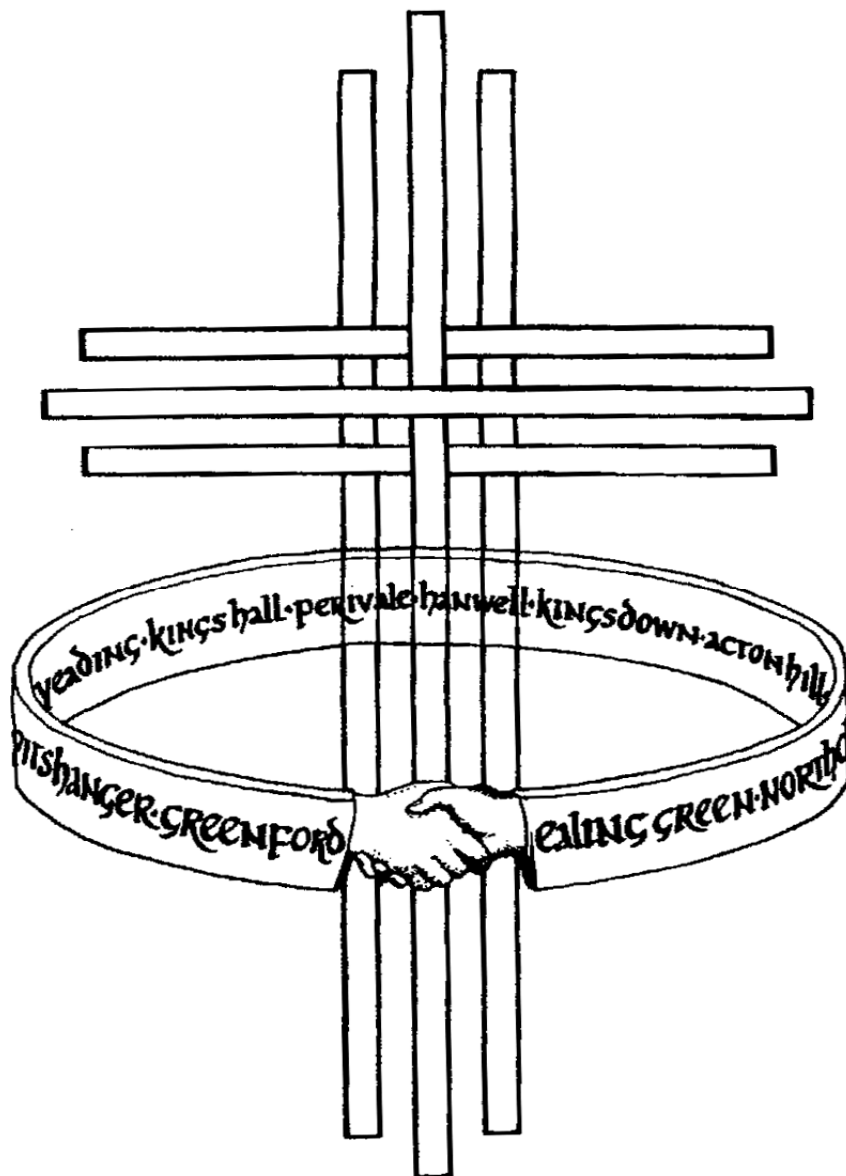


# In-touch

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No 59

March - May 2012



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The magazine for *all* the Ealing Trinity Circuit.

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**Circuit website**  
**[www.ealingtrinity.org.uk](http://www.ealingtrinity.org.uk)**

*Front Cover designed by Marion Narain*

## From the (Acting) Superintendent

Greetings, friends! It has been an autumn and winter of hard work behind the scenes in the circuit, as our Superintendent Michaela has begun shadowing to prepare for her rôle as Chair of London District, our Circuit Stewards and staff have negotiated stationing, and more than one church has prepared for major change to come. Additionally we have been working on the administrative preparation for the sale of Moullin House, and discerning next steps for the building at King's Hall. Between 12th December and 12th March Michaela is on sabbatical, so Kip Bennett is looking after the King's Hall congregations, Roger looking after Hanwell, and I am acting as Superintendent.

As many will know, we have been blessed to match with four new ministers who will begin in the Circuit next September, subject to Conference in July. Deacon Richard Goldstraw will be based in Southall, while Presbyters Peter Catford and Chrissie Howe will have pastoral charge of Kingsdown/Hanwell, and Greenford/Northolt/King's Hall respectively. Probationer Presbyter Suva Catford will be based at Perivale and Pitshanger as she enters Circuit for the first time, and I will be superintendent as well as having charge of Ealing Green and Acton Hill. We will miss the support of David Jenkins at Acton Hill, who retires over the Summer. We are not going to be working rigidly in sections, however, so churches can expect to benefit from each other's mission more and more vs. isolation – each minister will work in their strength across the Circuit, (as I have in the past two years with training and discipleship) so we will all get to see more of each other. Have a read of Peter Chadburn's reflections as Senior Circuit Steward (see p7), and give thanks to God for our growth and development!

Also this Autumn, Acton Hill welcomed me as their new minister, in conjunction with David Jenkins for this 12 months, and took the risky decision to move the service time to 9.30am for an experimental six months. The congregation is also adding a 'Sunday supplement' after the earlier worship to provide regular Bible study, songs of praise, teaching, and prayer, and committed to a goal of 10% membership growth this year. The new pattern will begin at Lent, 26th February so please pray for the church as it gears up for change.

