


grapevine

September 2017

Issue Number 31

IMAGINATION AND FAITH

East Anglia District of the Methodist Church



Ephesians 3:14-21 NRSV

Prayer for All

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Welcome to *grapevine*

Welcome to this edition of *grapevine* which has the theme Imagination and Faith. We have received some excellent articles which illustrate how imagination and faith are being used around the district. We hope you will find them inspiring.

There is an extract from Revd Betty Trinder's sabbatical report, which takes us on a journey across the world.

On page 16 we have an introduction to our new District Safeguarding Officer, Mrs Jane Gay .

Please remember this is your district magazine. If there is something you would like included, we would love to hear from you.

The next issue is due in April 2018. You will find contact details on the last page of this issue.

The Editorial Team:

Julian Pursehouse, Barbara Garwood and Alison Travis

grapevine

September 2017

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Front and back cover images by
Revd Jenny Pathmarajah



Keeping Faith and Exercising Imagination!

Revd Julian M Pursehouse

Some of you will be aware that when the annual Methodist Conference met in Birmingham this year, the triennial Statistics for Mission Report was released to the Connexion. Not surprisingly this was a sobering and challenging document for Conference representatives, for at one level it paints a picture of institutional decline. Our membership has now dropped below 200,000, we have lost significant numbers of young people from the life of the church and only a small percentage of churches indicated any real numerical growth. As you might expect there was genuine sadness for the state of the church and genuine concern at our apparent failure to make new members. Although statistical returns never tell the whole story we cannot ignore the fact that the Methodist Church is facing challenging times along with many of the mainline denominations in this country.

Whilst recognising the very real struggles of a religious institution in a post-Christian and secularised society, we do well *not* to lose sight of the enduring love of God for all Creation, the transforming power of the grace

of Christ and the life-giving presence of God's eternal Spirit. This is the Gospel of salvation that remains good news for all creation and all humankind – the scope of this good news and the plenitude of grace is captured in the first chapter of the letter to the Colossians:

'For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.' (Col 1:19-20)

Such a Gospel requires us to keep faith and exercise imagination! In the face of difficult circumstances we keep *faith* in the enduring promises and purposes of God – that throughout history and eternity, God continues to weave his creative and redemptive purposes for all creation. As human beings we may frustrate these plans in innumerable ways, through our selfishness and folly, but equally we can discern these things rightly and join ourselves to them.

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We can become the joyful participants in God's work of justice, love and mercy in our world – and perhaps this is where the church begins to make sense. As we become caught up in God's work of mission and draw upon the resources of grace, then perhaps we are ready to lose ourselves for the sake of Christ! We can *imagine* all kinds of possibilities when we let go of our own agenda and cleave to the purposes of God – when we cease to be concerned for our own survival and become passionate about the future of creation.

At the beginning of the letter to the Ephesians we are reminded that all the spiritual resources of the Gospel are at our disposal:

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.....' (Eph 1:3)

In the light of this great truth we are surely called to be an *imaginative* church who are ready to believe that all things are possible through God's grace and for that reason we are ready to focus our energy, people, resources and prayers in very particular ways!

Some of this spirit and imagination is what lay behind the sentiments of

Notice of Motion 110 which was tabled in the debate on the Statistics for Mission Report. It reads as follows:

The Conference, in recognising the most significant corporate risk facing the Methodist Church in Great Britain is that it further declines and ceases to exist because of an "inability to create new Methodist disciples", and in responding to the Statistics for Mission report:

- 1) Calls Methodist members to enthusiasm in prayer and acts of personal evangelism.*
- 2) Calls Methodist churches to direct their work and wealth to the priority of making new disciples.*
- 3) Calls Methodist Circuits to resource the forming of new Methodist societies wherever possible, to offer witness and worship in new places, or in places where Christian presence has long since diminished.*
- 4) Calls Methodist Districts to include disciple-making as a priority for forthcoming synods.*

Perhaps each church and circuit in our District can reflect upon how we might respond *faithfully* and *imaginatively* to the challenge of this Notice of Motion over the next year.

Revd Julian M Pursehouse



Imagination and Faith - Swaffham's Progress

Sarah Rodgers

Swaffham Methodist Church is on a 21st century journey. The church was built in 1813 for the worshippers of that day and age. Now we are re-inventing our place and our purpose for today's people of faith and fellowship.

We set out as a congregation on this journey over three years ago with a bold vision for change. With generous support from circuit, district and connexion, together with a number of charitable trusts, we have raised £325,000 of the £350,000 needed. Local fundraising has been energetic and played an important role in sharing our plans with the local community.

