



MY CHRISTIAN STORY: RESOURCES THAT HAVE HELPED ME ON MY JOURNEY

East Anglia District of the Methodist Church

I saw Him

I saw Him in the Spring's new birth
Rejoicing at the snowdrops' show
He – Creator and Giver of Life.

I saw Him in the Summer's gold sun
Shining amidst its glorious glow
He – King of Kings and Son of God.

I saw Him in Autumn's dying fire
Weeping bitterly at the bright leaves' flow
He - Man of Sorrows and Saviour of Men.

I saw Him in the Winter's cold waste
Waiting silent in the drifts of snow
He – Lamb of God and Friend of All.

I saw Him in every season's shade
Emmanuel – God with us
The One Who never fails or fades
I saw Him – yes I did!

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Welcome to *grapevine*

Welcome to the September 2019 edition of *grapevine* which has the theme 'My Christian Story: Resources that have helped me on my journey'. We hope the stories in this edition will inspire you and possibly introduce you to new resources to help you on your own journey.

We have included another beautiful poem by Helen Seeley on page 2 as her poem in the last issue was so popular.

Rev Briant Smith describes how the natural world is fundamental to his ongoing pilgrimage of faith and George Ginn's faith has inspired him to actively campaign on a wide range of issues. David Middleton describes how he is inspired by silence and explains how it can be used as a resource. Rev Jacqui Horton describes her journey with labyrinths including taking these as her Sabbatical project. Rev Anne Richardson finds books a source of help and hopes that one day there will be a simple phone app to enable Deaf Christians to see the Bible signed in BSL. Shaun Cushion shares his testimony and George Frost had no experience of 'a heart being strangely warmed' but he describes how he has grown in faith over the years.

Rev Julian Pursehouse shares his Sabbatical Reflections which brought him refreshment in body, mind and spirit. Rev Betty Trinder reports on Lay Employees and Volunteers and Susan Eldridge gives advance notice of a MWiB event. District News introduces new staff in the Regional Learning Network.

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

The next issue is due in April 2020. You will find contact details on page 24.

grapevine

September 2019

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The Editorial Team:

Julian Pursehouse, Susan Eldridge and
Alison Travis

Front cover image: Some of Susan's
resources, a photo by her husband Paul.

Page 2 image: Photo by Sanjeevan
Satheeskumar on Unsplash

Introduction

Rev Julian Pursehouse



I am delighted to commend this latest edition of Grapevine to you and I do hope that in reading it you will find it to be an encouragement in your own faith and discipleship.

Some of you will be aware that the Presidential theme for this Connexional year is **'So What's the Story?'** and the President and Vice-President are challenging the Methodist people to be a little bit more confident in how we both inhabit and share the Christian story. This challenge can be understood in a variety of ways – it is the encouragement to be a little more confident in the telling of our own Christian story (testimony) but it is also the confidence to find ways of sharing God's story in apt and relevant ways in the wider world (mission).

Part of the challenge of articulating our own story of faith is to remember the people, resources, experiences and places that have been significant in the shaping of our Christian identity and witness. Throughout this issue you will

find articles from a variety of different people who are seeking to identify the particular resources that were important for the shaping of their Christian story. This may well give you the appetite to seek something similar

or indeed to discover these resources for yourself.

Equally it may prompt you to find different resources that are particularly relevant and useful to you and your own unique journey of faith!

There is really no end to the resources or stories that might exercise a shaping influence over our Christian identity and

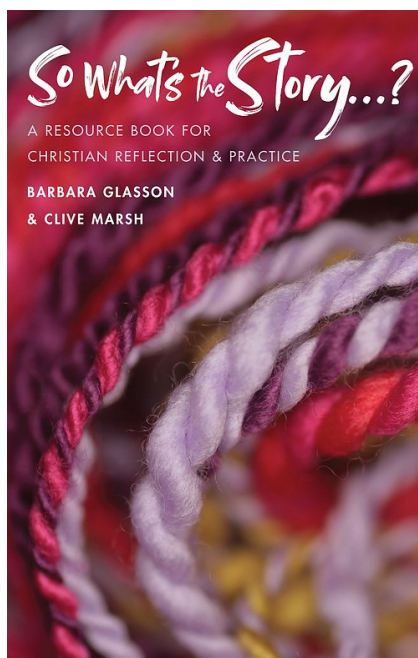
witness. We do well to remember the closing words of the Gospel of John:

'But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.'

