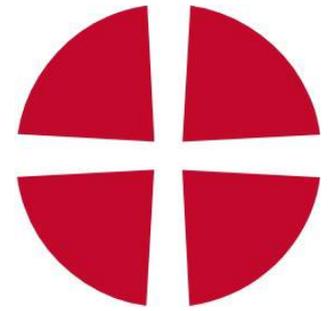




Sankey Valley Methodist Circuit  
**Newsletter No. 10**  
**February 2016**



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### FREEDOM OF WARRINGTON!

February saw a special meeting of Warrington Borough Council, called to receive the recommendation that Revd Stephen Kingsnorth be granted the Freedom of the Borough. This is the highest honour that can be offered by a council – there have been only five candidates over the past 20 years, none clergy!



Stephen arrived in Warrington to minister at Bold St Mission in 1992; in 1993 the Bridge Street bombing occurred, and thereafter faith relationships with statutory bodies blossomed. Responding to circumstance, the Circuit showed itself flexible. Relationships and networks developed with the community, and principally with key-holders in strategically important institutions, leading to invitations to join decision-making bodies where the faith community had never before been represented.

When Stephen was ready to leave the Mission, the Circuit did not want to vacate that wider ministry within the borough, so asked him to remain in the

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role of Warrington Borough Ministry... WBM operated on **4R's**: because of relationships built, WBM is known as a **reference** point for faith enquiry, a **representative** available to serve, a **resource** for acts of spiritual **reflection**, It is on that basis that activity, events, appointments, invitations emerged.



Stephen was instrumental in the establishment of the Council of Faiths. That Council appointed Stephen as faith adviser to the Borough Council. Over the years he has organised celebrations, dramas, briefings, and dialogue evenings. Relationships with statutory authority personnel have brought many informal, confidential and fruitful conversations regarding community cohesion issues in the corridors of power. He has been invited to attend Inter Faith Network conferences, as well as consultations at Lambeth Palace, St George's Windsor & the House of Lords, to discuss interfaith initiatives.

Stephen is driven by the concept of partnership, the integration of all involved with serving his adopted town, nurturing the relationship between statutory and community. WBM is an elected representative of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Network Hub, serving on the Warrington Partnership since its inception. This longevity illustrated that a faith representative is a valid partner – and enables bridge building because of WBM's involvement in so many other themes.

WBM has attended Council meetings over 20 years, building relationship with councillors, and officers, leading reflections when acting as the Mayor's chaplain. Stephen attends Citizenship Ceremonies to greet candidates.

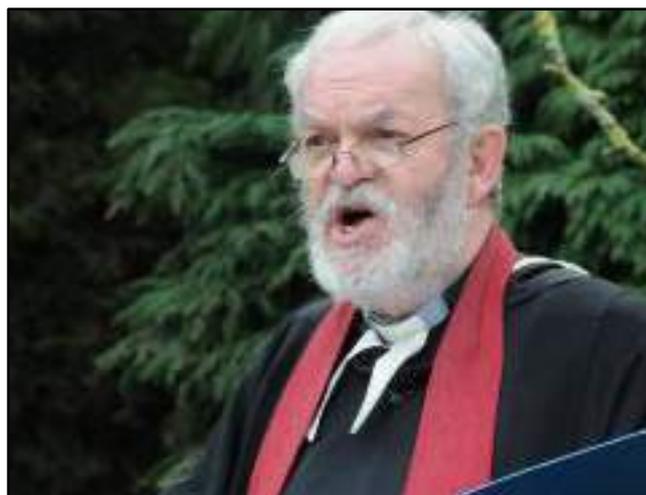
He has organised commemoration observations when significant world events suggest it, at the

request of the Borough Council; for example after Princess Diana's death, the Tsunami, bombings, the Holocaust memorial and WWII anniversary. In Mayoral Chaplaincy, he has organised, for council meetings, interfaith reflections from women faith adherents, the first time ever that women have contributed in that role.

WBM has led the Crematorium memorial service over 15 years, planning with staff the pioneering activity for many with no particular faith connection. He has been active in the Town Centre Management Board and its predecessors for over 20 years, as its secretary and Chair. He is a trustee of the Wolves Charitable Foundation, rugby being vital in the town. He initiated, organised and led a Welcome Songs of Praise for the Samoan Rugby Team at the Stadium, attracting an attendance of 1,400. He organised and led a 1<sup>st</sup> World War commemoration of the 1914 Truce with a Carol Service in December 2014.

