



THE METHODIST CHURCH LEICESTER NORTH CIRCUIT

Connexions March 2016

Fame and Rwanda (Rachel Parkinson)

The tiny country of Rwanda in Central Africa is famous for many things. It's home to the rare and famous mountain gorillas. It exports excellent coffee. And it boasts a new and exciting cycling team whose young stars develop their stamina riding in a country known as "the land of a thousand hills". At times it can look like the Garden of Eden - growing tea on the high hills; rice and sugar cane in the valleys; with pineapple, mangoes, coffee, bananas and papaya in between. But Rwanda is infamous for another reason. Nearly 22 years ago, on 7th April 1994, a genocidal conflict began which saw over 800,000 people killed in the space of 100 days. The date is significant for me because it's one marked in my memory by blood and pain too....I was giving birth to my eldest son....but whilst that was the beginning of life and hope, for Rwandans it heralded death and despair.

I visited Rwanda for a week in November with Rev John Harrod, current Chair of the Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury District whom I shall succeed in September. Our hosts were the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda with whom the District has had a partnership for the last ten years.

It was sobering to know that every person I met over 22 years old would have a story of the genocide, since it affected the whole country. It began with Hutu people being encouraged to kill their Tutsi neighbours (though many Hutus were killed too). Bishop Samuel, who travelled with us for several days, managed to escape to the Democratic Republic of Congo with his wife and baby son, but the mother, sister, nephews and nieces he left behind in his village were all slaughtered. We visited the Bishop's home village where John and I were invited to take part in the presentation of two cows. Cows are highly prized in Rwandan society and very expensive - these two had been donated by overseas partners. Many Tutsi villagers had only survived the genocide because they were protected by Hutu neighbours who resisted the call to join in the killing, at great risk to

themselves and their families. We handed each cow to a Tutsi villager who then presented it to the Hutu person who had saved their life. Two decades later, it was a powerful way of saying "Thank you".

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District have sent many thousands of pounds to their Rwandan friends to buy cows, build churches and support education. But they have received much in return. In particular, they have learned how easy it is to destroy peace through propaganda which encourages distrust and scapegoating. And when in Matthew 5, they hear Jesus say, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" they can think of the inspiring Rwandans they know who dedicate their lives to peace and reconciliation.

The Thrummy Drummers (Dorothy Hutchinson)

Amongst all the seasonal festivities, one experience stood out for me like a shining light and that was the morning I was one of a group of carol singers from Syston who were invited to sing at the Thurmaston Thrummy Drummers.

This group for people with dementia and their carers meet once a month at Elizabeth Park Sports Centre to socialise. The organisers try to provide light entertainment, talks, quizzes, etc. Music and singing are a wonderful means of communication, especially at Christmas.

The sports room, had been transformed into a place of beauty by the sparkling tree, the glitter of Christmas decorations and the tables set with Christmas fare and decorations.

Christmas time meant lots of delicious nibbles! Our audience were grouped around the tables so they could nibble as they listened and joined in. We had to "sing for our supper!" We began with familiar carols accompanied on the keyboard by Trevor,

It was heart-warming to see the audience respond and share the well loved words and melodies.

In the interval we mingled with the audience, chatting and listening as well as tucking into the party fare. Then fortified by more than mince pies, we sang the familiar songs - Jingle Bells, White Christmas etc. for what Christmas entertainment would be complete without these?

Some of us learned how to make ribbon bows for our festive gifts and as the raffle prizes seemed never ending, most of us took a parcel home.

But more than a parcel, we took home warmed hearts and deep gratitude for the dedication of all who are helping Thrummy Drummers to alleviate the isolation so often experienced by sufferers and carers alike.

For anyone who would like to know more, I'd be happy to provide a contact number.

Varied Christmas Celebrations @ Birstall (Mary Downs)

What better setting for a Baptism of a new baby than a Nativity Service. The church welcomed the family of Lyndsey & Lee for the Baptism of their baby daughter, Jessica.

The traditional story of the Nativity was told, not by the famous "Giant Puppets" but by their "miniature cousins", lovingly crafted over several weeks by the Sunday Club. The story took place mainly in the stable (the puppet theatre on loan from the Pre-school) with glove puppets. The striking of a gong introduced Caesar Augustus announcing the census, shepherds & sheep on sticks were visited by flying angels accompanied by the jingling sounds of tambourines & shakers, whilst wise men & camels traversed across the desert to the strains of a penny whistle. Definitely an action packed story- a true family Christmas Nativity service.

