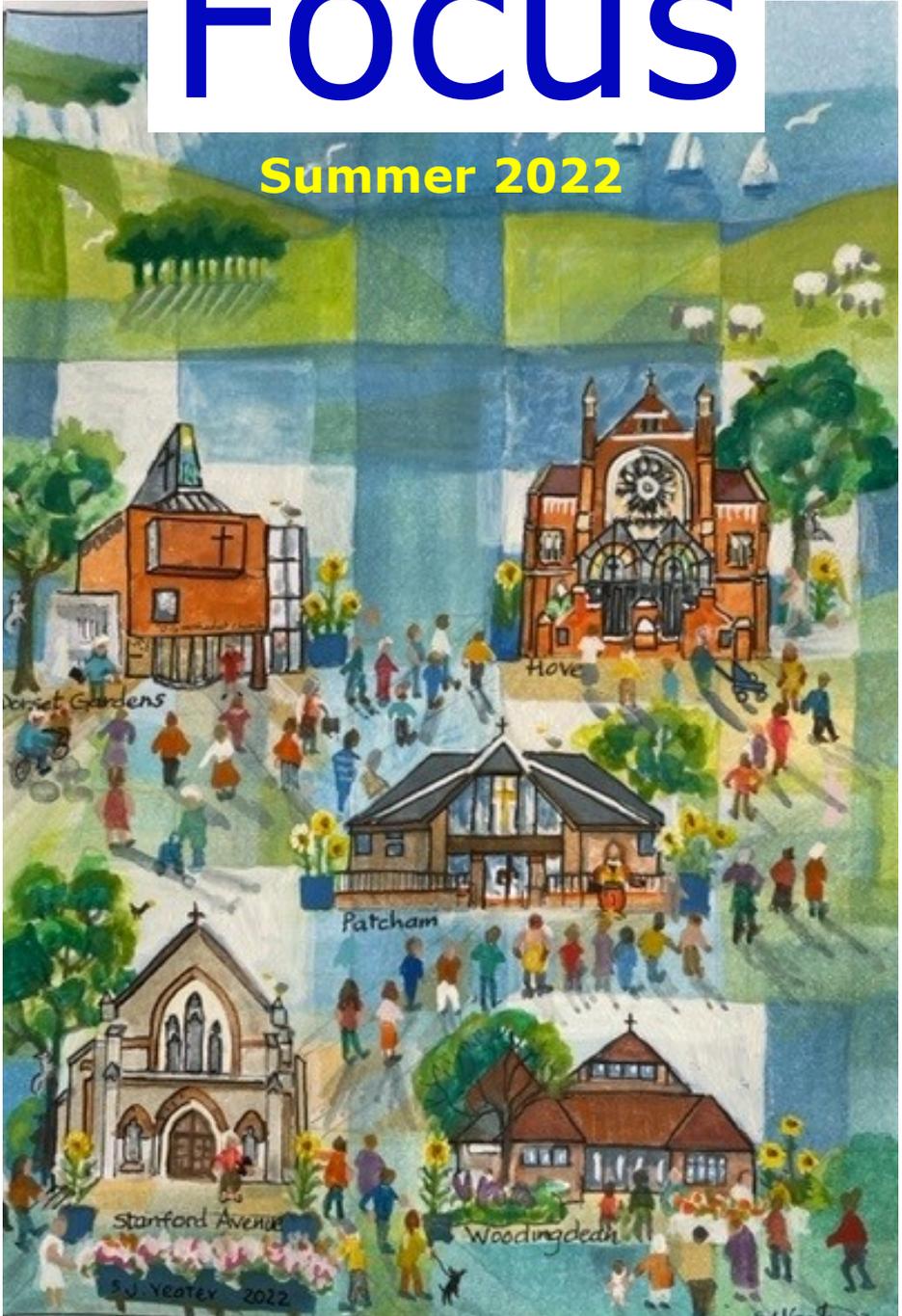


Focus

Summer 2022



Andy's Letter



Dear friends

How things have changed since I wrote my letter for the March edition of Focus.

We were beginning to plan for Lent and Easter when tensions rose and finally Russia, in an act of premeditated violence, invaded Ukraine and began an assault which still continues to this day and has resulted in untold horrors and a new and evolving refugee situation.

It is difficult to find words that express the sense of despair and fear that the invasion has evoked. That this could happen in Europe today asks big questions over security for all nations. The threats made by Putin raise big concerns and the effects this conflict has already had on the world economy will be with us for many years.

Coming, as this has, on the heels of the Covid pandemic, in a country still trying to work out what a post Brexit UK looks like, with an ongoing refugee issue which has divided communities and now a rate of inflation which seems to be spiraling ever upward putting more and more individuals and families in financial difficulties with many falling into poverty with worse to come, it is difficult to feel the hope that the Easter story is meant to bring.

It is no good to speak of what it must have been like for the first followers of Jesus as they went from the sense of despair following his death on a cross to the sense of joy and hope as they felt the ongoing presence of the Christ that they had experienced in Jesus, the situation is totally different and to speak that message is patronising and inadequate unless...

The dominant theme in the teaching of Jesus that we have in the gospels is about the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. Texts such as Matthew 4:17 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near', Matt 13:11 'The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you', Luke 17-20-21 'The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is, because the kingdom of God is within you.' Images of mustard seeds and bushes, banquets, , a net full of fish, a king settling accounts, a vineyard owner hiring workers, treasure in a field and a pearl of great price and virgins trimming their lamps.

There are various interpretations of his teaching. Some see it as being about a reward to be gained at the end of living a virtuous life of belief in Jesus as saviour and Lord, others see it as something that can be here and now. Some equate it with an earthly utopia to be worked towards, whilst others see it as a

state of mind. Our problem is that in so many things we want there to be one clear answer. We are people who want 'either-or' when sometimes it might be that the answer is 'both-and'.