(John 21:25)

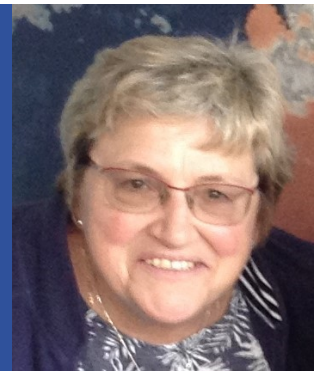
Enjoy this edition of Grapevine!

Rev Julian Pursehouse
Chair of the District



Lay Employees and Volunteers Report

Rev Betty Trinder



Lay Work is growing across the District and there is much appreciation of those who are paid or volunteer in their churches and circuits. Many gifts and skills are exercised as they offer support in all sorts of ways. We have administrators, family workers, pastoral workers and chaplains as well as lay pastors and many variations on a theme. We meet together quarterly to support each other, update training, have visiting leaders and, as their Chaplain, I value those four times a year and especially thank Jane Mottram who is the Lay Employees Co-ordinator.

Sadly, due to a Connexional Team review, the Lay Employees Conferences are no longer taking place, and so as a District, I

am delighted to report it was agreed there will be a Lay Employees' Retreat at Belsey Bridge in November, the cost being shared between the District, Circuit and individuals as a way of showing

how much we appreciate the work they do.

Our June meeting is a day away from our usual venue of Diss Methodist Church. Last year we checked out many of the historic



Lay Employees and Volunteers inside the Methodist Chapel at Walsingham

churches in Norwich and this year seven of us braved terrible weather to visit the pilgrim shrines at Walsingham and also to have time at the oldest Methodist Church in our District. Lay Employee, Sam Parfitt, showed us around Walsingham Methodist Church and gave us the history but also the sad news that worship there now only happens monthly but Sam, as the new Pioneer Rural Planter for Mission, informed us of the exciting new ministry that is planned for that beautiful chapel.

Thank you for all the support you give to our District Lay Employees and Volunteers.



Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham

Rev Betty Trinder
Lay Employees' & Lay Volunteers' Chaplain

My Journey of Faith

Rev Briant Smith



Reading Colin Urquart's book "My Father is the Gardener" proved to be a pivotal event in my journey of faith. It grabbed my attention and my interest when I was in my thirties and at a time when I was emerging from the wilderness. The start of chapter 15 of John's Gospel "I am the vine and my Father is the gardener" possibly best defines my developing relationship with God through Jesus. Life has in many ways come full circle, for now the natural world and our garden are fundamental in my ongoing pilgrimage of faith.

Martin Luther's quote "God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars." combined with the Celtic Christian notion of 'God speaks through the big book of creation and the little book of the Bible' have been hugely freeing in terms of a concept of God who, in every way, is greater than we can perceive or imagine. When



Sunrise over the River Yare

combined with R S Thomas' 'complaint' in one of his poems that people in Church and Chapel 'keep God hidden between the covers of a black book' I was encouraged to widen the boundaries of spiritual searching. Being stationed on the Lleyn peninsular and the edge of Snowdonia in north-west Wales with Bardsey Island at the tip of the circuit, combined with visits and a time as a volunteer on Iona, as well visits to Lindisfarne, reinforced the value of the natural world and a 24/7 relationship with our Lord as seen through a Celtic Christian perspective.

In the De Gwynedd circuit a hospital visit meant a round trip of over 50 miles including travelling around Snowdon itself. District meetings meant travelling the length and breadth of North Wales. A next appointment on the Isle of Wight again meant fairly extensive journeys through wonderful countryside and reinforced the importance of landscape, agriculture and wildlife



Thurne Dyke Drainage Mill

in my understanding of God as Creator. The ‘fragility’ of small church societies in rural circuits and the real need for ‘Macmillan ministry’ also emphasised my personal need for spiritual stimuli that looked beyond the confines of simply serving the needs and requirements of circuit life.

My first degree was studying biology and when combined with my theological and spiritual studies I was forced to look deeply into an understanding of creation in a world that is constantly changing and evolving. I first came to, and fell in love with, the Broads as a thirteen year old so when I was stationed in East Anglia and was offered the opportunity to become The Chaplain to the Broads it seemed an incredible gift, and combined all my experiences and ‘expertise’. It has proved to be a real joy and privilege! I have constantly sought to seek spiritual and theological understanding and meaning through the things that surround us and the special, but not necessarily unique, features of the Broads. Now I no longer need to visit

‘Holy’ places for wherever we are is Holy Ground if we choose to make it so! What I have come to understand and believe is that God wishes us to be co-creators to work towards that vision of perfection as illustrated by the Garden of Eden and the New Jerusalem of Revelation!

