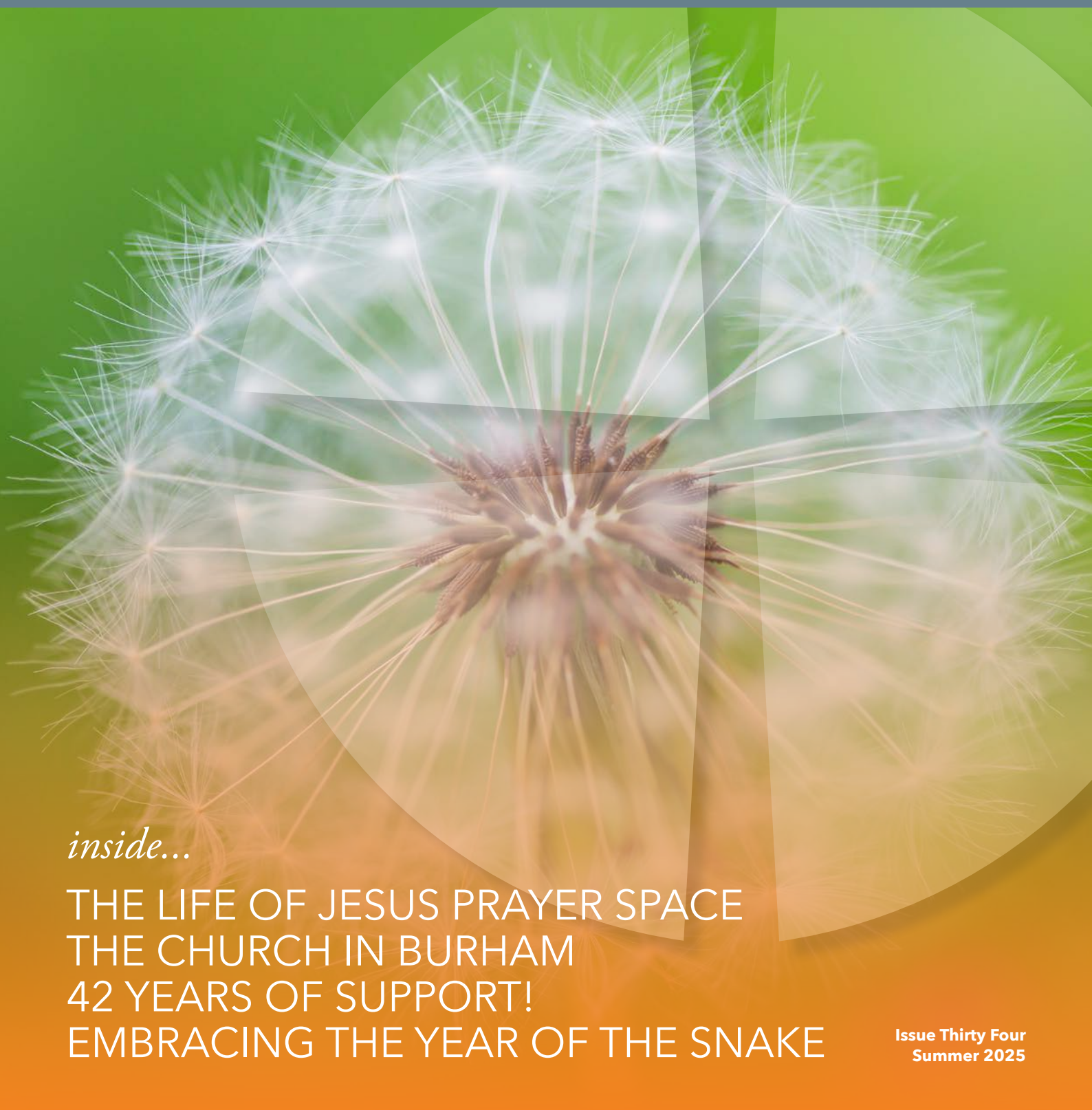




North Kent Methodist Circuit

# grapevine

CIRCUIT NEWS AND PREACHING PLAN



*inside...*

THE LIFE OF JESUS PRAYER SPACE  
THE CHURCH IN BURHAM  
42 YEARS OF SUPPORT!  
EMBRACING THE YEAR OF THE SNAKE

Issue Thirty Four  
Summer 2025

# Summer 2025



**In my former life as a member of the Methodist Church's Connexional Team, I was sent on a mission to the New**

**Room in Bristol. If you haven't been, I thoroughly recommend it - as well as having an excellent coffee shop, it's the oldest Methodist building in the world, and a reminder that before Methodists built their own churches, they built spaces that functioned as foodbanks, pharmacies, and places where those setting up a small business could access seed funding.**