There is not space in this letter for me to go through all my thinking in this area, let alone others, and I will return to this subject more fully in a subsequent edition. But I am influenced by the thinking of Cynthia Bourgeault who, in her book 'The Wisdom Jesus', describes the kingdom this way 'It's not later, but *lighter*– some more subtle quality or dimension of experience accessible to you right in the moment. You don't die into it; you awaken into it.' Then later using Jim Marion's suggestion that the kingdom of heaven is a metaphor for a state of consciousness, she says 'it is not a place to go to, but a place you *come from*'.

So back to the 'unless...' at the end of a previous paragraph about the relevance of the Easter story. If we are to be followers of Jesus then we need to be people who absorb his teaching and follow it in our daily living. As followers we need to be 'born again' which I understand as being awakened into the compassionate consciousness that is God which we see clearly lived in the life of Jesus even to death on the cross and opened to us through the ongoing experience of Christ we call the resurrection. And once we are at one with that compassionate consciousness then we will live our lives from that place.

In her sermon at our recent Circuit Together service Kathleen Richardson quoted Dietrich Bonhoeffer 'The kingdom of God is not an ideal for which we strive; but a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate'. Those of us whose lives have been renewed because of the story of Jesus are to live lives following kingdom values of love, care, pursuit of justice, kindness, encouragement and peace and in that way, the Easter story lived out in our daily lives can bring hope to others, to ourselves and for the world.

May we be participants in this kingdom.

Andy



Consultation Update

Following all our Church Council's agreeing to examine the feasibility of reorganising our Circuit to become 'One Society covering Multiple Sites' we are now moving ahead forming a series of working groups to look at each key area.

There will be three working groups under the heading of Mission and Growth:

- Worship and spiritual growth
- Pastoral
- Community

The work of these groups is strategic, creative, future focused and encompasses the reason for our being. We want representation from all churches on each group.

Acknowledging the importance of and interest particularly in **Worship & Spiritual Growth** we will form the working group for this after the two open to all meetings are held during May.

Proposed members of the **Pastoral** Group are:

Deeptima Massey, Jean Porter, Ann Collins, Cynthia Tudor, Marion & Terry Hammond.

Proposed members of the **Community** Group are: Cath Odd-Haywood, Cynthia Park, Rachel Richards, Dan Woodhouse, Sue Harrington, Liz Wakeling, Ruth Samur and Caroline Dewar.

We have a further four Structural/Operational working groups covering:

- Governance
- Finance
- Property
- Operations

The output from these four groups will build the firm foundations for all the work we want to do going forward and are more project/process orientated and should run for a fixed period only. Again we sought representation from every church, from those who can add expertise or have a real interest in the topic.

The Finance group formed in February and comprise:

- Stella Goddard - Chair/Circuit Treasurer
- Margaret Taylor - Notetaker, Patcham Treasurer
- Donald Reid - Hove Treasurer
- Jennie Lamb - Dorset Gardens Treasurer
- Stuart Neate - Circuit Examiner of Accounts

- Jenny Stevens - Stanford Avenue Treasurer
- Richard Fletcher - Woodingdean Treasurer
- Michael Richardson - former District Treasurer

Proposed members of the **Governance** Working Group are: Mick Hickman, Philip Gloyn, Andy Lowe, Terry Hammond and Jonathan Gravestock.

Proposed members of the **Property** Working Group are: Martyn Coblenz, Alan Imms, Ian Lamb, Andy Rutherford, Ken Hopkins and Vic Pollard.

Proposed members of the **Operations** Working Group are: Steve Preston, Ruth Samur, Mel Gillam, Richard Fletcher and Deborah Cornish.

We anticipate working groups will meet for six months and will report their findings and recommendations to a special Circuit Meeting to be held in November 2022. Watch this space for further updates, pray for the work of these groups and contact Steve steve.preston@brightonhovemethodistcircuit.org.uk if you have any questions.

Andy & Steve

COMment

I hope you like our beautiful front cover? It was especially designed by our very own talented artist Shirley Veater and reflects the colours of summer, our landscape and locations but with the emphasis on the diversity of our people and communities—can you spot some of the folk depicted? A big thank you to Shirley for creating this.

Thanks to all who have contributed to this edition. We are always keen to receive your contributions so please do get in contact.

Secondly we celebrate the news that Rosemary Cuthbert has agreed to be our Circuit Safeguarding Officer, with myself in support. This reduces the burden on our Ministers and leverages the experience that Rosemary brings. Thank you Rosemary.

Next page we cover more on GDPR and safeguarding, two important topics we have been focusing on a lot more recently. Please contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Steve Preston

Safeguarding Update (Training)

Every four years, individuals in particular church roles are required to renew their knowledge of safeguarding by attending the relevant training.

There are two levels of training available:

(1) Creating Safer Space Foundation Module (2020 version)

This training serves either as a basic starting point or as a refresher course. Whatever your role within the Church, it will help you understand safeguarding in the Methodist Church and our collective responsibility for creating safer spaces for all.

Required to attend are church and circuit stewards, pastoral visitors, anyone working with children, anyone working in activities targeted at adults who are vulnerable (e.g. luncheon club for the housebound), choir/music group/drama leaders – where there are children or vulnerable adults in the group.

This face to face training (lasting 2.5 hours) will be offered in our circuit during the summer so watch out for further details.

Alternatively, you can complete the Church of England online 'Foundations' course which is free to use, recognised by the Methodist Church as equivalent and can be accessed via:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-learning-and-development>

Follow the link to their online training portal and complete the instructions to sign-up. The Basic Awareness and Foundation online pathways have a 'pass' mark which must be achieved; this is set at 75%. Throughout the materials there are several questions to check knowledge ahead of the final assessment. Each of the questions contributes to the overall pass score. A certificate is automatically generated for those who reach or surpass the pass mark. If you pursue this route, please forward your certificate of completion to Steve Preston.

