



SUMMER NEWSLETTER

2025

Letter from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

Many years ago, when I was a circuit minister in Kendal, I attended a day conference at Tees Valley Community Church. In the news there had recently been an article about falling church numbers. The speaker began by holding up a tabloid newspaper with the heading "THE CHURCH ON ITS KNEES", saying, that is exactly where the church should be. On its knees praying. I cannot remember much about the rest of the day apart from a powerful time of prayer ministry, and I am not sure where the booklet is that was given out either, but the message shared then is still true today - we need to be and continue to be people and churches of prayer, remaining in God, Father, Son & Holy Spirit (see John ch15).

As the Grand Prayer Tour continues around the Circuit, it has been lovely joining with other groups, whether for soup, coffee, conversation... as well as prayer. Please do not be put off from joining in, for you can pray silently as well as speaking out loud.

In a recent CSW [Christian Solidarity Worldwide] Prayer journal, I heard prayer described as "Bearing something or someone in our hearts as we draw close to God." Then of course there is that wonderful hymn "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire" (STF 529) which reminds us of the many varied forms of prayer. Some of you also may have read one of the weekly Facebook Pauses, here I quoted an article from the Embrace Winter magazine which describes prayer thus:

Prayer aligns our hearts with God's will, grounding us in hope – even when answers seem distant. Prayer is also a form of resistance to evil, reminding us that things are not as they should be and making a refusal to accept things as they are. And prayer sustains our compassion, fuels our perseverance for justice, and reminds us that God is present – even in the darkest moments.

We probably all know that it is not essential to get down on our knees to pray, but hopefully these words of others will prompt a response, a desire to pray more, as individuals and churches.

The Grand Prayer Tour may even inspire you to come along and pray with us, and /or join some of us at 9am on Zoom on a Thursday morning when you can. Please contact me for further details.

Simply put, it is when we as individuals and churches are "on our knees", when we remain in God, that we are equipped to do our very best for God.

Over the summer may you find that extra space and time to pray, and keep on praying.

With every blessing

Rev Janet Capstick

NEW ADMIN



Hi, I'm Margaret, your new circuit administrator!

I was born and raised in a large Methodist family in Medomsley. My mam, Anne, was a local preacher, organist and Girls' Brigade leader. My dad, Maurice, helped to build the church in Medomsley in 1989 and was the caretaker, treasurer and Church steward.

My roles in the Church have included being a leader in the Girls' Brigade for over 30 years and currently the Church treasurer.

I am very family orientated and have two grown up daughters who I am immensely proud of.

I have an extensive background in admin having worked in various admin roles within the NHS for the majority of my working life. I am looking forward to this new challenge and getting to know you all!

Margaret Hall

BIBLE MONTH

The Gospel of John is the chosen book for Bible Month this year. Churches are invited to focus their worship for four weeks on themes from this Gospel, encouraging a deeper understanding of John's message.

It has been suggested that the four weeks after Trinity Sunday, starting on 22nd June might be the best time for us as a Circuit to join together in this time of learning. Preachers will be following the themes outlined in the Bible Month Study Guide.

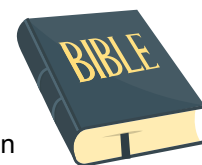
These are:-

Week 1: Chapter 1. Guided into Truth: embracing God and all reality".

Week 2: Chapters 2-12. Abundant Life: signs, conversations and controversy.

Week 3: Chapters 13-17. Open to Learning: Jesus' discipleship course.

Week 4: Chapters 18-21. Open to where the Spirit leads: 'the hour' and the resurrection and our drama.



If your Church would like to participate in this, please let Anne Farrow know (annefarrow60@yahoo.co.uk). If you would like to vary the weeks to accommodate any local arrangements at your Church, please specify your chosen dates so preachers can be informed. Thank you. Anne Farrow

A FOND FAREWELL & A WARM WELCOME

It is with sadness that we say a fond farewell to Rev Ann Varker and her husband Julian, both of whom have played their part across the circuit, whether keeping mission in our focus, helping with technology and much more. We wish them well in the West Birmingham and Oldbury Circuit, where they will be closer to family. Every blessing Ann & Julian.

Don't forget to put 27th July 6pm at Rowlands Gill for Ann's leaving service in your diary to wish them both well.