As Kingsdown is coming to the end of its lengthy building project, Ealing Green is beginning: both undertaken with celebration. Each of our buildings should be a platform for the mission of the whole Circuit, as we seek to serve our communities. The whole Circuit, and King's Hall church particularly, will be saying goodbye to Peter and Christine Green, and Catherine, and we will also give thanks for the changing ministry of local preachers Graham Preedy and David Groves who will no longer take planned services, as we present Anita Oji with her 40 years' long service certificate.

But these headlines only begin to scratch the surface of the mission life of our churches, with the build up to Olympics and involvement with ecumenical partners and gentle nurture of the weekly diet of worship and service. There will be false

starts and disagreements, a sure sign of life and growth. But we will continue to worship and serve faithfully, as our God is faithful.

We are here not for ourselves, but to work for the kingdom of God. It has been an encouraging and sacrificial year, and I take great pleasure in serving alongside you all.

*Every Blessing, Jen*

PS The eagle-eyed will note that I was away teaching with the Cliff College International Training Centre in Nigeria this January for three weeks: this is a connexionally (national) funded programme working in partnership with Methodist Church Nigeria, offering a two year diploma in applied mission and evangelism for mid-career ministers. With the strikes and violence, it was an interesting and difficult trip, but well worth it. My own contribution this year was a course on the theology of church engagement with those affected by HIV/AIDS. We went back to basics in a study of salvation, sin, and the mission of the church to work against stigma and for healthful living. Never has it been more important for the churches to be part of good civic cohesion as now, in Nigeria, and Methodism is at the heart of the effort. It was also a pleasure to run into Keji and Akin Phillips coming back from Lagos, and in Port Harcourt, Dr. Hashim Gibrill, the US son of Dulcie, a deceased member of Acton Hill. It is a small world, and this Circuit's extended family stretches far!

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## **New Staff Team**

As you will all know, Rev Michaela Youngson, Rev Kip Bennett and Rev Roger Dunlop will all be leaving our Circuit this Summer – Michaela to become one of chairs of the London District, Roger to another church in northwest London, and Kip, as Methodists express it, will be 'sitting down' (ie retiring). Rev Jen Smith will be taking over as superintendent and she will be joined by Rev Peter Catford and his wife Suva, who will be a Probationer in the Circuit, Rev Chrissie Howe and Deacon Richard Goldstraw. Peter will have oversight of Kingsdown and Hanwell whilst Suva will have Pitshanger and Perivale. Christine will have oversight of Greenford and Northolt and pastoral charge of King's Hall. Richard will have oversight of King's Hall.

The new team will work closely together so that the strengths of each minister can be deployed across the Circuit rather than primarily just in their 'sections' as has been the case until now. This means we should see more of each member of the team and, with their support come closer together as a Circuit.

# London District Chairs' New Year Message

*Rev Ermal Kirby, Rev Stuart Jordan, Rev Jenny Impey*

For good reasons many of us will mark the beginning of 2012 by sharing in a Covenant service - a recital of God's faithfulness and a re-dedication of the calling we have received. For the District staff the new year will immediately be marked by change and new ways of working, which will invite us to review what we as a team are particularly being called to be and do to further the District vision.

Early in the new year the MEDAL 2012 programme, including the significant residential Conference in February, will encourage lay leaders to reflect on their calling and the opportunities they have - or might need to create! - to be involved in the mission of churches and Circuits across the District.

As the year progresses the new Ministerial Development Review will be introduced across the connexion, when the focus will again be on our sense of call and on ways in which that can be enhanced, supported and more fully expressed in local contexts.

Meanwhile the calling of the whole church to embody good news for our local communities will doubtless be further challenged by the impact of economic policies on the lives of local people, not least on the most vulnerable – even as preparations for the Olympics come to a head and impact on the city as whole, bringing unique opportunities for engagement.

Even from what we already know, we can confidently anticipate that 2012 is likely to be an exciting and demanding year for us all! It may well be a year in which our calling and awareness of being a covenant people is well to the fore.

So let's pray that it might also be a year in which our sense of common purpose and commitment is renewed and upheld by an awareness of God's faithful and enduring love – beginning with that spine-tingling affirmation from the Covenant service itself:

**'We are no longer our own but yours'.**

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## Colin Pratt

Late last year we received the sad news that Colin Pratt died suddenly at his home in France on 13<sup>th</sup> December. Many of us will remember Colin as warden of Moullin House from 1987 until his retirement in 2005. Colin was an Anglican Lay Reader at St Peter's in Ealing and also preached at churches in the Ealing Trinity Circuit. On his retirement as warden of Moullin, Colin moved to live at Parranquet in southwest France.

## Circuit Lent Course 2012: 'Ways of Praying'

*'Prayer is not about overcoming God's reluctance, but about taking hold of God's willingness...'*

Why not refresh your prayer life preparing for Easter, or try new ways with prayer? Come try out Christian traditions of prayer and spirituality for our present day, explore what prayer is (and is not) and feed your relationship with God. Or just take a chance to get to know people from around the Circuit, be quiet and explore in friendly space. Led by Circuit ministers and friends.

***No experience necessary: All Welcome.***

### Ways of Praying...

28 <sup>th</sup> Feb/1 <sup>st</sup> March	Benedictine
6 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> March	Celtic
13 <sup>th</sup> /15 <sup>th</sup> March	Ignatian
20 <sup>th</sup> March	Taizé
22 <sup>nd</sup> March	Anglican
27 <sup>th</sup> /29 <sup>th</sup> March	Charismatic

The group will meet on Tuesday nights at Greenford Church in the Parlour at 8.00pm - 9.30pm, repeated Thursday mornings at Pitshanger Church at 10.00am - 11.30am followed by Pitshanger's usual prayer meeting at 11.45am, which you will also be welcome to attend.

