



North Kent Methodist Circuit

# grapevine

CIRCUIT NEWS AND PREACHING PLAN



*inside...*

STAINED GLASS SERMONS  
CELEBRATIONS AT MCMC

Issue Twenty Nine  
Spring 2024

# Looking back, looking forward, serving today...

In this issue of Grapevine, we have an article about the stained-glass windows that Union Street explored during its Bicentennial year - windows that memorialise people and families who were significant to the life of the church, especially around the late 1800s and early 1900s, leading up to the Centennial celebrations in 1923. Each of those memorial windows also featured a bible story or person. It was interesting to try to link up the significance of those stories with the person or people memorialised! It also made Union Street more aware not only of its history but the importance of carrying that legacy into the future.

This issue also features our fastest growing congregation, the Medway Chinese Methodist Church, which has just celebrated its 25th anniversary. While the majority of the new members of the congregation are BN(O)s (British National (Overseas)), that is, Hong Kong nationals who have emigrated to the UK under the recent special visa provisions of the UK government, MCMC is also seeing growth amongst its Mandarin-speaking group who come from mainland China, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore. These are exciting times for MCMC.

And from one of our smallest congregations in the circuit, Eccles

Methodist Church, we hear about a special recognition to one of its members, Dana Aris-Carter, who describes herself as just going about her daily life - but like so many others, in so doing she is quietly blessing her community through her Christian outreach.

Looking back, looking forward, serving today. God is with us in our past, our present and our future, and always presenting us with ways to build up God's kingdom and share God's love with our communities.

**Bonni-Belle**

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## An Honour for Dana

Dana Aris-Carter, who worships at Eccles MC, was recently amazed and delighted to be publicly recognised for her everyday service to church and community.

### **Dana writes...**

"I was surprised and shocked to receive this award from our MP, Tracey Crouch. I was nominated by two people for a community hero award, for the help I've given to people in the village: getting shopping or taking people shopping, running folks to hospital or doctor's appointments, also the things I do at church: flowers on occasions, church meals and even a bit of brick-laying!

I was very honoured to receive the award. Really, I just treat others how I want to be treated and of course I do what I can at church, as it's nice to have the fellowship."



# Stained Glass Sermons

As part of the Bicentennial celebrations of the Union Street Methodist Church building in 2023, explorations were made into the stained-glass memorial windows in the Church itself. Since each of these windows memorialised one or more named persons from the church's past and all but one featured roundels depicting a Bible story or character, some research was required to find out more about the persons and how the Bible stories might have connected with their lives and legacy. In the process, the church's Historic Roll from the Centenary celebration of 1923, Trustees' Minutes from 1864 to the present, previous historical booklets produced by the church, online genealogy resources, the Bible, and various hymnbooks were consulted. A series of Stained Glass Sermons were presented over eight Sundays between August and December 2023 by Rev Dr Bonni-Belle Pickard to the great interest of the gathered congregation. What follows is a brief synopsis of those stories.

## History of the Windows

At first we assumed the stained-glass windows were part of the 1823 church construction, but further research revealed they were installed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as memorials to people who had

been influential in the life of the church. This was an era when the use of stained glass was coming back into fashion in the UK, the churches having recovered from the shock of the destruction of many such artistic memorials during the dissolution of the monasteries. Methodism itself had traditionally preferred a plain and simple décor for its chapels, but the Art Deco and Arts and Crafts movements had influenced the churches, and stained-glass windows became a way for wealthier church people to commemorate their loved ones who had died and to reinforce the beauty and status of the building itself. Each of the eight Union Street windows is made of two separate long panels, most containing roundels depicting Bible stories or characters, with two further square panels at the top.

Two of the first memorial windows were dedicated to George and Josiah Thomas (JT) Smith, sons of Charles Smith who had been active as Secretary and then Treasurer of Union Street Wesleyan Church in the early-to-mid 1800s. Charles Smith is sometimes referred to as a Methodist Minister but would perhaps be known in Methodist circles as a Local Preacher. Brothers George and JT died in 1893 and 1903 respectively and were both Trustees (stewards) of

Union Street, active with the Sunday School, the burial ground, and the property and many other church and circuit committees. They were instrumental in purchasing land for Tonbridge Road Wesleyan Church. George and JT were local merchants, one dealing in drapery and another in hardware and toys. They had hearts for their church, the community and children, and at one point JT was elected Mayor of Maidstone.