Finally a huge thank you to all those people, especially Jackie, but otherwise too numerous to name who have been part of my travels and explorations. Many of these have been Christians but a significant number would not have claimed to have a specific faith. God speaks not only through the natural world, and the scriptures, but also sometimes shouts through those with whom we take the time to engage!



St Benet's Abbey

I am very happy to send printed copies of “REcreation – THE BROADS” and digital copies of “Here is Holy Ground” which I developed with members of the Norfolk Broads Circuit to anyone requesting them.

Rev Briant Smith
Supernumerary, Norwich Circuit

Briant's Retirement Lunch



On Monday 15 July several members of the District Staff Group and some partners/spouses came together for

Chaplain to the Broads and his creativity and devotion has been an inspiration to many within the District.

Briant once commented that he would never stop doing things and he has already planned to write another book. He will be taking a three-month sabbatical at the start of his retirement!

lunch in Rev Briant Smith's beautiful garden to celebrate his forthcoming 'retirement' at the end of August.

Briant was presented with a card and a cheque by Rev Julian Pursehouse and Mrs Alison Travis which was a gift of appreciation from many circuits, churches and individuals in the District.

Briant had worked for many years as



My Faith Story

George Ginn



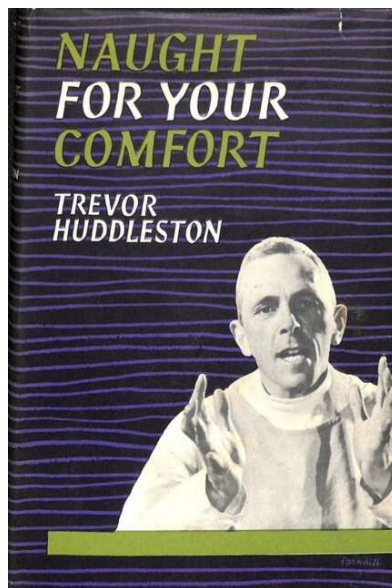
I attended a village Primitive Methodist Sunday school at an early age. I later entered the scripture exams and obtained two certificates which I still have to this day. At 18 I was called up for national service, but signed on for three years in the RAF. During my trade training in South Wales, we had a visit from the chaplain, who, having talked to us, asked - have you been baptised? If you have, would you like to be confirmed?

Four of us said yes and attended classes with the chaplain and were confirmed in Penmark, South Wales. Having volunteered for Middle East service we were sent to Egypt, including two of my friends who were confirmed with me. On my return home I found a great need to attend church, because starting civilian life again was a big transition. I started a course for lay preaching in the Congregational Church which a postal strike meant I never completed!

Following my marriage and move to Soham, I started afresh with the Methodist Local Preacher course and was accredited in 1983. I later passed a distance diploma course. I enjoyed my studies and welcomed the debate on bible issues like the authorship of the fourth gospel and Hebrews etc.

My faith has led me to be a campaigner on a wide range of issues, inspired by people like Father Trevor Huddleston "Naught for your Comfort"; Dr. Albert Sweitzer "All men are Brothers" who had the world at his feet and went out to darkest Africa, and who said when reading congratulations on his 70th birthday "For the work I have to do, I should be 30 years old and not 70".

I have been inspired by the American Hymn writer and Methodist minister the Rev Richard Garland who began writing Advent hymns for his church and covered all the lectionary years, as well as writing many other hymns. They included some for special occasions like one he wrote for those who lost their lives in the shooting at Virginia technical college several years ago with the title "In grief and aching sorrow". Also from America, the Rev Jim Wallace and his "Sojourners" who campaign for Justice and Peace.



There were two people from Holland, AG & Kate who, inspired by Johnny Cash, took to the road full-time with folk music, but later got hooked on Wesley hymns and changed to Gospel music along with country and western. For many years they took this music to Britain in the spring for three months and in the autumn went on tour in America, visiting as many prisons as they could fit in, using churches and other venues only to drum up support for their prison work.

My faith has inspired me to actively campaign on social issues. I grew up with the expression "Politics and religion don't mix", but I believe strongly we should stand up and speak out against every injustice that exists. Christians should be at the forefront of standing for what we believe is right and not hope that others will do so. James in the epistle says, "Anyone who knows the right thing to do, and fails to do it - that is sin". On the walk of witness on 26th June for the lobbying of Parliament on Climate Change, as I was walking from Trafalgar Square to the Embankment, the thought came to me that there are times when we need to pray with our feet!

