

get in the way from time to time, but everybody is very nice about it. It's good to know that you're kind to those who don't always know where to go, or what to do.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all again soon, but I must (🐾) - Paula's gone into the kitchen, and I might need to clean the floor if she drops something. I do hate to see a mess!

Bye for now! (BTW Rev Paula helped me write this!)

And yet another little note. There should be posters in all the Churches about the Reflect Silent retreats at Douai Abbey in April and June. If anyone needs advice or a chat about going on a retreat please contact me. Jo Kay

Dates that we have so far

Syston

Saturday 18th March Craft Fair 10am to 2.30pm

Friday 7th April a Fashion Show at 7.30pm. Tickets £5. For further information please ring 0116 2605520

Rothley

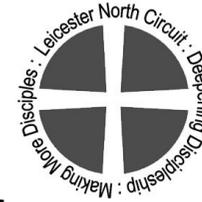
Friday, 3rd March (lunchtime) Women's World Day of Prayer

Saturday, 4th March at 7.30 p.m.

Little Big Band concert at Rothley Methodist Church (Tickets £7 including light supper of hot dogs, cake and tea/coffee obtainable from Sue Wainwright 07585 557548)

For Prayer

We have many members of our Churches waiting for or recovering from operations with many delays. We remember them and all others in our communities needing health care as well as all the staff working so hard to use their gifts to help us all.



THE METHODIST CHURCH
LEICESTER NORTH CIRCUIT

Connexions March 2017

Circuit Life

I'm pleased to be able to start with some really good news. When we merge with the Leicester Trinity Circuit on 1st September 2017 we will now be fully staffed. We have a new Superintendent Minister Rev'd Edson Dube who is joining us from Birmingham and we have just heard that Rev'd Jenny Impey is joining us from being one of the London District Chairs (for a 75% of full-time appointment). Rev'd's Fran Rhys, Saidu Kanu and David Willis from the Trinity Circuit will be staying on as will Dave and Paula from our Circuit.

Work to prepare for the new circuit continues. All the ministers are now meeting together each month and we are having joint Circuit Leadership team meetings. In the summer we will have a joint Circuit Meeting at Oadby on June 21st starting at 6:30pm with a BBQ.

We also have various property updates. Queniborough Chapel is now fully sold. The Birstall Manse is for sale and we are looking at also replacing the Syston Manse (among other issues the current one could not be made disabled friendly). Birstall are continuing with the next phases of their Walk in the Light project.

Meanwhile the Hub Café at Syston is now serving hot food at lunchtimes and is so busy it is going to be recruiting more staff. The Youth Café frequently has 40 young people on a Friday and the crime figures in Syston have shown a significant reduction since we opened.

I'm delighted that we now have four local preachers in training and more (short) accounts of their calling are included here.

James Blackhall writes about his call to preach

I realised I was called to some form of Christian service on first becoming a Christian at around the age of eleven. I often wondered if this was a calling to preach, but I was uncertain of this. As time went on I realised that I was being called to lead God's people in worship. This led to me approaching my minister shortly before going to university and discussing whether I was called to be a Worship Leader, he asked me to go away and think about whether it was that, or a call to preach- and I left still unsure and with lots of questions.

I came to the conclusion that I wanted to commit myself fully to God. After being assaulted and lying in hospital realising that all I had was Christ, I wanted to give all that I had to him. This led to a renewal of interest in preaching and I took part in a couple of local arrangements as well as leading a midweek service in the circuit in Leeds I was then worshipping in. At this point I was considering Local Preaching and started to seriously explore the possibility of training.

On moving to Leicester and leading worship in Messy Church I realised that my God given passion was for reaching people with the message of the God who loves them. I wanted to be able to do this through the ministry of a local preacher and after much prayer I realised that the time was right to 'go forward' and answer God's call remembering the message that He has given me and trusting that with His guidance I will be able to pass that on to others.

There were approx ten people at the first meeting including two teenagers, they met from 4pm - 6pm. After the service I met with them & they were really appreciative at being able to worship in their own languages.

They are going to use the lounge next week.

Editor's note—there is also a Sri Lankan Church who meet at Claremont Street, another Asian congregation at Harrison Road and All Saints Church are an Asian congregation that kindly host Edgehill Methodists.

Sandie's View-*looking at life when you're less than two feet tall*

Hello! It's Sandie here – you might have seen me around with Paula.

Last summer, when Paula told me that she was going to be looking after two churches, I must admit to being a little worried. Would she still have time for me? Humans are easily distracted, after all, and I do like to have my dinner at the right time, and take Paula for a nice long walk every day. She needs the exercise, you know.

