

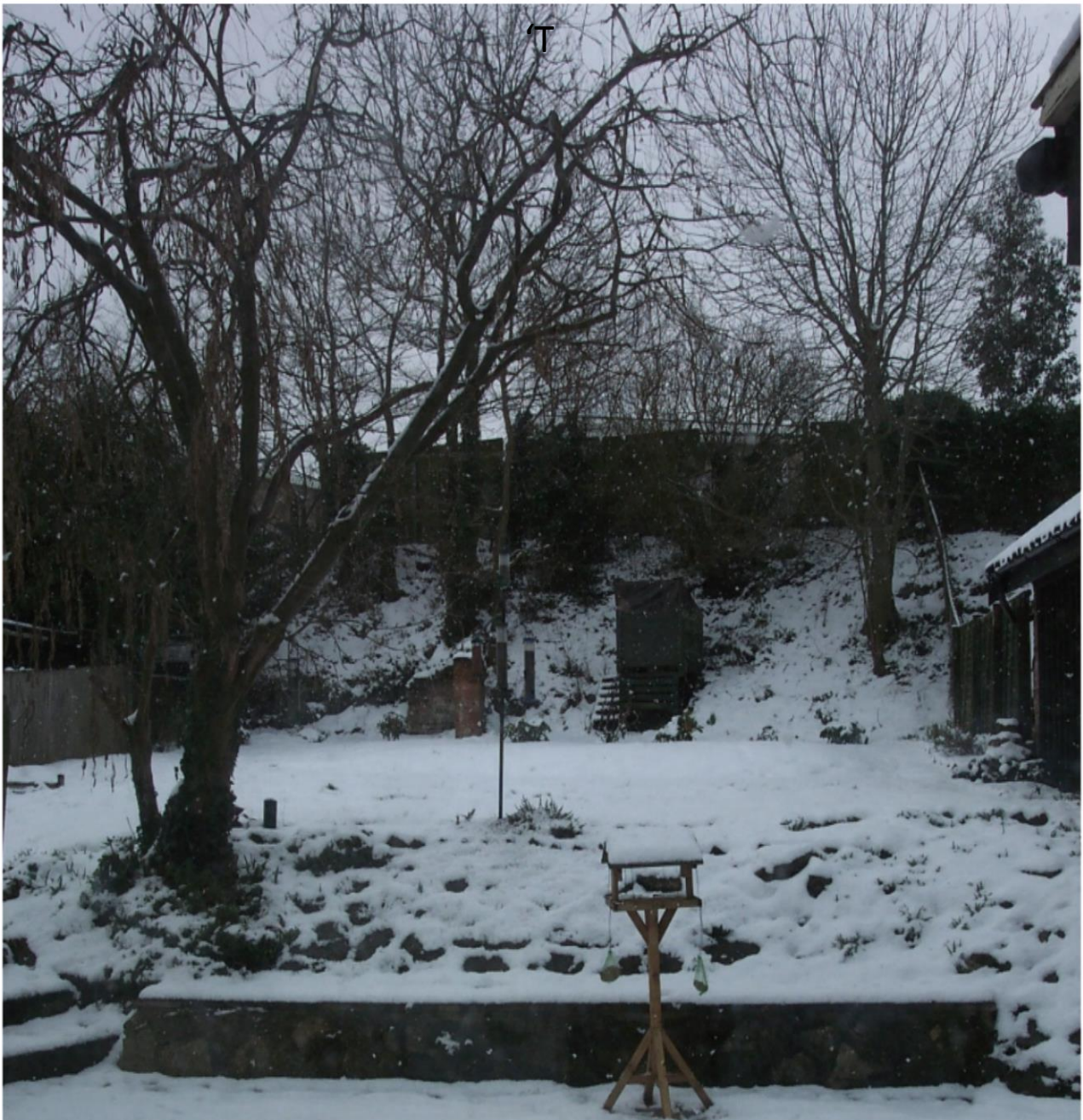
grapevine

November 2015 - Issue Number 27



Breaking Down Barriers – Softening the Boundaries

East Anglia District of the Methodist Church



'Tis winter now; the fallen snow
Has left the heavens all coldly clear;
Through leafless boughs the sharp
winds blow,
And all the earth lies dead and drear.

