

grapevine

April 2020
Issue Number 36



Why I choose to be a Methodist

East Anglia District of the Methodist Church

God's Goodness

Sometimes I sit and ponder
on Your Goodness, Lord, to me
and I never cease to wonder
how deep Your Love must be.

For as I look back down the years,
through good and bad times You've been there:
in times of sorrow You've wiped my tears
and in my happiness You've joyfully shared.

I see Your Hand at every turn
waiting to comfort, forgive and bless
with a Love that I could never earn –
though undeserving, You've loved me no less!

Sometimes I sit and ponder
on Your Goodness, Lord, to me,
and I'll never cease to wonder
how deep Your Love must be
For me.

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I have only been involved in a Methodist church for about three years, attending various denominations before that in my Christian walk. However, the manner in which my partner and I began to go to the Wesley Methodist Church in Cambridge was clearly and wonderfully God's Guidance, as we were accepted so readily and have become part of a caring church family enjoying love and fellowship, able to continue and develop our service for the Lord. We praise the Lord! This poem is about God's Guidance and Goodness which we see at 'every turn' when we look back on our lives.

Helen M Seeley

Welcome to *grapevine*

Welcome to the April 2020 edition of *grapevine* which has the theme 'Why I Choose to be a Methodist'.

At the time of writing, the country is in lockdown amid the Coronavirus outbreak. While we are all social distancing, and some of us are self-isolating, we hope you will enjoy reading the positive and inspiring stories from our contributors.

Whilst caring for ourselves and for each other is crucial at this time of crisis, it is one of the commitments in 'A Methodist Way of Life' which Revd Dr Roger Walton challenges the Church to adopt on page 11.

It is also partly instrumental in the reason why several of our contributors choose to be a Methodist and doubtless the reason why the District Safeguarding Group (DSG) is helping to make our churches safe for all. Martin Graham gives an introduction to the DSG on pages 20-21.

Still on the focus of caring, Sue Hockenhill tells us about the work of Walton Parish Nursing who provide 'whole person healthcare not provided by the NHS' on pages 18-19. George Frost gives us an update on pages 14-15 on the struggles faced by farmers and the community and asks us to 'Keep praying for each other'.

At the last minute, some of the events included in this edition had to be removed after being cancelled due to Coronavirus precautions. They have been replaced with some beautiful photos by Susan Eldridge from around the East Anglia District.

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 September 2020. You will find contact details on page 24.

grapevine

April 2020

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Julian Pursehouse, Susan Eldridge,
Alison Travis and Aileen Fox

Front cover image: A collage of many of the contributors to Grapevine past and present.

Pages 4, 5 and 15 images: Susan Eldridge

Page 14 image: Briant Smith

Introduction

Rev Julian Pursehouse



Dear Friends

I am writing this introduction at a profoundly difficult time as we all face the stringent restrictions imposed in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the course of just a few weeks our whole way of life has been changed irrevocably and we are all having to adapt on a daily basis to the changes that are taking place. In response to this colleagues, both lay and ordained, are working incredibly hard to maintain our common life of faith, worship and pastoral care – admittedly this is happening in new and different ways! We are discovering the possibilities of online platforms for communication like



Sheringham Methodist Church

Zoom or Microsoft Teams but equally we are rediscovering older forms of communication that are proving to be a blessing; like phone, cards & letters!

I am delighted to commend this edition of Grapevine to you as this is a form of communication in the District that connects us together and enables us to share and celebrate our common life of worship and witness as Methodist people across East Anglia District. Our theme this time is the exploration of why it is important for us to identify with the Methodist tradition; what particular aspects of being ‘Methodist’ have a bearing upon the living out of our faith. Given the current crisis, when so much of what we hold dear and precious is being stripped away, it is a good time to pause and reflect upon what really matters and what is really important! In this edition a whole variety of people are seeking to answer that question.

If you have visited the District Website recently, you will know that I set out on



Wymondham Methodist Church

and accountable approach to discipleship and a thoughtful engagement with the wider world through justice and social action. I have no doubt that you will find these marks of discipleship amongst the good folk of the East Anglia District.'