(2) Creating Safer Space Advanced Module (online version)

This course is designed to consolidate and develop your previous safeguarding learning, explore what this means in your designated role of responsibility within the church and further equip you with skills and resources to be confident in promoting good practice in the church and community.

Required to attend are Circuit/Church safeguarding officers; all presbyters with an active preaching or pastoral ministry

(including supernumerary ministers); those who are in paid employment or a voluntary role which includes leadership within the Methodist Church, involving direct work with children, young people or vulnerable adults; lay persons who are appointed to exercise pastoral leadership within a local church and Local Preachers and Worship leaders.

The Advanced Module is delivered from the South East District using an e-learning platform with self study content lasting between 4-7 hours, plus a 2 hour gathered session on Zoom. You can book on this yourself via the District website:

<https://methodistsoutheast.org/safeguarding.php>

There are a good number of dates available.

Data Privacy (GDPR)



Thank you to all those who have completed and returned their GDPR forms. These were circulated to all church council members, who as managing trustees, are required by the Methodist Church to annually attest their understanding of the requirements of this law protecting our personal data.

In the last edition of Focus we covered using passwords and staying safe online, let's now look at good practice using email.

Here We Come A-Emailing

Emails have certainly transformed the way we communicate, but there are still some useful pointers to using the medium in its most helpful way. Emails can so easily cause unintentional irritation so we should not fall into bad habits. In a GDPR age too, there are good ways to use emails that respect personal data as well. Let's look at a few:

- Try not to publish your personal email address anywhere. Personal emails can often be 'harvested' from church magazines (especially online ones) and websites. The simple solution is to create 'generic' ones - i.e. create an email address such as lettings@mychurch.org.uk or FlowerRotaBRMC@gmail.com. This has the additional advantage that when you hand over the role, you simply give someone else access to the email account.
- Keeping a separate email for church-related business e.g. treasurer@MyCircuit.co.uk enables you to quickly separate church role and personal emails on your computer.

- BCC > CC. When sending an email to a group, it is best practice to use Blind Carbon Copy rather than just Carbon Copy. The difference is that BCC hides everyone else's email addresses from all recipients. To let people know who has received it, simply begin the email with something like "SENT TO: ALL MEMBERS OF CHUCKLETOWN MC CC"
- Set up Distribution Lists or Groups in your email programme. They all have them. Then all you need to do is type "Missions Committee" in the BCC field and all the email addresses in your "Missions Committee" group will be filled in automatically.
- Get into the habit of deleting old emails, especially if they concern an issue that has since been resolved. Remember that any email which mentions an individual could theoretically be requested by that individual via a Subject Access Request. Also, when you move on or hand over (are you spotting a theme here?) it will be easier to delete / pass on all the emails associated with that role.
- Ask yourself - Would this be better handled face to face? Bearing in mind that most issues are local church ones, maybe an email could be delayed until after a face-to-face meeting. Frequently misunderstandings evaporate when folk get together with a mug of Fairtrade and a chocolate biscuit.
- Finally be careful sharing an email address as a family or couple if you are handling any confidential matters eg pastoral or staff information. Separate email addresses are easy to set up and are to be encouraged wherever possible.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion appointment

The Methodist Church adopted the Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity in 2021. The aim of the Strategy is to help churches to become as fully inclusive as possible and address matters of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), recognising this to be a crucial witness to the Gospel of God's love for all in Christ.



The South-East District, in order to support and implement various strands of the Strategy, has appointed Deeptima Massey as one of two Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officers for the District in a voluntary role. These roles will help churches, circuits and the district to uphold EDI values of dignity, respect, inclusion and love for all, promote good relations and practices in the life of the church and shape the culture of churches to become places of belonging and inclusion for everyone and celebrate diversity. Deeptima is well known to us as an accredited local preacher. She is passionate about EDI values as besides its theological underpinning, it challenges her to step outside her comfort zone and accept and embrace everyone just as they are creating a sense of belonging for one and all.

Joining her in this joint role is Daniela (Dan) who is based at Trinity Methodist Church, Woking in the Wey Valley Circuit. She is the church administrator, and coordinator for the Foundry project, supporting community development activities. The project is part funded by the District. Dan has an interest in the language of Gender and has worked in EDI roles for many years.

We wish Deeptima well and please contact her or Dan if you'd like to get involved with this work or be part of the district working group – email at edi@methodistsoutheast.org.uk

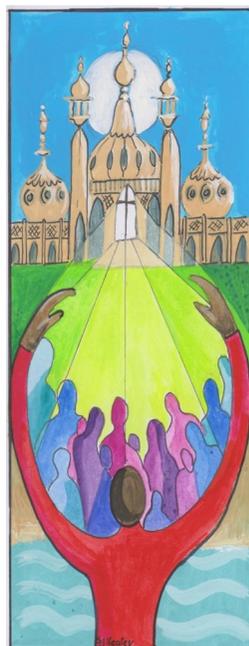
Circuit Refugee Project Update

We're delighted that the fundraising cards, designed specially for the project by Shirley Veater, are now available in all five Circuit churches. There are three versions to choose from (see right for one example), with a suggested price of £1 each or 6 cards for £5.

Since we started the project we have discovered more areas where we could help and so we have decided to broaden the project to not only include student refugees and their families, but also any refugees in the Brighton and Hove area.

I hope you agree that the more people we can help, the better.

To launch the project we had a talk from the Rev'd Dr Inderjit Bhogal OBE telling us about the Sanctuary Movement which he founded





and subsequent sub-categories; City of Sanctuary (eg Brighton & Hove), University of Sanctuary (eg Sussex) and the idea of churches and Circuits of Sanctuary. All very inspiring, we recorded the talk and if you'd like to watch it, you can find it here:

<https://youtu.be/0-itqHMTJ18>

Please note this is not in the public domain and can only be viewed by people with the link.