And yet God's love is not withdrawn;
His life within the keen air breathes;
His beauty paints the crimson dawn,
And clothes the boughs with
glittering wreaths.

Samuel Longfellow (1819-1892)

Welcome to grapevine

This issue of *grapevine* addresses issues under our theme of **Breaking down barriers – Softening the boundaries**. We are grateful to the people who have contributed items on the theme, which is introduced by the District Chair, Revd Julian Pursehouse, on page 4.

We're delighted to welcome the District Administrator, Alison Travis, to the team. Alison has taken a major role in the layout and production of this issue. She introduces herself on page 7.

Thank you for your feedback about the Spring issue. This is being considered by various groups in the District as we continue to look for the best way to make sure that everyone has access to *grapevine*.

We always welcome contributions, although we can't guarantee that they will be included. We prefer to receive information through our dedicated email address: eagrapevine@gmail.com Please use plain or rich text format. If you are sending images, use .jpg format. If you are sending by post, the address is still:

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grapevine

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Cover image – Catherine Hutton

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Softening the Boundaries Between the Church and the World

*Revd Julian M Pursehouse
District Chair*

Over the last year I have had the pleasure of travelling across the East Anglia District and leading worship in a number of our churches both large and small. During this time I have visited all of the circuits that comprise the East Anglia District. Many of our churches are well situated and well maintained and it is very obvious that many of them provide excellent community space for a whole range of different activities.

This means that in many places there is a significant footfall of people who cross the threshold of our churches. Indeed, when I consulted the figures from the Statistics for Mission website we reported a total number of **19,663** for our community roll across the District. This means that nearly **20,000** people regularly fall under the influence and orbit of our Methodist communities across East Anglia.

As I reflect upon this fact there are two questions that emerge as I travel around the District.

How do we exercise a Christian presence? And how do we delineate our relationship with the wider community?

There is a great virtue in the enduring and faithful presence of our

Christian communities that have remained as places of worship for many years, often situated as they are at the heart of living communities. I am reminded here of that word that is so rich and resonant in the Gospel of John - and that is “abiding”. “Abide in me and I will abide in you,” Christ says to his followers. We communicate the abiding and faithful nature of a loving God through the places of worship that have continued to abide at the heart of our communities – places of worship and teaching, hospitality and grace, who in their worship and mission are faithfully sowing the seeds of God’s Kingdom.

We should not *underestimate* the value of an enduring Christian presence that is faithfully maintained by the resilience of God’s people.

In the light of this enduring presence we should think positively and creatively about our interaction with the surrounding community and in particular the relationship we foster with the people who cross the threshold of our church buildings. I am increasingly of the view that we need to work hard to soften the boundaries between the church and the world – less *us and them* – and more a sense of *we* who are made in the image of God and share a common humanity as those who are profoundly loved by God. Perhaps the relationship between the church family and users of the building is not landlord and tenant but more church family and neighbours.

This requires us to discover grace and hospitality at the very heart of our life together in the Christian Church so that those who are strangers become friends and have every opportunity to be drawn into the wonder of God’s love in Christ.

HOW GOD HAS AFFECTED MY LIFE

A Testimony from Revd Alison Walker

I grew up always going to church and always aware of God's presence and that Jesus was my friend. Over time, you begin to explore beliefs that you have simply accepted and I found greater and greater truth in all I had been taught. I think children tend to have both 'head knowledge' and 'heart knowledge' of God in a natural, holistic way; and perhaps it is only later that we begin to worry about a lack of balance between the two. I remember as a child, feeling both reassured by God's love and challenged by my faith as well, as I could see the gap between God's desire for the world to be a good and happy place, and the reality that this is not true for everyone.

Most of the time, faith and awareness of God's presence are a bit like a background hum, but sometimes a new melody emerges. For me, the feeling of being called to be a Methodist minister was more like the crashing opening to an orchestral symphony! I was sitting on the floor of the Royal Albert Hall during the MAYC (Methodist Association of Youth Clubs)

London Weekend Sunday worship. For a few years, I had been asking myself what I wanted to do in my local church



and asking myself what God was calling me to do. As the preacher spoke, I felt that his words were really meant for me: "Perhaps some of you are called to become ministers". I had felt called to be a local preacher the previous year (but at 15 years old was told I was too young); but I did not expect such a clear feeling that this was the right path for me. That feeling has never left me – perhaps now it is more like a leading bass line amongst the background hum!