The Candlelight Carol Service in the evening was more traditional. The orchestra welcomed the congregation with a Christmas Medley & the service followed the Christmas story with well known carols & readings.

Joseph (alias Andy Webster) did have a habit of popping in from time to time to say "Can I have a word?" with his wife Mary, his mother-in-law Anna, and Angel Gabriel throwing quite a humorous slant on the story.

Christmas Day was indeed a truly Family Christmas service – with children showing their gifts(with a skate boards and scooters charging about) The Christmas story "Round the Back" told in the eyes of the innkeeper was of the "Come & dress-up variety"

The Work of the Holy Spirit (Margaret Leftley)

On Saturday 14th November five friends from Syston travelled to Northamptonshire to take part in a study day on the Holy Spirit led by Rev'd Paul Wilson. Members of Rothwell Methodist Church and Methodist Evangelicals Together (MET) welcomed us. We enjoyed three talks considering the work of the Holy Spirit as Helper, Evangelist and Teacher.

Paul used John 14 to illustrate the work of the Holy Spirit as Advocate, which lives in us so that the ministry of Jesus can be continued through us. The Helper gives power for service through us all, as individuals and as the Church, the Body of Christ.

Paul reminded us that, as The Evangelist, the Holy Spirit enables us to witness to the love and grace of God. We are given the task of sharing the Gospel in the language of the 21st century. The Evangelist takes our words and actions and brings people to faith.

In the final talk Paul considered the Holy Spirit as Teacher, using John 16. As disciples of Jesus we need to walk each day with Him, through prayer and study of the Bible. A greater awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit allows us to grow in faith and give glory to God.

It was very helpful and interesting to focus on this aspect of our faith. Paul gave us plenty to talk about on the way home. You may well find that some of this experience will crop up in services around the Circuit in the months to come.

Brian Pearson writes

On Wednesday, 16th December, Churches Together in Belgrave and Rushey Mead (CTBRM) organised a carol singing session at the Royal Leicester's Pub on the Rushey Mead Estate which was enjoyed by about 50 church goers and pub regulars. Brian Cottam from Harrison Road acted as M.C. and was ably supported by others from Harrison Road and other churches in the neighbourhood. This was the third year that CTBRM had sung carols at the Royal Leicester's where Rocky, the landlord, who goes to Harrison Road and his staff made everyone most welcome.

The Hub Café (Dave Warnock)

We are now open! Thanks to wonderful volunteers (Paul, Keith and Jane) the new Hub Café (with awesome branding thanks to Jules) is now open Monday to Friday from 8am to 3pm. We have great coffee, 9 types of tea, the best hot chocolate in the county and some really nice biscuits and chocolate. Lots of groups are already using or planning to use the Hub to meet in which is fantastic. We have already met lots of new people. Why not pop-in for the free Wi-Fi, big TV or computers if not for the snacks, drinks and company!

Connexions Editor From Rachel:

I've enjoyed editing our Circuit magazine for the last seven years as it's given reason to pause every quarter and review what we have done in the previous months to work towards our Circuit Mission statement of "Deepening Discipleship; Making More Disciples". I've never been short of material to cover, though have always been grateful to those who have agreed to write articles and send photos.

Photo Guide

1. Rachel celebrates with the Cameroon Christian Women's Fellowship
2. Amazing number of shoeboxes collected by the new team led by Lena Finley and crew at Syston
3. Rachel's Rwandan cow (see article for attempted explanation)
4. Rev'd Steve Wild, Methodist President preaching at Birstall holding one of the crosses he gives out all over the country
5. Cameroon Christian Women's Fellowship Retreat at Syston led by Rev'd Edward Sakwe that Dave was privileged to attend.
6. The new 'Donkey' nearly giant puppet at Birstall. Also used in the City and other Christmas events.
7. Peter Hancock cutting the cake at the official opening of The Youth Café at Syston Methodist Church, February 2016
8. The growing Syston Girls Brigade celebrate Christmas.
9. Churches Together in Belgrave and Rushey Mead carols in the Royal Leicester Pub
10. Fiona - not under arrest quite yet - at The Syston Youth Café opening.
11. Rev'd Steve Wild sharing Holy Communion at the packed Circuit Service at Birstall in February.
12. The New Year intrepid walkers who slipped, slid, climbed and waded their way for miles around the Gate Hangs Well!!!
13. Birstall breakfast club re-enacts Da Vinci's Last Supper at the Circuit Service (following a huge breakfast in preparation for this bit)

Presidential Circuit Service (Charles Hilton)

Sunday 7th February saw the first Leicester North circuit service of 2016. This time the service was hosted at Birstall, it was well attended from members of all the Churches with over 200 people joining together.

