

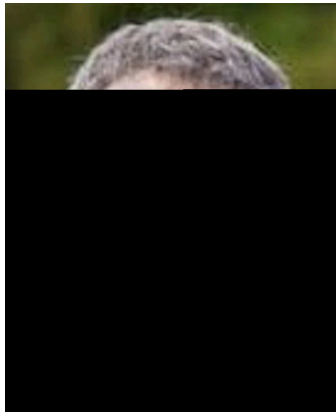


Welcome

Fresh Beginnings

Welcome to the summer edition of the eNews for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. I hope you are enjoying summer, perhaps dodging the showers but still able to appreciate the longer days and warm sunshine when it breaks through. Sunshine and rain are both essential for the growth that reminds us of the endless provision of our Creator God.

We're really thankful for Dan Bishop's contribution to this email. Dan is a recent recruit to the Connexional Team as Director of Ministry Development. His tasks include promoting the well-being of people in ministry, both lay and ordained. He's also a local preacher in the Salisbury circuit. Over to you, Dan...



Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure to write to you and offer deep gratitude for all that you do to lead God's people in worship, week-by-week. Leading worship is a great joy, but it's also demanding. We know the preparation an act of worship requires: the prayer, the study, the cost and joy of wrestling with God's Word and word, and what they mean for lives, churches, communities and God's world, with all of their fears and hopes, hatred and love. Increasingly, too, the pressures of the preaching plan mean we're taking on more acts of worship. That can be a privilege, but it can also be exhausting, and can lead to weariness.

The service for the admission of local preachers opens with these words, which I find powerful and comforting: "The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of the preachers". Each one of us, Local Preacher or Worship Leader, is part of a great Connexional community, praying for and supporting one another and, of course, part of the communion of saints. Kathy Galloway's hymn, invites us to:

*Sing for God's saints who have travelled faith's journey before us,
Who in our weariness give us their hope to restore us;
In them we see*

*The new creation to be,
Spirit of love made flesh for us.*

And so, I invite you to take a moment to remember a Local Preacher or Worship Leader who has played an important part in your faith journey. For me growing up in the late 1980s in Kent, that person was a Local Preacher, a farmer. I can't remember what he said, but I do remember for the first time an overwhelming sense of the presence of God - in retrospect, there was something about his sincerity and honesty, his deeply held sense of devotion and his gentle rootedness in God, which drew me into the mystery of God's love for the first time.

He will never know the impact that he had that day - and he is now one of the saints who has travelled faith's journey before us, part of that great company of encouragers. A lovely quotation in the "Called to be a Worship Leader" booklet says: "There is an old Christian tradition that God sends each person into this world with a special message to deliver, with a song to sing for others, with a special act of love to bestow. No one else can speak my message, or sing my song, or offer my act of love. These are only entrusted to me." (Francis Dewar, Called or Collared).

Thank you for the unique gifts that each of you bring and for the ways in which God has spoken through you which you might never even realise. As part of that 'great company', please know that each of us is supported by prayer, and held in the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Ideas & Resources

Do you know anyone aged 18-30 who wants to grow as a leader?



The Leadership Year is an exciting opportunity for 18-30 year olds in the Methodist Church who want to invest time in developing their leadership abilities.

It is aimed at those who may just be starting out in a leadership role, or who are wanting to be involved in leadership, either within or outside of the Church.

It includes 3 residential weekends, an optional mentor/coach and being part of a small group. It is a chance for young leaders to be in community with other young adults, to reflect on what it means to be a Christian leader (in church, secular workplaces, and local community) and to develop characteristics needed for self-aware, visionary, resilient leadership.

There are **12 fully funded places** available. **All details and application form are here.** Applications close on 22nd September!

Worship and Preaching Community

As Local Preachers and Worship Leaders, we can't work alone! We're part of a community of people called by God to proclaim the transforming love of Jesus Christ, to build up the church for service, and to set the scene for people to meet with God. That's amazing!

It also makes the times we gather in fellowship and encouragement really special. Our Local Preachers' Meetings* are the beating heart of our circuit's mission and ministry. Or they could be. Often though, they end up being just another committee meeting to be fitted into the diary. The result is that people opt out, because they see no point in being there.

Here are five ideas for transforming our meetings:

Worship comes first - spend time in worship and fellowship, invite everyone to contribute something or take turns to lead.

Make learning central - tackle topical issues that matter, or invite people to share things they have been learning. You could ask those in training to share about a module they found interesting.

