



THE GOOD NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our new circuit newsletter. This is the first of what we hope will be an ongoing series of publications designed to provide a place of sharing together as we seek to form a closer Circuit within the wider District and Connexion. We hope this provides a way for churches to share and celebrate their good news as well as exploring the different facets of church growth. We also look forward to hearing about future activities and events.

The Newsletter will be published quarterly and will also include a summary of the most recent Circuit Meeting alongside information about Circuit events and services. There are many activities which churches are already undertaking and we hope that through sharing some of these it might inspire others to ask questions or to bring new initiatives of their own.

The Circuit is the best kept secret of Methodism, it's a community of people called to live out their discipleship, worship and mission in a local area. It is the place where ministers are stationed to and allows for the sharing of resources. These aren't only finance and people but also ideas and activities. We want to encourage people to share what they are doing so that others may come and join in, learn about what is working and importantly give thanks to God for all the blessings we receive.

In this edition we will hear from a number of churches about their recent good news stories. In our next edition we will focus more deliberately in Discipleship in the life of our churches.

Together we can face the challenges of being the church in our time and I hope we can learn not simply to survive but to thrive as the people of God.

Revd Dr Iain Ballard

This issue:

GOOD NEWS

**DALE STREET
KINETON
KENILWORTH
WARWICK
FOREST CHURCH**

FROM THE
CIRCUIT MEETING

CIRCUIT EVENTS

CONTACTS AND LINKS

TRAINING COURSES



9:15 worship at Dale Street

It's some time now since we ran out of steam as far as 'junior church' was concerned. We don't have many children, perhaps ten on a good day, but we need to look after them and we need to attract more, and quickly.

We decided they should have their own service and, importantly, that it should be in the church space. Problem was that our main service is at 10:30 and we have to prepare the space for it – so we decided to have the service at **9:15** and that's what we called it. What we discovered was that there were opportunities for new directions in worship – more joy, more singing and dancing, more of what we like to call 'craft', more active ways of presenting Bible stories and our faith.

Some adults started to attend regularly and the other week we had an unexpected visitor as well – there were about twenty there. We're beginning to be more aggressive with our publicity and use social media.

Does this point the way to a different style of worship at our main service? Well, we have a family service every month and Graham Howe successfully brought some of the ideas from 9:15 to 10:30 when he built his Jacob's ladder and taught everyone how to tie a marlin knot (see also our Palm Sunday visitors below).

10:30 worship at Dale Street

We have to accept that if a young couple came to our main service – particularly if they had children with them – and looked around at the average age of our congregation (however lively they might be!) – they might not come again.



It isn't so much the welcome they receive – we do that pretty well – it's a matter of what we are offering them in our worship. **Café church** is not new, but it was to us,



and not everyone likes sitting at tables instead of straight lines. One thing it offers is a chance to be engaged one step more in the worship. How many times have you listened to a preacher say something interesting or even controversial and longed to join in? In café church there is a chance to pause, to reflect and to discuss what you have heard or a challenge you have been given. This adds to the usual elements of the service – the all-important intercessions, the Bible readings, the singing. So, provided the preacher is happy with the format, this is what we do once a month. We are blessed with an unusually large number of our members who are local preachers, and they are often present and are

hugely helpful in encouraging discussion.

Our new minister, Revd Tina Brooker, has breathed life into our family services and we were delighted to welcome two visitors, pictured above, to our Palm Sunday event.

Hymns ancient and modern

Since Covid we've sung over 250 different hymns and songs. As they're chosen by our preachers from around the circuit, you might like to know our frequency leader board:



- 1: 503: Love Divine – 10 times
- 2=: 351 In Christ Alone; 476 One more step – 9 times
- 4=: 83: Praise my soul the King of Heaven; 564: O Thou that camest from above – 8 times
- 6=: 563: O Jesus I have promised; 662: Have you heard God's voice? 673: Will you come and follow me? 706: Longing for light – 7 times.

It's great that all of these have good tunes to sing and words that are well-written and have good sentiments.

Strategies for Growth

Dale Street has a weekly footfall of around 800.