While I was there, a member of staff used a phrase that has stayed with me, and that he attributed to Wendell Berry: 'the seeds of the past bring forth the harvest of the future.' I see this wisdom reflected in our life as a Church: the life and faith of those

who have gone before us inevitably shape us, as we seek to be salt and light in our local communities. We see in some of our articles this quarter the debt that we owe to the past, as we look to the future God has in store for us. We see how the faithful folks from the Church in Burham, building on many years of worship in their church building, are now finding innovative ways to be church in the community, and seeing signs of growth. We see in the fantastic fundraising taking place for Action for Children at Sittingbourne the legacy not only of those who began the local group in 1983, but of the Revd Dr Thomas Bowman Stephenson, a Methodist minister whose horror at seeing children living rough under the arches of Waterloo Station led to the creation of the National Children's Home. And, of course, biblical figures from 2000 years ago appearing in knitted form today!

I hope you find these articles engaging and inspiring, and that you might find a moment to reflect on the ways in which the seeds of the past are bringing forth the harvest of the future in your own church and communities. If you'd like to find out more about the New Room (and arrange a visit to the café!) you can do so here: [www.newroombristol.org.uk](http://www.newroombristol.org.uk)

Thank you to Bonni-Belle for inviting me to stand in as editor while she is on her well-earned sabbatical - but we look forward to having her back for the next issue!

Every blessing,

**Naomi**



# *The life of Jesus* — *prayer space* —

I have been a member of the Christian Dance Fellowship of Britain since we came together in 1991 at Northampton. I have learnt a lot from other members of CDFB and one is the use of prayer spaces and prayer stations.

I set up prayer stations for a united reflective morning, entitled "The life of Jesus prayer space", as part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. I was inspired by all the biblical characters we have made in the Sycamore Tree Craft Group at Larkfield.

The stations were: Jesus' birth in Bethlehem; The Baptism of Jesus; The Last Supper; The Crucifixion; The Empty Tomb; The Ascension.

I also put together a booklet as stimuli for thought. I invited people to take a look at six significant times in Jesus life when things changed for him and challenged them to reflect on the different seasons of our Christian lives, when we have been called to live and share our individual witness differently.

I included relevant verses and prompts for thought such as:

Is there a word or image that captures your imagination or a helpful thought that springs to mind? Does this remind you of other verses? What does this mean to you? How would you feel if you were there? The theme of the prayer week, which was "Do you believe this?" was also included. At the end was a space to write a love letter to Jesus.

**Sylvia Ratcliff,  
Larkfield & East Malling Methodist Church**





# 42 Years of Support!

PROUDLY  
SUPPORTS

Action for  
Children

Way back in time, well 1983, a merry band of 6-8 people from Sittingbourne Methodist Church started a support group for Action for Children (AFC) or as it was known then, National Children's Home (NCH) it is still running today 42 years later with a similar number of people in the support group plus a lot of supporters from the church.

In the early days we operated our own bank account on behalf of NCH and supported local projects such as purchasing a tent for Limpsfield Chart, donating to the Shalom Project. Repair and re-vamp a rocking boat for Pastens - a care home for disabled children and young people that is still in operation today. A donation to the Children in Danger Campaign.

From 1987 - 1991 money was raised and donations made to Pastens and other local care homes. The money was used to purchase items for a fun bus and computer room it also helped to pay for Careline training courses and phone systems. Donations were also made to the Deptford Family Centre, the Young Runaways Project and the Jamaican Hurricane Appeal.

In 1991 our Halifax bank account was closed and from then until today all monies raised go to the AFC headquarters for them to use as needed. If we want to support a specific project, it has to be arranged with AFC Head Office.