During this time, we have also put out questionnaires, discussed and consulted and allowed ourselves to dream so that imagination and faith can work together to shape the future and bring about regeneration. At the heart of our vision, our

sanctuary space will be transformed so that we can accommodate different styles of worship and use contemporary technology to widen our horizons and reach out to those for whom the spiritual path is an unknown. To make this happen, we have had to grasp the challenging decision of taking out pews and pulpit. The action of taking out means that there is a counter action of letting in and our aim is to be able to

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3s Company—a fundraising evening of poetry and readings held in the church

welcome friends, neighbours, acquaintances and passers-by to God's house as a place of discovery, reflection, creativity, friendship and entertainment. We are also regenerating our sanctuary space by commissioning a mural across one of our walls. This artwork will be a wonderful vehicle for mission, helping people to explore and engage with faith.

The mural will be painted by a local artist, Eddie Goodridge. It travels from the coast, across Norfolk countryside under wide Norfolk skies, depicts one of John Wesley's recorded visits to our market town and shows a contemporary scene outside the church.

As part of a revitalised interior with space to grow as a congregation within the wider community, we have imagined a new welcome area in the church alongside a servery for refreshments.



Big Bake—one of the fundraisers for the Pinnacle Appeal which raised over £500 in sales of savoury goods cooked by members of the congregation.

We are making ourselves more accessible in as many ways as **we** can think of so that we can be of service in as many ways that **others** can think of. Included in these thoughts are a group for mothers and toddlers, an after-school club for local children, a respite group for carers, and health and well-being groups.

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Artist's sketch of the mural commissioned for Swaffham Methodist Church

We have imagined cinema church for family film-showings, active church for fitness and flexibility in older years, and creative church for arts, crafts, drama and music.

Even as we prepare ourselves for a period of exile when the builders move in, we are challenging one another through Bible study and prayer to be a relevant and resourceful church that can play its part in reaching out with a message of welcome, hope and purpose, rooted in the Christian faith.



Bowled Over—strawberries for the Anniversary Tea at the beginning of July

You can find out more about our project on our website: www.swaffhammethodistchurch.org or on our facebook page: www.facebook.com/swaffhammethodistchurch

Sarah Rodgers
Managing Trustee at Swaffham and Project Co-ordinator

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is available in large print
and on CD (audio)

If you would like to request a copy, please tell your church distributor or contact the District Office:

01603 625765

eadistrict14.office@btinternet.com

Theology Everywhere – A New Initiative from the Methodist Church

Discuss theology today to transform tomorrow



Every Monday, a short article is posted which brings some theology to bear on an issue or topic. This offers some theological reflection people can read quickly to start their week, ponder on and contribute to as the week goes on. It is a way of flexing and using our theological muscles to keep them fit, as well as an opportunity for those contributing to offer new ways of thinking about a topic or looking at an issue theologically perhaps for the first time.

The Theology Everywhere website is made available by the [Methodist Church](#) as one of the actions being taken to create a learning church. It can easily be found on the Methodist Church website. Contributors are from varied backgrounds; many but not all are Methodist. The views expressed are the responsibility of the authors and do not represent the position of the Methodist Church.

The moderator of Theology Everywhere is Revd Dr George Bailey.

Enquiries should be addressed to him at george.bailey@methodist.org.uk



Building a Community - Chesterton Methodist Church

By Mrs Rachel Hallam

In recent years Chesterton Methodist Church has grown from a small handful of worshippers to a regular committed congregation who have taken up roles, including leadership and children's work.

The church is situated between a mix of private and social housing and congregants come from a broad socio-economic and ethnic spectrum and includes many children. Deacon Ian Murray, in his appointment, was given the challenge of introducing new styles of worship to suit this diverse congregation. In addition, not all families have come from a Methodist or Church background, so there was a unique opportunity to design a leadership team to suit the church's needs.

The growth of our church has come from a relaxed, family friendly and welcoming atmosphere. New stewards were nurtured to explore the skills they could

bring to leadership and roles negotiated to meet individuals' strengths. Efforts were made to encourage all worshippers to be involved, including the children, from setting up the church for worship, within the service and in tidying up.



Renovation work in progress at Chesterton

This group approach has been strengthened with a church reflection day and put to the test while being confined to one room during a major refurbishment!

The group of worshippers became a community. Worship includes "Café

Church” with groups seated at tables with preachers either leading the service in a traditional way or facilitating discussion or group activities; the services are relaxed with drinks and toast available throughout and children’s chatter or play is welcomed.

A church presence in these groups, by church members or the Deacon, has resulted in new members and several baptisms.

Other services take a traditional format in our small chapel, but remain relaxed with toys available for children and intentional involvement of all in the service. There is a separate group for children on alternate weeks. In both services a mixture of hymns and

songs are used from *Singing the Faith* and other sources.

Growth of the congregation has also been from service to the local community; local groups at the church include a free to attend singing group for parents and toddlers in partnership with the Chesterton Parents Group, a twins group, a fitness group, a food bank and a church coffee morning.