On a Saturday morning we can have as many as 60 Dads and Tots (with bacon and egg butties available) and another 60 on Thursdays for our Babies and Toddlers group. Our Action for Children support group regularly holds what we are told is the only jigsaw fair in the Midlands – this and the group's other activities reach out to the community, and it makes thousands each year for the charity.

We had nearly 300 come to our production of *Bethlehem the musical* (see left for our Roman centurion and Ben the Busker)

Our Christingle saw some eighty people and the carol service over a hundred.



All this sounds good until you look at the average number of worshippers over an extended period. At present it is 56.

That makes you ask a pointed question, and there are other pointed questions to be asked before you can formulate effective strategies for growth.

By the time you read this we will have held our **Away Day** specifically to look at our current situation. Our facilitators from the District and Connexion will have led us through an interactive day and hopefully we shall be looking at ourselves with new eyes.

We'll let you know.

TONY PARKINSON





THE GOOD NEWS LETTER

Newsletter of South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit

Greetings from Kineton, we are currently enjoying somewhat of a revival following the dark days of Covid and are fully embracing new ideas, not only of Worship but also socially. Lack of transport and winter nights are challenging for organising activities, as is avoiding clashes with the extensive village activities. this impacts on the monthly family prayer meeting at this time.

Re-establishing a good pastoral visiting programme with emphasis on incorporating contact with those members from the now closed local Methodist Churches is proving very worthwhile with personal visits where possible, we aim to keep as many as possible informed even though transport links will prevent many from attending, this is also a problem with our own Sunday Worship attendees and lack of drivers, like many other Churches we somehow cope.

Attendance on a Sunday is averaging 16 with some coming from outside of our village when their local Church has no service, serving refreshments after services has also restarted, and with the four time a year Farmers Market in the village we will open up for refreshments on those Saturdays.

A regular leadership team meeting has been revived and is proving to help with internal communication and forward planning, like many other Churches filling posts is not easy but without younger members is a concern, as is the usual finance, property & heating.

By the time the news sheet is published we will have had a successful Holy week communion service at the local care home, (where regular contact is also made), hosted a joint Maundy communion service/supper with St Peters and been through our own Liturgy services during Lent,

The joint Eat & Meet venture with our Anglican friends is held on our premises and consists of soup & roll, tea/coffee and plenty of chat and shared ideas.

Our prayers and optimism for our future remains high.





Spirit and Sacrament

Everyone is welcome to join us at Kenilworth for our next Spirit and Sacrament service on Sunday 14th April at 5.30pm. We have had two so far and we are planning to continue these on the second Sunday of each month.

If you would like to know more, please come along and join us, speak to one of the Kenilworth team who are involved, or to Revd Iain, Revd Sally, or Revd Tina all of whom are part of getting this exciting initiative up and running. We have had about fifty folk each time so far from across the Circuit and across town.



In a service lasting an hour and a half. We were blessed to be led by a music group singing new (to us) and familiar contemporary songs. In our open mic time to share Good news, we heard about Messy Church at Whitnash from Revd Sally, our new doors at Kenilworth which will hugely improve our accessibility to the community and about the work of a missionary in Kenya. This gives just a sense of the variety of things we had to give thanks for. Revd Tina led us in prayers of praise and thanks, again encouraging contributions from the congregation.

Revd Iain preached about the impact of revival of the Christian Church based on 2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (New Revised Standard Version). He gave us an image of a future where the world would be different when the revival comes.



We concluded the service with the sacrament open to all. And of course, we wouldn't be Methodists without a cup of tea and time to chat at the end.

If you have any questions or queries, do get in touch with us.

Fi, Sandra and Dave

The Kenilworth Leadership Stewards
kmcstewards@gmail.com

5.30PM SUNDAY 14 APRIL

AT KENILWORTH METHODIST CHURCH – ALL ARE WELCOME FOR

**A SERVICE OF PRAISE AND
WORSHIP WITH HOLY
COMMUNION**

AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE IN CONTEMPORARY PRAISE MUSIC, GOOD NEWS STORIES, OPEN MIC PRAYERS, INTERCESSIONS FOR PLACES AND PEOPLE, A SERMON, BIBLE STUDY, AND COMMUNION, FOLLOWED BY REFRESHMENTS.





