



Introduction from the Chair of District

The Synod is meeting in Eastertide, a time when we focus on our calling as disciples to share the good news through our words and actions. I imagine the first disciples wondered how they could tell people about the life and teaching of Jesus, his death and resurrection and how they could share the deep joy and newness of life that they experienced.

It is similar for all of us as we try to work out how we can best share the good news of Jesus Christ with the people in our communities.

What is certain is that each one of us is called to proclaim the gospel, it is part of being a Christian disciple. We are all called to use our gifts in the community where God has placed us. It is in the circuits and local churches that mission is best developed because it is here that there is the closest contact with local communities. The role of the District is to support the circuits in the work they do and also to encourage and challenge them. The District offers grants which can be very substantial and most, if not all the circuits will have benefited from this.

In 2014-2015 the District Development and Oversight Group decided that it was the right time to offer £2000 to every circuit to be used for mission. The application form for this grant was very straightforward and the criterion was simply that the money must be used for mission. Some innovative and exciting work has been enabled through these grants and you can read about it in this booklet.

I hope that you will enjoy reading the different stories. I also hope that you will be inspired and challenged by them and will develop new mission projects in your own context. Remember, the District may well be able to offer financial support through the Grants Committee and Revd Bev Hollings and others in the District are available to offer advice about mission and evangelism.

Above all remember – this is our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

Ruth

(Revd Ruth M Gee – Chair of the Darlington District of the Methodist Church)

DARLINGTON

The Darlington Circuit used the £2000 Mission Grant to engage the services of a professional consultancy team (Mantes) to help us to formulate an intentional circuit mission strategy. Mantes guided us through a listening project, helping us to appreciate the heritage of Methodism in Darlington, as well as to understand what energies and skills are available within the existing Methodist societies across the town. They also undertook a mapping exercise for us which revealed the demographic, social and economic landscape of Darlington in a fresh way. This led to the development of exciting plans for a new Methodist Society to serve a geographic area identified by the mapping exercise as the priority area for mission in Darlington. This area had been previously obscured by the existing 'section' boundaries of the Circuit. When presented to the Circuit Meeting, the plans were met with enthusiasm and the Circuit has committed to delivering them over the course of the coming years. We are grateful to the District Grants Committee for the seed fund of £2000 which has enabled us to take important steps forward with a greater awareness of our context and the needs that God is calling us to meet in the present day. We invite you to watch with interest as we seek to follow the Circuit Roadmap which has been produced: as we transform Pierremont into a Growing Space, Northland into a Compassion Hub, and Bondgate into a Celebration Space, all alongside the creation of a new Methodist Society in central Darlington. As we do this, our prayer is that God will use us to transform the atmosphere of Darlington, that we may see God's kingdom come, among us, as in heaven.

Revd Dr Andrew Stobart

MIDDLESBOROUGH AND ESTON

We have certainly put the District Mission Grant, which we were very grateful to receive, to good use. The Trinity Family Friendly Centre, (TFFC) were able to stock their Breakfast Club shelves as well as buy necessary equipment for this project. TFFC reaches out to many families living on a vast housing estate called Whinny Banks. Through the generosity of the District Grants Committee we are seeing more and more engagement with the community - so much so - that even the President of Conference is coming to see how it works in April.

We shared the grant and were also able to help fund our Circuit's annual major outreach, 'More Than Gold'. This event, which takes place in Stewart Park on the first Saturday in July is open to all those visiting the park. We have tried to make this an ecumenical event and last year MTG was opened by the Bishop of Whitby. As well as the Circuit paying for the large marquee, the grant meant we could offer many interesting activities. It is great to see people who wouldn't normally take part in Christian Worship really engaging with puppets as they share the Gospel in a fun way.

This year the opener will be Micky Mouse!

Thank you very much.

Revd Sue Greenwood

STOCKTON

Clarences Community Garden Churches Together Faith Plot

This Faith Plot is in a deprived community near the Transporter bridge on the Stockton side [north of Tees].

In the past two nuns lived in the area, but when they moved out over a decade ago, and with no church building in the area and little clergy presence apart from regular assemblies and Methodist presence in the school the community felt a little neglected by the church.

In response to the communities comments recent developments include a monthly Messy Church led by Billingham Anglicans and the Faith plot.

The faith plot is part of a wider area serving different folks within the community.

Families have raised beds, a group of nurses have several beds promoting healthy eating and so the list goes on. It really is an eclectic mix of people with the labyrinth in the centre

Background

Once a month in the Clarence's community Centre Messy Church happens, but like any community there are many more people that the church never connects with. Part of the Faith Plots' vision is to simply be with folks at the allotment and be ready *to give the reason for the hope that is within us. 1 Peter 3:15* .

Aim

To have a more regular and informal presence within the community, link Christians across the denominations and circuit

Method

- Build a Churches Together Community Garden.
- Establish a Pray / Meeting Place on the Garden. This has developed into having a prayer wall [secret lives of Bees] and a Baltic labyrinth
- Local Ministers and church members to commit a specific time each month to be in attendance in the garden. As well as simply being on the plot growing veg like everyone else and chatting about his that and God.