Also to launch the project Hove Methodist Church organised and hosted a wonderful Myth Busting Community Breakfast on 5th March. This event helped everyone find out the real story about the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. As well as delicious food, there was a myth busting quiz which promoted lively discussion and some moving videos summarising key issues. A refugee from Palestine gave a powerful and sometimes shocking account of his recent experiences navigating the British asylum system and the range of wider issues he and others have encountered. He also discussed continued difficulties he has experienced even after gaining his Refugee status. So his account and his question/ answer session, gave everyone great pause for thought. Ruth Samur and Bob Winton then gave some information about the Brighton and Hove Methodist Circuit Refugee Project to support Refugee students and their families. Bob also spoke about his previous experience of trips to Calais to support asylum seekers there. Thanks to all involved in this memorable event.



In the meantime we continue to fundraise and to collect items to help support refugees through our Circuit churches. Items that would be really useful include: general household products, hygiene products including female sanitary products (good quality), toothpaste and toothbrushes (also for children); soap, Flannels, shampoo (also for children), moisturiser and deodorant. This list is not exhaustive but gives an idea of the sorts of things

which might be useful.

We are planning to have a table at Dorset Gardens' community Jubilee party on Thursday, June 2nd everyone is invited so do come along and say hello! If you have any ideas for events or other ways we can support refugees, please be in touch with your church representative or contact me or Deeptima.

Thank you so much for your support and interest.

Sue Harrington, Deeptima Massey

Spotlight On....Sheila Eames

Continuing our new feature to Focus where in every edition we will put the spotlight on one of our Circuit members and maybe we will learn more about someone whom we have known for a while. The person is given a list of 18 questions and asked to select and respond to 8. Here is Sheila's choice and answers:



* I grew up in Brighton actually in Upper Lewes Road where there was Mum, Dad, my sister and I all living in a 1 bedroom bottom floor of a house. Family life was quite good, holidays in those days were what you called a runabout ticket on the railway for 7 days anywhere from Hastings one way, to Bognor and Littlehampton the other way, but I can always remember taking my bucket and spade whatever the weather.

* I have pets: a budgie who is yellow and can talk and he is a cheeky little thing in his 10th year now. Also I have four goldfish in an indoor tank, who seem to want food 24/7 but are only fed once a day. I also have sixteen goldfish out in the pond in the garden.

* My favourite books are by Cathy Glass as they are true stories of her fostering different children. My favourite TV programme is Songs of Praise. My favourite hymn is *And Can it Be*.

- * How would I describe myself? I am quite happy but sometimes like to play simple little harmless tricks on people.
 - * The one thing that I would have liked to have changed in my past? I think I should have done better at school than I did.
 - * The thing I was most proud of accomplishing was learning to drive quite quickly
 - * The happiest day of my life was my retirement; since then I have wondered how I ever had time to go to work.
 - * I agree with Ann Frank who once said that in spite of everything, she believed people were basically good.
- Thank you to Sheila who is a member of Woodingdean Methodist Church and previously Dorset Gardens.*

People and Groups in New Testament times:

This series of articles look at a number of matters relating to peoples and groups in the Mediterranean world in the period c. 150 B.C. to 96 A.D.

9. The Samaritans III

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. the countries we now know as Israel, Lebanon, and Palestine, were governed by the descendants of Alexander's generals: Ptolemy, who ruled Egypt: or Seleucus, who ruled Iraq and Iran. By 170 B.C. the area was ruled by the Seleucid monarch, Antiochus IV. The origins of the Essenes, Pharisees and Sadducees, etc. can all be traced back to this period as can the emergence of a distinct group called the Samaritans.

When some Jews rose in revolt against Antiochus IV, the Maccabean revolt of 167-164 B.C., the Samaritans did not join them. The Maccabees were fighting for religious freedom, but the Samaritans practised a religion that the Maccabees did not wish to liberate. The Maccabees made themselves high priests in Jerusalem and eventually kings.

The Maccabean high priest, John Hyrcanus (r. 134-104 B.C.) treated the Samaritans as gentiles even though the Samaritans practised circumcision and had a version of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible). It was the Samaritan allegiance to Mt Gerizim rather than Jerusalem that, for John, placed them outside the Jewish camp. John Hyrcanus fought many wars, not just against Seleucids who were trying to retake this part of their empire. In one of these campaigns in c. 110 B.C. he destroyed

the temple on Mt Gerizim and the break between Jews and Samaritans became entrenched.

The Samaritans not only practised circumcision and had the 'Books of Moses'. They also held festivals like Passover as instructed in the Torah, and had synagogues. There was a Samaritan diaspora, a community of Samaritans outside Samaria. In 1979 two Greek inscriptions, dated to the 2nd century B.C. were discovered on the Greek island of Delos commemorating contributions by a number of the Samaritan community. These show that the people thought of themselves as Israelites who considered Mt Gerizim as the proper place of worship: they were Samaritans. Always a small community the Samaritans were subjected to persecution by almost every group who ruled their homeland over the past 2,000 years. Now fewer than 1,000 remain.



The Samaritan scriptures consists of their Pentateuch (SP) which they believe originally to have been written down by Abisha, a great-grandson of Aaron, brother of Moses. A copy of the SP was first brought to Europe in the early 17th century and caused some excitement. Tragically its role became part of the Catholic/Protestant rivalries of the period, each claiming that it supported their ideas about the Bible. It was not until the 20th century that a more scholarly approach was adopted. With the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Greek Bible (the Septuagint), and the Masoretic text (the 1,000 year old text of the Hebrew Bible) the SP is one of

four major textual biblical traditions used by scholars.

The Samaritans have four principles of faith:

- a) One God, the God of Israel,
- b) One prophet, Moses,
- c) One holy book, the Pentateuch,
- d) One holy place, Mt Gerizim.