I do hope you will enjoy this edition and that it will help you to cherish what is important about the church that you belong to!

With kind regards and best wishes

Rev Julian M Pursehouse
Chair of the District

the opening page what I view to be a set of characteristics that are at the heart of what Methodism is and they are characteristics that can be found across the life of the District. For the sake of clarity I repeat those words here for they arise from my own particular journey of discipleship and my experience of being shaped by the Methodist tradition:

'The Methodist Church cherishes its place within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church whilst expressing a particular blend of Christian faith characterized by the desire to sing our faith, a catholic spirit that welcomes all, a systematic



Blakeney Methodist Church

I was always destined to be a Methodist ...

Steve Acklam



Why am I a Methodist? Certainly not because of any dramatic intervention on my personal Damascene road. Nor because of any heart-warming moment in a prayer-filled upper room. And not because of family influences or traditions. I am actually a Methodist in four distinct, geographically and temporally separate phases!

As a child my home was in Barnsley in the heart of South Yorkshire. I have vivid memories of being taken to the

local Methodist Sunday school by one of the teachers who lived nearby, of the tiered rows of Harvest Festival offerings, and of the wonderful stories we were told and pictured.

In my teens we were living in the picturesque market town of Ludlow. No-one took me this time, but again I attended the Methodist Sunday School which was led by a Deaconess. I attended weekend rallies with guest firebrand preachers and stepped forward at commitment services only to be scared off by the prospect of “what next?”. Meanwhile I was a

member of the scout troop affiliated to the Anglican church, carried the flag on numerous St George’s day parades and was part of the guard of honour when Princess Margaret visited St Lawrences.

Through the 70s, 80s and 90s home was in Berkshire and, to begin with, my church involvement was spasmodic and ecumenist



Ludlow Methodist church by kind permission of Rev Kim Stilwell, Shropshire and Marches Methodist Circuit

before I knew what the word meant! Our daughter was christened in an Anglican church, but at my wife's request we attended special services in the local Methodist church. It was during this time that my faith journey really began to take shape.



Toft Methodist Church as it appears on the East Anglia District website.

In the mid-1980's my wife suffered a double bleed on the brain and, at the most critical moment, was given only a 5% chance of survival. At this time, she is convinced she met Jesus and, out of hospital, asked me to take her each week to the town's Methodist church. In my mind the love and care she received there was a major factor in her recovery. Gradually I not only took her, but joined her in the services and although Alpha did not work for me, discussion groups, friendships and ministerial care did, and eventually I became a Methodist member.

In the early 2000s we returned to Cambridgeshire where we had met and married. In our village was a struggling Anglican church and a thriving Baptist church. We tried both, but ultimately knew that the

Methodist way of worshipping was our way; that the Methodists' capacity for singing, bible study, caring for our fellows, and cake (!) was, literally and figuratively, what fed us.

We became members of our nearest chapel, at Toft, which is in a formal covenant with the village's Anglican church, and have benefitted enormously from the experience. The Disciple Course did work for me and I lay down any reservations about my faith and from Christmas letters to casual conversations talk about it openly and willingly.

Looking back, I was always destined to be a Methodist; it just took me a long time to realise it.

Steve Acklam
Circuit Steward
Cambridge Circuit

A Methodist by Accident

Cathy Michell



I became a Methodist by accident and now, as a member of a Methodist/Anglican LEP, think of myself as a Christian of combined identity and ecumenical enthusiasm. And maybe this is typical of many other Methodists, that in the light of Wesley's famous sermon on the 'Catholic Spirit', we acquire and value being 'in connexion' with our local chapel, whilst also being of one heart with, and offering a hand to, other denominations and all those of good will, whoever they may be.

Brought up by Anglican parents who in later life separately took to Roman Catholicism, and The Society of Friends, my Methodism was acquired because of a surprising invitation to join one of the Methodist teams then delivering in-service training to weary ministers who had laboured for 20 years in circuit and were thus badly in need of a lovely week off in beautiful surroundings (those were the days!). The company of this team and its happy 'clients' strangely warmed my heart and before

long I knew my Districts from my Conferences and my white bread from my tiny cups of communion grape juice. I mastered the lingo, embraced the culture and became a Local Preacher; the rest is history.