The designs of their windows are very similar, though the windows were probably produced about ten years apart. The George Baker window was situated on the east side, 'opposite the seat he usually occupied,' and approved after his death in 1893 by the General Purposes Committee as a suitable tribute to the man who had been a leading figure in the church for many years. JT's window was similarly approved soon after his death in 1903 and positioned directly opposite his brother's on the west side of the church.

George's window depicts Jacob's dream, with angels ascending and descending a ladder between heaven and earth and Jacob's realisation that God was with him even as he had travelled into a strange land. One wonders if that dream had



*In memory of George Baker  
died 12 Aug 1893.*



*In Memory of Josiah Thomas Baker  
died 12 August 1903, age 69*



something to do with George's help in establishing a congregation on the other side of the Medway River! The other image in George's window is a figure (Moses?) with a snake on a pole, traditionally a symbol of healing, but also perhaps cautioning against creating an idol to worship instead of God.

JT's first window depicts the story of the Good Shepherd caring for his sheep and reminds one of both Psalm 23 and the images of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Likewise, the second window shows Jesus blessing the children, a theme that would have been close to the heart of JT the toy maker, and Sunday School superintendent.

Meanwhile, a window had been established to memorialise Edward Wraith in the late 1890s, and another to honour his son, Edward Henry Wraith after his death in 1906. Both

father and son had been trustees of the Union Street Church as well as grocers in Maidstone. Edward's window portrays two angels with the words from the 14th chapter of Revelation: 'Blessed are the dead who died in the Lord.' His son Edward Henry's window is the only one with no Bible story depicted, the design instead includes a cross and shield motif which would have been popular during the time of the Great War (WWI). The two Wraith windows are found on either side of the JT Baker window, and they also surround a plaque honouring 67 persons who served in the Great War. The larger text from Revelation 14 is appropriate for that plaque as well:

*"Here is the call for the endurance of the saints,*

*those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus...*

*They will rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them.'*

After the end of the War, during which parts of the Union Street Church building had been requisitioned for billeting of troops, there was a great amount of clean-up and refurbishment needed at the church. Union Street also started working towards the Centenary of the church building in 1923. As part of that upcoming celebration, the Trustees agreed to erect four more stained glass windows in memory of Charles and Frank Leaver Smith (the latter had been killed in action in the War) and three other families important to the life of Union Street: the Ratcliffes, the Hewitts, and the Ivens family. These four windows are all similar in design and were commissioned together. According to the Trustees' Minutes, they cost about £50 each, which was about the same cost of replacing a boiler in those days!



The windows were unveiled and dedicated on Sunday 9 September, at the beginning of the month-long Centenary celebrations.

As noted above, Frank Leaver Smith was killed in action in the Great War; his window depicts the story of David and Goliath, with the small shepherd boy who used three small stones to overcome the giant Goliath, a story that would have well suited the wartime sentiment. His father Charles died four years later, and his window depicts the story of the Good Samaritan who cared for the needs of the injured traveller. Charles was a grocer by trade, so certainly he would know something about providing for the basic needs of others!

The windows memorialising Alfred Daniel Ratcliffe depict two Biblical harvest scenes: one is the Sower and the Seed; the other is Ruth and Naomi. Alfred Daniel was a

not a farmer but a Fly Proprietor, that is, a provider of light carriages (predecessor of the taxi) on the corner of Week Street and Union Street. He and his wife were both buried in the Union Street Church graveyard, and his headstone proclaims he was a 'Man of God.' Jesus' parable of the Sower ends with these words, "But as for that in the good soil, these are the ones who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance." Alfred Daniel may have been a Local Preacher of sorts, but certainly he seems to have been one who was keen for his Christian faith to be practised in his daily work.

