

Middlesbrough and Eston Circuit

Summer Newsletter



Welcome to this very revised version of our usual quarterly MEMO. Elaine is still recuperating after a knee operation but we hope to see her back in full health and able to return to the circuit office soon. Although Covid is still rearing its ugly head most things in our lives seem to be settling into a bearable and hopefully workable routine (I hesitate to use the phrase 'getting back to normal' but perhaps you now have a new normal in a positive sort of way!) As you read on you will get an insight into what has been happening around the circuit and find out about future events.

We also say goodbye and send our best wishes to Christopher as he moves on to another circuit over the summer. Many thanks for Christopher's input into the life and working of the circuit and churches, for his sermons that give food for thought, for the events and courses he has been involved in and the good conversations that have taken place on a wide range of topics.

MEMO should be back in circulation by September but only if you can help us to fill the pages. So, don't be shy, get those pens and keyboards at the ready to share things that you have all been up to! Don't forget that what might seem ordinary to you may be just the thing that someone else benefits from.

Best wishes

Anne

on behalf of Dave and Elaine



Letter from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

I have been reflecting on that long weekend of Jubilee celebrations which took place at the beginning of June. For four days the nation came together to delight in a mixture of pageantry and parties. We watched the national events on TV, but also found time to enjoy some local efforts as well.

The first of these I attended was on bank holiday Friday, when Nunthorpe Methodist Church hosted a 'Right Royal Family Fun Day'. We opened the church and the grounds to the community and hundreds came along. There were people picnicking on the lawn, with children enjoying the bouncy castle.

There was music, afternoon teas, stalls, games and a wonderful, relaxed atmosphere. You could even have your photo taken with the Queen! People commented that it was the biggest event seen at the church for many years, with too many people to count. The place was heaving.

Having filled myself up with tea and cake, I then attended a second event on the Sunday afternoon, when Stainton Methodist Church and our friends at St Peter and St Paul Parish Church organised a 'Village Open Air Big Sing'. Music was provided by members of Marske brass band, who combined their junior and senior sections for the day. The weather was a little 'iffy' on Sunday afternoon, but the rain held off and approximately 50 people turned up to sing in addition to around 15 band members. The service we held combined a celebration of the church festival of Pentecost with the national celebration of the Jubilee.

The big question we are now asking about these and other weekend events is can we do them again?

Of course the Jubilee is a one off and people might have come simply because the Queen's jubilee captured their imagination. People wanted to participate in an historic moment in the life of the nation. But then again the big attendance may have been more to do with the two years of Covid restrictions we have all endured. There is a new sense of delight at being able to gather in crowds and enjoy the freedoms we have been so long denied by this wretched virus. Whatever the reason, people certainly relished the chance to come together in celebration. After all, everyone enjoys a party with music and singing and cake, and this one was too good to miss.

To answer the question posed above, I certainly believe the church has an important part to play in community events, and while we cannot repeat or recapture exactly the events of the past, we can be creative in planning new ones. We don't have to do it all ourselves and it is usually best if we share our vision and partner with others. The church is embedded in communities in a unique way, because we engage with people's lives at the very deepest level of meaning. We relate to people at times of crisis and at times of joy. This is a huge privilege for the Church and a wonderful opportunity to be representatives of Christ in wider society. In this we demonstrate his love, his hospitality and his acceptance of all people.

I hope you all enjoy the rest of the summer,

Yours in Christ,
Revd. David Godfrey.

Rev Christopher

I am sure that I speak for our Church Family at Grove Hill, in saying a rather sad farewell to Christopher. He has made himself known to our Church family and has worked towards being available at different groups such as Mens' Fellowship and the Lunch group.

With his guidance we have established an efficient Pastoral Care group with many new Pastoral visitors being encouraged by Christopher.

We will be welcoming 14 new members to our church family in July and they have been helped on their way towards membership by the very informative and prayerful course organised by Christopher.

His preaching of course is very special. Some of us feel a real sense of being challenged towards a deeper understanding of the message he is sharing with us. As a preacher, I certainly have welcomed his sermons as they have made me think about my own ministry. On occasions, if I have been preaching at a service before Grove Hill and managed to attend to

hear Christopher preach, I have found all kinds of new ideas and depth that maybe I hadn't achieved. It has been good for us all to learn from his exceptional theological knowledge, and to be challenged, although at times some of us have possibly felt a little lost!

