

Grapevine

September 2016

Issue Number 29

LIFELONG LEARNING

East Anglia District of the Methodist Church



Science without religion is lame,
religion without science is blind.

Albert Einstein

Welcome to grapevine

Welcome to this issue of *grapevine* which has the theme **Lifelong Learning**. We are grateful to superintendents who have responded to our request for information about activities bringing enjoyment and challenge in their circuits.

We have experiences from Eco Churches to reading the Bible in a year: from study groups to *Songs of Praise*. We're also pleased to have information from ministers who have recently received the gift of a sabbatical from the Methodist Church.

On page 12 we have an introduction to our new District Mission Enabler, Dr Yasmin Finch and we've got information about conferences that have been attended.

Please remember this is **your** District magazine. If there's something you'd like included do get in touch via the District Office.

The next issue is due in April 2017. You will find contact details on the last page of this issue.

The Editorial Team:

Julian Pursehouse, Barbara Garwood and Alison Travis

grapevine

September 2016

Contents

Meditation	2
Julian Pursehouse	4-5
Sabbatical reflection:	
Solomon Joseph	6-7
My testimony:	
Stephen Oliver	8
Lifelong Learning -	
Emmanuel church	
Bungay	9
Thoughts from	
sabbatical: Steve Cullis	10-11
District news	12-13
Bible in a Year	14
Learning and growing	
through small groups	
at Wicken	15
Positive Working	
Together Conference	16-17
Circuit news	18-19

Cover image:

Karri Trees by Steve Cullis
(See also pages 10-11)



Lifelong Learning

Rev Julian M Pursehouse

(Chair of District)

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to commend this latest edition of *grapevine* that is inspired by the theme of Lifelong Learning. Throughout the pages of this magazine you will find lots of interesting examples of where people have contributed towards their own learning or indeed the learning of others within the Christian community.

For many centuries discipleship has been a popular way of thinking and speaking about the nature of Christian life and experience and it is one of the commonest designations in the canonical gospels for a person who is committed to following the pathway of Jesus. The root meaning of the word used for disciple in the New Testament (*mathetes*) is 'pupil / learner'. There is an explicit admission here that the life of following Jesus requires learning, development and training in the company of Jesus and those who follow him.

For the best part of three years the first disciples of Jesus accompanied him, sharing his way of life, witnessing his

(Continued on page 5)

deeds, listening to his teaching and reflecting upon the cost and privilege of following this way of life.

As we seek to be 21st century followers of Jesus, there is that same expectation that we will create time to learn, train and develop as we seek to discern what God is calling us to be and do in the world. I do hope and pray that the stories contained in this edition of *grapevine* will help you to reflect upon the learning that you require and that you will feel inspired to do something about it!

With very best regards,

Julian

THE DISTRICT HAS A NEW WEBSITE:

From 1 September 2016, a new District website will be available with the following web address:

www.eangliamethodist.org.uk

The website is still 'work-in-progress' and permissions are being set for the District website circuit administrators to add events, news, job vacancies and church and circuit updates.

Anyone may add events and news using the 'Submit an Event' or 'Submit a News Item' buttons and items will be published on the website subject to approval.

You may also contact Alison Travis, District Administrator via the 'Contact Us' button on the website or by email: eadistrict14.office@btinternet.com
telephone: 01603 625765 or by post:
District Office, Chapel Field Road, Norwich, NR2 1SD

An Extract from my Sabbatical Report

Rev Solomon Joseph

As part of my sabbatical from April to June 2016, I spent three weeks at north and east provinces of Sri Lanka. My purpose was to research the witness of the churches during and after the climax of the ethnic conflict between military forces and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam following the civil war which ended in 2009. I met church leaders, visited Christian organisations and also war widows and former militants.

The ethnic conflict that lasted for nearly three decades took about 200,000 lives including thousands of civilians. The survivors experienced significant hardship such as bereavement, poverty, hunger, high inflation on essential commodities, loss of land, homes and possessions due to looting. People's normal lives were completely shattered when the war ended. Many social problems resulted: increasing drug use, alcoholism, thug violence by the youth in former war zones; abuse of young war widows and young adults etc ..

Christians are a religious minority in the north and east provinces of Sri Lanka. During the war, people were not able to go to churches to worship. When the war was over, they wanted to build new small churches to replace those destroyed in the bombings.

Christian organisations and churches are playing a very good role to give new life and hope to the needy through their rehabilitation programmes.