All welcome to either session each week, and dropping in for one or two is fine. There is no childcare, but children are welcome and young people may also participate.

For more information, contact Rev Jen Smith on 020 8579 8114 or [jennifer.methodist@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jennifer.methodist@yahoo.co.uk).

*'Pray as you can, not as you cannot...'*

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## Christian Aid Week

Christian Aid week this year is **13<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> May** and many of you will be out collecting – door-to-door, shaking collecting tins at strategic locations, joining in the sponsored walks etc. I don't have details of the total collected last year by every church in the Circuit to hand, but those which are part of Christian Aid's Ealing area (Ealing Green, Greenford, Hanwell, Kingsdown and Pitshanger) raised £10,023.

## **Open for Mission- Reflections of the Senior Circuit Steward.**

*Peter Chadburn, Senior Circuit Steward*

Recently as Circuit Stewards we have had a busy time organising the recruitment of new ministers and at times it has been stressful, but overall these are exciting times ahead for the circuit. So we have Chrissie Howe, Peter and Suva Catford as our new presbyters and also a Deacon, Richard Goldstraw who will all join us in September, and Jen Smith as Superintendent. The process was an ordeal as you feel great responsibility and after a false start we got going and as things fell into place it just felt that we had been blessed with potentially a really good team with great synergy. With our desire to have a 'Team Ministry' where talents are used in the most appropriate place, things are looking good. So, if a new minister has a particular talent then that would be used for the benefit of all the churches rather than just the one they are assigned to. Why try and do what someone else does better. The Team will first of all get to know their congregations and then will together develop how best to use their talents and gifts. The recruitment of lay workers will no doubt take place as a result.

Also, we will have a turnover of Circuit Stewards with 3 of us due to finish in September. So, we are proposing to get our new stewards in place in March so that we can have a bit of an overlap. This will help the momentum of change within the circuit to be kept up. It would not be clever having a Policy Meeting in October with only 2 of the current people there!! I have volunteered to stay on till March 2013 to help with that.

So what do we do as Stewards? It takes a while to get your head around it all, but essentially we have to think through the changes and think of not just our own opinions but also feedback from different areas. So at times we may have to throw up ideas to see whether there is any mileage in them. We also have to deal with the Stationing process which, whilst not perfect has a good deal of common sense and symmetry about it. We can get asked questions about why can't a Church choose their own minister. However whilst we will put forward details of the kind of ministers our Circuit feels are right for certain posts, the big matchmaking committee will look at the overall picture within Methodism and will make tough choices to place people in positions of need. Overall there are no guarantees when you have a shortage of ministers. So this year we have done well, and others will not be so lucky. You feel a responsibility and, in a sense, the thought and prayer that goes into the role is the big bit. We also go to Central Hall for training and discussion. So ideas are floated to the stewards and we discuss aspects that are then fed back into overall Policy development.

So as someone who is not a lifelong Methodist but was brought into the Church by my late Kathy, I really do see the value and the common sense of our rebel Church. Kathy's dissertation was about Wesley and he certainly walked the path of Jesus. A Church that has stood up for many good things over the years is worth serving.

It has all been very interesting and I feel that the Church has a crucial role over the next few years as people perhaps question why they have chased the materialistic carrot over the past 30 odd years. So in March 2013 I will drop off and by then we will be a circuit in full flow. So, for me then hopefully some travel and also a start on some study.

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## **Graham Preedy**

*Gerald Barton - Editor*

Our longest serving Local Preacher, Graham Preedy decided just before Christmas that the time had come for him to stand down from preaching. Recognised as a Local Preacher in 1950, Graham has served for 61 years during which time he has conducted something like 1,200 services.

Graham is a life-long member of Greenford Church and his journey to becoming a Local Preacher started during the 1940's in their Sunday Night Fellowship. He says that, believe or not, in those days he was very quiet and seldom said anything in the group's meetings. That is, until someone said something he really disagreed with, said so and hasn't stopped talking since!

Graham's 'call to preach', however really dates from 1946 when he came into contact with the Order of Christian Witness, which had been founded by Donald Soper as the 'Kingsway Preachers' during the Second World War. This Order mobilised young people under Soper's leadership for outdoor preaching – teams of young people would go to a town, stay in church halls and go out to preach the Christian gospel to the townspeople. Graham was in a group of 13 who went from Greenford to hold outdoor meetings in Plymouth. Towards the end of one meeting, Graham felt he had something to say, climbed on the chair they were using as a 'pulpit', said about four sentences and forgot the rest despite having prepared it beforehand! However, it was after that that his minister suggested he might consider becoming a Local Preacher.

Graham studied by correspondence course and was tutored by Rev Clive Thexton. When it came to his oral exam, during which questions are asked of prospective preachers about their course and their call to preach, Graham felt he responded 'hopelessly'. However, he must have done better than he thought as he passed to become a qualified preacher. He soon learnt about being mindful of his appointments, however. His recognition service was being held at the Ealing Broadway Church, where Mary Bryant was also being recognised. That evening, as he was clearing out his desk drawers, he looked at his diary and suddenly realised he should have been at his recognition service and no longer had time to get there. The following morning he made his profuse apologies to the Superintendent Minister who fortunately, was 'very nice about it'.



Graham's first service was at South Acton Church and about 8 of his friends went along to support him. At the end of the service they lined up outside shouting 'you see, you see!' – he'd used the phrase no less than 24 times during his sermon. He never said it again!