From Methodism, therefore, I have gained much warmth and hospitality, a respect for academic study and a love of theology, open minded liberality about contemporary social issues, a spirit of



Service for the start of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at Toft Methodist Church.
A photo by Cathy Michell

inclusiveness and a Christian commitment to social justice.

I have enjoyed being the only Methodist on two Anglican ministerial training courses and enduring the endless teasing this has brought with it; all those jokes about my chains falling off, 'publishing the sinner's friend', 'and are we yet alive and see each other's face?' I've learned to channel a high church John Wesley who helps me struggle with the more Puritan aspects of the non-conformist conscience, not to mention all those plain chapels and that residual suspicion of visual beauty still dwelling



in Primitive hearts. But now we have some banners, two icons and even a candle or two! And there is hope, perhaps, that soon my Anglican/Methodist soul will find its reflection and its satisfaction in our two traditions getting their act together properly at last. I pray that they might find that unity in Christ that would so gladden our revered, great sermon-writing leader; that Oxford Anglican priest who was, so excitingly, once plucked like a brand from the burning to gift us our shared inheritance.

Cathy Michell
Local Preacher, Cambridge Circuit

Why am I a Methodist?

Aileen Fox



Why am I a Methodist? The question is in one sense easily answered. My mother and her family all attended a Methodist Church. My parents married at St Mary's Methodist Church, Bedford and later my father became the caretaker which meant as a family we could live in the house provided next

door. Being caretaker was in addition to a full-time job for him. Sadly, although christened there, I never attended as it closed and stood empty for years until demolished.

I went to afternoon Sunday school at a Methodist Church. Memories of taking part in Sunday School anniversaries, having a new dress for the anniversary, and reciting poems, singing solos or

duets! I remember returning later and being bridesmaid to my aunt there. But all that doesn't answer the question.

Methodism was, if you like, part of my DNA, but it was also pivotal in my social life; being a member of the Girls' Brigade, attending MAYC and London Weekend. Later to Youth Fellowship where I soon became a leader. At Youth Fellowship I met my husband, part of another Methodist family. Growing up I attended services in other denominations through parades and was a member of several young people's ecumenical Christian groups. I enjoyed the diversity but remained a non-conformist and Methodist. Along with my husband, I became a Boys' Brigade (BB) Officer and later, on moving to Suffolk, linked up with BB. I initially served in a Baptist Company, my husband the URC. Later I joined him at the URC as they were short of Officers. Despite enjoying different Church parades I still preferred the Methodist services and we continued to worship at the local Methodist Church forming lasting friendships.

Whilst waiting to move to Norfolk I felt the first prompting to consider training to be a Methodist Local Preacher, this was later encouraged and I was accredited 23 years ago. I also did a year's Foundation Training with a few

URC participants, three Methodists and many Anglicans.

I had the privilege to serve the Wesley Guild for nearly 5 years travelling around the Connexion and sharing in services and meetings. It was always the same welcome, friendships made and faith shared.

I have managed to be active within Methodism at Church, Circuit and District level, and more recently representing the District at Methodist Council and Methodist Conference. I like the opportunities to serve God through the local Church and further afield. I appreciate the enabling of lay people and the support and love Methodism tries to show. This love was very much apparent when my husband died suddenly.

I particularly like the affirmation by the Methodist Church that all are welcome. Methodism may not be perfect and we may sometimes upset people, but Methodism has given me a voice to try and show God's love to others, and it has given me love.

Perhaps this answers the question, perhaps it doesn't, but I remain a Methodist.

Aileen Fox
Circuit Steward
Central Norfolk Circuit

Choosing a Methodist Way of Living

Rev Dr Roger L Walton



Past President of the Conference, the Revd Dr Roger L Walton challenges the Church to adopt new commitments that echo John Wesley being inspired by the love of God

A Methodist Way of Life

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ

With God's help, we commit to this way of life:

Worship

We will pray daily.

We will worship with others regularly.

We will look and listen for God in Scripture and the world.

Learning and Caring

We will care for ourselves and those around us.

We will practise hospitality and generosity.

We will learn more about our faith.