We have raised funds for AFC in many ways from selling bulbs (the flowering kind!) to Pantomimes, Concerts and Sponsored walks. During lock-down we even baked cakes and delivered to people unable to get out and of course there is always a collection box available and once a year we try to have an Action for Children Service.



Pastens Rocking Boat - 1985



Dear Peter and  
friends,

Thank you for giving  
the Quadro kit.

from... Sarah Jane  
Bianca Jane Madge  
Cassie





## The Pantomimes!

From 1984 until 2008 the Support Group along with many friends staged a panto, the first being Sleeping Beauty and the final one A Christmas Carol in February 2008. The writing and production of these were all done in-house one year we even staged a pantomime about Boudica the leader of the Iceni tribe in Roman Britain. Great fun was had in rehearsals and many lines were learnt (and forgotten!) Stage sets were built and painted along with props and costumes, lighting and sound effects. Music and songs were chosen and for many years Brian Davies played the piano and more often than not had the instrument ambushed!

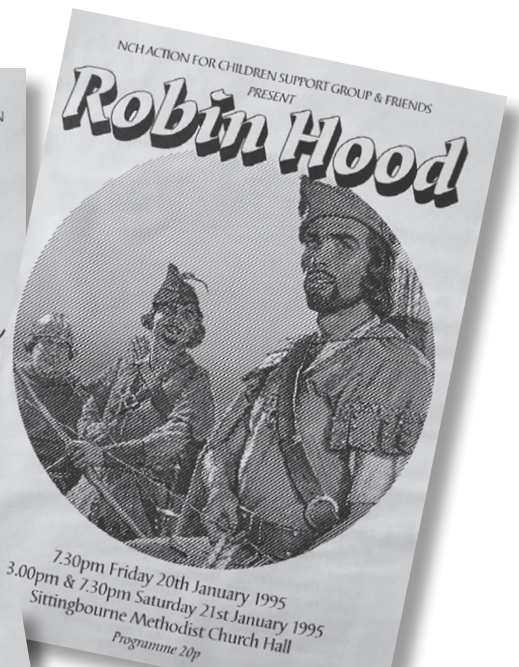
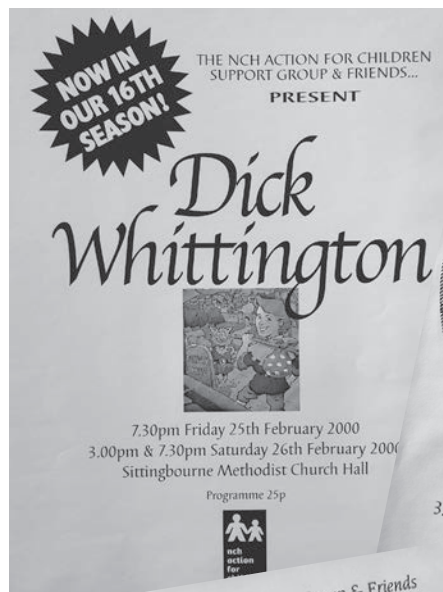
The panto's were a great success and raised a lot of money for NCH but as time went on and we all got older the decision was taken to stop staging them and concentrate on other ways of fundraising such as home grown concerts, concerts by the UK Paper Brass Band, producing a calendar with all the proceeds going to AFC and for a couple of years some of us even boycotted our beds and were sponsored to stay awake all night!

To this day we still raise in the region of £1,500 - £2,000 per year for Action for Children and our running total for the 42 years is approaching £114,000! My thanks to all the members of the Support Group and to all who have supported our events over the years, it's quite an achievement!

Paul Skipp, SMC

## STOP PRESS!

On the 21st and 22nd March local choir **Opus 32** and the Wind Band **Encore** performed two concerts to raise funds for AFC. The fantastic amount of £1,000 was raised!





# The Church in Burham

**Following the very sad closure of our church building in September, with Naomi's encouragement and helpful support, our congregation was eager to maintain a Christian presence in our village.**

Over many years we had established several regular activities in addition to our weekly Sunday services and felt that continuing some of these would somewhat achieve this aim. In doing so, we have had the support of Larkfield's Church Council (as Burham had already, for some years, been a class of Larkfield).