George Ginn
Ely and Newmarket Circuit

Hush be quiet!

David Middleton

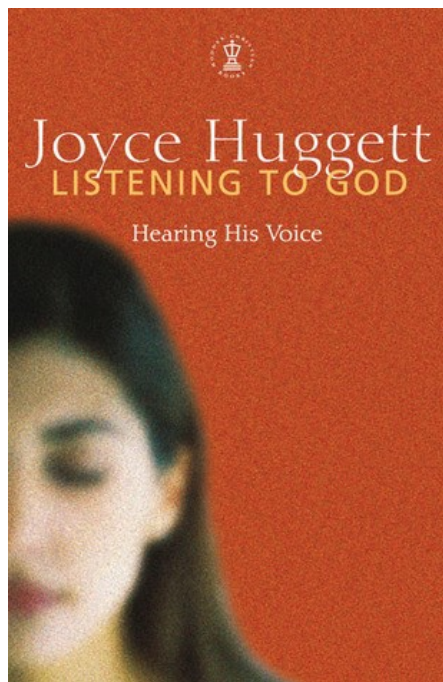
find myself wondering ... is silence a resource?

I guess so, after all it is an asset that can be drawn on by a person or organisation in order to function effectively. It has certainly helped me function more effectively.

In the early nineties we (my wife and I) went through a fairly traumatic experience. We started our own business, house building and having invested heavily in land and the construction of our first property the crash came. The value of the land and the property were falling by thousands every week until the bank finally called in the loan and we were forced to sell up – everything!

How does one stop those incessant thoughts that are constantly revolving in one's mind of what has happened, why it has happened, what might happen next and what will other people think? Then I was introduced to silence. I think my first resource for silence was Joyce Huggett's book 'Listening to God', and it

seemed I was on the road to something so much needed. I soon followed it up with other books, embarked upon the Methodist Distance Learning Spirituality Course and was admirably tutored by the late Mary Holliday. This led to enrolment in the then Methodist Retreat Group, now 'Reflect', and I was on my way to my first silent retreat. This was in tandem with enrolment for the Local Preacher's Silent Retreat organised by Rev Peter Barber which sadly has now ceased to exist.



So, what's so great about silence? Often silence is associated with allowing space for distractions, that's why life is so often lost in noise whether it be 'my music', or the TV or the car radio ... anything to drown our thoughts; and yet I have found that silence combats

distractions. 'The Cloud of Unknowing' encouraged me to sit in silence with no other conscious thought than 'I am' or 'God is', and my racing mind gradually settled as God himself silenced my fears.

As is often the case in Methodism, if we show enthusiasm for something, we get a job! So, I am now the organiser of a silent retreat for Reflect every February at Launde Abbey in Leicestershire. Reflect organise a number of retreats around the country, little known it seems! So visit the Reflect website (www.reflectretreats.co.uk), try reading 'The Cloud of Unknowing', or Joyce Huggett's book 'Listening to God', or best of all simply tap into the resource of silence; sit quietly, light a candle, pay attention to your breathing to quieten your mind, and when a distraction comes into your mind, simply bring your

mind back to silence with the simple thought that 'I am' or 'God is', and I pray that a smile will creep uncontrollably across your face, as it did for me the first time back in the 1990's, as I fell in love with simply being in God's presence.

Yes, silence is a resource, a Christian resource; it is an asset that can be drawn on by a person in order to function as an effective Christian!

David Middleton
Ely & Newmarket Circuit



grapevine

is available in large print and on CD (audio)

**If you would like to request a copy,
please contact the District Office:**

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A Journey with Labyrinths

Rev Jacqui Horton



The ancient, mysterious, and spiritual nature of a labyrinth makes it an ideal candidate for a resource for spiritual seekers in the 21st century. When I decided to take labyrinths as my Sabbatical project a year in advance, I don't think I quite realised the potential for spiritual exploration, experimentation and personal growth.

For a year, I walked a different labyrinth every month and then, during the Sabbatical period, walked 21 across the country (and 4 in America). Medieval ones, Victorian ones, contemporary ones;

labyrinths cut into turf, laid into church floors, formed from creative planting in gardens, painted onto canvasses and floors, made with piping and bark, stone slabs and rocks, and temporary ones made with rope, cloths and

sculpted in sand – I visited them and noted their characteristics and vital statistics but, more importantly, I walked them, and experienced them, and journaled my experiences.