We were pleased to welcome the Chair of the Methodist Conference, the Rev. Steve Wild to join us in the service, preach the sermon & serve Communion, whilst the Rev. Dave Warnock acted as the anchor man introducing the hymns & prayers, Rev Rachel Parkinson was with our junior church following their own worship, they joined our main worship in time to take part in the Communion part of the service.

Rev. Steve was a breath of fresh air, bringing humour & warmth to his description of his train journey from his home in Cornwall to Leicester. Rev. Steve told of his life as an evangelist from finding Christ in his early teens, to his current position as Chair of the Conference. He also told us of his passion for Mission & about some of his experiences of inclusivity or sometimes lack of, also how we must be open to people however they appear or behave.

It was a truly inspiring service, although possibly, there were a few very crisp Sunday dinners as the service didn't finish until 12:30pm, but very well worth it.

A video of Rev. Steve's sermon can be found on the Birstall Methodist Church's Facebook account.

How I came to be a 'chef' (Jane Warnock)

A few years ago Christine Solway asked if I would consider joining the Lunch Club Team. There are two types of role at Syston Lunch Club. One is more public, so I chose to join the kitchen team because they are less visible. When I arrived at 8.30ish on the first morning I realised that although run by volunteers it is run very professionally. There are many who feel aggrieved at locked cupboards and special 'Lunch Club' kitchen tools etc. but in order to earn our 5* hygiene rating and provide a safe meal economically for 50 people every fortnight it is necessary to keep catering sized tins, packets and baking trays etc. solely for Lunch Club use.

On my first morning I was eased in by the experienced crew. They explained everything and I soon felt I was being useful with about 10 kilos of potatoes to peel, carrots to chop and always plenty to wash up. It is a

very friendly activity and we share a lot of laughter while we work. The kitchen crew are joined by the first of the 'serving' team at about 10.30ish. There are tables to lay, flowers to set out and all those jugs of water to fill. We try not to get in each other's way. Around 11 we all sit down together for a short break and catch up with a chat over a cup of tea and a cob.

Then it's back to work to put everything out ready to serve at 12.30 prompt (if Dave has said grace on time) It is very satisfying to hear happy chatter, knowing that some of the people attending rarely get out. In fact I have forgotten one other very important role – driver. These noble souls drive out each fortnight to pick up those who have no transport.

Then a few months ago I was asked to step up and become a 'chef'. This is certainly a new responsibility, having to make decisions about timings for cooking vegetables and meat and actually making pastry. I have less time for chat and must concentrate more, but we all work as a team and someone always remembers the gravy/custard/frozen peas which the chefs have overlooked. I would encourage anyone who is interested in joining us to chat about what we do with one of the team. You will certainly be made welcome and no experience is necessary.

Birstall Sunday Club is changing!!!!

After a short time in church we move into the Coffee Shop to prepare and share breakfast. The rotating menu will include porridge, Weetabix, cocoa-pops, cheese, beans or egg on toast, bacon or sausage cobs, tomatoes, mushrooms, fruit & smoothies. But not all at once!!

We have a very wide age range in our Sunday Club and preparing and eating breakfast together is a great way to break down barriers, relax and chat. Even washing up has its appeal. Who knows we may even offer breakfast to the congregation on a special occasions.

After breakfast we follow the theme for the day with bible based crafts, drama, activities & discussions. **Please pray for our new "Breakfast Club"**.

"You wouldn't get a better Meal anywhere" Keith Baker

That was among the comments made about the Christmas Dinner provided at Syston Methodist Church. Expertly arranged and managed by Ann Cairns and her team of Helpers, a wonderful time was had by people from around the area who weren't able to be with relatives at that time of year.

I can't remember how many years Ann has been organising this now, but it goes back a while and each event gets better and better. As well as the Dinner, there was expert entertainment which included a sample of the best Christmas cracker jokes of all time and some seasonal songs. Modesty forbids me to tell you who the Chief Entertainments Officer was, but the supporting Elves were Sue Alexander and Jean Aldwinkle.