Progress

- Since the first spade hit the ground, many people have been involved in transforming an idea into a reality. Young people on community schemes, American choirs, local volunteers, church folk and many more.
- During that process there have been many conversations with quite a few about faith. Sometimes people are simply surprised to learn that Christians are just like them!
- The Holy hut is now shared with others and is a place for conversation. It is hoped as more folks show an interest the Holy Hut will not only be a place to drink a brew, but a space to stop think relax and pray. Maybe even have conversations about individuals labyrinth walk.

- The labyrinth, is not only used by children to simply have fun but is also used by therapists for rehabilitation and also disability awareness. We also hope to hold concerts and plays on the labyrinth stage!
- The prayer wall – inspired by the Film the **Secret life of Bees**, is something we hope to publicise, for anyone to make use of with the promise that those who come from churches together will use some of their time to pray for the concerns placed in the wall – without removing the papers, entrusting peoples cares to God alone. Rather like laying our burdens down and leaving them in Gods tender care.
- Even though we are still very much at the early stages of this project we have already had lots of conversations and are starting to make friends.
- A church member from South Africa once told me of a campaign at his university where everyone was given a pair of socks on which was written “EACH ONE REACH ONE!” If we can achieve that through fruit, veg, soil and tea that will surely be Good News.

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Stokesley

In Stokesley, our Mission Grant was used to help fund a Part Time Youth Worker Jared Besden based in Stokesley. Jared’s prime focus was to work in the weekly Youth Group that meet on a Sunday night called “Jam”. The group has been running for the past seven years nurturing Young People from Secondary School age, mainly from Church families. The hope has always been to reach further afield to Youth from the local Council Estate who have little or no connection with the Church. Through Jared’s work on both Sunday nights and at the Monthly Sunday Cafe Worship has meant we now have a group of children who come who are “un-churched” on Sunday evenings. Through games, hot chocolate and a time of teaching the Gospel is being shared. Average weekly attendance is usually between 6-8 young people. Small acorns, Big Trees!

Revd Lisa Quarmby

CLEVELAND AND DANBY

Our grant of £2000 was used to begin a project at Guisborough Methodist Church called Food4All.

The project was designed to help children and their families, to have a home cooked meal at least once a week during the summer holiday when they would have normally received a free school meal.

We ran the project on a Friday throughout the school holiday, but sadly this approach did not have the impact that we desired – and so a very limited amount of the £2000 was used.

Guisborough Methodist Church Children and Young People Management Team believe in the benefit of this project and are committed to it. We have discussed the

project and spoken to a number of other churches running similar schemes successfully to see what they have done differently.

After consulting with others about these similar projects we have taken the decision to re-run the project again, but this time in the May half term holiday, operating every day, with renewed publicity and promotion. We are going to use the £2000 for the continuation of the project and it has been ring-fenced as such.

Once the week is over we will review the project again in terms of continuing in the summer holiday.

Revd John Henry

BISHOP AUCKLAND AND SHILDON

Distribution of 'The Good News' in Coundon. (£500)

The Valley Methodist Church, Coundon Grange is a small church with a prominent place within a community. The church is highly respected and has for some time distributed a copy of the 'Good News' evangelical newspaper to surrounding houses. The additional funding has enabled the scheme to be expanded with 300 monthly copies of the paper being bought to incorporate a new housing estate. It also provides an opportunity for the church to advertise it's Bible Study, Men's Group and worship services.

Church @Costa. (£500)

Church @ Costa has continued to run at Costa in Bishop Auckland for the last year - with a cost to the Circuit of around £45 a month funded by the Mission grant. There is a regular attendance of around 30 people from around the new combined Circuit and has built a good relationship from those who attend. A recent review has confirmed that it is valued by all and this is being discussed by the Circuit Leadership Team in conjunction with the Costa management how to finance this in the future

Bishop Auckland and Shildon Circuit website (£1,000)

The development of the new Circuit website which combines information for all the Bishop Auckland and Shildon Circuit is nearly completed and it is aim to launch it at the Circuit meeting at the end of March 2016. The money has been used to finance the building of the site and the associated running costs as proposed. It will also act as a portal to any new Church sites/social media contacts which are developed around the Circuit.

Revd Andrew Bryer

DURHAM AND DEERNESS VALLEY

The circuit 'Faith and Arts' network continues to develop supported by the initial grant from the Darlington District. We focussed on dance before Christmas with 'Springs Dance Co. and their wonderful performance of 'The return of the Magi': The singer-songwriter Gareth Davies-Jones joined us in the new year for an inspiring and moving evening service combining music and words of faith. We are currently planning a city-wide photographic competition around the theme of Easter in Durham, a puppetry workshop event and a story-telling, drama event later in the year.

Revd Shaun Swithenbank

West Durham Methodist

Community BBQ – Stanhope

Back in July we had a Community BBQ in Stanhope to celebrate the end of a week-long holiday club. The wider community was invited and a few came along to enjoy sausages and burgers in the Summer sunshine (or drizzle!) and hear about all the things that the young people had been doing during the week.

