with an array of cuddly toys; some of the teddy bears made me wish my grandchildren were younger to give me an excuse to buy them. Our book stall range is extensive as is the array of mouth-watering home-made cakes, so pay us a visit to enjoy some fellowship and fun. Enjoy your Easter Celebrations and Spring which is nearly here.

Joan Macey

Hilgay

On Good Friday our service will begin at 7pm with the Downham Methodist Choir leading. All are welcome. On Saturday 31st March a Messy Easter will take place in our chapel from 10am till 12 noon. On Easter Day our service will be led by Mrs Heather Brown.

Pauline Driver

Wimbotsham

Wimbotsham Church Society Meeting was held on 19th February, open to anyone who would like to come. Twelve members of the Church attended with Rev. Maurice Stafford and Maggie Blowers, Circuit Steward.

We proceeded with the usual business with one of the main subjects being the Church Anniversary. This year is the 144th but next year will be the 145th Anniversary. We hope to have some special events, so watch this space. We have also been asked what our way forward is for Wimbotsham. Do we have a plan for growth? Yes, we do, so watch out Wimbotsham!

Mary Rose, Church Society Secretary

A Quick Message to say Hello All

We have been attending the little Wimbotsham Chapel now for almost a year, and we have found love, joy and laughter here, the small congregation always joyfully receiving all who enter in their Sunday service. We, or rather I, have attended the Bible Study and have shared together many ideas of what it means to be a Christian in the 21st Century. Reflecting upon these sessions attended the desire to learn and share out faith and, more importantly, sharing Scriptural principle with others, requires courage and open mindedness; we are all helpful witnesses to each other. Charles Spurgeon an evangelical giant, his pearls of wisdom always gleamed sobriety, says "Don't just read it, but strive to re-enact history by preaching it. So, let's be doers of words and not just hearers only.

Much Peace and Grace from Malcolm and Shirley Starreveld

The snowy scenes around our village looked beautiful but how lovely it is to have seen the fragile snowdrops still peeping through, having weathered the storms; what a message of hope they give to us when we may go through stormy times! Now the golden daffodils are brightening the little road leading to our Chapel where the colourful winter pansies by our doorway are also greeting us with their 'smiling faces'. We continue to be blessed with the warm fellowship within and inspiring messages from those who lead our services.

The dates in April of our Bible Study/Fellowship are Tuesday 3rd and Tuesday 17th, meeting in our school room at 10.30 am. All are welcome. Over coffee and biscuits and led by Mick, we are now looking at the writings of James and how these words of practical instruction and guidance to all God's people relate to our everyday living of acting out our faith.

As we enter the Easter period we recall how the disciples, coming out of hiding since Jesus' crucifixion on the Friday, "ran together" with the wonderful news that their adored teacher was indeed the Christ, Son of the Living God, and He was risen. Hallelujah!

Mary Davies

Gaywood St Faith's

Holy Week, as we prepare for the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus, is marked on Monday, 26th March and Tuesday 27th March with sessions of Night Prayer at St Faith's Church starting at 7.30pm. Do join in these reflection prayer evenings and feel free to come and go as you please.

On Wednesday, 28th March there will be a Station of the Cross service at 10am following by the usual Holy Communion celebration at 10.45am. At 7.30pm there will be another session of Night Pray.

Also on Wednesday 2th there will be a Taize service at St Mary's Church West Winch.

On Maundy Thursday at St Faith's there will be a service of Holy Communion at 7.30pm. The service will include feet washing and stripping of the altar.

At 10am on Good Friday morning, people will gather at St Faith's Church for prayers and a reading before setting off, walking behind a large wooden cross, to Lynn town centre to meet others taking part in the Walk of Witness. The procession will stop at various locations when a Bible reading and a hymn will be sung. All are welcome to join the Gaywood contingent as they walk in silence into town.

At St Faith's at 2pm there will be the observance of An Hour at the Cross. The Glorious Easter Day Festival, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus starts at 6am with an outside Dawn Communion Service followed by breakfast in the Church Rooms. There will be an 8am Holy Communion service followed by the main Easter Day service of Holy Communion starting at 9.45am. Also an evening service at 6.30pm.