Signs of hope

Sutha is a war widow and a part-time theological student. She is running a counselling programme for war widows. She gives encouragement to them to speak freely about their problems, and

(Continued on page 7)

offers friendship, fellowship and refreshment. The prime concern of the counselling is to help them to get healed of their loss and wounds.

Rev John Puviarasan opened his church campus for young children to learn in the nursery classes, play freely at the children's park, and prepare their lessons with the help of their tuition teachers. Children can move around freely in the campus to develop their skills in a welcoming and safe atmosphere.

The Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) in Jaffna houses a small community that comes under American - Ceylon Mission. Most of the students who are studying theology are young war widows. The motto of CTS is to equip them with theological education and send them back to their villages to work for the deserving people. The help offered by the world community, non-governmental and charitable organisations is making a difference, but much work remains to be done.

Rev Solomon Joseph

(Formerly in the Thetford Circuit)



A Regional Study Day

**for ministers in the East Anglia District and
Beds, Essex and Herts District**

Led by

Dr Edward Kessler MBE

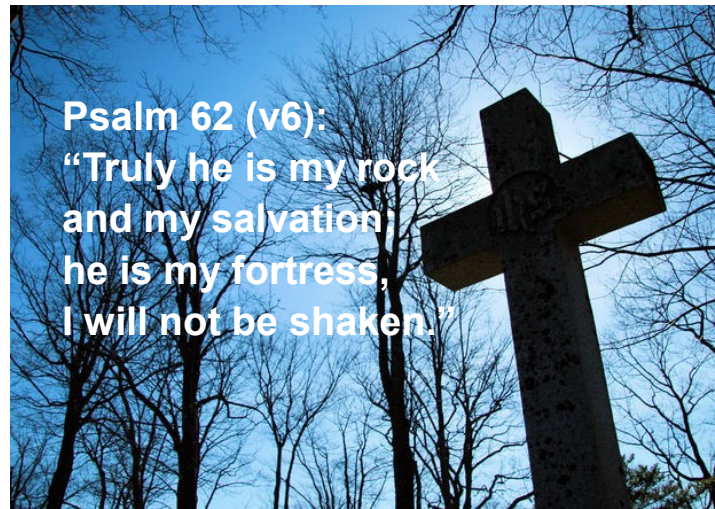
**Wed 9 November 2016 10.30 am – 3.30 pm
at Bar Hill**

Bar Hill Church, Viking Way, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB23 8TE

Places need to be booked through Eventbrite and a link can be obtained from

Alison Travis, District Administrator

Tel: 01603 625765 or email: eadistrict14.office@btinternet.com



Rev Stephen Oliver

God has been part of my life as long as I can remember. There have been good times when my faith has grown and there have been bad times when it has faltered to the point of feeling totally deserted. It is only in between those highs and lows do I truly find who God really is. I still get times when I ask why certain things happen; I still try to come to terms with being called by a God who knows my past, my weaknesses and my strengths and how he wishes me to fulfil that calling, but in the end I have come to realise that he is a God who always waits with patience for me to listen and put into practice what he requires.

I became a server in the Church in Wales when I was seven and remember trying to understand some of the things the vicar said in his sermons. One question that kept coming back was, if Cain and Abel were the first children of Adam and Eve who did they marry? Questioning was not the thing to do, and so for years I had to keep quiet until the day the Bishop of Durham's controversial words enabled me to ask my questions, and it put my faith and trust in God into a place I never thought possible.

The death of my first wife was the biggest challenge in my faith, and I failed it, but God waited; and waited; and waited. Was his waiting worthwhile? That will be a question I will have to put on the back burner until we meet face to face. But his waiting and accepting me back without fear or condemnation was the turning point to where I am now, dog collar and all.

The grace of God knows no bounds though I cannot deny we have our differences. (he is always right of course!) God continues to lead me in the direction he needs.

To be called by God into ministry is the most wonderful, exciting, frightening thing that has ever happened to me. It is a gift I will never take for granted and one which I will treasure always.

I may not always get it right, but the forgiveness offered to me by God through Jesus enables a new beginning and a new direction in my continuing journey of faith.

Rev Stephen Oliver



Lifelong Learning — Emmanuel church, Bungay

In 2006, Rev Roy Robinson asked the Church Meeting for the permission to organise a Climate Change Conference because of his personal concerns. This was held in 2007. As a direct result of this conference, Sustainable Bungay was formed and, as a church, we became more aware of the importance of doing something.