For the uninitiated, a labyrinth is a maze that has only one path and, consequently, is a place where the walker cannot get lost. The pattern has an entrance, one path and a centre (which may, or may not, be at the

actual centre of the design). The 'classical' 7 circuit design has been found across the world in all cultures, the oldest one thought to be 3,500 years old.



Medieval turf labyrinth in Yorkshire

The Romans had their own design which was often built in to their mosaics. The 'medieval' labyrinths are based on the 11 circuit design that was built into the nave floor at Chartres Cathedral in 1201.



Walking the Labyrinth inside St Michael and All Angels, Abingdon

labyrinth (it is usually covered in chairs). I was moved by the number of people queuing, and walking, and making spiritual or personal journeys on the famous design. However, for me, I had experienced more significant, and transformative, encounters with God on a small painted contemporary labyrinth on a hospice chapel floor

In the last 25 years, there has been a resurgence of labyrinthine creation and use across the USA and the UK. Some modern labyrinths are based on the classical design, some on the medieval design and some have a contemporary design. They can be used, in a Christian context, for prayer, meditation, liturgy, and personal growth. My own experiences were different in every case but, often, transformative and healing. There is not the room here to go into further detail but if you would be interested in my journal jottings, or my book (when I have finished writing it!) do get in touch.

The climax of this initial phase of my journey with labyrinths came in August when I was able to travel to Chartres for the Cathedral's Friday uncovering of the nave

and in many other places. I have concluded that one can walk a labyrinth, or indeed any path anywhere, and offered to God as a spiritual journey, the path can become a point for personal or spiritual growth, even life-changing transformation.

Rev Jacqui Horton
Superintendent Central Norfolk Circuit



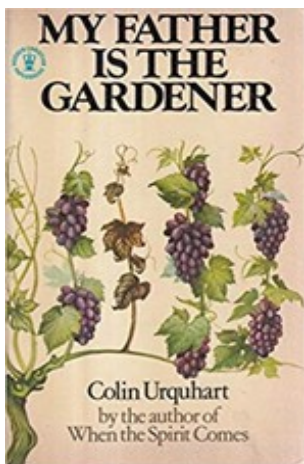
The outdoor Chartres Labyrinth at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco

Well worth a read ...

Rev Anne Richardson

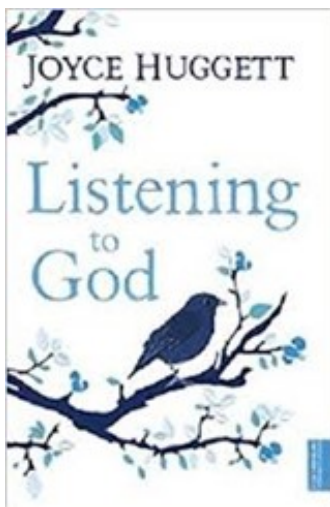


Stories of people of great faith and courage helped me enormously when I was first a Christian – like ‘The Hiding



Place’ by Corrie Ten Boom, and ‘God’s Smuggler’ by Brother Andrew. Doctrine woven around a story, like “My Father is the Gardener” by Colin Urquhart was also hugely influential. To help with prayer, I

found Joyce Huggett’s book ‘Listening to God’ very inspiring. These are all old classics now yet their encouraging messages still have an effect and are well worth a read.



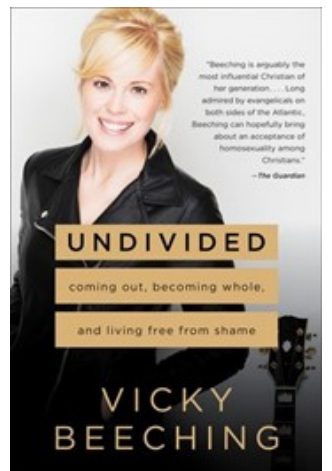
More recently, I’ve read a book by Vicky Beeching, ‘Undivided’ (2018) in which she shares her journey reconciling faith with sexuality. She describes her struggles and the

