



# THE METHODIST CHURCH ST AUGUSTINE'S CIRCUIT

Canterbury, Barham, Challock, Faversham, Greenstreet,  
Old Wives Lees, Stelling Minnis, Whitehill

Faversham is a United Church with the United Reformed Church,  
Greenstreet is a Shared Church with the Roman Catholic Church,  
Barham shares worship with the Church of England  
Nationally the Methodist Church and the Church of England  
are in a Covenant Relationship.



## JULY 2010

CIRCUIT BULLETIN

### The Rev'd Geoff Boxer, the circuit superintendent minister writes

On the 23rd of June a special Circuit Meeting was held to discuss the possible coming together of our Circuit with the North East Kent Circuit. The resolution that was put to the meeting was as follows:

*"Following a meeting of the Circuit Leadership Team this Circuit Meeting agrees that we now begin to work with the North East Kent Circuit in preparing the way to become a new Circuit from Sept 2011."*

This was timed to coincide with a similar Circuit Meeting that was taking place at the same time in the North East Kent Circuit who were being asked to consider a **similar** resolution.

After a good deal of discussion the resolution was passed unanimously by the Circuit Meeting, and I'm pleased to say the resolution was also passed unanimously by the NE Kent Circuit Meeting, therefore opening the way for us to begin the process of bringing our two Circuits together, which we hope will be completed in September 2011

However, it may be that this is the first time you have heard about this and are wondering how it has all come about? So let me give you a bit of background to this decision, and then explain what steps we will be taking in the future.

### Background:

The Methodist Church throughout the UK has been conducting a review over the last three years or so entitled "**Mapping a Way Forward - Regrouping for Mission**", which has been a wide ranging exercise looking at what the future shape of Methodism should be in order to tackle some of the challenges it now faces and its future direction. Part of this has been to meet the challenges of a declining membership coupled with a reduced number of ordained ministers to fill the Circuit appointments needed. Although it should be pointed out that Methodism is not alone in facing these problems, nevertheless "**Mapping a Way Forward - Regrouping for Mission**" has been a really positive attempt to tackle these issues and has sought to renew the Mission focus of the Church.

**Our South East District** has also been part of this review and in particular circuits have been encouraged to form closer links with neighbouring ones. Our circuit has been actively engaged in this and has formed good links with other circuits in our east Kent region, sharing in joint training and other events.

Much of the **Mapping a Way** forward part of the exercise has now been done, and recently the Rev'd Dr. Martyn Atkins, Secretary to the Methodist Conference, said that we are now moving into the "**Regrouping for Mission**" phase of the review.

At a recent meeting of representatives from all of the circuits in the east Kent region there was overwhelming support for beginning to

An occasional publication with information of interest issued on behalf of the circuit  
by the Rev'd Ted Bishop. [ted@tedbishop.co.uk](mailto:ted@tedbishop.co.uk)

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consider how the six Circuits in our region could become three; which would mean Thanet being linked with Dover & Deal, Folkestone being linked with Ashford, and St. Augustine's with NE Kent.

It was around the same time that we learned that the current Superintendent Minister of the NE Kent Circuit, the Rev'd Gareth West, had decided to take early retirement, not from 2011 as had been originally thought, but from September 2010. Unfortunately this meant that no replacement minister would be found and the NE Kent Circuit would be without a superintendent for at least the next year. As a consequence I was asked to act as interim superintendent minister. However, if I was going to have to act as Superintendent Minister for both Circuits it also seemed a good opportunity to explore the possibility of bringing the two circuits back together. Some will be aware that we were one circuit until an unfortunate split a few years ago. I don't intend to go into details only to say that uniting the circuits again will at last enable us to finally put this separation behind us.

Another factor in this equation is that Helen Letley is nearing the end of her ministerial training and indicated that if possible she would like to be placed somewhere within travelling distance of Canterbury. Following a consultation with the District Chair, the Rev'd John Hellyer, it was indicated that while it was unlikely that another Superintendent Minister could be found for the NE Kent Circuit, a probationer appointment for Whitstable was much more of a possibility. The recent annual Methodist Conference has approved what would make an ideal appointment for Helen. What was more, with the approval of SEITE, Helen's training institution, it was agreed that she could effectively start her probation from 2010 rather than in 2011 which would greatly assist the situation in NE Kent. I'm pleased to say that the NE Kent Circuit Meeting unanimously agreed to Helen's appointment. And if, as is hoped, the two Circuits become one in 2011, Helen might then become part of the staff of the new Circuit.

### **What happens next?**

Over the next few months we will begin to bring together the various Circuit committees and meetings such as Leadership Team, Local Preachers Meeting, Property and Finance etc, . This initially will mean some duplication in Circuit responsibilities; we may well find ourselves, for example, with two Circuit Treasurers , but this will all be part of the transition. Steps will also be made in bringing the two financial accounts together. We will also be looking at united services and more informal social events in order to get to know those from each other's Circuit. Then there is the difficult decision of what this new Circuit is to be called. All this will culminate with a special service to inaugurate the new Circuit in September 2011.

At present we have only declared our intent to unite, a bit like a couple announcing their engagement. There is much to be done before the marriage takes place and it's really important that we all work together and are fully involved. It matters to me and the Circuit Leadership Team that you feel part of this exciting and challenging process of forming a new Circuit. We would especially welcome any suggestions or ideas you may have in contributing to this whole process.

*Geoff Boxer*  
*Superintendent Minister*  
*St. Augustine's Circuit*

### **The Current NE Kent Circuit**

The North East Kent Circuit of the Methodist Church ministers to an area of Kent stretching from Whitstable to Herne Bay on the North Kent coast, and south as far as Sturry and the village of Bridge.

There are three large churches, four village churches or chapels, a Cafe Church and a Methodist Residential Home which has services and other activities.

These are:  
St. John's Methodist Church, Whitstable  
Herne Bay United Church (Methodist and United Reformed Church)  
St. Nicholas Church, Sturry,  
Wesbere Church,  
Hersden Cafe Church  
*(these 3 are all part of Sturry Local Ecumenical Anglican and Methodist Partnership)*  
Bridge (Worshipping at St. Peter's Anglican)  
Marshside and Herne (near Boyden Gate,)  
Beltinge Chapel (east of Herne Bay)  
Bradbury Grange (MHA), Whitstable

In addition to the ministers mentioned above the Rev'd Peter A Cornish is the Anglican rector of the Sturry Local Ecumenical Partnership, The Rev'd Geoffrey Collins is a minister of the United Reformed Church, The Rev'd Peter Freeman is an ordained local Anglican, and The Rev'd Simon Rowlands is the vicar at Bridge

3 supernumerary (retired) Methodist ministers:  
The Rev'd Howard Skinner  
The Rev'd Peter Neatham  
The Rev'd High-Nigel Sheehan

Further information can be found on the NE Kent circuit Website: <http://www.nekentcircuit.org.uk>