We as the Circuit Invitations Committee are also delighted to inform you that from the 1st September Rev Stephen Lindridge will be joining the circuit team as a part time presbyter working with SRMC at Rowlands Gill and Chopwell, but still living in North Shields. Many of you will be familiar with the name and it is who you think it is. Adjusting to a part time Ministerial appointment can be tricky so please show both the understanding and support, as I know that you will. Part time IS part time so Stephen will rarely preach around the Circuit but rather focus on the churches in his pastoral charge.

If you want to hear Stephen preach, pop along to either of those churches!

We pray God's blessing on Stephen's ministry and look forward to getting to know him over the coming months.

ECO CHURCH AWARD

Centenary Crawcrook are very pleased to announce that they have now achieved Bronze status as an Eco Church.

Thanks to Anne Farrow and our Eco team for all their hard work in achieving this.



2 OR 3 PRAYER TIME

"Where 2 or 3 come together in my name there am I with them"

For some years this group has regularly met at Centenary in the comfort of our small vestry on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month from 10am to 10.30am to pray for "the needs, concerns and hopes of God's people and world". It is led by our Minister Rev Janet Capstick, along with volunteers from the group and this time of quiet reflection always feels very special and helpful.

A regular number do meet, with others joining from time to time, including friends from our local Care Home. We also look forward to others from the Circuit joining with us in June on the Grand Tour of Prayers. Prayer time is usually followed by fellowship over coffee at our regular Saturday coffee morning, which usually runs from 10.30 to 12 noon.



ALL ARE WELCOME TO POP IN TO EITHER OF THESE EVENTS AT ANY TIME.

ANN VARKERS REFLECTION

Listening to the Today programme on Radio 4 earlier this week, my attention was grabbed by one particular item. Sir Charlie Mayfield, the person tasked by the government to find ways to encourage people back to work, was speaking to Justin Webb. It was said in the introduction that over two and a half million people of working age are not looking for a job due to ill health. The thrust of the article considered how government and business can help people back to work, to reduce spending on benefits and boost the economy.

I found myself thinking about the impact on individuals. Each week the household support team at Strathmore Road engages with people who are struggling financially. Time and again we discover that one or more adult in a family is unable to work due to anxiety or other mental health issues.

The Community Hub at SRMC offers some help already; the NHS Mental Health team run a drop-in on all but the first Monday of the month, and the Pay as You Feel café provides a place where people can meet with others. Volunteers look out for new faces and begin to build relationships.

Can we do more to encourage people to take small steps to engage more fully with life, let alone work? Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you." For me, this means recognising the unique qualities of each individual, and the difficulties they experience. Many of us will know someone who suffers from anxiety or depression; this can so easily lead to isolation unless someone is willing to befriend them and stand by them. Is God challenging you to reach out and offer support? If so, I encourage you to do what you can to show you care.

As I prepare to leave the South West Tyneside Methodist Circuit I am getting ready to take up a new appointment in the Birmingham West and Oldbury Circuit. I am continuing in work for the Methodist Church due in no small part to the Circuit Leadership Team, and especially Janet, who gave me a recuperative year following a lengthy period of ill-health.

I will miss the many friends I have made around the Circuit, and the beauty of the north-east, but give thanks for the love you have shown to Julian and me during our time here.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our final service in the Circuit at Strathmore Road on Sunday 27th July.

FROM PRAYER WALK TO PICNIC

You may recall that the re:imagine team set a date to consider whether to do a prayer walk around the Circuit. Sadly only a few folks turned up, others sent apologies. The Prayer Walk was just an idea, and like all ideas, you must see if there is enough enthusiasm for them.

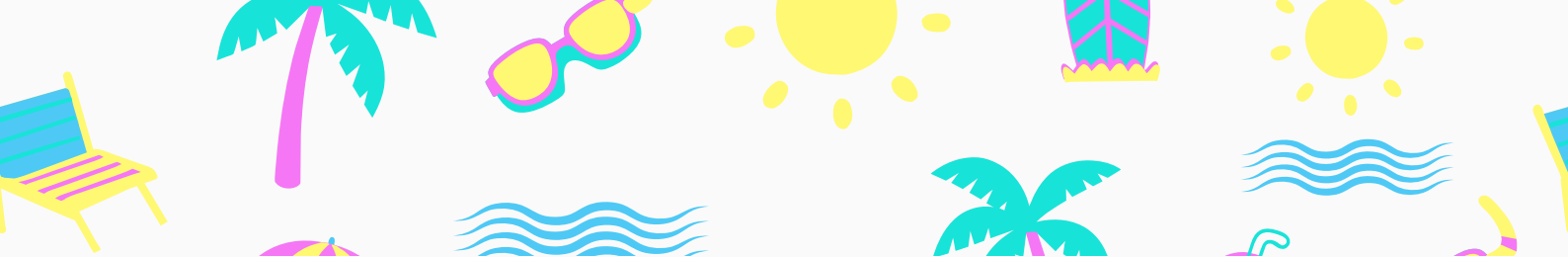
On reflection it was thought best, that instead of a prayer walk around the Circuit, we would have a gathering of Circuit folk with the possibility of walking to the park, maybe even praying in it.