Although we are shortly to mark the great Festival of Easter, the Season of Christmas and the birth of Jesus in some lowly cattle shed in Bethlehem, is already occupying the minds of some St Faith's members who are busy planning the fourth Christmas Tree Festival to be held early in December 2018.

The three previous Tree Festivals, 2012, 2014 and 2016 have proved really popular with church members and visitors. They have achieved much in raising the public profile of St Faith's to a wider community. More details about the Tree Festival programme will be announced in the coming months.

A concert celebrating the 20th anniversary of the formation of The Friends of St Faith's Church is to be held in church on Friday, 27th April at 7.30pm. The concert, which will feature talented local singers and musicians, will celebrate all that has been achieved in the past two decades by the Friends.

This is the Group that exists to raise money to contribute towards major purchases in the church, such as lighting and heating. The idea of the concert, as well as a musical celebration, is to raise the profile of the Friends' group

which is to be re-launched. More details about the Friends' concert will be available from the St Faith's Church office on 01553 774916 9am until 12 noon Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

It is amazing to think that the Rev. John Garfoot, who attends St Faith's every Sunday morning, arriving on his motorised scooter, will be 102 on June 15th. John is a remarkable man of God and his appearance and zest for life belie his great age. Many of us at St Faith's Church have been surprised to see John arrive on Sunday morning in cold weather dressed only in his lounge suit jacket and trousers with no winter overcoat. Clearly a man who doesn't feel the cold.

Richard Parr

Stow Bridge

Peace seems to be in short supply these days. Where can we find peace?

There is conflict in all areas of life. Wars being fought in many parts of the world despite the efforts of peace keeping forces. In our own country racial tensions, strained industrial relationships, protest groups fighting for many causes. In families and homes there is unrest; even personally we cannot find peace. Is there an answer?

Many people have found peace through the truths of the Bible; is it still the best seller? There is much to say about peace in the Old Testament. The Lord says, "There is no peace for the wicked!" is our guilt the reason for lack of peace? I'm sure it often is so it is forgiveness we need first.

Breaking the law separates people and also separates us from God. Many Christian services end with the words, "The peace and love of God be with us all." These are great words to hear.

So it is forgiveness first we need but having felt this within, then the great feeling of peace, through our weakness we need it again. And it is made possible by Jesus.

"Justified by faith in God we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. These are Paul's words in Romans 5 verse 1.

Peace often seems so far away and we despair of what we see in our world news. But I know it can be attained...if we follow the way of Christ.

No, this isn't a sermon, just a few thoughts from someone sitting in the pews (chairs in rows!) in St Peter's.

Peter Hewitt

Mum says to Mary, "Did you behave in church today?" Mary replies, "Yes I did. A nice man offered me a plate full of money – but I said no thank you".

Methodist Women in Britain Forthcoming Events

Spring District Day April 26th to be held at Methodist Church,
Museum Street, Ipswich (10.30am for 11.00am start)
Speaker Rev. Catherine Dixon

Easter Offering May 16th at London Road Methodist Church
King's Lynn. (2.30pm)
Speaker Rev. Catherine Dixon.

A.G.M. October 1st at London Road Methodist Church (2.30pm)

Autumn District Day October 11th to be held at
Cambridge Methodist Church (10.30am for 11.00am
start).



Any items for the **MAY** edition should be with
the editor by **APRIL 12th**, earlier if possible.
**If you don't get an acknowledgment of emails
PLEASE enquire if I have received them as
some articles have found their way into my
spam bin which I don't check very often!**

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Carry on Serving....

In a series of famous/infamous films recognised around the world, in the past 5 years there has been a resurgence of the theme 'Carry on...' and you can now find it on tea towels - Carry on and Drink Tea, T-Shirts - 'Keep calm and Carry on' and advertising 'Keep calm and Costa' etc..... The Methodist Diaconal Order has a full and varied history, much of which will be unknown to most, however throughout that history the underlying theme has been perseverance. A commitment to carry on the work of God, a willingness to be sent and a heart for service have sustained the MDO through all its incarnations and will no doubt continue to drive those called to be Deacons to face whatever the future holds. Therefore, we have chosen for our new series of monthly articles the theme 'Carry on....' Each month we aim to share the experiences of Deacons around the country to highlight and hopefully enlighten as to the everyday tasks undertaken by those called and ordained to Diaconal Ministry in the Methodist Church.