Over the years, Graham has seen many changes – the change from addressing God as 'thee' to 'you', which to begin with took a bit of getting used to; the change from the King James version of the Bible to modern translations such as the Good News Bible and the NIV, which Graham feels are more easily understood; new songs and hymns with modern words and music; smaller congregations, although Graham says it's always been good to hear Methodists sing heartily; shorter sermons – down from 25 – 30 minutes to about 20. One thing that hasn't changed however, is what people say to the preacher after the service. Generally, they say 'thank you for a nice service'. On one occasion, however after a service at Ealing Green one man spoke to him and tore his sermon to shreds, after which he apologised. Graham recalls saying, 'That's quite all right, if only more people did that, it would be very helpful.'

Not surprisingly, Graham says he will miss preaching. However, he feels this is the right time to stop, partly because he can only take evening services of which there are now only two in the Circuit, partly for health reasons, and partly because he doesn't want people to feel he's gone on too long. Graham will, however continue teaching in Greenford's Sunday School in which he's clocked up a phenomenal 70 years service.

I'm sure you'll join me in offering our heart-felt thanks to Graham for all his years of faithful service as a Local Preacher.

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## **David Groves**

At the end of January, David Groves also decided that he should stand down as a Local Preacher. As many people in the Circuit will know, David has suffered from ill-health in recent years and he has concluded that he can no longer continue. David was 'recognised' as a Local Preacher in 1994 and has served about 17 years. Our thanks go to David for his service to our churches.

The opportunity will be taken at the next Circuit Service to celebrate both David's and Graham Preedy's service as Local Preachers. We will also celebrate Anita Oji's 40 years of service – she was recognised in 1971 so the anniversary was, in fact last year. Finally, just in case anyone gets a tad confused, Anita is, of course continuing as a Local Preacher.

## Lendwithcare – One Year On

*Gerald Barton, Editor*

You may recall that a while ago I wrote about becoming an ‘international microfinancier’ with Lendwithcare (in In-touch No 56 to be precise). It’s now a year since I signed up, so I thought I’d let you all know how things have progressed. First of all, let me remind you what microfinance is all about.

Microfinance is about lending small amounts of money to people who need to borrow small amounts of money to start, extend or continue small-scale businesses in the developing world, particularly where poor people would otherwise have no access to financial services. In addition to providing small loans, microfinance also includes the provision of other basic financial services such as savings, money transfer and insurance for poor people. Improving access to such services allows poor and low-income people to finance income-generating activities, build assets, stabilise consumption and protect against risks. Microfinance is now widely recognised as a powerful solution to alleviating poverty among the working poor.

I started out with a portfolio of four loans which rapidly grew to six. Since then, I’ve added 16 more bringing the total of loans I’ve made to 22, although 5 are now fully paid back. Of the loans I’ve made, 6 are in Cambodia, 7 in the Philippines, 6 in Togo and 3 in Bosnia. Most (11) are small traders running market stalls or small shops, 4 are in farming, 2 in basket production, one does vehicle repairs, another runs an internet café, one a restaurant, one is a welder and one does embroidery and tailoring. At the start, I put in one slug of money and have re-lent the repayments as they’ve come in. The total amount I’ve lent is now more almost 3 times the initial amount I put in and the amount repaid is about 80% more as well. So, as you can see the money I put in at the start is recycling nicely to benefit more small entrepreneurs as time goes by.

All of ‘my’ entrepreneurs have been paying back their loans. Some did miss payments at the start of their payback periods, but all have since kept up their repayments. Thus far, none of my loans has gone bad so I haven’t ‘lost’ any money.

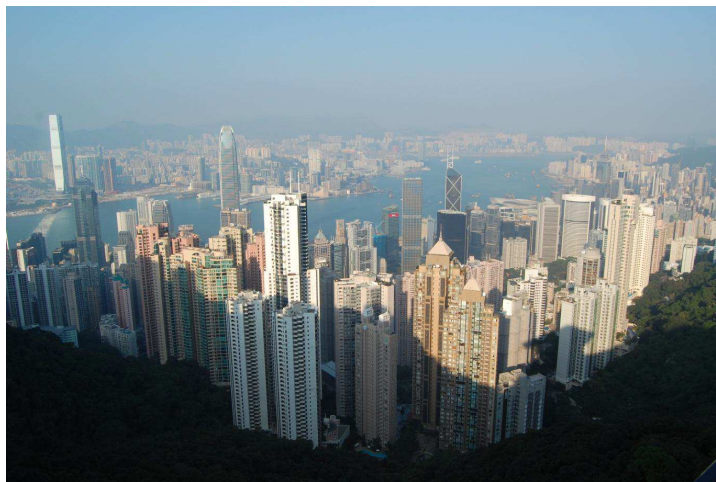
I must admit I quite enjoy the monthly process of seeing how much credit I’ve got when repayments come in and deciding which entrepreneurs I’m going to add to my portfolio of loans. It’s good to know that a small amount of money makes a big difference to these people, helping them build better lives for themselves and their families. Also, the more successful they are, the more goods and services they will buy from other people. Thus each loan supports a network of people beyond the immediate recipient.

Have a look at Lendwithcare’s website ([www.lendwithcare.org](http://www.lendwithcare.org)) and think about it. You don’t have to lend large amounts – you can start with just £15.00 if you wish. So, why not give it a go?