A church presence in these groups, by church members or the Deacon, has resulted in new members and several baptisms. Working in partnership with Wesley Methodist church and with support from the circuit we have now refurbished most of the church and we have great vision for our future to build a community coffee shop which we hope will strengthen our presence and witness in the local area.

Mrs Rachel Hallam



A young people’s talk at a confirmation service with Deacon Ian Murray in the newly refurbished building

An extract from my sabbatical report

Revd Betty Trinder

The Church gives the most precious gift of a 3-month sabbatical for its ministers after 10 years of service. How quickly those 10 years have passed. To quote from *The Message* version of the Bible, Matthew 11:28, "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest."

By the time my sabbatical began, this was exactly how I was feeling. I had crammed six months' work into three months, for some reason feeling guilty for taking so much time off. Easter week had 14 services in it. Totally ridiculous I realise now. My work/life balance was all to pot. I discovered very quickly that my blood pressure had gone through the roof and if I didn't stop and take a proper rest, I would suffer the fate of many ministers before me, burn out or collapse.

So it was with this understanding, I took three days to walk around

Norwich, visiting all 31 Historic Churches, taking time to share in worship at Norwich Cathedral and St. Giles and spending time at the Mother Julian cell.

I also wanted to explore Quaker worship and, living just five miles from the Society of Friends Meeting House in North Walsham, I went there for a wonderful hour. No preaching, no singing, just silence until one person felt moved to stand and say what he felt the Holy Spirit was leading him to say.

Friends and family came to stay at our home by the sea in Bacton. We had quality time together and a chance to explore parts of Norfolk I had not previously had time to visit.

I had a very restful stay with my sister and her husband in Spain for a week, then I was off for a whole month to visit my "£10 Pom" cousin in Melbourne, via a three day stop over with friends in Singapore, where I

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visited Changi Prison Museum. It seems the level of cruelty of human beings to other human beings was the same then as it is now. It was necessary to take a break in Raffles Hotel for the famous Singapore Sling Cocktail!

My husband Mark and I were pleased to be away from the UK with post-election vitriol, terrorist attacks in London and the truly shocking Grenfell Tower fire. In Melbourne they were putting concrete blocks on the pavement to prevent similar attacks there. We visited the Shrine of Remembrance for the fallen in the wars Australia and New Zealand had supported with the UK, together with other Commonwealth countries. We

travelled up the Great Ocean Road to see the 12 Apostles rock formations.

By the end of my sabbatical, I felt I had taken Jesus at his word. I had taken a real rest and recovered my life and I had worshipped with fellow Christians in a variety of ways, all of whom loved the Lord as I do. We were refreshed, we laughed and had a thoroughly great time.

I thank all those who covered for me during my time away and urge all ministers to take their sabbaticals without feeling guilty and not to cram as I did before you go.

In Christ's service

Revd Betty Trinder



Revd Betty Trinder with her husband Mark in Australia as part of her sabbatical break

Creative Projects in Wymondham's Town Green Centre



Revd Jacqui Horton

Colouring sessions, sequence dancing, open days, film afternoons, health and well-being events, spirituality evenings, mindfulness courses and labyrinth workshops are among the varied outreach activities that Wymondham Methodist church has organised in its halls (known as the Town Green Centre) over the last few years.

The vision has been twofold: firstly, to build relationships and to create community in the Centre and secondly, to provide opportunities for spiritual experience outside the usual church 'box'. The former has been realised through a dedicated website www.towngreencentre.org.uk, by regular email mailing to the Town Green Centre Network, by an informative leaflet that gives details

of all activities in the Centre and through annual Open Days that showcase the 25 plus user groups. The latter aim is being realised through occasional events, workshops and other activities that enable those who do not want to come to church to access tools for personal growth and spirituality.



A stall at an Open Day at the Town Green Centre

Each of the four courses, so far, has attracted interest from the community and around 24 people



Celebrating the end of 25 years of a charity shop and transition to the new Green Room

have done the course (or dipped into it) in our 'Green Room' which is set up specifically for Mindfulness and Meditation.

The network of relationships based on the Centre has therefore been extended, a handful of people have come to church services (an unlooked for consequence!) and we have a pool of people who can be offered a 'Mindfulness Extra', which will seek to introduce an experience of the Christian God through the medium of Mindfulness.

Other initiatives in the Town Green Centre that have sought to provoke reflection around the Christian story have included a display of Nativities

in Advent (coinciding with the Town Christmas event which has brought over 400 people through our doors), a large Easter Garden (which led one lady to say that it felt as though she really was in the first Easter garden), and open days for Harvest.

The journey has involved some hard work, but has always been rewarding, often with unexpected consequences! Everything has always been committed in prayer and, as a result, arrangements and resourcing have fallen into place, often in amazing ways. We give God the glory and then ask what he wants us to try next.