We cannot hope to cover everything and therefore these will act as a snapshot, an insight into the nature, call and expression of witness through service demonstrated by Methodist Deacons in a particular place at a particular time. We will also aim to cover some of the significant events throughout the connexional year and offer a Diaconal perspective. To begin with a brief history.....

Wesleyan Deaconesses

Wesleyan Deaconesses were founded by the Rev. Thomas Bowman Stephenson in 1890. In 1873 he had become involved in a new development, the Metropolitan Lay Mission - with lay missionaries and deaconesses working with people not reached by other agencies. He realised that women were an untapped resource: they could visit homes where it was impossible for men to go. However, despite this vision, the Church was not sympathetic to this programme so it was dropped, albeit temporarily.

In the 1870s and 1880s Stephenson developed what was to become the National Children's Home (NCH/Action for Children). Alongside this he founded the Sisters of the Children who worked in the homes and in some way fulfilled his vision of an order of women used by the Church.

The Sisters of the Children were part of a widespread movement as churches began to realise the importance of women in evangelistic work. Bands of deaconesses could be found working in London, Manchester, Halifax and Rugby.

In 1890 Stephenson outlined his vision for a deaconess order within the Wesleyan Church in his book Concerning Sisterhoods. "For any Christian work, except that of the pulpit, the woman is at least the rival of the man. A woman, whose hand is softer than a mans for works of character, and whose heart is

warmer in sympathy with sorrow, is in many circles more powerful for good than he."

Gradually the Wesley Deaconess Institute moved from an informal movement to a structured organisation. In 1900 Stephenson became Superintendent of the Ilkley Circuit. Whilst there, Conference agreed that what had become the Wesley Deaconess Order be fully acknowledged, and Stephenson appointed its Warden. In 1902 he purchased a house that was to become the Deaconess Institute College, and it opened that September with 17 students. The workload of a deaconess was heavy. An account of work for one deaconess in 1905 shows a typical day beginning with breakfast for 100 children at 7.30 am and ending with a concert at 8.00 pm. Her tasks for a 70-hour week included:

Leading three prayer meetings. Playing the organ on Sunday. Choir practice. Extensive young people's work. Drill class. Benevolent society committee. Women's' own club. Babies hour. Interview with an employer. A few hours in the office. Cutting out garments for a sewing class. Visiting of homes and hospital with services. Practical help in the home.

Significant Dates

In 1973 the conference decision to open Presbyterian ministry to women led to a working group being set up who suggested that a Methodist Order of Deacons be formed, continuing the existing Wesley Deaconess order, but now opening to men as well as women. In 1989, after a long period of deliberation, the Methodist Diaconal Order was formed and the first Deacons were ordained in 1990 - a 100 years after its inception.

In 1993 Conference agreed that Deacons should be recognised as being both a Religious Order and an Order of Ministry, giving them the same status as Presbyterian colleagues. 2004 saw a conference report 'What is a Deacon?' discussed and approved to help churches increase their understanding of Diaconal Ministry and the role of the Deacon. The core emphasis of Diaconal Ministry is Witness through Service. An Ecumenical statement on Diaconal Ministry states: *"Diaconal Ministry is Christ-focused, people-centred and lived out in a lifestyle both active and contemplative...We increasingly perceive our role to be pioneering and prophetic, responding to needs, proactive in opportunity through commitment to mission and pastoral care within and beyond the Church. Opening doors of opportunity, encouraging others to take risks, the contemporary diaconate acting in its capacity as 'agent of change', engages imaginatively and collaboratively with issues of justice, poverty, social and environmental concerns. We often find ourselves spanning boundaries, especially official ones of Church and society. "*

Although there is much more that could be said, space and attention span limit this! So we hope that we have given a brief flavour of our history and that in the articles to come we will be able to illustrate the core beliefs and

practices that underpin and continue to inspire those called to Diaconal Ministry.