We had secondary glazing put over the windows in the sanctuary area and replaced the ancient heating system for a modern efficient one. In 2010 we fitted 220 PV panels on two of our hall roofs. The community rooms were transformed as a working model for many environmentally friendly technologies three years ago and this year, 2016, we are the first church in the country to achieve an Eco Church Silver Award.



**Rev Jacquie Evans receiving the
Eco-Church Silver Award**

At the beginning of our project we were concentrating on our buildings to reduce our carbon footprint and to encourage others to follow our lead. This led to an understanding that we all needed to change some of our habits, turning lights off, closing doors, thinking twice before turning on a heater, planning a meeting in a smaller, more appropriate room rather than the usual one which used more energy to heat. Could we buy something with less packaging or reuse what we already had?

Filling in the Eco Church Survey showed that we had travelled a long way and achieved many things but it also showed us new areas that we need to concentrate on.

Climate change and global warming are affecting the poorest peoples of the world much more severely than us, and their actions, their way of life, have caused the least impact. We need to do more to support these people, individually and as a church.

It is now time to start to help those further afield who don't have the resources to help themselves.

Rev Jacquie Evans

Thoughts from Sabbatical

Rev Steve Cullis

I'm grateful to the Methodist Church for the gift of a sabbatical. This can only be a thumbnail picture of what I achieved.

During the first part I was keen to improve my physical fitness and health so that I would be better set for continuing to minister as I entered my 50s. This included a week walking along a section of the South West Coast path (Penzance to Falmouth).

I established a routine of physical exercise which continued on my return to work and I have scheduled into my diary times for jogging/running/(staggering!)

Back in Norfolk, I did some

reading. I particularly engaged with "Simplify" by Bill Hybels which set a blueprint for focusing on the things that matter. On my return to circuit we used this as a basis for study groups in Acle.

I used travel time for exploring creative mediums. I have had an idea for a novel in my mind for some time and during this period I wrote the novel - about 40,000 words - and had some time to begin editing before returning to work for a spell.

Although I managed to keep to the fitness routine, I found it nearly impossible to return to writing for editing or completing the book.

(Continued on page 11)



Elephant Rocks

During the second part of the sabbatical I travelled to Western Australia. I used this period for both the joy of travel and to pursue the chance to do some considered photography. The quality of the light and landscape was quite extraordinary and I came home feeling that this was really one the most beautiful parts of our world that I had seen. To describe a few of the features of this remarkable landscape one would need to talk about cobalt blue skies, aqua oceans, the glossy green of eucalyptus and a bedrock of red: this is a landscape that has it all with clear light to see it by.

When I returned, I took the themes and characters of the book and turned it into a children's book. In the intervening period I had realised that this was what I had been wanting to write from the beginning. I completed it - about 42,000 words - and had time to complete a second draft. It is now being edited by my wife, who in a previous existence was a technical editor by trade. I'll consider my options as to what to do with it from there - so watch this space!

Rev Steve Cullis



Margaret River Coast



Pinnacles



Laughing Kookabورا

DISTRICT NEWS



An Introduction to our new District Mission Enabler, Dr Yasmin Finch.

As of 1 September, Yasmin Finch will be taking up the reins as the new District Mission Enabler, now Jack Lawson has retired from the position.



Yasmin brings a wealth of practical experience in mission to the role as well as an in-depth knowledge of missiology. Her undergraduate degree was completed at Cliff College, Derbyshire and she has just completed her PhD in New Testament Studies through the University of Sheffield. This research worked on the burial of Jesus in the Gospel of John from a feminist perspective. She has also worked as an occasional tutor at Wesley House, Cambridge, working one to one with students.

Yasmin has been in the East Anglia District for over 15 years; living in Papworth, Ely, Downham Market and presently St Ives. She has had the privilege of working as part of the leadership team at St Ives Methodist church where she has specifically been involved in online development as well as pioneering their Café Church and alternative worship services.

Yasmin is married to Matt Finch who is a Methodist minister. She has two young children.

Rev Alison Walker has been appointed the District Training and Development Fund Officer.



Dr Jack Lawson has not only retired from the post of District Mission Enabler, but has also retired as a member of the *grapevine* editorial team.

Rev Julian Pursehouse has taken his place on the team.

Rev Barbara Garwood has been appointed a second Deputy Chair.

We will be saying farewell to Mrs Barbara George as the District Travel Fund Administrator and hope to appoint a new person to the post at the Representative Synod on 17 September 2016.

Mr Angus Campbell has been appointed the new Hunter Rowe Administrator, following the retirement of Mr Grahame Lindsay.