We have all come to know Christopher well over his time with us. We have learned much from Christopher's ministry and he has, like all ministers, added to our church life and we hope he has gained from being with us. We do appreciate his description of Grove Hill as one of the most inclusive churches he has ever known and I think this is part of our Church Family ethos and something he has also enhanced for us during his time here.

Our Church family feel that we have enjoyed getting to know Christopher and have appreciated his kindness and friendship.

So we wish him all the best in his new appointment and thank him for his time at Grove Hill.

Dave Elliott.



Daily Prayers

My lasting memory of Christopher Wood-Archer's time in this circuit.

When the pandemic began, I have to admit that my prayer time wasn't very structured at all. In the early weeks of doom and gloom, my first words on awaking were a prayer, "Thank you for another day".

I saw that Christopher had set up a routine of daily prayers and I wasn't keen to join in the beginning. I had been to prayer meetings in the past which I found very tense as people uttered prayers and everyone seemed to take a turn, and I couldn't feel an atmosphere of worship as I was panicking inwardly, searching for a prayer when my turn came.

After some time, I was talking on zoom with someone who assured me that the daily prayer time on zoom was not like that. So I decided to link in, and I am so glad I did.

The prayers were structured, and we had hymns and bible readings and a time for private prayer during which you had the opportunity to pray aloud or use the chat system. Prayers of the day from the Methodist Prayer handbook followed and we joined again in the closing structured prayer.

Christopher then set up a Saturday evening Vigil on zoom and Sunday Compline service. I have to admit that these sessions were not so popular after a time but I loved Compline on Sundays.

I found a new family, a circuit-wide family, in these zoom meetings and I am very grateful to Christopher for setting up this time of prayer and fellowship.

Celia Shires

News from around the Circuit

Grove Hill

We feel very much aware of great things happening at our church at the present time, we believe there is a sense of the Holy Spirit working with us.

We have fourteen people training for membership on a course led and organised by Rev Christopher. We will see them received into Membership at two services to accommodate them all, on July 17th and 31st. It has been great to see how people are wanting to be involved in the life of our church and we look to even greater things happening with our new members.

We have a monthly Discussion Fellowship, looking at 'Methodist Way of Life' which happens on the third Friday of the month at 1.30pm at church. People are having the chance to talk and share and ask important questions.

On the third Saturday of the month 12pm to 2pm we have a Faith Lunch fellowship, eating together and then having quizzes, games, hopefully most important some fun and a chance to be together. These relatively new activities, help us in our faith and our development of our Church Family.

We are delighted that we have a very busy and exciting Steps group on Sunday mornings. This is for our youngest children. It is being led by Ancy who is bringing all sorts of opportunities for these children to begin their faith journey. Our Strides group is at the moment not meeting as our leader, Anne, has been unable to get to church. We pray she will soon be back with us.

Mens' Fellowship is doing well, but this is a Circuit group, meeting the last Friday of the month from 2pm at church .

We are sad to be saying farewell to Rev Christopher. We are grateful for all he has given to our church and we wish him God's blessing in his new appointment.

Marton

1. This year is Marton's 180th Anniversary. Marton is one of the old Middlesbrough. The first services, thought to be as early as 1839 w village inn (the old Rudds Arms). The first Church with seating for 1888 it was recognised that this Church needed renovation and so a second church was built. Whilst it was being built services were held



(now Marton) station. In 1912, additional land was purchased and the third church, now our main hall, was built slightly further back from the road. The new church could seat 140 people and was opened in 1913 at an estimated cost of £1000. This building was extended at the back in 1962 to provide a meeting room (the Guild Room), kitchen and toilets.

The fourth church, our current church, was opened on March 21st 1970 at a cost of £28,000. The building is the shape of the old Methodist 'shell' badge and can seat 190 people.

We are celebrating our anniversary with Sunday lunch at the Treebridge Hotel on 3rd July. Not only will David be there but we are delighted to welcome back several of our former ministers and their wives namely Alan Anderson, Paul Golightly, Neil Stacey and Sue Greenwood. It should be a lovely occasion and there should be no problem finding someone to say the grace.

2. A few weeks ago we had a first for our Church and for David. Two of our congregation wanted their marriage service to be part of the Sunday morning service. It was a lovely service and so good to be able to include all the congregation as well as family and friends of the couple.

3. It is good to see people back worshipping regularly on a Sunday morning and staying for tea and coffee afterwards. Not having to wear masks makes singing so much better. Furthermore several of our mid-week groups are again using the church premises.