# London District Chairs' Visit to Hong Kong

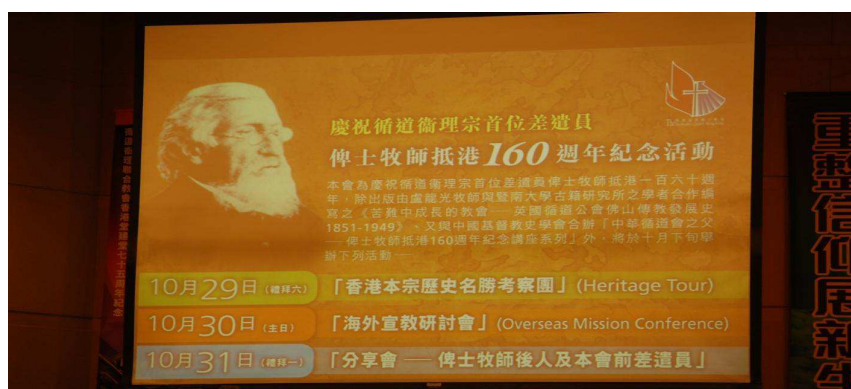
*From the London District Website*

From 26th October – 2nd November Jenny and Stuart were part of a group of British and American Methodists invited to share in a programme of celebration and consultation hosted by the Methodist Church of Hong Kong at the instigation of its President, the Revd Prof Lung-kwong Lo. Revds Sue Keegan von Allmen and Nick Oborski (Superintendents of Circuits in



partnership with Chinese congregations at King's Cross and Epsom) were also present from the District, as were Alan Jameson, circuit steward of the Sutton Circuit and his wife Ann, along with Revd Nick Skelding (Harrow & Hillingdon) - the last British Methodist Mission Partner in Hong Kong from 1982-1987.

The occasion was the 160th Anniversary of the founding of the Methodist Church in Hong Kong by George Piercy. Originally from Pickering in Yorkshire, Piercy arrived as a missionary in 1851 and spent 31 years in China, before returning to London to spend another 31 years working



among Chinese sailors in the East End! The church he helped found now has 16,000 members gathered in 24 congregations and served by as many ministers. Piercy's two-stage ministry framed the whole visit – which both celebrated the missionary heritage of the Hong Kong Church (gathering latter-day members of the Piercy family alongside ex-missionaries from both British and United Methodist origins), and engaged with the significant ministry of the 13 Methodist Chinese congregations that have been planted and are thriving throughout the UK.

Apart from many conversations in the course of the week, there were visits to see a number of the Church's social and community projects - mission, education and welfare being the three substantial foundations of the church's missionary past and current self-understanding; opportunity to preach among the Sunday congregations and a trip to Macau - a parallel but very different ex-Portuguese colony some 50 miles away from Hong Kong which was the earliest European entry-point to China but is now developing around its dubious privilege as China's only territory where gambling is legal.

The visit inevitably generated many impressions and causes for reflection which will need to be processed in due course. Among them:

- The oft-experienced privilege of being part of a world church in which there is so much (of both similarity and difference) to share
- The link between heritage and mission which is so valued by the Hong Kong church and which our own Methodist heritage centres are so valiantly seeking to reclaim in the UK
- The naturally holistic understanding of mission (incorporating education and welfare) which seems to permeate the church's life in Hong Kong
- The intentional levels of committed discipleship - which for example require those who wish to tithe to apply for the privilege, accept pastoral conversation about the significance of what they are doing and regularly hand-over their contributions in person (rather than by Banker's Order !) – and seem to contrast so often with our concern to lower the bar of commitment
- The work of the International (English-speaking) Congregation where Revd Howard Mellor has recently been appointed and which has among its multiple congregations some 700-800 domestic workers from the Philippines as well as members from the business and diplomatic communities.
- The need to ensure that the work of the Chinese congregations throughout the UK is as well supported and encouraged as it undoubtedly deserves to be.

Of all this, perhaps, more anon!

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## Let's Say Grace

*Ray Garnett, Hanwell*

How often have you ever wondered what you should say as a **Grace** before having a meal and how often has it been composed with the same or similar words because you can't think of something "different"?

It was about a year ago when I received an email around Burn's Night which offered a Grace he hadn't heard before – the *Selkirk Grace*. Having caught my imagination, I wondered how many other "Graces" may be around that were just as thoughtful, catchy and appealing and easily recalled because of their shortness prior to a meal. Following the idea through, I thought that it may be a good idea for people to contribute to a list of Graces that I would be happy to publish on Hanwell's Church website. If lots were forthcoming then it could even be turned into a small publication!

I am therefore now collecting any that you may have come across or preferably that you may wish to write. If you would like to add to those I already have, then take a

look at this web page - [www.hanwellmethodist.info/grace.html](http://www.hanwellmethodist.info/grace.html) to see the sort of thing I would like and the rules to follow. (I am webmaster for the Hanwell Methodist site). If you would like to send me a contribution for publication on the website then you can email it to me at [ray@hanwellmethodist.info](mailto:ray@hanwellmethodist.info).

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## Methodist Women in Britain

*Blossom Jackson*



The **Daffodil Day Service** in this Centenary Year of Westminster Central Hall will take place on

**Monday 5th March at 2.00 pm.** The hall has been refurbished and the organ has been back in use for a few months after major work, with illumination! So, it's appropriate that this year's theme is 'In Praise of Music'. The service should prove not only memorable but filled with praise and worship. *If you wish to attend you are advised to get to Central Hall early in order to secure seats.*

**Craft Day, 10th March** - the annual Women's Network Craft Day will take Place at Christ Church Methodist Church which is in Redford Way, Belmont Rd, Uxbridge UB8 1SZ. This year there are some new and interesting workshops. If you'd like to go along, please see your local church MWiB rep or look for and application forms on your church notice board.

The annual interdenominational **Women's World Day of Prayer** service, for the Ealing group of churches, will take place on **Friday 2nd March** at Haven Green Baptist Church at 2.00pm. This service has been prepared by the women Of Malaysia and the theme for this year is '**Together in Prayer**'.