Obviously, feeling called to ministry at age 16 affects what you choose to do next. I took a gap year on a Seed Team living in Normandy, France, and that experience led in turn to working as a mission partner in Florence, Italy (2009-13). I did not want to study Theology at university, but, in the end, I found that course was more interesting than the English course

and so I had the best of both worlds: reading for a joint honours in English and Theology. Although I did try not to work for the church straight after university in the end, again, that was the job I was offered and I enjoyed three years in London working with international students.

Today I find Jesus more interesting and inspiring than ever, and although some of my theological ideas have changed, I still want to find ways to encourage other people to meet and make sense of Jesus for themselves.

Revd Alison Walker is a minister in the Cambridge circuit

DISTRICT NEWS

Our new District Administrator Alison Travis introduces herself



I have lived within East Anglia for most of my life, having moved here from Birmingham in my childhood and I currently live in Beccles. I am therefore delighted to be able to support the East Anglia District as the District Administrator following my appointment in April this year.

I previously worked full time at the Magistrates' Court in Lowestoft for a period of over 24 years, working in various departments during my time there. Although working for the Methodist Church is a completely different environment to the Magistrates' Court, I am confident that my knowledge and skills in administration will help me in my new post and I look forward to the different challenges. My role includes attending various District committee meetings and taking minutes; organising social events for members of the District; assisting with preparation of *grapevine* magazine; assisting with the building and development of the District website and many other administrative functions which support the District.

I have met a number of you already, including those I met at the Representative Synod in St Ives during September. I would like to thank you all for making me feel so welcome and I look forward to meeting many more of you in the future.

Working Alongside Kampala Community Church

Revd Catherine Hutton



My friend Pastor James Teira is leading a church in one of the outskirts areas of Kampala, Uganda, called Masanafu, which is near the northern bypass road around the city. I spoke with James and asked what could be done to support the church's ministry. It turned out that their schools' outreach work had come to an end because they didn't have the resources. So we set about raising money so we could take out whatever they needed for their youth work.

I love having a purpose and working together with God's people in sharing the gospel and so this July I took a group of 11 people to work alongside Kampala Community Church.

We worked at painting the local high school. And we gave the money for the kitchen to be tiled to improve hygiene. We shared in teaching class, where we shared life experiences and stories with the students.

We sponsored a women's ministry day, providing enough money so they could feel valued and special in the midst of hard living, sharing with the local church leaders in the teaching. Every woman present received a new bra and a gift bag. Dignity is important and bras are often poor quality and expensive. Many women from our home community had donated bras and we took 3 suitcases. Lilian, Pastor James' wife, was very happy. "I can't ask James to ask for bras when he is travelling, but they are so needed. Thank you."

We took sufficient team tee shirts so that we could unite as a single team with the Kampala Church people for school's outreach.

We travelled to high schools around the city - singing, sharing the gospel message of Jesus' love for everyone. I lost count at 130, as so many students came to faith.



During this time, my quiet, unassuming group of 'missionaries' found confidence to share their faith in public, preaching mini-sermons and telling of God's love at work in their lives. They continued to do this on returning to the UK.

WORKING WITH OTHER FAITHS

Revd Colin A Smith

After 24 years of ministry in London Districts, I have recently moved to East Anglia to be superintendent of the Cambridge circuit and minister of Wesley Church on Christ's Pieces (what a wonderful address for a church!). Life in these first few weeks has been very busy but I am learning a great deal. It is a delight to be in East Anglia and Cambridge.

I have also been asked to be the District Inter-Faith Officer. My priorities are local at the moment but I look forward to filling this role properly in the months ahead, once I have settled in. In North London I ministered in one of the most religiously diverse areas in the country. Barnet is the most Jewish place between New York and Tel Aviv with every variety of Judaism. I worked in particular with a local Orthodox synagogue and a Liberal synagogue. But when possible I got to know the other faiths.

I find it stimulating to see my faith through the eyes of others. It is very interesting to understand other faiths, particularly Judaism, our parent faith. Judaism, in biblical times and today, is often unintentionally misrepresented by Christians. We can gain much understanding of our own faith through Jewish-Christian dialogue.