Service

We will help and serve people in our communities and beyond.

We will honour creation and tend the environment.

We will challenge injustice.

Evangelism

We will speak of the love of God in Jesus.

We will live in such a way that others might be drawn to Jesus.

We will share our faith with others, sensitively.

May each life be a blessing within and beyond God's Church, for the transformation of the world.

The 'Methodist Way of Life' is not a detailed list of beliefs, but rather how we seek to live our lives in response to God's love in Jesus. The commitments left are a work in progress, but aim to set out, in simple terms, what being a Methodist is all about.

Revd Dr Roger L Walton from *the connexion*,
the free magazine of the Methodist Church, www.methodist.org.uk
To receive a free copy, visit www.bit.ly/the-connexion

Acceptance, Belonging and Fellowship

Pam Wear



became a Methodist by chance really. My father was brought up in the Church of England. He attended as a child and told me stories of a life in Durham that involved being an altar boy, together with swinging the incense, and “bells and smells”.



Bricknell Avenue Methodist Church
By kind permission of Mr Bob Lawe.

My mother is from Hull. I didn't ever question why my parents had got married (in 1949) at The Derringham Bank Methodist Church. When my brothers were born they were baptised at the Anglican Church nearby. Around the time that I was born my mother had a “falling out” with the local Anglican Church. The Bricknell Avenue

Methodist Church was just being built so that is where I was baptised.

We all attended Sunday School, my brothers cubs and scouts, me brownies and guides, Youth Fellowship and Youth Club.

When I became an adult, I discovered that my father had previously been married and divorced. This had excluded him from marrying my mother at the Anglican Church.

Their marriage gives an example of the accepting and forgiving nature of the Methodist Church that I have encountered.



Walton Avenue Methodist Church, South Harrow
A photo by Pam Wear



I met and married my husband at Bricknell Avenue Methodist Church and we travelled around the Country with MAYC meeting like-minded young people, always being accepted for who we were and never judged.



When I left home, my Church attendance became sporadic – but when my children were born we took them along to our local Church in South Harrow because we wanted them to enjoy the Church life that we have had.

They are now members of their local Churches and when we visit we are always welcomed and accepted as family. The sense of acceptance, belonging and fellowship is a truly Methodist experience which is why I am still a Methodist.

MAYC membership badges and certificate

Pam Wear
St Neots and Huntingdon Circuit

grapevine

is available in large print and on CD (audio)

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

01603 625765

eadistrict14.office@btinternet.com

Please note these items will only be available once lockdown restriction rules have ended and normality returns.

District Agricultural Chaplain's Report

George Frost



Wet, Wet, Wet, and I'm not referring to the pop group. That's how it's been since

last September, and I guess you don't need me to remind you of that. I cannot remember a prolonged period of wet for so long. I can remember having two tractors to pull a trailer over the field in September, but by mid October everything was back to normal.

Land recovery is going to be very difficult and land which has been flooded for a long period probably will not be seeded this year. People who are not connected to farming have commented to me that the fields which have been drilled look very green, and they are quite right, but look a bit



The River Ant taken from Johnson Street

closer and you will see there is very little root and without some drier and warmer weather the root system will not be able to sustain the plant.

'Brexit' has happened but the markets have not been established, so we carry on and watch this space, having planted a crop without knowing whether there will be a tariff to pay, depending where we find a customer. I always thought it would be a messy process.

Moving away from speculating about the future, the pig prices have been quite good mainly due to the pig disease in China, so that has boosted our market.

With the coronavirus affecting the whole world, people still have to eat, so hopefully we can still export our meats. Wheat and barley prices are stable with a small profit margin if the farmers have been careful with the spray programme. There are still several hectares of potatoes in the ground, especially in Lincolnshire. There is still sugar beet in the field near to where I

live. The factories at Bury and Cantley are closed, Wissington is staying open until March 30th, but there will not be a haulage contribution from British Sugar.

At a time like this I think of God's promise that 'seed time and harvest will not cease'. Some of the farmers might question that, but from experience there has always been a seed time and a harvest. There are difficulties along the way, which have been prominent these last six months.