The Hewitt windows are opposite the Ratcliffe window at the front of the church. They are dedicated to the memory of Charles Ghuznee Hewitt and his daughter Evelyn May Hewitt who died six months apart from each

other. The 'Ghuznee' name probably alludes to his father or grandfather being part of the English and Indian army battalion which fought in Afghanistan. Charles himself was a local merchant, a manufacturer and seller of Mineral Water, which in those days meant bottled soda water, lemonade and ginger beer. He had started his career as a brewer's assistant in Maidstone, where breweries were prolific, though many specialised in beer in small bottles, which was considered healthful instead of intoxicating. Charles and his wife and several children were all very active at Union Street, Charles being a Trustee and choir leader for many years. They were also probably involved with the Tonbridge Road church as they lived nearby, and the youngest daughter, Evelyn, was a Sunday School teacher there. Sadly, Evelyn May died as a young woman aged 23.





Charles' window depicts a man being presented with a crown of laurel leaves, which suggests the parable of the Talents in which the ones who invested their talents wisely were rewarded with the laurel crown and the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Evelyn's window suggests David playing a harp, which would tie in with Charles' musical interests as well as the scripture which suggests that King David played a harp to soothe King Saul's troubled mind.

Finally, we come to the window memorialising Edward and Elizabeth Ivens, both active at Union Street, though neither are listed as Trustees as are all the others who have memorial windows. Elizabeth was apparently born just a stone's throw from the church and was baptised there as an infant; her father died when she was a young child, and her mother brought her and her brother up on her own, surviving on her income as a seamstress. Edward was born and raised in Warwickshire but came to Maidstone as a 'clothier'. After they married, Edward became a travelling salesman for brushes and other articles, though the family remained in Maidstone and produced several children, most of whom survived into adulthood.

The window dedicated to Edward shows another depiction of Jesus blessing the children, while Elizabeth's window illustrates the story of Hannah presenting a shirt or short robe to her son Samuel whom she had dedicated as a child to serve in the temple; Elizabeth's interest in clothing is apparent! It's worth noting that the second (unmarried) daughter of Edward and Elizabeth was Ada Ivens, who, along with two married women, became the first female Trustee of

Union Street Wesleyan Church (as it was then known) in 1924, the year after the Centenary celebrations. Ada was a schoolteacher and continued to serve as a Trustee and on the Choir Committee for many years, even after her retirement. Though the Ivens name disappears from the church records after her death, hers is often

the first name listed in the Trustees' minutes, and she is noted for having brought recognition to the church caretaker and others who might have otherwise been ignored.

The years after the Union Street Centenary brought many changes: electric lights were installed in the church and school rooms. The Wesleyan Methodist Churches united with the Primitive Methodists across the Connexion in 1932. Then a second World War arrived, and the church as well as the nation had a new set of challenges.

The past year of 2023 has been an interesting time for Union Street Methodist Church in considering its legacy as well as the way ahead. How do we honour the past as well as the future?



# Encountering Christ at a Chinese Restaurant

Within the heart of Chatham a remarkable spiritual journey has unfolded within a local Chinese restaurant. What originated as a small Mandarin group gathering for weekly Bible studies and fellowship has blossomed into a vibrant, closely-knit community of believers. The Chatham Weekly Mandarin Gathering, hosted at the restaurant, has become a place where Mandarin-speaking brothers and sisters come together to worship, grow in faith, and praise God. Organised under the umbrella of the Medway Chinese Methodist Church and the North Kent Methodist Circuit, this gathering is a shining example of how faith can unite individuals from diverse cultures, languages, and ethnic backgrounds.

## The Birth of Chatham Weekly Mandarin Gathering

In recognition of the growing Mandarin-speaking immigrant and student population in the UK, a Mandarin group was established in Chatham. This small group initially gathered weekly for Bible studies and fellowship. However, as the number of participants increased, the need for a regular worship service became evident. Several factors drove the establishment of this service, including members' work commitments which prevented attendance on Sundays, and the language barrier faced by some members who could not understand Cantonese, the predominant language of the services in Gillingham. Thus, a monthly Mandarin service was organised to cater to the members' spiritual needs and desire for collective worship.