Tudhoe Worship on Wednesdays

For a little while now, Tudhoe Methodist Church has been struggling for numbers on Sunday mornings. This was in contrast to the success of other community focussed projects run by the small but committed congregation, including a Messy Church and a weekly coffee morning. The congregation took the brave decision to cut down to a monthly Sunday morning service and replace it with "Worship on Wednesday" – building on the success of the popular coffee morning. This half-hour service is informal and welcoming and is proving popular to local residents. This grant money is being used to help spread the word about Worship on Wednesday with some quality publicity.

Prayer Spaces in Schools

Prayer Spaces in Schools is a national initiative who's aim is to equip local teams to set-up and lead prayer spaces. These spaces involve many different creative styles of prayer, and help the young people to talk to God. It is accessible for schoolchildren of all faiths and of no faith at all, and puts the emphasis on helping the children express emotion and feelings.

The circuit plans to get on board with this initiative by purchasing a number of resources needed to set up a prayer space. These resources will then be used by teams across the circuit to run a prayer space in a local school, starting with the many schools that have pre-existing links with their local Methodist church.

The Typ Street Engagement

The Typ is a new drop in centre based in Spennymoor that operates weekly. It is part of the wider "Trinity Youth Project" that aims to reach out to young people that spend their evenings out on the streets in Spennymoor. As well as welcoming young people into the building to use the many new facilities on offer, the team have also been working out on the streets of Spennymoor, engaging with the young people and offering them help and advice where necessary. The team plan to use the money to invest in jackets that will help them to become more recognisable to the young people. They also plan to put it towards the ongoing costs of hot chocolate and sweets that the team give away for free.

Philip Mason

BARNARD CASTLE

Sunday 4 Talk

The Idea: a monthly discussion based event, held at 4pm on the 4th Sunday of each month for talking!

The Venue: NEST, a community cafe and art space in Barnard Castle. Hired for 2 hours at the end of normal opening.

The Aim: to attract and stimulate spiritual discussion with those who don't regularly attend church, especially adults aged 20-40 plus their children, though all welcome.

The Plan: With coffee and cake provided the outline each month would be some ice breaker questions around tables, a dvd clip followed by discussion questions, a brief summing up including a few verses of scripture, pause for reflection whilst a song or other piece of music played, then informal prayer around tables. A bookmark incorporating the bible verse of the day given to take away.

The first session in April 2015 was encouraging with 8 team members, 18 other adults and 6 children attending. However, numbers declined each month after that, with a particular drop noticed when the children and family worker left in July - the people attending were mainly her contacts.

A mix of secular film clips (Paddington), some downloaded clips and Nooma dvds were used

From the beginning a review had been planned for December when 8 sessions would have taken place. During the review many points were noted, positive things and lessons to be learned. Amongst the positives - the experience of planning and praying together as a team; the good relationships built up with the staff at NEST; that one 30 year old had attended every time who doesn't regularly attend services in church. Lessons learned include that the 4th Sunday doesn't work easily as people assume it is always the last Sunday of the month which isn't the case and that a 'film buff' is needed on the team to spot clips which can be used.

At the end of November we heard the sad news that NEST was closing. This combined with low numbers throughout the Autumn, Bev's sabbatical and other team members being away on the 4th Sunday, and questions about whether the right time and format had been found means that Sunday 4 Talk is taking a break. The team will meet again in May and plan new events for June and July which may be a similar format in a new venue or may be something completely different 'Curry and Bible' is one idea being considered.

Revd Bev Hollings

NORTH YORKSHIRE DALES

Epiphany, in the NY Dales Circuit, was marked on 6th January by the unwrapping of gifts- resources purchased with the aid of the District Mission Grant, received in two large boxes a few days before 25th December 2014. A number of folk from throughout the Circuit gathered in Leyburn church hall to explore the contents of the boxes, share light refreshments and experience the story of Creation as told through some of the Godly Play resources the Circuit has acquired with the aid of this grant.

Following the launch of this District Mission Grant initiative, almost 12 months ago, a number of us were inspired to visit the Godly Play room at South Billingham, share in a couple of GP stories and hear something of the remarkable accounts that resource has brought to the area.

I believe there are now over 50 GP stories waiting to be told, throughout the NY Dales Circuit, with each story labelled and stored in Leyburn Methodist Church. Currently the Circuit has two qualified Godly Play storytellers and interest is emerging for others to complete the training in the future.

Several stories have been used during Messy Church in Bainbridge, with youngsters keen to recount the story for themselves afterwards, as well as taking part in craft activities. At least three local primary schools have already welcomed the experience Godly Play brings to a number of their classes, where the children have engaged creatively with the opportunity and enthusiastically talked with their teacher afterwards of how much they appreciated the occasion. Many would like GP to happen every week!

The resources have already led to many fascinating comments, along with the creative responses developed after the story- one child made a clay grin, about the size of her hand, reflective how Jesus smiled as he responded to the persistent questions from those who followed him. I suspect He's still grinning now, as we re-discover the value of biblical truths through the creative resources of Godly Play. Thank you, Darlington District, for enabling this to happen.

Revd Janet Park