Well, I'm pleased to say that things have turned out much better than I feared. Paula still loves me just as much, and I've been able to explore new places with her, and make lots of new friends. You seem like lovely people, and it's nice when you notice that I'm down here, and say hello. I like it when you scratch just behind my ears, and I try to remember to wag my tail to say thank you. It can be quite scary when you don't notice me, though. I can't always get out of your way if I've got Paula on the lead. I know I'm not the only one - I've noticed that lots of humans can't move very quickly, either. It makes me feel safer to know that most of the time you look out for each other (and for me!).

Paula says I'm not allowed to have biscuits – she says my liver doesn't work properly, but I don't really understand what that means. I like to be helpful, though, so when she's not looking, I clear up the crumbs that you drop on the floor.

There are lots of things I don't understand, and sometimes when Paula starts talking, I get a bit bored, and lie down. I think I must

Little BIG Band helps Action for Children

The Leicester Support Group of Action for Children had a very successful year in 2016 raising a grand total of £2,133.00. Just over half of this money was raised through the Little BIG Band performing at concerts and giving various entertainments. The Band consists of a group of friends from areas in Leicester; Syston, Anstey, Queniborough, Birstall etc and we all enjoy entertaining a wide range of people. In 2016 we performed at churches and residential homes in the Leicester area. For instance, in October, supporters of Action for Children at Wigston Magna Methodist Church hosted a Concert where we raised over £500. We had a wonderful evening and the audience joined in and were very appreciative. We were invited to give Christmas entertainment at Forge Ct, Syston and Riversdale Ct, Birstall and again, our audience enjoyed a variety of songs and monologues etc.

This form of fund raising gives a lot of pleasure to both the musicians in the Band and the people who support the events. We very much appreciate the generosity of people who give their time and money, without who none of this would happen.

The Little BIG Band are performing at a Musical Evening at Rothley Methodist Church on **Saturday 4 March**. Why not come along and give your support? We shall be raising funds for Rothley Methodist Church as well as Action for Children.

Thanks, Eileen and Pete Molesdale

From Birstall Church

Hi to all, the first meeting of the Asian Language Church (they haven't thought of another name yet) are now meeting in our Church.

Jo Leatherland writes about her call to preach

I joined Syston Methodist Church a year ago, having been at Elim Pentecostal church in Loughborough for many years. Whilst I was at Elim I was trained to preach within their church context, as part of their team.

For the past year I have been a Youth worker with Nottingham Youth for Christ. As part of that role one Sunday morning a month I run Brunch Church for them; a contemporary form of youth church.

Since becoming a Christian in my teens I have loved reading and studying the bible. I had no formal theological training until a year ago, when I began to study for a Masters degree in Applied Theology. I have loved the challenge of broadening and deepening my understanding of scripture and discussing it with others.

When preparing a sermon, I utilise the skills I developed as a teacher and from delivering training within schools. I have been told that my preaching is well structured and my thoughts flow logically.

I am a highly creative person so often use images or objects to illustrate my points. Beware, you may be asked to participate when I preach at your church! My aim when being creative is to make the words that were written thousands of years ago, in a different context and culture, relevant to our 21st century lives, and stages of life.

My main purpose when leading any form of church service, is to pray and ask God what He wants to say and do through me. It is an honour and a privilege to be now developing my preaching

skills further within the Methodist church and I look forward to meeting you all in due course.

Juliet Kisob writes about her call to preach

My name is Juliet Kisob. I am a local preacher on note with Leicester North Circuit. I was born in Cameroon to a Presbyterian family and educated at a church boarding school. I grew up in a society that placed less value on girls and girls' education and raised up by a grandmother who challenged that.'

My journey has been very tough sometimes. My dream of training as a preacher was thwarted (I thought) by the lack of access for women back then. I turned my energy to women's activism, education and empowerment. In 2008. I met Reverend Rachel Parkinson, who later became the Spiritual mother of the Cameroon Christian Women's Fellowship and also my mentor, through Reverend Edward Sakwe and his family. I carried on with my membership in Central Baptist Church Leicester where I served as deacon responsible for prayer and preached a few times They supported me when I said I was sensing in my heart to become a preacher. They said they were not surprised because they had noticed there was something unique about me. One looked into my eyes and said 'Juliet, I would come to church if you were a preacher'.

I went on a retreat to Launde Abbey to seek God's help to calm the storm that was in my heart. After the retreat, I spoke to my minister, Reverend Andrew Fitzgerald about my sense of calling. He prayed with me and offered me information and advice about Spurgeon College as did Reverend Edward Sakwe I shared my sense of calling with Reverend Rachel Parkinson who spent time with me in prayer and guided me through the practical steps that were essential if I were to be trained with the Methodist Church. To move to the Methodist Church, I had to resign my membership with Central Baptist which was very painful. They prayed with me, gave me their blessings and sent me off in love. The Methodist Church also received me in love.