theological thinking that led her to now be ‘undivided’. I found it very moving

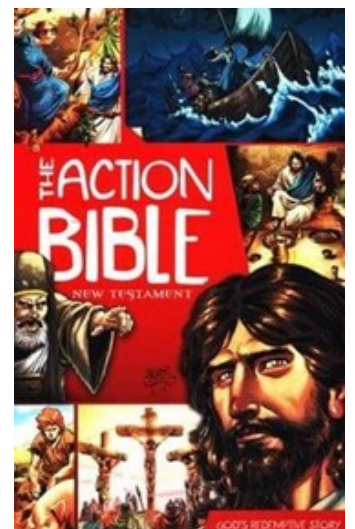
and helpful, and recommend it to anyone who may be wondering how it’s possible to be a Christian and also part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Our greatest resource is of course the Bible, but it’s not easily accessible to all. I’m privileged to work with Deaf Christians, many of whom struggle with English, often due to poor educational

opportunities in the past. If you’re a British Sign Language user, English is effectively your second language, so reading the Bible can be problematic.



There are several picture Bibles available - many are aimed at children and so the pictures reflect this. However there are a few like the Graphic Bible and The Action Bible that have more appropriate pictures for an adult reader.



Most of these summarise the stories. However, there is now also The Word for Word Bible Comic, which not only has all the words, but also detailed pictures that have been researched meticulously to be historically accurate.

Have a look at their website: <https://www.wordforwordbiblecomic.com>

I'm sure these resources benefit many people, not only the Deaf, but any who speak other languages, or even reluctant readers.

Ideally, Deaf BSL users want the Bible in BSL! There is a project for this, but the process is very slow, as they strive for a linguistically accurate translation of the original text. This could be achieved more quickly with more funding. If

you'd like to see how it's progressing, you can visit <https://www.bslbible.org.uk> In the future, we dream of a simple app on your phone, that a Deaf Christian can tap to see the Bible signed in BSL. Won't that be a superb resource to have!!

Rev Anne Richardson
Minister Working with the Deaf Community



Sign the Cross

You are where I want you to be, doing what I want you to do

Shaun Cushion



I was asked several years ago why I was Methodist, thinking there would be some deep rooted theological reason, but I realised there was a much simpler explanation. Growing up in the small Norfolk village of Catfield there were two churches, Anglican and Methodist. My mum had attended the Methodist Sunday School in her youth and so the decision was made.

My Methodist journey began in the

summer of 1966 as a 2½ year old, although I'd already been baptised in the chapel two years previously. There are so many memories – Sunday School Anniversaries, recitations, annual Sunday School trips to Gorleston, carol singing around the village and Christmas parties in the village hall.

Around the age of fourteen I decided I had outgrown God and my bed was far more appealing on a Sunday morning. It

was at that point in my Christian journey that our Sunday School Superintendent, Charlie Wilkins, took me under his wing and began to gently encourage me – he was to continue supporting me for the next forty years until his



Catfield Methodist Chapel

death in 2016. It was at the age of sixteen that my life was to change forever. I had purchased a Honda CB50 motorcycle in the spring of 1980; it was my pride and joy. In June of that same year I was involved in an accident which resulted in my motorbike being written off.

However it was the words of a police officer who came to take a statement some days later that had a profound effect on me when he explained that I was very lucky to be alive.

The following month I began a three year period studying to be a local preacher – believing in the course of the journey that I had been saved by God to serve him. During that time I was supported by so many people but two in particular, Rev. Roy Coppack who took me ‘on note’ and my tutor, Professor Eric Roberts.

My recognition service was held in October 1983 at Catfield Chapel. From

the age of nineteen, and for the next thirty years, I believed that God was calling me into the itinerant ministry, and yet on four separate occasions, believing I had responded to his call, I found obstacles placed in my way that I initially struggled to understand.

It was in my fiftieth year, having taken up a role as a paid lay worker on the Norfolk Broads Circuit some four years earlier, that the penny finally dropped. **‘You are where I want you to be, doing what I want you to do.’**

It’s hard to put into words the sense of fulfilment that I experienced on that day and I continue to experience as I serve God in a Circuit that has been part of my life for over fifty years.

My journey continues to be ‘resourced’ by so many kind people who have encouraged, supported and nurtured me along the way – all reflecting God’s love.

Shaun Cushion
District Treasurer

District Agricultural Chaplain's Report

George Frost



The theme for this issue is supposed to be my testimony and experience in church life. I have in the past been envious of people who could name a time and date when they have come to know the Lord, with a personal change of knowing Jesus, and how wonderful it was. That's not me; I didn't have the John Wesley experience of 'a heart being strangely warmed' but I do know my Lord and have grown in faith over many years.