Just as with our faith, we were not promised an easy road. We have had the Budget and will have to wait to establish the outcome when it has been

through the parliament process. At the time of writing the country is waiting to see if we have lock - down on movement and whatever else might be added on. It is a very worrying time for the elderly especially with the prospect of self isolation for a number of weeks. This will certainly test the support organisations who would normally be on hand. It is a new era which we will all have to adjust to. Anyone my age has seen it before and rose to the challenge, so I am confident we can do it again.

Keep praying for each other.

George W Frost
District Agricultural Chaplain



A plaque in the garden at Upwell Methodist Church

Why I am a Methodist

Susan Eldridge



My Church experience started at the Congregational Church in Bungay, which was my Mum's home Church. This became a URC, so Methodism entered the picture. I have to say I did not really feel I belonged at that Church, perhaps because we did not live in the Community it served. It was there I met Kath Jolley who was instrumental in my involvement with Methodist Women in Britain (known as Network then). This taught me more about the social justice side of Methodism.

In my early 30s, having finally left home



Bungay Emmanuel Church

(but moved less than two miles away), I decided to try Framingham Earl Methodist Church (equidistant from my previous and current home!) and was given a warm welcome and so I stayed and Mum and Dad later moved across too. Sadly, a few years later my Mum was diagnosed with cancer and the support given by that Church (in particular by two elderly ladies – Roma Lowe and Nancy McFall) to my Dad and me during Mum's illness and after she died was amazing.

Many other lovely Methodists have contributed to why I remain a Methodist and have helped me to deepen my Methodist knowledge and experience. They are too numerous to mention and please do not be upset if you are missed out – there is a limit on the number of words for this article! These people (and some are now in Glory) include:

- Rev Gerald Cole who officially made me a Member of the Methodist Church.

- Rev David Hart who was the reason I undertook Worship Leader training, which is very useful in these days of local arrangements and when I had to take an Easter Offering service at the last minute!



A very Methodist wedding

- Rev Derek Grimshaw through whom I had my first experience of Methodist Conference and Ordination Services and who was by my side on much of my journey as a Circuit Steward.
- Rev Graham Thompson who encouraged me so much, including to stand for election as a Representative to Conference and to become Assistant Synod Secretary.
- Many local preachers including Bill Allen, with his gentle and wise words.
- Many Methodist friends across the District.

I am pleased to be part of the Methodist family, which ensures a warm welcome wherever we go in the United Kingdom (or Channel Islands)

and often a connection to someone back in our District.

Although I am very much a Methodist, I am involved ecumenically too. I belong to an ecumenical Bible Study Group and it was an ecumenical home group that helped me so much after Mum's death. I have been involved with Churches Together locally and once had the privilege of going on a Roman Catholic / Methodist pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi with, among others, Liz Thetford.

If you ask my husband Paul why he is a Methodist, he will say because he married me! Many in the District are very grateful for the support he gives me and I don't think I could do what I do for the Methodist Church without him!

Susan Eldridge
Synod Secretary

Walton Parish Nursing

Sue Hockenhull



Parish Nursing
Ministries UK

The concept of “Parish Nursing” began some 25 years ago in Chicago, USA, in a church that felt it should address the health issues (physical, mental, emotional but also spiritual) of its congregation and community by employing a nurse. Being Anglican, they coined the name “Parish Nurse” (PN).

From this beginning there are now 12,000 Parish Nurses worldwide with 100 in the UK of which we were the first!

“**Walton Parish Nursing, Felixstowe**” grew out of a community survey by Maidstone Road Baptist Church that highlighted health as a need/concern amongst the people of Walton, a deprived area of Felixstowe, Suffolk. With much prayer and trepidation, they piloted a PN scheme brought from America by the Baptist Union. From that first leap of faith we have grown into a very successful ecumenical ministry that has become a trail-blazer for other schemes.

A Parish Nursing scheme works through a local church providing whole person healthcare not provided by the NHS. We “fill the gaps”. It is not about evangelism but taking God’s love from inside the church to those outside, not expecting anything in return other than being caring Christians and believing this is “what Jesus would do”.