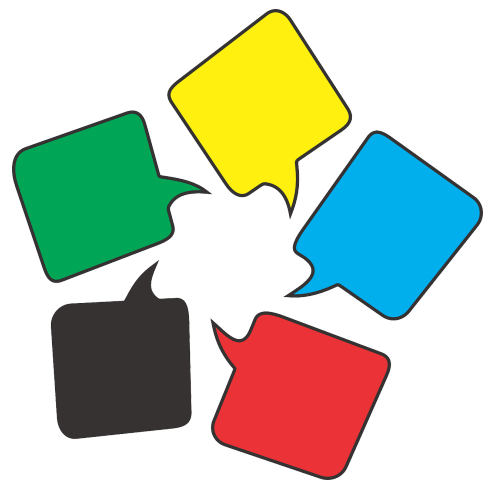
Talk through real issues - one of our tasks is to consider the work of God in the circuit. Talk through what's going on, the joys, challenges and dilemmas and pray about them. We all have valuable insights to bring to the table.

Ask people what matters - especially those who don't regularly come. Find out what would persuade them to come back. It's best to speak to people face-to-face if possible - we all get fed up with email questionnaires! Be prepared to take suggestions seriously, even if things need to change.

Meet at a time and place that suits people (especially those who don't already come) - you may be inadvertently excluding people who have work or family commitments, or who don't want to travel in the dark. Saturday morning at a coffee shop or Wednesday teatime at a central location in the circuit may work better. Consider holding some meetings on Zoom.

These are just a few ideas, but please tell us what works in your circuit and we can share your good ideas around the connexion. Please write to Stefan or Bob at localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk.

* If your meeting is called something else, like "Worship Leaders' and Preachers' Meeting, this applies to you too!





Christianity Month found its origins in a God-given vision in November 2022. It has since grown across Methodist Churches and ecumenically.

Put simply, Christianity Month is an opportunity to celebrate the huge positive effect the Christian faith has had on the world, as well as providing an opportunity to reach out in mission as well.

This simple idea can release people to share the good things that the Christian faith does in a variety of different ways as churches and individuals feel is

appropriate. Preachers, worship leaders and church officers can play an exciting part in catching the vision.

Christianity Month can be held at any time. However, holding it in May lends itself to linking with other events and campaigns such as Thy Kingdom Come, Pentecost, and Christian Aid week. Taken together, these can make a real splash.

Why not think now whether Christianity Month could be a focus for your church next May? To download the logo and find out more visit **[Christianity Month](#)**.

Chris Briggs, Mission Enabler, Nottingham and Derby District



Action for Children's Faith Space

Join Action for Children's quarterly online forum, Faith Space, for Methodists and other church supporters. You'll connect with other churches, communities and individuals - all inspiring each other to help the charity create more safe and happy childhoods.

You'll hear first-hand updates from frontline staff, young ambassadors and fundraisers. And you'll see the huge difference your support makes. **[Register to receive invitations](#)**



Politics in the Pulpit?

The election may be over, but politics is all around us, and affects all our lives. The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) is a partnership between the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United

Reformed Church. The purpose of JPIT is to help the Churches to work together for peace and justice through listening, learning, praying, speaking and acting on public policy issues.

Their website is full of fascinating and insightful resources, covering many of the issues facing people today. In particular, **Politics in the Pulpit?** is a weekly podcast with a guest speaker which connects next Sunday's lectionary readings with the current news. Find it with the other resources on the **JPIT website** or search for **Politics in the Pulpit?** in your usual podcast app.



Methodist Prayer Handbook 2024-25

Following the prophet Isaiah's call, echoing through the ages to us and reflected in Mary's prayer, the 2024/2025 Prayer Handbook focuses on how the Church can "learn to do right; seek justice and defend the oppressed" (Isaiah 1:17a, NIV). The Methodist Prayer Handbook includes prayers for every day of the year together with the daily lectionary for the year.

Order from **Methodist Publishing** at £4.50 each, £4.15 each for 10 or more. Why not order a copy for each of the local preachers and worship leaders in your circuit?

Events

Doing Digital

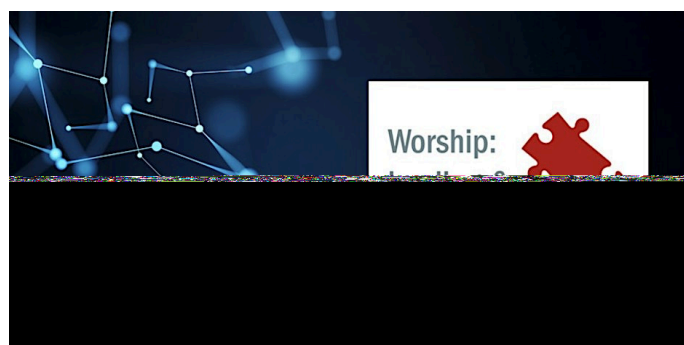
The online world is changing quickly and it's hard to keep up with everything!