The **Athlete Family Homestay** programme was launched in November 2011. Anyone who wishes to participate as hosts in the programme can now register online at [www.morethangold.org.uk](http://www.morethangold.org.uk) (and follow the links from 'Hospitality'). Once completed, potential hosts will receive confirmation of their registration. If you intend to register, note that you will need to register the name of your church leader as part of the process. It would therefore be wise to get your minister's consent before entering his/her name. Should all the necessary criteria be met, a follow- up visit will be arranged to confirm all the details entered in the registration process. Matching of guests to hosts will take place by about May, by which time the athletes taking part in the Olympics will have been confirmed. In the meantime, I will keep people informed about developments. Please remember that More than Gold will also need a number of volunteers for other activities. For more detailed information, visit the More than Gold website ([www.morethangold.org.uk](http://www.morethangold.org.uk)).

# Statistics for Mission

*Gerald Barton, Editor*

Every year during October, the Methodist Church asks every church in the Connexion to provide a range of information about itself including how many people attended services during the month, its membership, whether it has 'fresh expressions' and so forth. The information gets collated and analysed by the research department of the Connexional Team. The results are published annually on the Church website and every three years a report is submitted to the Methodist Conference. The purpose of all this is to enable and encourage informed conversations, strategic thinking and mission and planning for everyone in the Methodist Church.

I had a browse through the summary for 2010 which you can find on the Church website just to get a feel for how British Methodism looks 'top down'. Methodism in this country has 5,162 church communities organised into 467 Circuits and 31 Districts. A bit under half (44%) of church communities are in rural areas, 23% are in suburban neighbourhoods, 20% in small towns, 6% in inner city areas, 5% on council estates and just 2% in city centres. Churches vary in size with some having as few as 10 members whilst the biggest has 549 – that's not far off as big as the whole of Ealing Trinity Circuit. The average is about 46 members.

Total membership including the 540 Local Ecumenical Partnerships in which Methodists are involved was 238,000 in 2010. In common with other mainstream denominations, membership has been declining over the years and was 6% lower in 2010 than 2008. Sunday adult attendance in October 2010 totalled 181,000, equivalent to about 76% of membership.

In 2009 and 2010 125 churches (about 2.4% of the total) reported that they run or host worship or fellowship in languages other than English or Welsh. Around a quarter of these were in the London District. The most frequent languages were Zimbabwean/Shona, French, Korean and Punjabi. Interestingly, several churches host services using British Sign Language.

About 14% of churches have set up 'fresh expressions' of church. These are groups which meet regularly and are focussed on people who are not (yet) members of any church. Most (72%) of these groups were reported as meeting in church premises, although 8% meet in people's homes, 7% in cafés and 2% in pubs. This, of course is about taking the church to the people rather than expecting the people to come to the church. At the moment, Ealing Trinity doesn't have any 'fresh expressions' like these.

That's taken you on a brief canter through some of the information available for the Methodist Church as a whole in 2010. What about Ealing Trinity? Here's a few brief indicators from the 2011 October Count.

In total Ealing Trinity had 565 members, which includes all members Methodist, URC and joint at Acton Hill and Ealing Green. Average weekly adult attendance was 445 across the Circuit and weekly child attendance was 100. The following table gives a breakdown by church. Incidentally, because these are averages there are a few ‘funnies’ particularly in the average child attendance when parade services are taken into account – eg at Pitshanger all the children (28) came on parade Sunday which gives an average of 7 per week, although they all came on the one day.

	<b>Members</b>	<b>Average Weekly Adult Attendance</b>	<b>Average Weekly Child Attendance</b>	<b>Combined Average Weekly Attendance</b>
Acton Hill	69	50	9	59
Ealing Green	65	54	3	58
Greenford	97	92	23	115
Hanwell	63	59	16	74
Kingsdown	94	67	15	82
King’s Hall am	27	17	1	18
King’s Hall pm	70	36	12	48
Northolt	44	42	14	55
Perivale	12	9	2	11
Pitshanger	24	19	7	26
<b>Circuit Total</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>545</b>

*Nb Some errors due to rounding*

This table gives a snapshot for the last three years for the Circuit as a whole. Whilst, generally speaking our numbers have been slipping, the number of children has bounced around somewhat. The explanation for this is unclear, but reflects experience at a number of our churches.

	<b>Members</b>	<b>Average Weekly Adult Attendance</b>	<b>Average Weekly Child Attendance</b>	<b>Combined Average Weekly Attendance</b>
<b>2009</b>	590	466	102	568
<b>2010</b>	588	449	84	532
<b>2011</b>	565	445	100	544

The 2011 Count also asked some questions about the age and gender breakdown of our adult congregations. The results of these are unsurprising. About  $\frac{2}{3}$  of our adult congregations are female and we’re rather heavily slanted towards the 40-65 and 65-80 age groups compared to the UK adult population as a whole. Only 10% of our adults are in the 20-40 age group compared to 38% in the UK population. Again, that’s unsurprising but is somewhat concerning for the future.

That gives a snapshot of our Circuit and the Methodist Church as a whole. Numbers aren’t everything, of course, but they do give an indication of how we stand.

# Escaping Slavery - the 'Underground Railroad'

*Gerald Barton, Editor*

It would be a very unusual person, at least in London who did not know what an underground railroad (or railway) is. We are very used to the 'Tube' and many of us are perhaps only too familiar with it as a means of getting to and from work. If you were a slave on a cotton or tobacco plantation in the United States in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, it would have an entirely different connotation. Although for them the Underground Railroad was neither underground nor a railroad, it did represent the routes you might take from slavery to freedom.