We have continued our monthly Country Lunch and have just restarted the Book Exchange, both now relocated to our Community Centre. The Country Lunch has grown, with people staying on after the Thursday community coffee morning. We are most grateful to the Community Centre's trustees for installing kitchen cupboards for us to store cutlery, crockery etc. and for giving us space



to keep our stock of books for the Book Exchange.

Our Christmas Eve Christingle Service had traditionally been a wonderful start to the festivities and our little church would be filled to capacity. We were therefore anxious to continue this and so planned to hold a similar service in the Community Centre, not knowing whether this would be well attended. However, we were delighted that about 50 parents and children attended, assembled their Christingles and sang some carols. A collection was taken and we sent this to Action for Children.

So we will hopefully be repeating this in future years.

Probably the most pleasing and rewarding of our innovations is the Prayer & Praise gathering held on the first Thursday of the month in St Mary's Old Church, Burham.

This historic church closed when the main village of Burham moved up to its current place and new houses were built to accommodate the increased numbers of workers and their families with the advent of brick and cement works.

The Prayer & Praise gatherings are shaped by those who attend, with around 45 minutes of acoustic worship music, prayers, testimony, and reflections. It is great that we have welcomed others from outside the village. The Friends of St Mary's have allowed us to meet in this Pilgrim Church and we give a donation to help with their ongoing expenses. There is no heating and we debated whether we should meet during the

colder months, but the general feeling was that we should and just wear warmer clothes and take blankets!

In March we had the first of what we hope will be a monthly event, when we joined with our friends from All Saints, Wouldham for a joint ecumenical service led by Naomi and the Rector of our parish, Rev Nicky Rawlins. This took place on Sunday afternoon in the Community Centre and was a café style service with tea, coffee and cakes being served.

Those who previously worshipped in The Church in Burham have visited other churches: Eccles, Larkfield and All Saints in Wouldham, while others tune in to the online service. There has been a wonderful welcome wherever we have gone and a great understanding of our feelings of sadness around the loss of our church building.

We were bequeathed a considerable sum of money by one of our faithful lifelong members and decided we would like to spend some of this in her memory within the village where she had lived for all of her 90 plus years. Plans are going ahead to reinstate the Prayer Garden in our local Primary School and we hope that this will be completed shortly.

We extend a welcome to anyone who would like to join any of the activities

mentioned above and wish for your prayers as we set out on a new journey of faith.

**Eileen Smith**



# *Embracing the Year of the Snake:*

## **A Journey of Community, Culture, and Faith at the 2025 Chatham Chinese New Year**

The Year of the Snake is rich in symbolism. It represents flexibility, adaptability, and wisdom—qualities that resonate deeply with our experiences during the Chatham Chinese New Year event on 8 February. This year, the Medway Chinese Methodist Church took part in a celebration that not only honoured our heritage but also strengthened community connections through service and shared joy.

This event was a fantastic opportunity to showcase our vibrant Chinese culture while fostering cultural exchange with our British neighbours. We offered an array of traditional Chinese New Year gifts—festival stickers of blessings, flip flowers, glowing lanterns, handheld drums, lucky bags, fortune boxes, lion dance bracelets and lively snake balloons. Each of these items symbolised hope, joy, peace, and blessings, reflecting our rich traditions and our Christian spirit during this festive season.

Dressed in bright red attire, many members of our congregation marched through Chatham High Street. The colour red holds deep significance in Chinese culture, symbolising good fortune, happiness, and prosperity. Wearing red during this festive season is a joyful invitation for good luck in the year ahead.



A highlight of the event was the skilled calligraphers from our church, who demonstrated the beautiful art of Chinese calligraphy. They wrote attendees' English names in Chinese characters. Chinese calligraphy is not just artistic expression; it's a way of honouring our language and heritage. As our calligraphers interacted with fair-goers, we witnessed moments of genuine cross-cultural understanding.

In those moments, I felt God's presence guiding our mission. We used our gifts to bless others and build relationships within the vibrant tapestry of modern British society. It was a joyful reminder that our shared

experiences and cultural expressions can unite us in faith and in one community, transcending barriers and fostering understanding.