KENILWORTH CONNECTION



What is Kenilworth Connection and why was it formed?

Post Covid the congregation of Kenilworth Methodist Church was very much in need of spiritual refreshment and a change of direction as its membership was in decline. After the Church Council agreed the new Mission Document “Decline to Growth” the Leadership Team formed an Implementation Group to look at ways to take the church forward by encouraging people to connect with one another again and with God. As a result, Kenilworth Connection was introduced to provide a series of topics over several weeks, to give the congregation the opportunity to come together on a Sunday evening or Thursday afternoon for a time of teaching, small group discussion and fellowship over a meal or tea and cake. This has been an important time of fellowship with the opportunity to support and encourage one another in our faith.

We began by looking at “The Methodist Way of Life” and continued to explore several other topics over the next year. Last Autumn we used the series “Talking Jesus”, a series of six video-based sessions giving us practical suggestions to help and encourage us to talk about our faith, with the opportunity for discussion in small groups. Our Christmas Services gave us the chance to put our faith into action and invite others to join us and a number of our Toddler families came and took part in our Scratch Nativity Service.



As a result of Kenilworth Connection, we also welcomed nine new members at our Easter Service last year and have others currently considering membership. Two new house groups have been formed and 50% of our congregation now belong to a housegroup.

We rejoice that we are seeing new people join us each week and continue to thank God for the direction in which He is leading us.



**K
E
N
I
L
W
O
R
T
H**

**G
O
O
D**

**N
E
W
S**



Contribution to the Circuit newsletter from Warwick Methodist Church March 2024

The leadership team have decided that the first strategy for growth is to build on what is going well already.

To this end we have committed to running our Holiday Club more often, not just in the summer holidays, and we welcomed many families on January 2nd and in the February half term.

Our fortnightly Bread Church has been running for 7 years, following [it's](#) introduction by Peter Powers. It has drawn in a regular group of new people, who enjoy the opportunity for fellowship, and the shared lunch. Some have become regular worshippers on a Sunday too, and one is being baptised and becoming a member on Palm Sunday.

We are open for coffee and fellowship every Tuesday morning and extended this until 4pm during the winter months as a Warm Space. Friends from around the circuit are very welcome to join us.

These three Tuesday events rely on a willing band of volunteers, and we are very grateful to everyone who gives of their time to make them happen.

Another strategy is to find out what our community needs. In response to demand we started a sitting Pilates class on a Wednesday at 10am. Since the autumn we have had a "Pre-Loved Shop" on the first Saturday morning of each month. We sell clothes and household goods at low prices to help members of the community in need. Graeme Russell is working on a Community Audit Plan that we will use to gather ideas.

We also felt that it was important to offer plenty of opportunity for fellowship to our existing members, to make sure that they felt part of the church and got to know each other outside of Sunday morning. A Spring Tea, Church Picnic & a Faith Lunch are all planned. To develop our spiritual lives, we have a fortnightly evening house group for Bible study, which we take it in turn to lead; and we've had a Lent Group during the day.

Our partnership with Churches Together in Warwick has proved fruitful, as Graeme Russell was able to work with them to secure funding for the "Big Local Night Out" initiative, which is now in its second year. Held quarterly at the Bridge House Theatre in Warwick, this a great night out, with professional acts, and local choirs arranged through "Warwick – A Singing Town". The evening provides an opportunity for us to invite friends who we might be reluctant to invite to the church, providing a neutral space where we can raise the profile of our church within the town.



Last year we had our Community Hall redecorated with a view to increasing our lettings. This is an area that we know we need to develop, in order to generate the income we need to continue God's work within Warwick. We now have an attractive space for hire, with two smaller rooms for meetings. Going forward we hope to raise funds to refurbish the kitchen facilities to match the high standard of the hall.

Anne Oliver





Stratford Forest Church

The forest Church is a partnership between the Circuit, Stratford-upon-Avon Methodist Church and Holy Trinity Church. Currently led by Deacon Jane Mills, Rev Jemima Strain and Phil Harper, (Holy Trinity Children and Families minister.)