Deacons Claire Gill and Linda Gilson
From the Methodist Recorder



Interesting. More next month.

SAINT GEORGE

I am truly blessed to be able to worship in the beautiful St Faith's Parish Church in King's Lynn, where there has been a Christian presence since Saxon times and we have had a firmly held Anglican--Methodist LE P (Local Ecumenical partnership) since 1974. One of the treasures of St Faith's is the splendidly carved oak pulpit. It is the work of Nathaniel Hitch, a noted British sculptor whose wood carvings may be seen in many churches all over the country and as far away as Australia and New Zealand and in several cathedrals, including Truro, Bristol, Rochester, Peterborough, Canterbury as well as Westminster Abbey. There are carvings of St George, the Good Shepherd, St Walstan, St Dunstan and St Nicholas. They are all very different. So far, I have been unable to find out why they were chosen and if there is any link between them.

It is, of course, St George who comes into his own this month, on April 23rd. St George is inevitably associated with his slaying the dragon and rescuing the fair damsel in distress. This fearsome monster, fire breathing from its nostrils, struck terror into the neighbourhood demanding sheep every day for its meal. When the supply of mutton ran out it required maidens. They had to draw lots to decide the daily victims and at last it became the turn of the king's own daughter, the princess Sabra. In the nick of time George appears on the scene with his trusty sword Ascalon and the rest is history. Or is it?

The real-life St George is more likely a keen Christian who lived about 1700 years ago. He was also a soldier who rose to high rank in the army of the Emperor Diocletian. The trouble began when he discovered that Diocletian had begun a persecution of Christians. He asked for a personal interview with the emperor and begged him either to give up the persecution or accept his resignation from the army. For his boldness the emperor handed him over to the torturers. In the end he died a martyr's death on 23rd April 305. After his death this brave soldier of Jesus Christ was revered as a saint. It was as a warrior saint that his aid was sought by the Crusaders and Edward III created him patron saint of England about 650 years ago. His flag, a red cross on white background became the flag of England and still is part of the Union Jack. His name was used as a war cry in battle "For St George and England." Actually, he was not very English at all, though he may have visited this country. His family was Greek, coming from Lydda, now in Israel. As patron saint we share him with about fifteen other countries, including Georgia, Egypt, India, Greece, Iraq and Portugal and recently the Scout movement.

In 1940 King George VI inaugurated the George Cross for "acts of the greatest heroism or of the most conspicuous courage in circumstances of extreme danger." St George slaying the dragon is depicted on the silver cross.

We might look upon our figure of St George as a reminder of and a prayer for many thousands of Christians today who are standing firm in the face of unbelievable persecution and that we should Stand up, stand up for Jesus.

John Garfoot

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SPRING PASTORAL DAY - Saturday 21st April 2018

The Rev. Catherine Dixon will be offering reflections on the topic **"the glory of God is a human being fully alive"**.

Hunstanton Methodist Church, 9.15 for 9.45am

The morning will end with Holy Communion and a soup lunch All welcome.

Names for catering purposes, please, to Mrs Phyllis Bowman, 01553 671288

Please note: the day on sudden bereavement will follow later in the year

West Norfolk Methodist Circuit Diary

APRIL 2018 onwards

Wednesday 11th April 7pm - 9.30pm Safeguarding Refresher course London Road

Thursday April 26th MWiB Spring District Day

Saturday 5th May 2018 6:30pm District Celebration Service at Bury St. Edmunds

Wednesday May 16th Easter Offering Service

Saturday 27th May Circuit Celebration 3pm

Saturday 16th June 10am - 4pm Ecumenical Day of Prayer at Downham Market.

Saturday July 21st 2pm - 4pm Sir George Edwards Memorial Meeting at Gressenhall

Monday October 1st MWiB A.G.M. at London Road

Thursday October 11th MWiB Autumn District Day