Syston Methodist Church "Operation Christmas Child" Shoebox appeal 2016.

Samaritan's Purse is a Christian international relief organisation whose project "Operation Christmas Child" collects shoeboxes—filled with school supplies, hygiene items, fun toys and notes of encouragement—and delivers them to children in need around the world to demonstrate God's love in a tangible way. Leicester boxes go mainly to the Eastern bloc, where it gets very cold in winter. Many of the children will not have had a present before.

Here at Syston we sent off 171 boxes and had great fun when customers of "The Hub" café joined in to assist us in wrapping boxes, donating and making gifts. Some local people heard what we were doing and popped in to collect boxes for their families to do at home.

Members of Syston U3A (university of the 3rd age") crochet and knitting clubs donated lovely warm woollen hats, scarves and mitts to keep the children warm and made beautiful hand-made greetings cards for them. Syston branch of Tesco donated some sweets and toiletries. Our church band of knitters made woollens and soft and cuddly hand and finger puppets and dolls, as many of the children are orphans, or live on the streets or in war torn places, I'm sure these soft toys will be a comfort to many. Our thanks are due to the congregation and to everyone who joined in. We would ask you to pray for all involved in the shoebox project, especially for the children. Pat and Lena.

Joy's Jewellery raises money for HOTPEC at Bradgate Christmas Fair

Once again Joy took her Jewellery to Bradgate Christmas Fair in December 2016. Joy and David Bark raise money for HOTPEC which is a charity supporting an orphanage in the Cameroon. Joy and friends had a very enjoyable and successful two days; this year we were nice and cosy in a huge marquee.(see photo)

Captions for photos

1. Joy's jewellery at Bradgate—see article
2. All systems go for lunch in The Hub. Like the hats!
3. Some of the 171 Boxes for Samaritan's purse at Syston
4. Jenny and Santa at Action for Children, Syston
5. Syston Christmas Day— So what constitutes a party? First you need people and they came from local homes in Syston, the North of England, Oxfordshire, Cornwall and even the U.S.A. to join the party of worshippers on Christmas morning at Syston. Christmas Day morning service at Syston Methodist Church has always been a warm, welcoming, family occasion and so it was again this December. Getting dressed up as shepherds, angels and even Mary and Joseph we all had great fun processing around the church, taking part in a retelling of the nativity story. A lovely memory to take back home to New Jersey.
6. Art in The Hub
7. Card from Toys on the table at Claremont St., More toys than ever before, Terry Watts gave a sensitive and illuming resume of their work and his wife Margaret sent this lovely card with a message of thanks.
8. Dave and Jackie united for week of Christian Unity
9. Christmas Trees at Birstall's Christmas festival
10. Carol service at Harrison Road Unfortunately the photo doesn't show the 30 or 40 people sitting under the balcony.
11. Ignite at Birstall — A District training day exploring Pioneering Ministries within Methodism was very encouraging and exciting.
12. Little Big Band at Wigston Methodist for Action for Children
13. Carols in the pub— for the last 5 years the HR Choir and friends have been invited to lead carol singing at the pub of Arti and Rocky(HR members) . It is a popular event with the local clientele. We had a full house that joined in with great enthusiasm! A group of children overshadowed their efforts with their rendition of Jingle bells. A good evening was enjoyed by all.

I was invited to attend the local preachers and worship leaders meeting to share my sense of calling, which I did with great joy. That is how my journey began. My story is a testimony of how unknown to us, the Holy Spirit goes before us opening the way, and how He orders our footsteps to fulfil God's plans and purposes in our lives.

Note from Editor—this is a much edited version of Juliet's call which is a very moving and inspirational story. It can be read in full on Circuit website (I understand from Charles that there is a link on there) and possibly the Birstall website as soon as possible

Jenny Utting writes

Action for Children had their annual Christmas Fayre at Syston. Santa had presents for all ages. It was a great success- we raised £513. Action for Children exists to make a real and lasting difference to the lives of disadvantaged children across the UK. In 2015/16 we made life better for 390,000 children & young people, their parents & careers, in different ways- For instance the adoption & fostering of children looking for a new home. Our schools offer a secure developing environment for pupils with the most profound & challenging needs. Support for disabled children & their families to live the lives they choose. We support children in care & leaving care, getting them into education, training & employment. Our 200 children's centres help families turn things around in difficult times with practical & emotional support. Neglect affects 1 in 10 children-that is too many. Those who are at risk of abuse or neglect must be identified early so we can help. A New Year, a new Royal patron, in 2017 the Duchess of Cambridge will be taking over from the Queen. She will continue the Queen's great patronage work. Action for Children is a Methodist charity. Thank you for continuing to support & help us.