We can by meeting, talking with and sometimes working with others develop respect and understanding. At home I seem to be surrounded by books on 'religion and violence' at the moment. We must play our part in demonstrating that people of different faiths can be friends although holding different views.

The cohesion of our society will be much helped by the example of religious people being seen to co-operate and not be enemies. Inter-faith work is not an optional 'add-on' to what we do, it must be at the core of what we do as churches. This is not to say that we compromise our

Continued on page 11

beliefs or expect others to do so. We listen, we talk and we co-operate in serving the community where we can.

At my welcome service in Cambridge at the beginning of September, I invited representatives of the two synagogues in Cambridge and they were glad to accept. By great coincidence one of these synagogues was celebrating the opening of their brand new building on the same day and they invited me to be there. The synagogue Chair has already met with me to see what we can do together in the interests of the wider community.

There was also a Muslim representative at my service. I met him in Rome in May (when I was visiting Tim and Angela Macquiban) and he has invited me to visit and speak at the Cambridge Muslim College, which helps to train future imams. Since I have arrived in Cambridge I have met with representatives of the Cambridge Islamic College who have bought the former Sturton Street Methodist church in the city. They don't just want to buy our property but to work with the local community and ourselves. They have a particular interest in women's spirituality within Islam.

I appreciate that London is very different from Cambridge, and that Cambridge is different from the rest of East Anglia but we can all look for opportunities for friendship and conversation. This will not be possible with all (it isn't with all Christians!) but these encounters will be very precious and influential.

I would be very glad to hear about any inter-faith encounters in the East Anglia district and in due course will develop my role.

Colin A Smith

minister@wesleycam.org.uk

01223 352324



Boundless

Ann Howlett-Foster

*Discipleship and Ministries Learning
Network (East of England)*

This summer saw over 15,000 Salvationists from across the world gathering to share in celebration as it is 150 years since William Booth 'founded' The Salvation Army here in the UK.

I was one of them. I had been ambivalent about the event initially but soon became engaged when I was invited to 'host' a visiting group from Hawaii – The Hula Dancers no less!



The event called *Boundless* was held over several days at the O2 Arena in London.

There was wonderful worship, challenging addresses, amazing and varied cultures mixing and worshipping and learning together.

Assumptions were challenged too. Who knew that Hula dancing could be so beautiful and deeply spiritual, and that's just one example. Certainly *Boundless* blurred the boundaries of my imagination and thoughts.

But the thing that stood out for me was the effect the thousands of Christians had as they flooded the O2 Arena and into the City of London. Smiling, laughing, praising. And it was noticed. The O2 staff who are apparently normally polite but 'professionally' disengaged found the atmosphere infectious and we saw the smiles transfer to their lovely faces!

One Steward was so moved by the Hula dancers' beautiful spirituality, she asked me to keep her informed about their appearances. Many other staff commented on how wonderful it was to be involved and were happily working shifts that are normally difficult to fill.

God provides us with so many opportunities and his work is Boundless. God softens the boundaries! So don't be surprised if he uses us in a much bigger way than we expect!



SOMETHING NEW FOR 2016?

John Hull

District Evangelism Group Coordinator

The New Year will be with us before we realise!

It is a tradition among many people that they start a new year with a determination to change their habits or to introduce new ideas into their lives. As we contemplate the beginning of a new year, could we adapt this idea of a New Year's Resolution to our church lives?

One of the four points in the Methodist Church's *Our Calling* is "To make more followers of Jesus Christ", but judging by the decline in attendance at many of our churches we are not usually very good at this. "Why?", we ask ourselves. We are friendly; our churches in general are warm and comfortable; our preachers are worthy. Why are we rarely able to make more followers of Jesus? And we could ask ourselves, why are some churches full and growing?

There is a genuine interest in spirituality among a large section of the population. The problem is that in our present way of being church we are not connecting with most of these. Do we need to think about new ways of getting people involved and learning about the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ?

At an East Anglia District Synod last year, we asked those

Continued on page 15

present to tell us about any new ways that they were using to connect with people not usually interested in regular types of church. We were given over 75 examples with a great variety of happenings. Some were very small, others much larger. Some were in large towns, others in small rural villages. It was very encouraging.