Reflecting on our journey, it's clear that God was with us, guiding our teamwork in preparation for this event. Our church team united with a clear vision, working hard to prepare for the festivities. Our role wasn't just to lead; it was to serve one another—lifting each other up, sharing burdens, and ensuring every voice was heard. Teamwork and collaboration are essential pillars of our church community.

The event also provided financial support to our church finances, alleviating some of our critical challenges. This support is a testament to God's faithfulness. When we step out in faith and engage actively with our community, we align ourselves with His greater mission. The funds raised will empower us to continue our ministry, fulfilling our commitment to nurture both our church family and the wider community.

Throughout the preparations and celebrations, we realised that our presence at this event built bridges with both the Chinese community and the English-speaking residents of Medway. We were not merely spectators; we were active participants in our local community's fabric. The Medway Chinese Methodist Church aims to be a source of light and salt, making a positive impact in our neighbourhood.

In the spirit of the Year of the Snake, we embraced qualities of flexibility, adaptability, and wisdom. As we navigate the challenges of our mission, may we continue to embody these traits, creating a future that honours our heritage while serving our wider community with grace and love.

**Oscar Siu**





# North Kent Circuit

## Preaching Plan June – August 2025

		JUNE					JULY				AUGUST				
		1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	31
BEARSTED	10.30	READ	<i>us@</i> NEWINGTON	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	NEWELL	READ	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	PICKARD	LA	ZACHAR	READ <i>hc</i>	LA	R GREY	LA	ZACHAR
CHINESE	13.30	PICKARD & SIU <i>Baptism</i>	SIU	PICKARD SIU	WONG	LAM	PICKARD SIU <i>hc</i>	SIU	SIU	LAU PUI KEY	SIU	KAN YU <i>hc</i>	CHU	LA	CHENG PO SANG
DENE HOLM	11.00	LA	ROWE	DOWNES	BURCH	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	LA	ROWE	LA	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	TERRETT <i>us@G'end hc</i>	TERRETT <i>us@The Brent</i>	TERRETT <i>SummerOuting</i>	TERRETT <i>us@Spital St.</i>	TERRETT <i>us@DeneHolm</i>
ECCLES	10.30	WILDING	NEWELL	SHEPHERD	LA	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	SHEPHERD	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	R GREY	LA	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	LA	LA
THIRD AVENUE	10.30	SELMES	LA	LA	SELMES <i>hc</i>	COOKE <i>ca</i>	SELMES <i>sss</i>	ROBB <i>sss</i>	SELMES <i>sss hc</i>	LA <i>aa</i>	SELMES <i>sss</i>	SELMES <i>hc</i>	WILLING	ROBB	WATTON
GRAVESEND	11.00	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	OATES <i>hc ca</i>	TERRETT	LA	WATTON	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	DOWNES	LA	ROWE	TERRETT <i>us@G'end hc</i>	TERRETT <i>us@The Brent</i>	TERRETT <i>SummerOuting</i>	TERRETT <i>us@Spital St.</i>	TERRETT <i>us@DeneHolm</i>
HARTLIP	18.30	TROTT <i>9.30am</i>	SELMES <i>hc</i>	HILLS- BENDING <i>ca</i>	GALLAGHER	SELMES <i>us</i> <i>St. Michaels</i>	GERMAN	SELMES <i>hc</i>	LA	GERMAN	STUNELL	LA	GERMAN	LA	SELMES <i>hc</i> <i>@St. Michaels</i>
HEXTABLE	10.30	LA	TERRETT <i>hc</i> <i>9am bc</i>	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	LA	ROWE	HARDMAN	PACKHAM <i>9am bc</i>	OATES <i>hc ca</i>	LA	DOWNES	OATES <i>hc</i>	DOWNES	LA	HUDSON- BEDDOWS
HOPE STREET	10.30	COYNE	LE MASONRY	LA	LE MASONRY	THOMPSON	COYNE	LE MASONRY	LE MASONRY	PICKARD	COYNE	LE MASONRY	LE MASONRY	LE MASONRY	THOMPSON