BIBLE IN A YEAR

REV JENNY PATHMARAJAH

The meeting in my diary I look forward to the most every month takes place on the last Friday at 10.30 am.

I'd been reading the Bible in a year as a new year's resolution for a few years and inevitably the experience would sneak in to one or two of my sermons. Someone from church asked me if they could join me when January came. I thought I would take the opportunity over Christmas to challenge others to join me. To my shock, over 30 people asked to start. Not all of us have made it to the end, but that's ok!

When January came, the conversations on a Sunday morning were no longer about what hymns we were having or the stain on the carpet, but about the Bible and what people were reading. Others were inspired to start and catch up and, before I knew it, we had a group of people who wanted to explore the Bible.

We started meeting once a month to share our thoughts about the experience and what we read. Here we are eighteen months later,

reading the Bible through a second time and continuing to meet monthly.

The format of our gathering is informal. We start with a short prayer and then we simply take it in turns to go round and share how we are finding things. Sometimes it's "I'm so behind, but I know I'll catch up eventually" but more often than not, people share deep theological thoughts and ask profound questions without even recognising the depth. It is an open and precious space where no question is too stupid and no thought is invalid.

There is a wide range of theological opinions and our meetings have led us to have study days on the issue of biblical translation, Old Testament problems and New Testament challenges; the latter two led by Biblical scholar Rev Paul Ashby.

Rev Jenny Pathmarajah
Central Norfolk circuit
revjennypath@aol.co.uk

Learning and growing through small groups at Wicken

Julie Rash

In our small rural Cambridgeshire village, we have been running an ecumenical midweek evening home group for well over 16 years, since our first Alpha course. The people in the group have changed over time as folk move away and new folk come into the village. We welcome all denominations and those who are just seeking - we promote ourselves as an ideal place for people to come who are exploring faith, or would like some midweek nurture and fellowship.



The Bible Study Group

Rear: Sylvia, Daphne.

Front: Lynne, Keith & Georgina

We offer a diverse range of activities that explore different ways of growing closer to Christ and in fellowship with each other, including courses on a wide range of Christian themes: film nights; meals; outings; pilgrimages; themed holidays which include study, and many more. We have also led the occasional local arrangement in Wicken Methodist church. As a result of this kind of fellowship, we are used to talking about our faith to each other and it doesn't matter if our doctrine differs slightly, because we all worship the same Lord. Over the years, we have supported each other through bereavements, problems and celebrations. We have also enjoyed the company of many visiting Christians, some who have stayed for many months.

We also have an ecumenical Bible Study Group that has been meeting in the daytime for around eight years, currently at the home of a dear Christian who is house-bound through ill-health. Apart from me, here is a completely different group of people. We concentrate purely on Bible study and prayer.

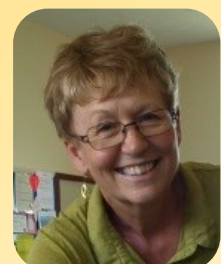
For some, these groups are their church, because they do not attend Sunday worship, either by choice or because they are unable to.

Julie Rash

Wicken Methodist church , Ely and Newmarket circuit

Tel: 01353 722008

email: Julie.rash@metronet.co.uk



Positive Working Together Conference

Rosemary Anderson

As a member of the East Anglia District Mediation Team, I was invited to take part in the *Positive Working Together* conference at Cliff College, Derbyshire, in June. There is only space here to give brief details of talks and seminars, but I'm happy to share my full reflections.

"Creative thinking can lead to the healing of relationships. Both sides may still disagree, but will have a greater understanding of each other."

Rev Samuel McBratney spoke about *Bullying: Theological Reflections and Responses*. He recommended reading René Giraud about rivalry in childhood - which can lead to rivalry and violence. He also spoke of bullying, saying that it arises from a sense of insecurity. He supported his thoughts with biblical references and reminded us that Christianity does not protect us from being human.

The Venerable Dr Justine Allain Chapman talked on *Building a Resilient Church*. She described how not all children who have had a difficult childhood are crushed by the experience; some flourish. She talked of embracing struggle and of being changed and strengthened by it, leading to resilience. There can be three steps from adversity to altruism:

- adversity
- process of strengthening
- pastoral responsibility

Alan Sharland introduced *Bullying Allegations: Letting Go Of The Ineffective "Prove and Punish" Approach*. The investigative approach towards the bully and victim dwells on the past and leaves both parties feeling bad. The facilitative approach asks questions that are not fact-finding, but serve the purpose of helping to create a different way forward more acceptable to both parties. Creative thinking can lead to the healing of relationships. Both sides may still disagree, but will have a greater understanding of each other.