Of the many and varied activities, a lot centre around “Messy church”, an activity for young children, most of which also involves their parents. Others involve cafe-style worship, with practical activities for both adults and children. One church which does this on a monthly basis attracts double the usual number of people, many of whom have not attended church before. Children's holiday clubs, cafés open during the week and lunches for various age and gender groups are also great ways of involving those outside the regular church activities.

Many of these activities involve working with other churches in the area. I know that there are many other activities going on which are aimed at those who do not, and probably will not, attend church as we know it. If we are not involved in something like this, then surely we need to be? It is not going to do us any good just hoping for the best. We need to pray for, think about and plan something different, something that will engage with all those lovely people who do not attend our regular church services.

How about planning a New Year's Resolution to start something new in 2016: something for those outside our church circle? Let us make sure that we follow the examples of our Methodist forebears and ensure we are more like a lifeboat station, here to rescue people, and not just a social club.



Polar Explorers' Igloo

Rachael Atkins

We held our Holiday Club in August at Marshland St James, in the Fens circuit. The theme this year was "Polar Explorers". We had the idea of building an igloo back in

January and put the request out across the circuit and to the local community for empty (and cleaned) 4 pint milk cartons, with tops.

Having calculated that to build one approximately 7 feet across we would need at least 700 cartons, we were not sure how long we would need to collect that amount. An unused bedroom was our store and during May we communicated that we had sufficient cartons (about 1,100).

2 weeks before the holiday club, we packed the cartons into cardboard storage boxes built onto pallets. We filled 4 of these.

We began the Saturday before the Holiday Club began by gluing 2 rows of milk cartons in place. On the first day of the holiday club, the oldest children had the opportunity to glue at least 3 cartons each onto the structure. On the second day, 4 of the leaders stayed after the club had finished and completed the building of the igloo.



The igloo is still standing in the church as it is too big to remove without breaking it up.

We actually used 699 cartons!



'Follow the Star'

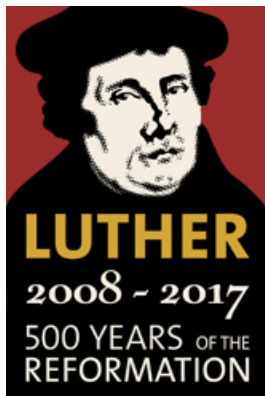
Live Nativity

3.30 pm on 13 December 2015

Bramford Road Methodist Church, Ipswich IP1 4AY

Refreshments following

**Watch out for details of Christmas
events in your local area!**



Rhine Cruise and Reformation Tour 5-13 November 2016

From Revd Dr and Mrs Peter Graves:

In November 2016, we will be leading a group to join a five night river cruise from Amsterdam along the Rhine to Speyer. After a day sightseeing, we will sail back to Koblenz and spend the night onboard. The following day we will begin an overland tour to visit sites associated with the Great Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther.

Places visited include Cologne, Koblenz, The Rhine Gorge, Mainz, Worms, Speyer and Heidelberg. The overland tour includes the Wartburg Castle, Eisenach, Erfurt, Eisleben and Wittenberg. We will then journey to Berlin before flying home.

Please ask us for brochures and other information by telephone (01638 724928) or by email at pcgcam@yahoo.com

The tour is organised by Educational Opportunities Tours. There is a section of their website that deals with this tour. It includes a helpful and informative three minute video. Go to www.eo.travel/graves2016

A recent information and publicity event attracted a great deal of interest and definite bookings are now coming in. It's going to be a great group. You are warmly invited to join us for what promises to be a really interesting and enjoyable experience.

Contributions

Letters, good news, beautiful photographs and poetry

by 1 February 2016

for our April 2016 *grapevine* (preferably by email)

eagrapevine@gmail.com

or by post to:

'grapevine', District office

Chapel Field Road Methodist Church

Norwich, NR2 1SD

Tel: 01603 625765

Please send short items in plain or rich text format.

Photos electronically in .jpg only and separate from the text.

We cannot guarantee inclusion of contributions.

The Methodist Church East Anglia District

Registered Charity Number 1129451

USEFUL WEBSITES

Methodist Church	www.methodist.org.uk
Singing the Faith	www.singingthefaitplus.org.uk
District Website	www.eamethodist.org.uk

There is a website administrator in most circuits.

Make sure your church website is up to date.

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