I have attended church from a baby, when the whole family (I'm the middle one of 9) would be taken complete with lunch. When older it was Sunday school, service, lunch, Sunday school and service and then back home to milk the cows and feed the other animals, collect the eggs and then tea. After tea we would sing hymns with mother playing the organ. What an experience and getting to know Jesus as my saviour; no televisions, just a radio with a chargeable accumulator, and a wind-up gramophone. Prayer was very important before meals and at bedtime.

All the years I was farming in partnership with father and brother, we never harvested on a Sunday or did

anything other than look after the livestock and we always managed to get the harvest in. It was frustrating sometimes when it was fine on Sunday and raining on Monday.

We are now starting the cereal harvest in this area and it is looking promising with some crops looking exceptionally well. Some winter barley had storm damage and because it was still very green went down, but the modern combine harvesters will cope with that, provided the pigeons leave it alone.

The sugar beet have had just the right weather for growth. Too early to determine sugar content.

I feel I must mention 'Brexit' and the impact it will have on farming. If the subsidies are withdrawn in one foul swoop it will be devastating for some of the smaller farms, adding more stress to the support organisations. We are



Ploughing in Bramerton

coping at present, but the helpline is very busy. RABI (Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution) have paid out over £43k in Norfolk, given to 42 cases, and £51k in Suffolk, given to 32 cases, this year from January to June to support families. It is thanks to all who have given financial support that work can continue, with the volunteers. Whether gifts are for FCN, RABI, YANA or The Addington Fund, we all work under the heading of 'Farming Help'.

At the time of writing this we have a new 'Prime Minister', and he, like all new brooms, will make changes. I hope and pray that the politicians of all

parties will get together and think of the country and who they represent before making decisions which are detrimental to the state. With the value of the pound at its lowest since 2017, we need some common sense.

I have just read through the bible reading I will be reading at the Lammas service this week which is very appropriate for today also - "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will reap generously" (2 Corinthians 9 v 6)

George W Frost
District Agricultural Chaplain

Sabbatical Reflections

Rev Julian Pursehouse



The gift of a sabbatical is now a well-established practice for ordained ministers in the British Methodist Church and it offers the opportunity of a three month period where one is set free from normal responsibilities in order to seek rest, refreshment and renewal! This is my third experience of being on sabbatical and without fail it is always deeply beneficial when it comes.

This time around I sought a set of experiences that would bring

refreshment in body, mind and spirit. Firstly I have dedicated a good deal of my time to one of my great passions which is off-road cycling or what is sometimes referred to as mountain-biking. I have travelled to a number of different forestry trail centres around the country particularly those centres that offer dedicated mountain-bike trails that are usually graded black for severe, red for difficult and blue for moderate. Over the years I have found this to be a deeply relaxing and at



Thetford Forest

times exhilarating pastime – sometimes it is just me, the bike and the stillness of a great forest with all the natural fauna and wildlife to observe. After a day on the bike I always come back feeling physically tired but also strangely refreshed in the process. I estimate that I have covered hundreds of miles – I'm trying to keep track of the mileage!

The second strand of my sabbatical has been to focus on a particular area of theological research in support of my studies towards a PhD. I am looking at the theological theme of 'happiness' with particular reference to the complete sermons of John Wesley – you may well think what on earth has Wesley to do or say about 'happiness'? Well it may surprise you but it is a prolific theme in the complete set of

his sermons – there are no less than 540 references to the word 'happiness' in the complete set of 151 sermons! His unique contribution to the understanding of 'happiness' is to articulate a theological understanding of the concept – put simply, for Wesley, happiness lies in God and in the relationship sustained through faith and therefore the seeking of communion with God, both in this life and in eternity, is our true goal and end. In his sermon 77, *Spiritual Worship*, Wesley says;

'In this alone can you find the happiness you seek – in the union of your spirit with the Father of spirits; in the knowledge and love of him who is the fountain of happiness, sufficient for all the souls he has made.' (Sermon 77, '*Spiritual Worship*', 8, Works, 3:101.)

The third strand of the sabbatical has been to seek spiritual renewal by organising two periods of time when I have been able to enjoy the hospitality of a religious community and be a part of the daily rhythm of prayer and worship. This experience is sometimes referred to as 'going on retreat' where there is the joy and luxury of being ministered to through the service of hospitality and the generosity of a praying community. This experience has taken me to an Augustinian community at Clare Priory in Suffolk where I have been made to feel



A view from the Isle of Capri

welcome at the daily times of morning and evening prayer and also the daily Eucharist. This has been a real blessing and a poignant reminder of the deeply beneficial discipline of stillness, prayer and reflection. St. Augustine and his teaching reminds the Church of the perpetually restless nature of the human spirit and how we all need to find that place of divine rest and communion with the living God:

'Lord, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless

until they find their rest in you, O Lord.'