Stationing (Dave Warnock)

We briefed everyone at a special open Circuit Meeting after the Circuit Service on 7th February about the situation so far. There is a significant shortage of Ministers for next year, including the round where probationers are stationed. We are therefore one of many circuits for whom no minister has been found for next year (in our case to replace Rachel). Other circuits who have not been matched with a minister include Leicester Trinity and Loughborough. Following a positive mission focused response by the Circuit Leadership Team the Circuit Meeting voted to

a) give the Invitation Committee permission to explore and potentially accept a part-time presbyter who lives locally (but not within the Circuit and not connected to the Circuit at present). It is expected that the minister would have a full preaching plan and look after Birstall and Rothley. This will have to be done through the formal Stationing process.

b) ask the Circuit Leadership team to look at employing part time lay workers to cover areas such as school work and Messy Churches.

c) ask the Circuit Leadership team to take advantage of the manse not being needed by looking at replacing it with somewhere with lower maintenance and energy costs that could be rented out until needed again by the Circuit.

Any decisions on b) and c) will need to be made by the Circuit Meeting and we hope to be in a position to discuss things more fully at the next meeting on 8th March. If you have any questions then the Circuit Stewards or Rachel or Dave will be happy to help.

Harrison Road developments

Since last Summer the Circuit have been supporting some new initiatives at Harrison Road to reach the local community. The latest of these led from crafts into a Christingle Service. We are now looking to employ someone to generate more community use and handle bookings and access.

EVENTS FROM MARCH – MAY 2016

Regular Coffee Mornings at:

Birstall every **Tuesday – Saturday** mornings 10am to 12noon

Rothley every **Tuesday** morning 10am to 11.45am

Edgehill at All Saints every **Thursday** morning 10am to 12noon

Claremont every **Friday** morning 10am to 12noon

Syston every **Saturday** morning 10am to 12noon

Syston Hub Café Monday – Friday 8am to 3pm

Messy Church at:

Birstall 4-6pm on Saturdays 19 March, 16 April and 21 May

Rothley 3-5pm on Saturdays 26 March, 23 April and 28 May

Syston 6-8pm on Fridays 18 March, 15 April and 20 May

Other events:

Sat 5 March – 7.30pm - Little Big Band at Rothley Methodist Church (NB not at Syston) tickets £6 to include a light supper of hot dogs, tea, coffee and cake available from Sue Wainwright 0758 555 7548

Sat 12 March – 6.30pm – Harrison Road Men's Weekend Supper and Concert, tickets £5 from Brian Cottam 267 4339, please book by Sun 6 March

Sat 19 March – 10am to 11.30am - Ladies Circle Coffee Morning at the Rothley Centre, Mountsorrel Lane, Rothley, in aid of the Laura Centre and the church, ample parking available

Sat 19 March – 10am to 2.30pm – Craft Fair at Syston

Sat 19 March – 7pm – Classics to Jazz Concert at Syston – for more information ring 260 9804

Sat 30 April – Cycling Sportive – for more information ring Dave on 0788 655 3376

Sat 4 June (advance notice) – 10am onwards – Summer Gala at Syston

DATES FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF CONNEXIONS SHOULD BE SENT TO LAURIE BY FRIDAY 22 APRIL 2016

Circuit Prayer Space: March to May 2016

Let us give thanks and pray

That the Circuit and Circuit Leadership team may continue to be spirit led as we seek the way forward with regard to stationing and the issues arising from the current situation. Throughout the Connexion may all involved in stationing be upheld in times of uncertainty and change.

May we all, as individuals and churches, find meaningful ways in which to journey through Lent and prepare to share and celebrate the good news of Easter. That all worship and activities will reflect the wonder of God's gift of love for the world.

For the many people known to us experiencing frailty and ill health at home or in residential care, especially those unable to attend church and who miss the joy of worship and meeting with friends. May we find ways to support and encourage all who are in need.

For Safe Space Counselling, for clients, the counsellors undertaking further studies and development, supervision arrangements, supporting prayer partners. May those who need the help that counselling can offer have the courage to make contact.

For the Spirit's leading in all work that seeks to engage with the local community. For Harrison Rd exploring ways of developing such work and for Syston's new Community Project Hub Cafe now open 5 days a week

For the ecumenical contemplative Julian prayer group based at Syston as it meets for the first time on 5 April

Give thanks that the Cameroon HOTPEC water and electricity project is nearing completion and pray there will soon be a consistent reliable water supply "on tap" wherever its needed.

For yourself and the church you belong to. That discipleship may be deepened and God use you in helping people to be drawn to his love.

NB CONNEXIONS MATERIAL

Rachel has now handed the editor's role over to Jo Kay at Syston. Jo's email is jokay1947@gmail.com and other contact details are on the plan. Please help make her life easier and our magazine more representative by providing information for her to include.