Added to this is a belief in the 'Taheb', a prophet like Moses, who will appear on the Day of Vengeance. The idea of the Taheb, an Aramaic word, is often equated with that of Messiah but that is not accurate.

The Taheb is not a redeemer or liberator but a restorer. The idea is not very prominent in contemporary Samaritanism but it is evident in Jn 4 v 25. The word used by the Samaritan woman would have been 'Taheb' not 'Messiah' but understandably the latter was used in the New Testament.

The New Testament has a variety of views on the Samaritans, the most positive being found in Luke/Acts. Some have suggested, on the basis of Jn 8 v 48 where Jesus does not deny the charge that he is a Samaritan, that Jesus was in fact a Samaritan, but the vast weight of evidence is against that idea. The early church certainly sought and obtained Samaritan converts (Acts 4 vv 1-25). Other than Jews and Christians, the Samaritans were the only group from this area in the first century A.D. to have survived to our own day. We turn next to a group who left no writing of their own, the Sadducees

Mick Hickman

Looking Back with thanks (Part 1)



Just before Christmas 2021 Kathleen and I learned that our friend Margaret had died. The sad news took us back to when we first met

whilst stationed at RAF Manby (*photo of entrance above*) in Lincolnshire. Kathleen was then eighteen and I was nineteen.

Opposite the main entrance to the camp was a Methodist chapel which only held services on Sunday evenings. Kathleen was a regular attender, duties in Air Traffic Control permitting, and I started going there soon after my posting to Manby.

How this tiny chapel came to have such an influence on both of us for the rest of our lives is down to Margaret's family who worshipped in the neighbouring village of Grimoldby. Yet every

Sunday evening one of them would come to Manby to invite any RAF personnel present back to their home for supper. This was something the family had done every week since 1941 when Manby was part of wartime Bomber Command. Their farm lay under the flight path to and from Germany and they told us how at night they would count the number of bombers taking off and then check how many made it back the next day, noting the difference with sorrow and offering prayers for the missing crews' survival as prisoners-of-war, hoping that they'd been able to bail out.

The chapel (*see right*) was nearly three miles from the farm but we looked forward to our visit so much that, regardless of weather, the walk never seemed to drag. On our arrival we would be welcomed by Margaret's parents and shown into the front room. The house itself was not very spacious, so seating was always at a premium. We shared



chairs, catching up with the latest news, letters from former RAF personnel. Mrs West had a phenomenal memory and could remember the names of all the servicemen and women they had hosted over the years. When all the news had been exchanged, Mr West would announce it was time for us to sing and out would come a music edition of the Methodist Hymn Book. Although all four daughters could play a variety of instruments, whenever possible, one of us would be asked to play the piano. That often fell to me, which meant I got my own seat on the piano stool. They firmly believed that not only was Methodism born in song, but that it was kept alive in the singing of our faith, especially through the hymns of Charles Wesley. Mrs West strictly adhered to the rule that if you could not find anything good to say about someone, then it was better to remain silent. The solitary exception she made was in the case of local preachers who referred to Manby chapel as "this wayside Bethel," a trite phrase that really got under her skin.

After the hymn-singing, we would gather around their dining table for a supper of home-made Lincolnshire plum bread, buttered scones, cakes and puddings washed down with real coffee. Afterwards we took turns to clear the table and do the washing up. The house itself was always warm and welcoming, perfectly reflecting the character of its inhabitants.

They were a wonderfully generous family who, over many years, had made countless young, lonely and apprehensive strangers feel loved and very much at home. They were not particularly well off, but never counted the cost of giving and sharing because that was what Jesus had commanded us to do. They never owned a car and cycled everywhere, although the flatness of Lincolnshire's topography made that easier than in our home counties of Yorkshire and Derbyshire. They lived their faith quite naturally, asking questions and encouraging discussion, something that resonated with all of us. Kathleen and I have tried to follow their example as we have moved around the country, welcoming strangers and newcomers wherever we have found ourselves.

We kept in touch after leaving the RAF until, sadly, time took its toll and both Mr and Mrs West died. We travelled to Lincolnshire for Mr West's funeral where it was no surprise to meet other ex-RAF personnel who had returned to pay their respects. We remained friends with Margaret and her husband over the years and visited them at their home. To have met and been influenced by such a family at the very beginning of our life together has been a real privilege for which we constantly give thanks to God.

Tony Leonard

The Emmaus Road



Like you, I've heard a good many sermons on the Emmaus Road. But they always seemed to end when Cleopas and his partner recognised our Lord and He vanished out of their sight, as though that were the whole story.

But, of course, it isn't. Luke tells us (Ch 24) that they went back to Jerusalem that same hour and tried to convince the Apostles in the Upper room that they had indeed met the risen Lord. (Though they weren't really believed.) And whilst they were still discussing the whole thing, the Risen Jesus Himself came

and showed all of them His scars and His wounds. Yes, Cleopas and his partner were with the Apostles, were in the presence of the risen Lord.

What an incredible reward for faith, to be present at and to be

part of - arguably - the greatest event in history. To be nearer to God than they had ever conjectured. The story of Emmaus is incomplete unless it tells us that they were there, two humble followers, and this time, He didn't vanish out of their sight. They could see Him, hear His words, talk to Him and see His wounds.

The story began with faith that was unsure. It ends with faith that is informed and complete. They had witnessed the enormous and powerful love of God for them. And it was so powerful that a tomb in a Jerusalem garden could not contain it, nor a cross on the hill at Calvary.

Selwyn Veater

**Dorset Gardens Methodist Church
Brighton**

REJOICE!