Nunthorpe

Perhaps the most exciting event at Nunthorpe Methodist Church this spring was the Right Royal Family Fun Day held on Friday June 3rd 10.00am-3.00pm in the church grounds. Using a grant we'd applied for from the council, in our grounds there was a free bouncy castle, free children's games including Bash the Rat, mask making, a variety of craft stalls in-doors, our local band Wrong Direction sang classic "pop" songs. Tables and chairs were set out on the grass in front of the church and our visitors had the opportunity to buy either bacon buns in the morning, or later afternoon tea with sandwiches, home-made scones and cake. Our volunteers in the kitchen worked their socks off, non-stop! We were delighted that easily 400 to 500 people called in. Families and children were able to enjoy Noah's Garden in sunshine. For the Lord was good: it was the best day weather-wise of the Jubilee weekend. We weren't aiming to make money but we made over £1200 for church funds. And, importantly, Nunthorpe folk had fun, with church people! They know where we are!

We seem to have got back to sort of normal! Services are shorter, yes, but strangely, this is popular. We were delighted to welcome Rev John Howard-Norman to lead a special service for Methodist World Mission, where he taught us a new hymn, StF 700, and gave us insight on the situation in Palestine based on his recent experiences there. Coffee mornings, Toddler Playgroup, Table Talk, Women's Hour and Beryl's singing for pleasure group, Bring Me Sunshine, are all up and running again. We are letting the grass grow on our lawns to help insects and God's creation. Held by Him we look forward to the future, whatever it brings.

Stainton

On Sunday June 5th we were delighted that we were able, after two years, to reinstate our village Big Sing.

We chose this date to coincide with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations which also happened to be Pentecost Sunday. We had already had a wonderful 'free' Jubilee Afternoon tea in the Memorial Hall on Saturday kindly provided by the Memorial Hall committee. It is this committee that we are indebted to as they allow us to use the Hall and its facilities for our Big Sing.



Stainton Big Sing

Perhaps we didn't have quite as many attend this year as we had in previous years but nevertheless people arrived from the village, the circuit and further afield.

We had a magnificent accompaniment for our hymns. Instead of Lockwood Brass which we'd always had in previous years this year we welcomed a different group of talented musicians, namely Marske Brass Band, an ensemble with a wide age range including an excellent young boy on the drums. They were wonderful.

Rev David and Rev Claire Todd (Vicar from St. Peter and St. Paul's, the village parish church) guided us through the service. This was the first time either of the clergy had experienced one of our Big Sings. We always wonder what the weather will be like on the day and fortunately, once again if a little chilly for some, it stayed fine. A few drops of rain were felt just as we finished.

It was brilliant to have had a successful afternoon when music and singing once again filled the village square and we were able to renew our ecumenical links with the parish church. Let's pray there will be more similar events in the future.

Trinity

Trinity seems to have recovered from the pandemic and the majority of activities have recommenced.

The café particularly continues to provide a service to the community and it is open to everyone, including the circuit, on a Tuesday from 9.30 – 2.30pm
Our drama group ACTS are once again planning a pantomime for Christmas 2022

Room bookings are still very good with a wide range of activities including MHA, dancing classes, uniformed activities, sporting chance, sports activities and many more.

Due to the success of the activities, we are outgrowing part of the premises and therefore have produced a scheme to enlarge the entrance foyer and kitchen and provide an accessible w.c. off the entrance foyer. We have church council and circuit meeting approval and are pursuing various funding sources.

We continue to carry out maintenance to the building and working through the list from the quinquennial inspection. Due to it deteriorating badly, we have removed part of the front wall and are enhancing the adjoining flower beds. We have also ordered a new notice board.

With the assistance of Middlesbrough Council, we have improved our garden area as they have constructed raised planting beds and we are now growing vegetables.

We all miss our minister Charity and regularly communicate with her whilst she is in hospital in Leeds. The Rev. John Howard Norman is providing pastoral care to us.



Methodist Women in Britain

Kath Smithies is retiring as Circuit Methodist Women in Britain Secretary. It is therefore important to have a new Secretary by the beginning of the new Church year in September.

The main duty of the Secretary is to be a link between the District, the Circuit and the women in our Churches and to remember that all women in the Church are members of Methodist Women in Britain whether or not they attend a group.

You are to attend a meeting of the District MWiB committee at Elm Ridge Methodist Church, Darlington, twice a year in September and March, to receive emails from the District Secretary and to forward information to Circuit MWiB representatives

To meet with Circuit MWiB representatives once a year in October to share information and plan for any meetings that may be held in the Circuit in the coming year.