## A Space for Worship and Fellowship

The local Chinese restaurant graciously opened its doors to accommodate the Chatham Weekly Mandarin Gathering. The owner, an active member of the Chinese Church,



saw this as a divine opportunity to utilise her establishment for spiritual purposes. Without seeking rent, she offered her restaurant as a sanctuary for worship, fellowship and spiritual growth. This generous gesture exemplifies her deep commitment to faith and her desire to be a vessel of God's love within her community.

## Coming Together in Cultural Diversity

The Chatham Weekly Mandarin Gathering serves as a unifying force that brings together Mandarin-speaking individuals from various backgrounds, including mainland China, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. This diverse fusion of cultures enriches the gathering, creating a vibrant tapestry of worship that celebrates and appreciates the richness of each participant's heritage. Through the shared Mandarin language, attendees find a sense of belonging and establish valuable connections based on their common experiences and faith.

## Embracing Spiritual Growth

The Chatham Weekly Mandarin Gathering has become a catalyst for spiritual transformation within the Mandarin-speaking community. Each week, attendees engage in Bible studies, heartfelt worship and prayerful connections, which foster a deeper understanding of their faith and relationship with

Christ. This environment of support and encouragement has led some individuals to make significant decisions, such as embracing baptism and finding an enduring place within the wider Christian family.

## An Ongoing Journey

The Mandarin weekly gathering at a Chinese restaurant in Chatham serves as a beacon of unity, love, and grace within the Mandarin-speaking community. Through worship, fellowship and shared spiritual growth, individuals from diverse cultures, languages, ages and professional backgrounds find common ground, celebrating their unique contributions to the body of Christ. By providing a weekly space for Mandarin-speaking brothers and sisters to come together for Bible studies, fellowship, and collective worship, this gathering has become a cornerstone of their spiritual growth. Through the unwavering support of the Chinese Church and the North Kent Methodist Circuit, this Mandarin group exemplifies the extraordinary impact that can be achieved when faith converges with unexpected settings. The ongoing journey of the Chatham Weekly Mandarin Gathering serves as an inspiration, reminding us that the encounter with Christ can take place in the most unlikely of spaces, uniting believers in a common purpose and igniting a passion for God's presence.