BIG SING

The 'Aldersgate' Experience

Saturday 14 May 2022

2.30 to 4 pm

(Doors open at 2 pm for a quick cuppa)

There will be plenty of tea and cakes

Any donations will go to our Circuit Refugee Project

Nominate a hymn that has made your heart feel strangely warmed, share your story and we will sing the hymn together. Let Deeptima or your Church Steward know.

All are welcome!

A Civic Virus?

New Study Explores People's Struggles to Find Belonging And Hope

We see it all around us: people are increasingly disconnected from the civic institutions, including churches, that fostered relationships and belonging in decades past.

One new study, **Civic Virus: Why Polarization Is a Misdiagnosis**, prepared by The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation in partnership with the Kettering Foundation, explores just this disconnection and diagnoses a "civic virus." This research found that in the US today,

"People are experiencing a profound sense of loss of reality and control, leaving them dizzied, disoriented, and feeling helpless... everyone seems to be struggling nowadays.

This thread runs throughout all that we learned from talking in-depth with Americans from many walks of life. People are in a desperate search for an antidote to these prevailing social and psychological conditions. At the heart of what people seek is acceptance and belonging. Though feelings of intense isolation undoubtedly surged during COVID-19 times, his search didn't just begin as a result of the pandemic."



We can see symptoms of this virus everywhere we look. We see more heated fight-or-flight responses to minor disagreements, attractions to charismatic leaders promising easy answers or top-down control, and interest in conspiracy theories that supply a feeling

of belonging to a group that is "in the know" about a grounded theory that explains everything.

If a lack of connection and belonging is the dis-ease, healthy congregations that offer true belonging and acceptance are sorely needed in our world today.

(continued on p20)

Celebrations and remembrance at Patcham



**27th March,
Seb & Amber
Harrington had
Hugo & Esme
baptised, and a
blessing for
Herbie.
*Harriet Bird
Photography***

Some of the study respondents reported having to toe a line of belief they may not fully embrace to find belonging. Progressive congregations that focus on belonging and not rigid belief assent could provide a safe place for them to land. While attending worship may not be on their radar, congregations that provide opportunities to plug into community service or spiritual practice without high entry barriers can serve as a place of connection and grounding through the rapid societal and life changes we all experience.

The report also suggests that **“more doable and achievable actions will need to be taken to restore people’s belief that we can get things done together, rather than offering more false hope about change.”** Local community action was seen by many as a source of hope during the pandemic, but also a source of concern that even these connections would soon unravel. A healthy congregation that makes a real local impact through ongoing collective efforts can be a demonstration plot for real rather than false hope in our collective possibilities.

We also have to consider if people in need of such a place can find us. Our fear of evangelism can often mean that we are not meeting the very urgent needs of our neighbours. We may be excellent at collecting canned foods for those experiencing food insecurity but terrible at letting people know: You can find belonging and hope here! This may require rethinking how people find out about what you offer, highlighting more “front doors” to belonging than worship, and intentionally incorporating new people into groups to feel that sense of belonging.

Dr. Anna Hall

Review of Brighton Male Voice Choir

Long, long ago, before Covid came into the world, a man from Woodingdean had an idea. I sing in a choir, he thought. Why don't I ask the choir if they would like to do a concert to raise money for Action for Children. He made plans, sorted out a date, found a venue and then . . . LOCKDOWN happened.

It took two long years for his idea to come into fruition but on a wet and windy February afternoon, the Brighton Male Voice Choir performed a wonderful concert at Stanford Avenue.

Things weren't perfect; coming the day after storm Eunice, the weather was pretty atrocious which meant several folk felt unable to brave the elements. The Woodingdean man and his wife went

down with Covid so after all his preparation, he was not able to be there, and we missed out on his harmonica solo.



However, we were treated to a variety of songs; traditional, spirituals, from the musicals and the Beatles. We also had a history lesson; did you know that during the depression of the 1920's miners came from South Wales to work here on the sea defences. We had a recital of Shakespeare's sonnets, classical piano solos (Bach and Mozart) from a nonagenarian and lashings of tea and cake.

The highlight for me was the updated versions written by choir members of 'Some Enchanted Evening' ('Coming out of Lockdown') and the Flanders and Swan 'The Gasman Cometh' ('When lockdown came to pass')

A good afternoon for us all.

Rosemary Cuthbert

Nearer God's Heart in a Garden

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
One is nearer God's Heart in a
garden
Than anywhere else on Earth.

These words were composed by Dorothy Frances Gurney (1858-1932) an English poet and hymnwriter. The second to last verse of her best-known poem, "God's Garden" is seen everywhere on signs, plaques and other garden ornaments, but few people know its author.

Having spent over 40 years working as a gardener I finally retired at the end of April last year and I can definitely say that I identify with her words.



The months of April, May and June are particularly exciting months in the garden as the days lengthen and plants begin to grow vigorously. The majority of the Spring bulbs have gone over and the early flowering plants and shrubs such as hellebores, daphnes, sarcococcas (Christmas Box), and witch hazel have faded. Now the dawn chorus of the birds increases in volume as they attract a mate, build nests and proclaim their territory. There is an increase in insect activity and the constant sound of bees buzzing as they move from plant to plant and the emergence of butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. One of the main reasons Jennie and I moved house in 2002 was to have a bigger garden so that I could indulge my passion for plants. I particularly like plants that have small flowers so that you have to get close up to study them and my garden is mostly herbaceous perennials with just a few small shrubs, three dwarf apple trees and a pond. There is no lawn but a winding stepping stone path runs through the plants from the patio to get to the raised vegetable plots at the bottom of the garden.



Possibly my favourite plants are Clematis and I have seven different cultivars growing on trellis, tripods and over the garden arbour seat. I also love blue coloured plants and the garden is full of *Verbena bonariensis* which I leave to self-seed and is great for attracting bees and butterflies.