We meet fortnightly on Wednesdays, during Term Time, at 4:15pm. The team currently meet to plan sessions on the weeks in between. Although at a time to suit children, it is open to anyone and a variety of ages have attended, we just ask that any children are accompanied. Forest Church isn't doing outside a service that would normally take place in church. It's about spending time together in nature, seeing how God may speak to us through creation, drawing us closer to God and each other. Each time we explore our faith through our senses, using activities, games, prayers, times of quiet conversation and reflection.

The first one was on 8th November 2023, when we explored Holy Trinity Churchyard and the RSC Gardens, and were very excited to be joined by a juvenile swan! We decided to start in the Winter months, rather than wait for the Spring, partly to give us time to explore how it works best with fewer people about! We also want this to take place throughout the year, enabling us to see all aspects of God at work through every season.



Each session begins by gathering in the Methodist Church, usually with an activity, which then leads us into Holy Trinity Churchyard. We may find things to tell a Bible story or help us in prayer. As we journey around the space, we are open to God. Until now most sessions have involved toasting marshmallows around a fire pit, which keeps us warm and often draws attention!

We have had a variety of people join us, some for one session out of curiosity, but we now have a core of families who join us regularly.

We look forward to seeing this evolve, all are welcome.

Phil Harper, Jemima *and* Deacon Jane.





Circuit Meeting

The Circuit Meeting met on 20th March and opened with a time studying the Bible together, 'Dwelling in the Word'. Alongside our more usual business we considered two important items. The first of these was the proposed merger between the Birmingham and the Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury Districts to form a new West Midlands District. We heard a presentation from Jo Yair (Methodist Learning Network) and Revd Rachel Parkinson (W&S District Chair). The purpose behind the merger is to reduce the number of lay and ordained roles needed to undertake our work and, where possible, to make cost savings. The two districts already work closely together in a number of areas including safeguarding, employment and mission projects. The [District](#) provides a network of circuits, allowing us to pool resources for larger projects and to learn from and support each other, as well as being the layer of governance and oversight between the more local circuit and the Connexion. The Circuit voted in favour of the merger taking place. There will now be a vote by both Representative Synods and, if accepted there, a confirmatory vote by the Conference in the summer, with a proposed start date of 1st September 2025.

The meeting also considered the proposed merger of Dale Street & Cubbington Methodist Churches. These discussions have been ongoing for a number of months and reflect our desire to decrease the number of trustee bodies across the circuit. Currently each Local Church has its own Trustee body. Each of these needs Officers including two Stewards, a Treasurer, Secretary, Pastoral Secretary, Safeguarding Officer etc, etc. By reducing the number of trustee bodies and therefore office holders, we can release people, both lay and ordained, to focus on discipleship, mission and evangelism. This process has been especially important for Cubbington, as their membership had fallen below 12, therefore necessitating a merger with another church. The proposals, having already been accepted by both Church Councils, were ratified by the Circuit Meeting. The new Multi-Site Church, to be known as Dale St Methodist Church, will come into effect from 1st May 2024. Worship will continue at both sites with some joint services. As part of this merger, the Circuit has accepted Managing Trusteeship of the Cubbington Site. We ask for your prayers for all those involved in the merger.



Within the usual business, the meeting heard reports from the Circuit Office relating to Property, Lettings and GDPR. Included in this was an update relating to the sale of Fenny Compton Methodist Chapel and the Warwick Place Manse. We also received reports from the Circuit Stewards, Treasurer and Safeguarding Officer, as well as the Local Preachers Secretary, who informed the meeting of a new local preacher starting their training (on-note).





18 th May 2024	Warwick	10.00am
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Event – led by Revd Jill Marsh, Superintendent Minister of Coventry and Nuneaton Circuit.	Methodist Church CV34 4TH	
19 th June 2024	Wellesbourne	7.30am
Circuit Meeting – Members of the Circuit Meeting to attend. Any circuit church member may attend to observe.	Methodist Church CV35 9LR	
23 rd June 2024	Kenilworth	10.30am
Circuit Service Celebrating 50 years of the Ordination of Women in the Methodist Church.	Methodist Church CV8 1LQ	



Local Arrangements resources on the Methodist Church Website:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/28229/local-arrangements-dont-panic-guide-ed-19-1-23.pdf>

https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/29737/local-arrangements_guidelines-may-2023.pdf