Revd Jacqui Horton



Celebrating 25 years of the Town Green Centre with the television presenter Pam Rhodes

DISTRICT NEWS



An Introduction to our new District Safeguarding Officer, Mrs Jane Gay ...

From the beginning of September 2017, Jane Gay will take over the role of District Safeguarding Officer, following Linda Morgan's retirement and after working in tandem with Linda for two months.



Jane's career has been centred round working with children, including primary school teaching, managing a preschool, conducting OFSTED inspections in Early Years settings and organising children's events within the local church.

Throughout much of this time, she has been a school governor and, in this capacity particularly, has developed her knowledge and expertise in safeguarding. She works with the Designated Safeguarding Leads in the schools to monitor and support the implementation of policies and procedures.

Jane is married to Simon, who is the pastor of the local Baptist church and they have four sons, two of whom are teenagers still at home.



... and goodbye from our former District Safeguarding Officer, Mrs Linda Morgan

When I started my work as District Safeguarding Officer in September 2011, I had not anticipated that I would still be in post six years later.

It seemed a slow start at first, but over the years the work has increased with the introduction of the Foundation and Leadership Training, together with new policies and procedures. Furthermore, the decision of the Methodist Church to carry out the Past Cases Review has produced more work than anyone could have anticipated.

Hence, the work has increased gradually over the years and safeguarding has become an increasingly higher priority. There is still more work to be done in the churches to prompt Safeguarding work, which will ensure that everyone in them is safe and supported.

I enjoyed many aspects of the work, particularly meeting and working with people in the circuits, sometimes in difficult and challenging situations. I could have done without so much paperwork! Everyone has always been helpful and I have appreciated the friendship that I have been shown.

Retirement awaits and, at the moment, I have no plans other than taking up my jewellery making but I will, no doubt, find there is something in which I can get involved in in my church and Norwich circuit.

Thank you to everyone in the District who has shared the work with me and supported me and for the friendship and shared collegueship. I know I will miss all of this.

The District has now appointed a new District Safeguarding Officer, Mrs Jane Gay. Jane has already started work and no doubt you will have the opportunity of meeting with her at Synod. I am confident that Safeguarding in the District will be in safe hands.

reImagine forum

a day for those interested in
revitalising + starting churches

Exploring
different ways
of being church
for the 21st
century?

Need some
practical
support to move
from ideas into
action?

Passionate
about
innovation,
inclusion and
risk-taking?

Nothing in organised religion works the way it used to. Real change requires more than doing conventional things better. We're interested in cultivating new models and equipping leaders who can serve creatively and flexibly amidst seismic cultural shifts.

Bring a team of people from your church for a **panel of diverse practitioners**, facilitated break-out **groups for your ministry's next steps**, and a **keynote address** by Trey Hall, pioneer, writer and Birmingham Mission Advisor.



Hosted by the EAST ANGLIA + BEDS, ESSEX & HERTS DISTRICTS

ST IVES METHODIST CHURCH

THE WAITS ST IVES CAMBRIDGESHIRE PE27 5BY

SATURDAY 7 OCTOBER

9:30 for 10:00am - 4:00pm

FREE EVENT + LUNCH PROVIDED, BUT BOOKING IS REQUIRED:

Contact Yasmin Finch: yrfinch@gmail.com or 01480 462293

More info: www.reimaginemethodism.wordpress.com



Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network

The **Methodist** Church 

OPEN GARDEN INVITATION

Helyg, Thetford Road, Coney Weston, Bury St Edmunds, IP31 1DN



Jackie and Briant Smith are very happy to open their garden to groups who wish to have an afternoon's relaxation and contemplation, enjoying the peace of the countryside, combined with a cream tea.

Set in rather less than half an acre, the garden has evolved to provide many quiet seating areas set amid some stunning planting, wildlife areas, and innovative settings for growing flowers and vegetables. The garden attracts many birds.

There are good parking facilities and the garden is located centrally in the District.

The garden is open by arrangement from 2pm till 5pm from May to October and is open under the National Gardens Scheme at other times.

Money raised will be split between MIND and NGS.

Further details are available from:
01359 220106
jackie.ks@hotmail.co.uk
briant@broadsspirituality.org.uk

Revd W Briant Smith
Chaplain to the Broads



Contributions

We hope you have been inspired by the articles in this edition of *grapevine*. If you would like to make a contribution to the next edition, we would love to hear from you. Please send any news items, letters and photographs, which you would like to share with others in the district, to

eagrapevine@gmail.com

or post to

**'grapevine', District Office
Chapel Field Road Methodist Church
Norwich, NR2 1SD**

**For further information, please contact the
District Office on 01603 625765**

***Items should be sent in plain or rich text format.
Photos should be sent electronically in jpg separately
from the text.***

Unfortunately we cannot guarantee inclusion of all contributions.