KINGSWOOD	11.00	LA	MYLES	LA	LA	LA	LA	MYLES	LA	LA	LA	MYLES	LA	LA	LA
LARKFIELD	10.00	<i>9am bc</i> <i>10.30am LA</i>	McKERRY	BURCH	R GREY	OATES & CLAMPIN <i>us hc</i>	<i>9am bc</i> <i>10.30am LA</i>	McKERRY	LA	WILDING	McKERRY	PICKARD	WILDING	SHEPHERD	OATES <i>us hc</i>
	Café 15.00		WILDING	OATES & NICKY <i>Burham Cafe</i>				WILDING	OATES & NICKY <i>Burham Cafe</i>						
NEWINGTON	9.30	LA	ZACHAR <i>us St. Mary</i>	LA	ZACHAR <i>us St. Mary</i>	LA	M SMITH	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	M SMITH	LA <i>us St. Mary</i>	LA	LA	M SMITH	ZACHAR <i>us St. Mary</i>	SHEPHERD
ST. LUKE'S	10.30	STUNELL	SELMES <i>hc</i>	CROUCH <i>ca</i>	LA	STUNELL	LA	SELMES <i>hc</i>	LA	WATTON	LA	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	LA	LA	SELMES <i>hc us</i> <i>Strood</i>
HOLY TRINITY	10.00	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. Albans</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. David's</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. Williams</i> <i>hc</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. Albans</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. David's</i> <i>hc</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. Williams</i> <i>hc</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. Albans</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. David's</i> <i>aa hc</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. Williams</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. Albans</i> <i>hc</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. David's</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. Williams</i> <i>hc</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. Albans</i>	ANGELICAN <i>@ St. David's</i> <i>hc</i>
SITTINGBOURNE	10.30	ZACHAR <i>hc am</i>	<i>us@</i> NEWINGTON	TROTT	LA	ZACHAR <i>gd</i>	GALLAGHER	LA	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	M SMITH	LA	ZACHAR <i>hc</i>	LA	STUNELL
SPITAL STREET	10.30	LA	PICKARD	WATTON	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	DOWNES	BURCH	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	LA <i>Music of</i> <i>John Newton</i>	LA	TERRETT <i>us@G'end hc</i>	TERRETT <i>us@The Brent</i>	TERRETT <i>SummerOuting</i>	TERRETT <i>us@Spital St.</i>	TERRETT <i>us@DeneHolm</i>
STOKE	18.30	LA	ROBB	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA	LA	ROBB	LA	LA	LA
PENINSULA STROOD	10.30	LA	LA <i>aa</i>	LA	ROBB	SELMES <i>hc</i>	LA	LA <i>aa</i>	LA	SELMES <i>hc</i>	LA	SIU	LA	LA	<i>us@</i> <i>St. Lukes</i>
TONBRIDGE RD	10.30	OATES <i>hc</i>	R GREY	PICKARD	OATES <i>Junior ca</i>	LA	R GREY	NEWELL	PICKARD	LA	OATES <i>hc</i>	SHEPHERD	READ	LA	MCKERRY
THE BRENT	10.30	TERRETT	LA	S SMITH	LA	HUDSON- BEDDOWS	S SMITH	TERRETT <i>hc</i>	LA	DOWNES	TERRETT <i>us@G'end hc</i>	TERRETT <i>us@The Brent</i>	TERRETT <i>SummerOuting</i>	TERRETT <i>us@Spital St.</i>	TERRETT <i>us@DeneHolm</i>
UNION STREET	10.30	AT WEEK ST. URC	AT WEEK ST. URC	AT TON. ROAD	AT WEEK ST. URC	AT WEEK ST. URC	AT LARKFIELD	AT BEARSTED	AT TON. ROAD	AT WEEK ST. URC	ONLINE	AT LARKFIELD	AT WEEK ST. URC	AT WEEK ST. URC	AT WEEK ST. URC
ONLINE SERVICES	10.30	PICKARD	PICKARD	HEXTABLE	OATES	THIRD AVE	PICKARD	THIRD AVE	HEXTABLE	TBC	PICKARD	OATES	HEXTABLE	TBC	SELMES

*aa* All-age / *am* Annual Meeting / *bc* Breakfast Church / *ca* Church Anniversay / *cc* Café Church / *gd* Gift Day  
*hc* Holy Communion / *sss* Summer Sermon Series / *us* United Service

**For the Autumn 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 20th June 2025. If you can, please attach a suitable high quality image, but do not embed it in a document.