In her book "Plant Personalities", Carol Klein divided the plants up into 9 different sections based on their characters. One of the sections she called 'Shooting Stars', plants whose flowers are here today and gone tomorrow but lift the borders and the spirits when they are out in flower. One such

group of plants are Iris which are great favourites of mine but unfortunately are also a favoured plant of slugs and snails which are inevitably numerous in a garden bounded by crumbling bungaroosh walls. I have 8 different cultivars of flag iris which are mostly blue but I have one beautiful yellow and white variety called 'Florentina'. I also have a number of Peonies including a spectacular 'Bowl of Beauty'.

Herbaceous Geraniums are another favourite and I have 14 different varieties. They mostly have a long flowering season particularly when regularly dead headed and they are great for covering ground and keeping weeds down. Beware though of *Geranium x oxonianum* which can become invasive and swamp other plants.

I grow a number of different Hostas but because of the slugs and snails these are all grown in pots with copper tape around them and they line my front garden path. There are a number of other plants grown in pots on the patio where I find they get less damage than in the garden. Here I grow the beautiful *Gillenia trifoliata* with its wiry stems bedecked with small starry white flowers.



My passion for plants means that I never have enough room for all the plants that I would like to grow as I already have over 150 different plants growing in what is a small garden. We regularly visit other gardens and flower shows and I have to restrain myself from buying more plants.

Gardening has a lot to offer:

- By planning and planting a garden you become a creator.
- Tending and improving your garden requires development of the observation and experimenting skills of a scientist.
- Gardening teaches you patience and hope. It aligns you with the rhythm of seasons. It connects you with your inner self.
- By providing you with a bountiful harvest, gardening shows you that life is abundant and there is plenty to go around.
- Gardening makes life worthwhile and beautiful! It is good for your body and your soul.
- Gardening brings you closer to God.

Ian Lamb

Summer Soup recipe by Caroline

Food & Friendship Chef extraordinaire Caroline Henderson recommends a very nice summery soup recipe that she absolutely loves. We hope you enjoy it too.

Pea soup with mint and lemon dressing

Preparation time: 15 mins

Cooking time: 20 minutes

1 onion, peeled and roughly chopped

1 clove garlic chopped

2 tbsps olive oil

2 carrots scrubbed and diced

1 large potato, peeled and diced

1 and a half pints of vegetable bouillon or stock

1 bag spinach, washed

8 oz frozen or fresh shelled peas

For the dressing:

1 small bunch of fresh mint leaves chopped

1 lemon, juiced

2 tablespoons olive oil

salt and pepper



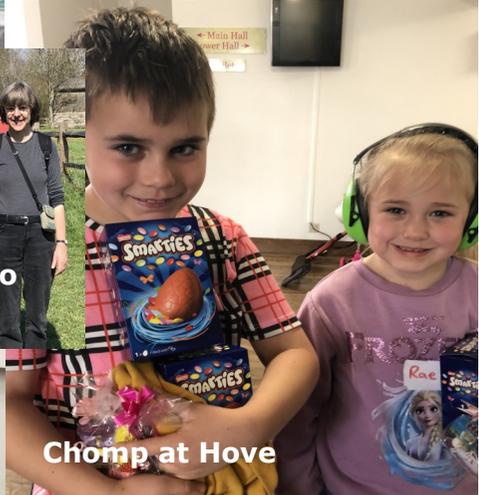
In a large pan, cook the onion in the oil until soft but not browned.

Add the garlic, potatoes, carrots and stock and cook until they are soft (approx 15-20 minutes). When the potatoes are almost cooked, add the spinach and peas. Simmer gently for five minutes. Liquidise with a stick blender and season with salt and black pepper.

When you are ready to serve, mix the chopped mint with the olive oil and lemon. Serve the soup into bowls and drizzle mint dressing over each serving. Serve with crusty bread.

Caroline Henderson

Easter Tidings and recent activities



Dates for the diary: Summer activities

Barnstormers are proud to present **Anything Goes** from May **19 to 21** at Patcham Methodist Church.

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THURSDAY 19TH - SATURDAY 21ST MAY @ 7.30 PM
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TICKETS £11 (CONCESSIONS FOR CHILDREN AND
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ORIGINAL BOOK BY P.G. WODEHOUSE & GUY BOLTON
AND HOWARD LINDSAY & RUSSEL CROUSE
NEW BOOK BY TIMOTHY CROUSE & JOHN WEIDMAN

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With music and lyrics by the legendary Cole Porter, and stars such as Ethel Merman, Elaine Page and Sutton Foster, Anything Goes is a charming, Boy-Meets-Girl, zany, romantic and funny show which has been delighting its audiences ever since it was first performed on Broadway in 1934.

Please join us aboard the ocean liner S. S. American, where nightclub singer/evangelist Reno Sweeney is en route from New York to England, her pal Billy Crocker has stowed away to be near his love, Hope Harcourt, but the problem is Hope is engaged to the wealthy Lord Evelyn Oakleigh. Joining this love triangle on board the luxury liner are Public Enemy #13, Moonface Martin, and his sidekick-in-crime Erma. With the help of some elaborate disguises, tap-dancing sailors and good old-fashioned blackmail, Reno and Martin join forces to help Billy in his quest to win Hope's heart. With all time-favourite numbers such as Friendship, I Get A Kick Out Of You and the block-busting title song Anything Goes, you are guaranteed a voyage of a lifetime.

All aboard! Last few tickets are on sale now!

Come and join **A Big Sing** on **Saturday 14 May** from 2.30pm at Dorset Gardens Methodist Church. As the date falls near Aldersgate Sunday we are going to ask people to nominate a hymn that resonates with Wesleys 'heart strangely warmed' and share their story. If you have a hymn you'd like to share, please contact Deeptima Massey.



Congratulations to the 14th Brighton Scout Troop based at DG who won the March Overland Hike which is a 25-mile hike over two days where they carry all their equipment & camp overnight. The hike is open to Scouts from both East and West Sussex and the 14th Brighton won the Scout trophy for only the second time in their history. Pictured here with leaders Helen & John.