The result is a PENTECOST PICNIC in the park on Saturday 7th June Ryton Park 12 - 2pm.

Prayer activities for all ages. All faith and no faith welcome.

There will also be a prayer walk happening from Greenside to the Park. More details about that will follow.





DIGEST OF THE CIRCUIT MEETING 20TH MARCH 2025 HELD AT CENTENARY CRAWCROOK

Stationing update – Approval was given to apply for a part-time appointment for Sept 2025.

The Meeting approved named people for Circuit Invitation Committee (CIC) beginning May 2025. A Reminder to Churches to look at appointment of CIC members at the Church Council spring meetings.

William Gray presented the Dreaming Dreams report exploring the possibility of Lay workers for the third age and Mission and evangelism, and asked for volunteers for a working party for this project, with the hope of getting 50% funding from the District.

Circuit Stewards report - Circuit stewards are taking roles to support the smooth running of the Circuit but more volunteers are needed as some of these jobs are essential to the Circuit.

Val Burn was appointed as a new Circuit Steward. Irene Middlemass was thanked for 7 years of service as she steps down from the role.

Video Services – Are available to all churches, contact Rev Dave Charter, who can provide this with an order of service and USB stick with the recording of him preaching.

Circuit Safeguarding policy was approved, updated and signed at the end of the meeting.

Safeguarding report - District has asked for an audit in each church.

Worship and Local Preachers report - Ann Farrow said Churches have been asked if they wanted to participate in Bible month - contact Ann if interested, starting 22nd June.

Ann Varker's leaving service – 6pm Sunday 27th July at SRMC- Strathmore Road.

Sabbaticals - Dave and Janet are due sabbaticals in 2025-2026.

Mission - Celebrating Circuit - Thanks to everyone for participating in Re: Imagine Christmas. At a meeting at Spoor on 2nd April the outcome was changed from Circuit prayers around the churches to a picnic in the park event.

Celebrating Churches – Whitehall Road. Thanks to Circuit for donation to remove pews and other work. Christine mentioned an exhibition at Blanchland Gatehouse Exhibition on methodist tapestries, Raise money for Highbury chapel 17th -18th May

Management - Finance report given by Peter Nelmes, noting that income was 5k better and interest is also at a higher level than budgeted for. Just over £500k sitting in the bank but the reason for having this amount was explained by the need for 6 months expenditure to be covered. The Youth and family worker funding in place till September 26 £30k. Also holding Circa £50k for work on manses. It was mentioned that the Hollyholme manse might need Upgrading. Quarterly payments for Assessments have all been on time Peter thanked Churches for their support.

Assessment agreed for 2025–2026. Peter reminded Churches if they are struggling and couldn't meet assessment to go to CLT and Circuit treasurer for Support and they will get help.

Property report - Blaydon roof repair nearing completion. Blaydon are Seeking approval from the Circuit meeting to apply for district grant The CLT suggested at their meeting granting £2000 in support on the proviso of a team and district support being in place. Ann proposed an application to the district for £2000 for the feasibility study. William was proposing Circuit give £2000 towards cost of feasibility study.

SRMC – The repairs and renewals of Coping stones was done around Nov time

Sunnyside update – Still waiting for the Community asset registration to lapse before we can sell the building. It was agreed that further fixed assets could be disposed of. Thanks to Trevor Peart for work done at Sunnyside along with Sue Robson.

Spoor ramp – Exploring the possibility of creating wheelchair access into the building

Dave Charter raised the Churches Together Community worker and was asking for ongoing contribution for the worker. The suggestion from CLT for 3 year commitment under provision of other churches continuing support (£10000). This was proposed, seconded and approved

Date of next meetings 10th June at Chopwell at 7pm then 16th Sept @ Unity Dunston Hill