# North Kent Circuit

## Preaching Plan March – May 2024

		MARCH					APRIL				MAY				
		3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	
		<i>3rd in Lent</i>	<i>4th in Lent</i>	<i>5th in Lent</i>	<i>Palm Sunday</i>	<i>Easter Day</i>									
<b>BEARSTED</b>	10.30	WEST	NEWELL	ZACHAR	LA	D READ <i>hc</i>	SHEPHERD	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	G HARRIS	WILDING	SHEPHERD	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	
<b>BURHAM</b>	10.30	OATES <i>us 4pm</i>	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA	
<b>CHINESE</b>	13.30	SIU <i>hc</i>	E LAU	SIU	LA	SIU	P LAU <i>hc</i>	SIU	SIU	LA	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	SIU	J TANG	PICKARD <i>LPA</i>	
<b>DENE HOLM</b>	11.00	ROWE	BURCH	LA	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	LA	HARFLEET	US @ BRENT	LA	TERRETT	LA	LA	LA	TERRETT	
<b>ECCLES</b>	10.30	–	WILDING	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	LA	
<b>THIRD AVENUE</b>	10.30	LA	LA AA	STUNELL	GALLAGHER	WEST <i>hc</i>	ROBB	M HARRIS	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	SIU	WATTON	LA	TROTT	LPA	
<b>GRAVESEND</b>	11.00	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	HARFLEET	LA	DOWNNS	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	GRAY	US @ BRENT	S SMITH	ROWE	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	DOWNNS	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	LA	
<b>HARTLIP</b>	18.30	LA	GERMAN	LA	GALLAGHER	US @ ST.MICHAELS	GERMAN	GALLAGHER	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	GERMAN	LA	LA	GALLAGHER	LA	
<b>HEXTABLE</b>	10.30	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	ROWE	PATERSON	BURCH	LA	LE B-SCOTT <i>hc</i>	GRAY	LA	PATERSON	LE B-SCOTT <i>hc ssa</i>	BURCH	HARFLEET	
<b>HOPE STREET</b>	10.30	LEMASONRY	ZACHAR	TBA	LEMASONRY	LEMASONRY <i>hc</i>	COYNE	TBA	LEMASONRY	LEMASONRY	LEMASONRY	TBA	TBA	J THOMPSON	
<b>KINGSWOOD</b>	11.00	LA	LA	BAPTIST	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	MYLES	BAPTIST	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	LA	M SMITH	BAPTIST	ANGLICAN <i>hc</i>	
<b>LARKFIELD</b>	10.00	10.30am LA	SHEPHERD	WILDING <i>aa</i>	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	OATES	10.30am LA	GILLMAN <i>ca</i>	WILDING <i>aa</i>	OATES <i>hc</i>	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	LA	OATES <i>aa</i>	LA	
<b>NEWINGTON</b>	9.30	LA	CAN- TAMAKLOE	M SMITH	ZACHAR <i>hc us</i>	KASONGO	ZACHAR	LA	M SMITH	ZACHAR <i>hc us</i>	CAN- TAMAKLOE	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	M SMITH	
<b>ST. LUKE'S</b>	10.30	M HARRIS	LA	TROTT	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	ADOFO	LA	ROWE	TROTT	LA	SIU	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	STUNELL	ADOFO	
<b>HOLY TRINITY</b>	10.00	KICHENSIDE @SW	KICHENSIDE @SA	KICHENSIDE @SD	KICHENSIDE @SW	KICHENSIDE @SW	KICHENSIDE @SA	KICHENSIDE @SD	KICHENSIDE @SW	KICHENSIDE @SA	KICHENSIDE @SD	KICHENSIDE @SW	KICHENSIDE @SA	KICHENSIDE @SD	
<b>SITTINGBOURNE</b>	10.30	ZACHAR	ADOFO	LA	WATTON	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	ADOFO	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	KASONGO	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	ADOFO	KASONGO	ZACHAR	
<b>SPITAL STREET</b>	10.30	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	S SMITH	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	GRAY	HARFLEET	LA	DOWNNS	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	LA	BURCH	ROWE	S SMITH	LA	
<b>STOKE</b>	18.30	–	LA	–	–	–	–	LA	–	–	–	LA	–	–	
<b>PENINSULA STROOD</b>	10.30	ROBB	SIU <i>aa</i>	TOLHURST <i>hc</i>	M HARRIS	LA	TROTT	LA <i>aa</i>	STUNELL	ADOFO	M HARRIS	ROBB <i>aa</i>	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	WATTON	
<b>SWANSCOMBE</b>	10.45	DOWNNS	LA	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	LA	LA	LA	US @ BRENT	TERRETT	LA	LA	LA	TERRETT	LA	
<b>TONBRIDGE RD</b>	10.30	OATES <i>hc</i>	STUNELL	WEST	SHEPHERD	WILDING	G HARRIS <i>w/Union St</i>	OATES <i>hc</i>	LA	SHEPHERD	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	NEWELL	LA	
<b>THE BRENT</b>	10.30	GRAY	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	HARFLEET	DOWNNS	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	TERRETT <i>hc us</i>	LA	HARFLEET	GRAY	TERRETT	LA	LA	
<b>UNION STREET</b>	10.30	LA	PICKARD	G HARRIS	LA	PICKARD <i>hc</i>	US @ TON. RD	PICKARD	NEWELL	PICKARD	LA	PICKARD <i>hc acm</i>	SIU	G HARRIS	
<b>ONLINE SERVICES</b>	10.30	PICKARD	TBA	KICHENSIDE	TBA	BURCH @ HEX	PICKARD	TBA	TBA	LE B-SCOTT	PICKARD	OATES	BURCH @ HEX	LE B-SCOTT	

*aa* All-age / *acm* Annual Church Meeting / *Ca* Church Anniversary / *hc* Holy Communion  
*us* United Service / *LPA* Local Preacher Accreditation / *ssa* Sunday School Anniversary

**For the Summer issue:** Please send contributions as a Word document, no longer than 500 words, to [bonni-belle.pickard@methodist.org.uk](mailto:bonni-belle.pickard@methodist.org.uk) to arrive by 20 March 2024. If you can, please attach a suitable high quality image, but do not embed it in a document.