Finally being on sabbatical and being free from responsibilities has afforded quality time for family and friends and we have been able to use this to great effect. In the middle of April, leading up to Easter, we had a wonderful holiday in Italy, spending time in Rome and then moving down south to the beautiful Amalfi Coast in Sorrento. This was a holiday of a lifetime and it did not disappoint – Italy is a beautiful country with fantastic food and lovely people.

All in all, I am feeling relaxed, rested and renewed! I am deeply grateful to the British Methodist Church for the gift of this experience.

With every blessing,
Julian M. Pursehouse
Chair of District



One of the many bridges in Rome

Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB)

Advance notice

Susan Eldridge



Our residential conference will take place on the weekend of 7th and 8th March 2020 at Belsey Bridge, Ditchingham.



This will be led by Revd Dr Val Ogden. Val worked in education and training and as a presenter in commercial radio before training for the Methodist ministry. She was ordained in the United Church of Zambia where she served for 6 years. She has also served in the UK and been involved in training, research and orientation for global mission. From 2014-2018 she was Director of Theological Education at the Pacific Theological College in Fiji. Val is now back serving in the UK. She is fervently ecumenical – “for God so loved the world”.

I had the privilege of attending the National MWiB Conference at Swanwick, Derbyshire in April and this was also led by Revd Val. She is an excellent speaker and has so many interesting experiences

to share. I am really looking forward to listening to her again. She is very down to earth.

There will be the usual opportunity to participate in workshops, enjoy good food, excellent company and the peaceful surroundings of the Conference Centre. I am lucky in that it is a 15 minute journey for me, but I still feel like I am getting away from it all. It is a chance to refresh my batteries and I really look forward to it. We have booked 45 places and are committed to filling these, so please join us if you can. Booking forms should be available by late November or early December. We have booked a handful of places for the Friday evening for the organisers and those travelling from a distance.

Events like this have played a significant part in my own Christian journey - why not make this one part of yours?

Susan Eldridge
Joint Conference Organiser, East Anglia District MWiB



DISTRICT NEWS

We are delighted to introduce two new Learning & Development Officers to the East of England Regional Learning Network:



Therese Barrett writes:

I have a background in teaching. I chose French at college because I had enjoyed time in France as a child and had a love of the food, swimming in the sea, sunshine, speaking French and probably first and foremost, holidays and the French joie de vivre.

I enjoyed working with children and young adults and helping them to learn and grow in confidence so teaching was the obvious choice of career. After some years I branched out into working for a Christian housing association helping ex-offenders to move forward in life and gain qualifications and employability skills. Many were young adults with little English and those unable to thrive in mainstream education.

I feel very blessed to have been able to combine this with bringing up my three children who are now all adults and largely flown the nest. In my spare time I enjoy art and I love to play around with colours being inspired by our amazing natural world. I also love to dance and have been known to jig around the kitchen - preferably when no-one is watching. In public I attempt to keep fit with Zumba and yoga.

John Banks is thrilled and thankful to have joined the East of England team in the role of a Learning and Development Officer.

For those of you who are yet to meet him, John frames himself as a people person. He loves God, Jesus, the Church, family, listening to the richness of people stories, and the occasional cup of coffee.



John has worked previously in support-planning for the homeless, in retail management and has been involved in mission with an inter-denominational agency for 7 years. His last appointment was with a City Church in Perth, Scotland, where he pioneered and co-founded collaborative mission with a wide number of churches and mission partners for regional and local community events. As a trained Christian Counsellor, he has first-hand experience of the struggles and pitfalls that church leaders and members wrestle with, and the requirement for effective listening, mentoring and discipleship within the Church.

Due to John's desire to see Church growth and its development he recently completed an MA at Cliff College, where he explored how a prophetic orientation of mission attends to the importance of the Spirit of God, the teaching of Scripture, tradition, and the Church context. As part of the East of England Team he is taking the lead on vocations, ordained ministry, W:L&P mentor training and portfolio moderation.

He and his South Korean wife Lucia have two sons, Daniel (aged 12) and Isaac (aged 10). As a family, they are currently in the process of moving to Hertfordshire before the new school term.

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**

*Unfortunately we cannot guarantee inclusion of all
contributions.*