The 'Underground Railroad' is a term used to refer to all the routes slaves might take in trying to escape to freedom. Specifically it refers to a covert network of people and places that assisted fugitive slaves as they escaped from slavery in the Southern states. This was not a tightly defined organisation, but rather a loose network of people ready and willing to assist escaping slaves and help them on their way to freedom. Much of the activity took place along the Ohio River which marked the boundary between the slave states of the south and the northern states that had abolished slavery. In all, it is estimated that more than 100,000 slaves sought freedom through the Underground Railroad in the decades leading up to the American Civil War.

Escaping slavery was not simply a matter of getting across the Ohio River into a state where slavery had been abolished. Things weren't that simple. When the US Constitution was drawn up, one of its compromises was that it recognised the legitimacy of slavery in those states where it was practiced. Whilst the northern states all abolished slavery in the decades following independence, they nevertheless had to recognise it as part of the legal fabric of the Southern states. In addition, federal law required states to facilitate the capture and return of fugitive slaves to their owners. In 1850 the Fugitive Slave Act strengthened these laws by making it a federal offence to assist or help hide fugitive slaves, and all Underground Railroad activity became subject to six months in prison and a \$1,000 fine. That said, in principle if a slave owner took slaves into a non-slave state, his slaves could automatically claim their freedom. This right was, however limited by so-called 'transit rights'. These allowed slave owners the right to retain their slaves when taken into a non-slave state provided they were only there for a short time.

These issues battled back and forth through the courts as arguments were placed to increase, or limit, the rights of slaves taken or escaping into non-slave states. Congress and the presidency was however, dominated by the Southern states. States' level of representation in the House of Representatives was determined in part by their populations, and Southern states included 60% of their slaves in their totals. This tipped the balance in their favour so much so that until the American Civil War only four presidents were provided by non-slave states. In fact, much of the anti-slavery activity prior to the Civil War was about inhibiting its spread. At the time, territories in the mid-west and beyond were being opened up. In addition the United States acquired significant new territory from Mexico during the US-Mexican



War of 1846-48, as a result of which Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming were added to the Union. Northern campaigners sought to stop slavery spreading into territories where it had not featured before. In part, this reflected moral objections to slavery, but also a fear that a spread of slavery would have economic consequences for non-slave states - that it would undercut non-slave labour and would give slave states an unfair competitive advantage.

It's also worth noting that whilst northern states had abolished slavery, that did not mean they conferred equal rights on 'free blacks' Far from it. In fact, being free did not generally confer anything like equal rights on black people. Most states sought to limit their black populations including making it illegal for black people to move from one state to another to settle. Allied to campaigns to abolish slavery, was the idea of colonisation - that freed slaves should be encouraged, or even required, to return to Africa or move to Caribbean islands or colonies in Central America rather than remain in the United States. Beginning in 1820, the American Colonization Society began helping freed slaves to settle in what subsequently became Liberia on the west coast of Africa. At the time even most abolitionists thought that the United States should be a 'white' nation that had no real place for free black people. Indeed, in a notorious Supreme Court decision in 1857 it was held that the framers of the US Constitution had had no intention of conferring citizenship on anyone other than 'white' people. Probably even most abolitionists took the view that although the Declaration of Independence conferred on black people the right to '*life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*', it did confer civil or political rights – at the time women did not, after all have 'political rights'. Of course, the Southern states took the view that the 'right to property in slaves' took precedence over any rights black people might claim.

Escaping to freedom, then was not simply a matter of crossing the Ohio River and getting into a non-slave state. 'Freedom' was only found when fugitive slaves had gone much further. Whilst some settled in northern cities, many aimed to go as far as Canada. Slavery was illegal in Canada and there were no laws in place protecting slave owners or slave catchers. It was by far the safest place a fugitive slave could be. The province of Ontario had the largest population of free slaves, a number estimated at around 17,000. That said, some fugitive slaves escaped south or west often into areas that were controlled by Mexico at the time.

The term 'Underground Railroad' can make it seem like there was a well-organised set up helping fugitive slaves. Whilst many people were involved in helping escaping slaves, white abolitionists as well as former slaves, it was rather loosely organised. Escaping slaves often had no help or guidance from anyone throughout the majority of their journey. While it is a common belief that white Northerners were going into the South and bringing slaves from the farms and plantations into the North, the truth is that most enslaved individuals left on their own. When escaping slaves did have assistance, the aid they received varied from being given a place to rest in barns and sheds to being provided with a small amount of food and sent on to the next location. Those seeking freedom would have had to place a good deal

of trust in the people assisting them, for at any moment their safety could be compromised, leading to recapture.

Precisely how the 'Underground Railroad' came about is unclear. Some explanations ascribe the term to slave hunters who, in the 1830's in frustration at not being able to find fugitive slaves remarked that they must have '*gone off on an underground railroad.*' Another version places the origin in Washington DC, in 1839, when a fugitive slave allegedly claimed that he was to have been sent north, where '*the railroad ran underground all the way to Boston.*' Whatever the explanation, a railroad terminology grew up as a code to describe people, places and other aspects of it. People who guided slaves from place to place were called 'conductors.' Locations where slaves could safely find protection, food, or a place to sleep were 'safe houses' or 'stations.' Those who hid fugitive slaves in their homes, barns, or churches were 'station masters.' Slaves who were in the safekeeping of a conductor or station master were 'cargo.' Biblical references were also used – the Ohio River was the 'River Jordan' and Canada the 'Promised Land'. Perhaps these are at the root of the myth that certain spirituals – 'Swing low sweet chariot', 'Steal away', 'Wade in the water' and others, contained coded messages about the Underground Railroad, although it's easy to see parallels between their words and slaves' desire to escape.