PLATINUM JUBILEE

Celebration of Faith & Service

70

On **Thursday 2nd June**, as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, there will be a **Party in the Park** from 2 to 5pm in the Peace Park, next to Dorset Gardens Methodist Church. It is for the whole neighbourhood – and indeed the whole circuit! The party will be loads of fun: there will be a visit from the Mayor; Silver Sounds Samba Band will perform; the Brighton Morris Men will do a turn or two. There will be stalls, games, maybe a bouncy castle, decorations and lots of tea, squash, cakes and sandwiches. Everyone is encouraged to dress up: maybe fancy dress, maybe patriotic gear, wearing crowns or tiaras, and lots of red, white and blue – above all looking celebratory and fun!

Planning is in the early stages – but do put it in your diary and try to come along. If you have a usual Thursday group in your church, perhaps plan to decamp to Dorset Gardens. You'll be guaranteed a warm welcome. And if you can help out by providing a cake or a plate of sandwiches or a pair of strong arms on the day, Cynthia Park (01273 640247) would love to hear from you. The event is free, but there will be a stall telling folk about our circuit refugee project and giving them a chance to donate to it. There will also be buckets around to collect for Ukraine.



Stanford Avenue are inviting you to **Come 4 Coffee every Thursday** from 10.00 to 12.00 in their Fellowship Room. All are welcome to drop in for tea, coffee, a chat, craft, or, quiet time in the church.

Hove happenings...

- ◇ **Community Breakfast Saturday 28th May** Drop in between 9.30 - 11.30. Free. An opportunity to meet new friends and catch up with old ones over a bacon buttie!
- ◇ **Community Disco** with DJ Chris Love **Saturday 28th May** 7pm till late. Free entrance. Fun, Food and Laughter guaranteed.
- ◇ Chomp supporting families on low income during the school holidays - **indoor street party** to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee. **Tuesday 31st May** 11.00 -13.00. Contact Rachel 07813707929 to book a place
- ◇ Martlets Queens Platinum Celebration - **Songs Through The Decades** with light refreshments. **Wednesday 1st June** 11.00 -13.00. Free entrance
- ◇ **Sunday Lunch** after the service on **Sunday 5th June** - bring your own lunch. A relaxed celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- ◇ **Street Party Saturday July 2nd 12 - 4pm.** Community event with live music. DJ Chris Love, Streetfunk, Chinese Dragon dance, Nam Yang Martial Arts, Public Living Room, Table top sale, Raffle, Hot food, cakes, drinks. If you would like a stall or be able to help on the day please contact the HMC office.
- ◇ We are also hosting an evening entitled "**What would love do now**" on **Saturday 25th June** 7.30-9.30. An evening of songs and poems and stories exploring what matters to each of us at the end of life. Info and link to ticket purchase here <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/judithsilver/666591/>
- ◇ PS Hope all at Woodingdean have a wonderful anniversary/jubilee tea on Saturday 4th June



Deborah & John Cornish are still planning to hold their annual summer **Cornish Cream Tea** on **Saturday 13th & Sunday 14th August**, between 3-5pm at 155 Surrenden Road. There will be donations for the work of Action for Children and Matthew Rusike Children's Home



(Zimbabwe). You are welcome to come whichever day you like, no need to book a time slot this year. Just come as you are – rain or shine it will go ahead! You can be the first to hear about Deborah's sabbatical and welcome her & John back.

Tea Party!

1952 - 2022
THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE 2022
 70 YEARS

2-5pm Thursday 2nd June 2022
 Family friendly games and entertainment. Dress red, white, & blue.
 Dorset Gardens (in Dorset Gardens Methodist Church if wet)

Dorset Gardens Methodist Church The Village Metropolitan Community Church

Special Worship Services this summer

Dorset Gardens is celebrating it's **Church Anniversary** on **22nd May** at 10.30 with a special service led by **Deacon Ali McMillan**.



Ali grew up in Brighton and before coming into ministry worked at schools in Oxfordshire teaching Religious Education and Ethics. Post training and her first appointment in Dorset, she joined the team at Westminster Central Hall in September 2019. As a member of the Methodist Diaconal Order, Ali is passionate about coming alongside people where they are and journeying with them as they discover God at work in their lives.

Two weeks later on **5th June** at 10.00 Woodingdean is celebrating it's **Church Anniversary** which will be led by **Rev Dr Stuart Bell** His very first appointment was at Woodindean back in September 1987 as well as University Chaplain. He gained his first degree in Computer Science in the days of punched cards and paper tape, after which he lectured in that subject for seven years. He is an Honorary Research Fellow of St John's College, Durham University and now retired, lives in Nottinghamshire.

On the same day **5th June at 8.00am**, all are welcome to join Andy to celebrate **Pentecost at Ditchling Beacon**. Contact Andy for further details.



On **10th July** the **Revd Paul Young, CEO Off the Fence**, will lead worship at Dorset Gardens, as part of Off The Fence 25th anniversary year. The mission of Off The Fence is to eradicate social and spiritual poverty in Brighton & Hove. They operate across three main areas: homelessness, women at risk and schools and youth. They work through two day centres, three outreach vans and 15 local schools, entailing the support of just over 150 trained volunteers, staff and interns.

Finally our next **Circuit Together** service will be led by our Chair of District the **Revd Dr David Hinchliffe** at Patcham on **31st July** at 10.30am.

Back by popular request



♥ To Elin

Copy Deadline
Please submit your articles, jokes and miscellaneous pet pics for our 2022 Autumn Edition by 24th July.

Circuit Office

Portland Road Hove BN3 5DR

Tel: 01273 324600

office@hovemethodistchurch.co.uk

Superintendent: Rev Andy Lowe