Since 2006 we have grown into an ecumenical scheme (the first and biggest in the UK) run by the 3 Walton churches – Baptist, Methodist and Anglican. Currently we employ two part-time health professionals - a Parish Nurse (fully trained community nurse) and a Mental Health Nurse (there is poor provision of mental health in our area).

Facilitated by a set of Trustees and Management Team working with eight volunteers, they run three drop-in clinics (one at a foodbank), support groups for those with mental health issues and working-age with physical disability, craft groups, two weekly chair-based exercise classes, “sole

mates” (leg care for the elderly), transport to hospital, health fairs and education programmes. Our professionals offer health support, short or long-term, counselling, home visits, support after discharge from hospital, interpretation of diagnoses, signposting to other agencies and end-of-life care. The list is endless and our professionals are always busy; the need for health support never declines and indeed is likely to increase since the recent closure of our local GP surgery (GPs are hard to recruit in our area).

We get financial support from the three congregations, fund-raising events, Friends of WPN and grants (of which we acknowledge, with thanks, support from the East Anglia District and Ipswich Circuit).

This is a God-led ministry and we say we will continue as long as finances allow and He is with us. We provide a regular prayer diary for the congregations to support us.

We are pleased that we have inspired another PN scheme to be set up in our Circuit at Capel Methodist Church.

Different PN schemes will address different health issues in their locality.

In Yorkshire a PN works with an isolated farming community, in Lytham St Anne’s a PN works with refugees, London has a PN working with new Mums and Clacton has a PN in an area with gangs and knife crime. Our specific needs in Walton are mental health and end-of-life.

It has been a joy to work in this ministry and see it grow, flourish and do so much good outside church walls. With God by our side we hope to continue for many years to come.

Sue Hockenhull
Management Team,
Walton Parish Nursing
Member of Seaton Road Methodist Church



Lorna Bellamy, Parish Nurse
John Gillett, Mental Health Nurse

An Introduction to the District Safeguarding Group

Martin Graham



Safeguarding work is complex, difficult and sensitive, particularly in a church context where we want to welcome survivors and perpetrators and offer them hope. We know, however, through things like the Past Cases Review which reported in 2015, that we have often not dealt rigorously and robustly enough in managing people who represented a safeguarding risk nor have we adequately supported survivors who have often felt abandoned.

The District Safeguarding Group (DSG) is one way in which the East Anglia District seeks to assure itself that issues and concerns relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in its churches are now being addressed appropriately and efficiently. In order to facilitate this the DSG is required to appoint an Independent Chair, a role I have held since early 2018.

So what are my qualifications for this role? Well I retired in 2016 from a 40 year career in the Probation Service,

working at all levels in the service most recently as Chief Executive for Norfolk and Suffolk Probation. One of my responsibilities was to represent the Probation Service on the multi-agency Safeguarding Children Boards and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Boards for the two counties. Being responsible for the work of the Probation Service, not just with offenders but also with the victims or survivors of serious offences, has, I believe, given me some invaluable experience in seeking to steer the work of safeguarding across the District.

As my role is a voluntary one, Jane Gay, the District Safeguarding Officer, is the person primarily tasked with receiving information about safeguarding allegations and concerns, setting up Safeguarding Contracts and ensuring that these are properly managed and reviewed regularly. The DSG supports Jane by bringing together a range of people from both within and outside the District who can share their expertise and experience and thus promote good safeguarding practice.

Who are the members of the DSG?
Apart from myself and Jane, the DSG comprises the Chair of the District, a number of ministers and lay Church or Circuit Safeguarding Officers, someone from the Regional Learning Network who reports and advises on training and a number of external people with a wide range of safeguarding expertise. These include representatives of the Police and the Probation Services, the Head of Safeguarding from Suffolk County Council, the Local Authority Designated Officer from Norfolk County Council and a member of the Methodist Church Survivors Advisory Group. The East Anglia District seems to be almost unique nationally in having such a wide external professional representation and other DSGs are now seeking to replicate what we have achieved. The DSG meets four times a year and has also held for the last two years a Development Day at Oak Lodge in Thetford Forest where we have been able to think about the strategic