Slaves attempting to escape on the Underground Railroad faced long uncertain journeys filled with fear, and the very real possibility of never reaching their goal. Winter was considered the best time to escape, since nights were long and the Ohio River frozen, making it easier to cross. Slaves would often be given free time around Christmas, which increased opportunities to escape. Travelling into colder northern weather however, could be difficult. There was the question of finding safe places and people to trust - fugitive slaves might go several weeks between stations and, even when they did arrive at one, they risked being found by slave catchers. By the time of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, more and more slave catchers were travelling north with guns, horses, and bloodhounds, eager to take fugitive slaves back by any means. The journey north was also hundreds of miles long especially for slaves who wanted to go all the way to Canada. Having little knowledge of the land, little or no money, needing to avoid slave catchers, finding safe stations, and trusting the instructions given by others about how to get to freedom all made escaping risky and difficult. Although the number of slaves who escaped to freedom via the Underground Railroad is put at about 100,000, many more must have failed to make it. Fugitive slaves caught by slave catchers were often harshly punished on their return with beatings, imprisonment, or worse. However, even when slaves did not gain their freedom, their attempts were not in vain - knowledge of the paths to take, where safe places were, and who could be trusted were all passed on to others who might make the same attempt.

Whilst it was a loose and informal set up, the Underground Railroad could not have functioned without the bravery of people willing to go against the law and help fugitives. People such as Rev John Rankin, a Presbyterian minister from Ohio, who with his wife Jean and family of thirteen children all helped in the struggle against slavery. John Rankin spoke out against slavery across the country and began local

anti-slavery organisations throughout the region. Mrs. Rankin sewed clothes and cooked for fugitive slaves passing via their home overlooking the Ohio River and the slaveholding state of Kentucky. Their sons often led runaways on horseback to other Underground Railroad members further on into Ohio. In all, the Rankins are believed to have sheltered more than 2,000 runaways.

William Still was only a small child when he escaped from slavery with his mother and siblings by following the North Star. Having taught himself to read and write, Still became Executive Secretary of the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society. He interviewed as many escaping slaves as possible as they passed through Philadelphia on their way to freedom - one fugitive was his own long-lost brother, Peter. In later years, his careful records helped many ex-slave families re-unite. He was also instrumental in helping fugitives to set up new lives for themselves in the North and in 1872 published "The Underground Railroad," one of the earliest accounts of how slaves escaped to freedom.

John Parker was born a slave in Virginia, although he was later sold to a plantation in Alabama. After several unsuccessful attempts to escape, he finally bought his freedom with money he earned doing extra work as a skilled craftsman. Parker moved to Cincinnati and then to Ripley, Ohio, where he became one of the most daring slave rescuers of the time. Not content to wait for runaways to make their way north of the Ohio River, Parker "invaded" Kentucky farms at night and conducted hundreds of slaves to freedom. He kept records of those he had helped, but destroyed his notes in 1850 after realising that the Fugitive Slave Law threatened his home, his business, and his family's future.

Ultimately, slavery was the fracture that sparked the American Civil War of 1861-65 following the secession of the southern states from the Union after Abraham Lincoln's election as President in 1860. Although the original aim of the war was to preserve the Union rather than abolish slavery, many slaves inevitably took the opportunity to escape into Union lines, particularly in the later stages of the war. Union policy towards what should be done with escaping slaves was, in truth uneven – Lincoln was deeply concerned to avoid slave-owning states such as Kentucky and Maryland that had not seceded from doing so. However, events had a way of charting their own course, particularly after black men were allowed to enlist in the Union Army as soldiers and their fighting qualities became appreciated. Ultimately Lincoln decided to issue the Emancipation Proclamation (which he did on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1863). This formally abolished slavery throughout the Confederate States even though it could not be immediately enforced. Whilst ridiculed at the time as freeing slaves in areas that the Union did not control, the Proclamation laid the framework for emancipation as the Union armies advanced into the south and the ultimate abolition of slavery throughout all parts of the United States.

London was the first city to build a real underground railroad – between Paddington and Farringdon, opening in January 1863. Little do most of us know that there was an older, if figurative underground railroad which had existed in the United States for several decades before then. Not one which had physical rails and trains of course, but one which nevertheless conveyed many slaves to freedom.

## Circuit Directory Update

### Forthcoming Events around the Circuit

[as notified to, or discovered by, the Editor]

#### March

*For dates of Circuit Lent Course, please see details on p6*

3 <sup>rd</sup>	Sat	10.30am 4.00pm	<b>Hanwell</b> – Ealing Animal Welfare Bazaar <i>Admission free – details 020 8567 6739</i> <a href="http://www.animalwelfarebazaar.info">www.animalwelfarebazaar.info</a>
5 <sup>th</sup>	Mon	2.00pm	<b>Westminster Central Hall - Daffodil Day Service</b>
10 <sup>th</sup>	Sat	10.00am 12.30pm	<b>Kingsdown</b> – Book Fayre <i>in aid of West Ealing Trust Soup Kitchen</i>
15 <sup>th</sup>	Thu	8.00pm	<b>Circuit Meeting</b> at Acton Hill

#### May

12 <sup>th</sup>	Sat	10.00am 12.30pm	<b>Kingsdown</b> – Book Fayre <i>in aid of Christian Aid</i>
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13 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup>			<b>Christian Aid Week</b>
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#### July

7 <sup>th</sup>	Sat	10.00am 12.30pm	<b>Kingsdown</b> – Book Fayre <i>in aid of United Anglo-Caribbean Society</i>
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Articles for '**In-touch**' **Issue No 60 (June - August)** should be sent by e-mail headed '**In-touch**' to the Editor, **Gerald Barton**, or as hard copy to the Circuit Office.

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**Deadline for next issue: April 26th**