So what opportunities does this bring for the church?

Many people who can't get to a church building have found a place to belong in an online church. Several districts and circuits are exploring a NPNP digital church. Some churches are exploring connecting with their local areas, through podcasts or radio stations.

- We can make and build friendships online.
- We can pray together online.
- We can be an online church.

This 3 week course run by Fiona Fidgin (Digital Communications Officer) is an introduction for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders to develop our digital skills and become more confident in a digital world.



Previous participants described it as: *'A delightfully practical series.'* *'It really inspired me to look at my preaching and leading worship in a different way.'*

Three consecutive Wednesdays starting 6th November at 7pm - 8.30pm

Nov 6th : What's digital got to do with me?

Nov 13th: Using PowerPoint well (including videos & recorded music)

Nov 20th: Using social media and the internet for prayer and worship.

Sign up here on Eventbrite for the three sessions.



LWPT

Mastering Sermon Types and Powerful Conclusions

A webinar with Ian Stackhouse,
Wednesday 11 September, 1pm

Ian Stackhouse, Senior Minister of Millmead Church in Guildford will offer valuable insights and practical advice to help you hone your sermon-writing skills and deliver more compelling messages.

Discover expert tips on creating impactful conclusions that resonate with listeners. Learn why effective sermon endings are crucial for leaving a lasting impression and reinforcing your message. **Book online here**

New Places for New People



Church Planting Intensive (residential), 11 to 13 October:

A fully funded course for those planting New Places for New People, including residential weekend and six online sessions to follow.

30 places available, booking info here: **Church Planting Intensive**.

A repeat course is planned, starting in March 2025.

Here's a quote from a previous course participant:

Our story so far is so exciting in how we have moved from unchurched community on the margins to a community of faith - on our annual community seaside trip in August we are baptising 4 people in the sea !!! Hallelujah and praise God for this - ps your prayers will be appreciated as the North Sea even in August is blooming cold without a wetsuit lol. (Terminus Community, Sheffield)

Download the **July/August New Places for New People Update**.



Working out Worship is a new series of online training events for anyone who is involved with leading worship in their Local Church.

Perhaps you're a Worship Leader hoping to make worship more engaging, a Local Lay Pastor developing a new worship time for families, or a Church Steward wondering how to get a team together for Local Arrangements at your church: This course is for you.

Youth workers, Sunday school leaders, local preachers, ministers are all welcome, as well as anyone interested in getting involved in leading worship.

To register using Eventbrite click here.

Registering for one session will give access to all sessions as all use the same link.



Training & Development

Worship: Leading & Preaching

Local Preachers' Secretaries' Drop-in Sessions

Thank you to everyone who attended the first four drop-in sessions for Local Preachers' Secretaries. These were a new idea for 2024 and we were thrilled by the positive response.

Two more are planned on **Thursday 17th October (7:30-9pm)** and **Tuesday 22nd October (2-3:30pm)**.

Please click the date to book.

The sessions are provided for us to share ideas and issues together in our roles. The sessions will be facilitated by one or two of the Learning Network officers who specialise in supporting worship and preaching, and there will be some input on a topic of interest. However, the main purpose is conversation and all are welcome to attend, whether or not you have been to one of these before.

We have compiled a list of questions raised at the first four sessions and their answers. We are in the process of adding this information to the revised Methodist website. Please keep checking the **Local Preachers' Secretaries' page** for updates.

Worship: Foundations

Worship: Foundations is a workbook for those starting out as Worship Leaders or Local Preachers. It covers the basics of planning a service of worship and forms part of Module 2 of the Worship: Leading & Preaching course.

It's also useful for those leading Local Arrangements or wanting to explore what's involved in leading worship.

The booklet can be downloaded as a PDF from the **Worship: Foundations page** or ordered in paper form from **Methodist Publishing** (copies are free with just postage to pay). New WLP students are sent a voucher in their enrolment email entitling them to free postage should they order a paper copy from Methodist Publishing. To reduce paper usage and cost, we no longer post copies of Worship: Foundations to all new students

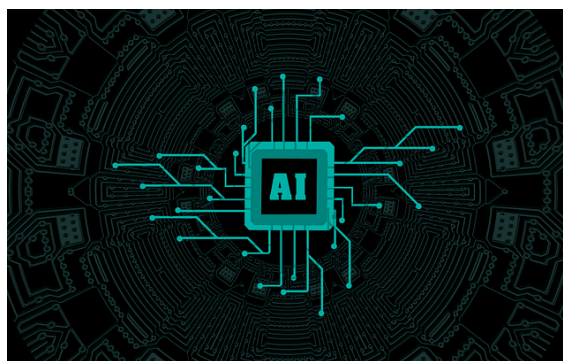
Worship Foundations is now available as a PDF download in both **Welsh** and **Traditional Chinese**.