(Continued on page 17)

Rev Frances Young , a theologian and Methodist minister, took the theme *Ambassadors for Christ: Being Reconciled to God and to One Another*. She divided her thoughts into three sections:

- exploring forgiveness
- problems we have in accepting those who are different
- Paul's affirmation of a new creation in Christ

We attended three workshops:

- Gary Williams spoke about *Renewing Church from the Margins?*
- Abdul Rahim works in Scotland for *Place of Hope* which recognises that in order to be effective reconcilers in

faith communities we need to develop our inner resilience.

- Rev Inderjit Bhogal led a Bible study on Mark 7:24-30 about Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman. We reflected on issues such as ethnicity, faith and identity, and thought about what lessons we can draw from the story for Christian discipleship.

Since writing this we know the result of the EU referendum. Mediation and reconciliation will be important to our national thinking. We will need to hold respect and dignity in our minds towards those who have opposite views to our own.

Rosemary Anderson

grapevine

is available in large print
and on CD (audio) on request

Please ring the office:

01603 625765

or tell your church distributor if
you require these.

THURSFORD SONGS OF PRAISE 2016

The Thursford Collection was full of eager worshippers for the 2016 Songs of Praise.

We welcomed our District Chair, the Rev Julian Pursehouse, as our preacher, together with Julie Edmunds, a volunteer worker with the East Anglian Air Ambulance (EAAA), our chosen charity.

The music was once again by the Fakenham Town Band, under the direction of Chris Brown, and Danny Wakefield at the console of the museum's Wurlitzer organ.



Possibly the most talked about aspects of the afternoon was in fact the quietest! For the first time, thanks to the skills of Rev Anne Richardson, the service was offered in British Sign Language, enabling the deaf community to play a much fuller part in the proceedings. It was wonderful and fascinating to watch the 'singing by signing'.

We have been able to donate in excess of £3,500 to the work of the EAAA, which is, coincidentally, almost the amount which Julie told us is needed to keep the service operating for one day. That total will be enhanced, as around £1,500 was gift aided. which means that EAAA should be able to claim around £400 by this means.

The Thursford Collection, to whom we are greatly thankful, have kindly invited us back again next year on Sunday 2 April, at 3.00 pm. Further details will be available later in the year.

Stephen Lynn

[Photograph reprinted with permission from Archant Community Media Ltd.]

Kilvert's Diary without Bridget Jones

People who keep a personal diary seldom want to see it published for others to read! Francis Kilvert's diary is established as a minor classic as it records his years as a Victorian Clergyman on the Welsh Borders and Wiltshire countryside. Short extracts were read out by several people on a Rural Church Day held in May at Orwell Methodist church in Cambridgeshire. Period hymns were chosen from around the year 1870 so that those gathered from around the circuit could glimpse the pastoral ministry of the past. It enabled a clear contrast to be seen with current ministry and church life in the present.

If you have never browsed the pages of Kilvert's Diary you are missing out on a literary treat and a breeze of rural nostalgia. Take a look!

Rev Chris White

Formerly minister of Orwell Methodist, now minister at Thetford

The Bowthorpe Road Chinese Methodist church in Norwich celebrated its 18th birthday on 18 July 2016



The singers leading worship



Sharing stories of God working in their lives

Local Preachers Long Service Awards

Thank you to circuits who have sent information about preachers who have received long service awards at local services. We celebrate their ministry.

Thetford, Diss and Mildenhall

Mrs Irene Sayer	40 years
Mr Roy Sayer	40 years

The celebration was a unique event because it is unusual for a husband and wife to qualify as local preachers and their original tutor, Mr Ken Burrows, was able to give the address.

St Neots and Huntingdon

Mrs June Vivian	70 years
Mr Geoff Glenn	60 years
Mr John Green	40 years
Mrs Barbara Spencer	25+ years
Deacon Sue Roberts	25 years
Mr John Bridge	25 years
Mr Brian Newell	25 years

Contributions

Please send your letters, good news and
beautiful photographs for the
April 2017 issue of *grapevine* by
Wednesday 1 February 2017 to:

eagrapevine@gmail.com

or

'grapevine', District Office
Chapel Field Road Methodist Church
Norwich, NR2 1SD

District Office: 01603 625765

Please send short items in plain or rich text format.

*Photos should be sent electronically in .jpg only, separately
from the text.*

We cannot guarantee inclusion of contributions.