Members of the DSG at our Development Day in November 2019

direction of the DSG and produce actions to support this. Not surprisingly, many of those actions are about communication at all levels across the District about safeguarding generally and how the DSG can facilitate and improve this. What we don't want the DSG to be is just a talking shop that people have heard of but no-one knows exactly what we do. So to address this we are planning to hold a District Safeguarding Conference in the autumn to which we hope to invite a wide cross section of people in the District, both lay and ordained. We are also proposing to offer opportunities for people to attend and observe meetings of the DSG, again with the intention of demystifying the work of the group and taking back positive messages to our churches.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility – we each have an interest in making our churches safe for all. So I hope that some of you reading this will be encouraged to register for the Conference later in the year.

If you would be interested in attending the DSG as an observer or maybe even joining as a member please contact me on martingraham@ntlworld.com.

You would be most welcome.

Martin Graham
Independent Chair
East Anglia District Safeguarding Group

DISTRICT NEWS

An introduction to our new District Lay Employment Secretary (DLES), Mike Garwood ...

Mike writes: I grew up in Norfolk, but have strong connections with Suffolk, where one half of my family originates from. I became a Christian when I was 19 years old at University. For most of my career I have worked in the legal profession, and I am now a retired Solicitor. I also work part time in, and am training for, accounting where I work with charity sector clients.



I live in Wroxham, on the edge of the beautiful Norfolk Broads and, when I have time, I enjoy sailing and walking my dog in the surrounding countryside. I live with my wife Felicity and we have two children, 12 and 9 years old. As a family we also all enjoy learning and speaking French and we visit France as often as we can.

As I write this in late March, we are in almost unprecedented times of Church services being cancelled and the wider Church, and each Church community, is looking at how it can innovate to care for each other and the wider community around us. People I listen to are being challenged as to how to do things, why we do things, and what is important.

Reflecting on this, I am reminded of the well-known verses in 1 Corinthians 12:26 "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it". So in my role as your DLES, whilst my focus is on lay employment, service in the Church occurs in many ways and volunteer roles, we are reminded, are equally important. I am looking forward to also helping where I can with volunteer recruitment, to reflect the value and vital contribution volunteers make to Church life, and to ensure this is done in a safe way for our Church communities.

As things return to some normality, I would like to get around different churches to meet you, but in the meantime if you would like to contact me, please email: DLES@eangliamethodist.org.uk or phone 07400 539461

My office hours are Mondays 9-12 and Thursdays 12-4pm, however, I generally check emails and messages each weekday.

With every blessing

Mike Garwood

And we say goodbye to Aileen Fox ...

Some years ago, a previous District Chair asked me if I would join the District Lay Employment Committee, an email committee which scrutinises all posts for employment within the District. Later, I shadowed Ray Sawyer, District Lay Employment Secretary (DLES), and took over the role in 2010. I have enjoyed being involved in assisting churches and circuits in employing lay people in various roles within the District. I had been a manager in the NHS involved with personnel issues and later worked for a local charity setting up contracts and role descriptions for the staff. It was a very steep learning curve and a great responsibility to become the DLES.

If I am honest I enjoyed the contact with people and problem solving more than the admin, but I always wanted to ensure that everything was done legally and for the welfare of the employee and make it as easy as I could for the employer. To see people safely employed in carrying out work that enhances the mission of the Church, has been a real pleasure. We owe a lot to paid employees (and volunteers) which is why it is so important that we always do the right thing for them.

One interesting aspect of the role was the annual workshop for DLES at Methodist Church House, where I learnt a lot. The Connexional personnel, on hand by email, supported me and others, especially when there were some tricky situations to work through. There has also been a team behind me, the Lay Employment Committee, who rarely meet but work via email to check job descriptions and person specifications and help the prospective employer get the paperwork right. (Thank you). It has never been so important as it is now to ensure all procedures are carried out and we recruit safely.

It is now time to go. I had planned to go last August! Looking back, I never expected to stay so long and cannot believe it has been over 10 years. It has been a privilege to serve. Michael will possibly work differently from me, but I am sure you will all support him in his role as you have supported me.

All good wishes

Aileen

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.***

**** These contact details will only apply once lockdown
restriction rules have ended and normality returns.***