Go to the **Worship: Foundations page**, where you can also download copies of the accompanying worksheets.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

There's much discussion around Artificial Intelligence, and the technology is changing so fast. Like all new technologies, it promises so much, and there is clearly much benefit. It also poses many challenges and risks.



Look out for a new series of online courses next year looking at how AI affects our faith and how we understand Church.

For WLP students, it's almost impossible to avoid using AI in some form - even a simple internet search will probably use AI algorithms. However, care should be taken, as using AI to directly create project work is not acceptable. The use of generative AI without due acknowledgement constitutes plagiarism.

If you do use Generative AI apps such as ChatGPT as part of your project work you should make it clear in your project and make sure your Tutor knows. Remember, using AI to create sermons or project material for assessment is no different from asking someone else to do your work for you.

A polite request

Stefan Carney works hard to try to ensure that requests for certificates and admission packs for new preachers are printed and despatched on time. In order to avoid disappointment, please:

- Request long-service certificates in good time before they are required, and clearly state the date when you require them for presentation. We endeavour to print and send certificates around two weeks ahead of this date.
- For new Local Preachers, don't request the Admission Pack (Bookplate and Presidents' Letter) until the Local Preachers' Meeting has made their recommendation to the Circuit Meeting. At this point, the Trial Service and final interview will be complete, and the WLP course results will have been confirmed following moderation. Planning the Admission Service too early can result in disappointment if the outcome of WLP moderation is not as expected, and extra work is required.
- If possible, make requests using the Local Preachers' Return Form. If this doesn't work for you (it has its limitations) please email us direct at localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk.

In the next few weeks, we will be moving offices again, from our temporary home in Church House Westminster to the new Methodist Church House in Tavistock Place. Thank you for your patience during this transition. Please bear with us if we are not able to answer your queries immediately.

Bob Bartindale & Stefan Carney, Local Preachers' and Worship Leaders' Team

Stefan's Very Important Question

Thank you to everybody who got in touch to tell me how they would "*describe the colour of the perfect cup of tea*". The Methodist Tea Colour chart proved a very popular source of reference! I've picked out some of the more interesting answers below:

"I like my tea a rich golden colour... I make it using 18 carrots!"



- **John**, Local Preachers' Secretary, Kendal

"I'd probably say Red Sea from the Methodist Tea Colour chart!"

- **Jenny**, Presbyter, South Bedfordshire

"I am not a tea drinker but consider that builder's brown is the best colour."

- **Barbara**, Local Preacher, Cannock Chase

I'd love to hear your answers to the question "***what are the day-to-day things you do that make you truly happy?***". You can send your answers along with your name, role within the Methodist Church and your circuit to me at: localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk



Footnote

As I write, the Olympics have just come to a close. Were you one of those who was glued to the TV, watching all kinds of sports you never notice the rest of the time, or were you getting grumpy that you couldn't find anything decent on the telly because there was sport on every channel. I was definitely in the first category!

As I watched, I noticed how my mood shifted as I was absorbed in Keely Hodgkinson's magnificent victory in the 800m, or Katarina Johnson-Thompson's personal best (also in the 800m) that clinched her first ever Olympic medal in the heptathlon. And it was fantastic

to see Simone Biles back on form in the gymnastics. For a few moments, it seemed that the world was a brighter place, despite the endless tragedies that form the usual media backdrop to our lives. We can't (and shouldn't) forget the present reality of poverty, violence, racism and climate crisis but it was good to concentrate for a while on the best achievements of humanity made in God's image.

Paul the apostle knew about sport - he speaks of running races and winning prizes. He knew too about darkness, fear, hatred and violence and had experienced it first hand. But he also speaks of light: *For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord...* (Ephesians 5:8-10 NRSV)

As we lead worship and to share the good news of Jesus, we are amongst people who have all sorts of experiences of life. Some will be optimistic, some will be holding back despair. Some will be full of hope, others worried for the future. Some will be celebrating, some will be struggling. Our role is not to pretend that everything is fine, but to provide an opportunity for all to be honest in the presence of God.

And we also point to the light of Christ, the light that is found in all that is good and right and true. Because in Christ, we can be optimistic about the future and the possibilities that lie ahead. We believe that there is always hope for a brighter tomorrow. We should encourage each other to find out what is pleasing to the Lord, and the light that can overcome darkness.

Bob Bartindale

Officer for Worship & Local Preachers

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