WBM over many years has participated in spiritual reflections and promotional events at the Market – he was told that actor-vicars with an Equity card were more expensive to hire than the real thing.

He has been invited to numerous consultations, conversations and conferences organised by the Constabulary or police commissioner. He is Faith rep to the Cheshire Emergency Voluntary Agencies Committee, sharing insights into interfaith sensitivities.



He is appointed to the Council for Religious Education, and works with homeless issues, adult learning, education... WBM has been involved in broadcasts and interviews with the Collegiate media department, and some years ago he was made a Fellow of Warrington Collegiate.

Within the media WBM is faith adviser to Radio Warrington, and has done 'pause for thought'

broadcasts, Sunday newspapers reviews on Radio Merseyside. With the Warrington Guardian, some 20 years ago WBM initiated with the editor a Church News column which Stephen wrote for many years, as well as an internet feature.

WBM has led annual observances at the IRA bombing site in Bridge St. He has regularly visited the island of Ireland with civic parties (and Terry Waite), holding conversations with former paramilitaries, because risk-taking by a victim community is possible. He chaired The Bridge, which organised an annual Irish festival, and hosted visits by President Robinson & Martin McGuinness.

Some years ago Warrington Borough Transport named buses after those they termed 'local heroes'. One bus was named 'the Reverend Stephen Kingsnorth'.



*Stephen adds a personal note:*

It was an honour to be made a Fellow of Warrington Collegiate, have a bus named after WBM by Warrington Borough Transport and now to be awarded Freedom of the Borough by WBC. It has been grand to be supported by the Methodist circuit as I have stood in this privileged position alongside the decision-makers of Warrington.

I am to retire to Wales in June and my final circuit service, to which all are invited, will be held midweek on Wednesday June 22nd at 6pm at Warrington Islamic Association, Lockton Lane, Bewsey, when a Christian Service will be held beside the Mosque, followed by an informal reception. In an attempt to gauge numbers please inform Emma at CRC [crc@svmc.org.uk](mailto:crc@svmc.org.uk) if you hope to attend.

**Revd Stephen Kingsnorth**

## SABBATICAL REFLECTIONS

I am very thankful to the Circuit for the gift of my sabbatical, which I took for three months from the beginning of October. I am especially grateful to staff and stewards who took on extra work during that period. The study element of my sabbatical focussed on time at Gladstone's Theological Library in Hawarden, North Wales. I read in depth around the verse in John's Gospel where Jesus says 'I am the way, the truth and the life,' exploring what that meant at the time and what it might mean for people today. I look forward to leading a Bible study and / or preaching series on these themes in the spring.



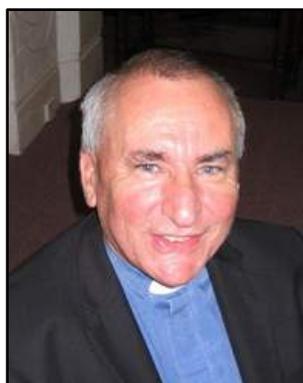
I enjoyed catching up with friends around the country and spending precious time with my family in Gloucestershire. I was blessed by Advent retreat days in Hastings. I also took time to sort out my teacher training course and have accepted a place to do my Primary PGCE at Worcester University, starting at the beginning of September 2016.

I missed people in the Circuit and am glad to be back among you. Thank you for your messages of prayer and love, and your warm welcome back. I am looking forward to journeying with you in the coming months.

**Revd Lucille Rogers**

## INCOMING SUPERINTENDENT

We are delighted to welcome Revd David Easton as our new Circuit Superintendent from September 2016.



David is an experienced minister with thirty years in ministry in a variety of contexts. His priorities in ministry include a desire that preaching should be biblically based and relevant to our current context. Also important is the need to develop our own sense of vocation as

disciples of Jesus. In his free time David and his wife Joan enjoy walking their collie Maisie and David a keen follower of Aston Villa FC. They have three adult children who have left home.

**Eric Andrews**

## LAS POSADAS AT CROSS LANE

Las Posadas is Spanish for “inns” and is a traditional Spanish festival that takes place during Advent.

The festival was popular in Latin America, and especially Mexico, where young people would dress as Joseph and Mary, ride a real donkey, and stay at a different house every night. On the final night of the festival, Christmas Eve, the community would act out a play of the nativity, the figures of the Holy Family would be placed in the nativity scene, and after midnight, the figure of baby Jesus added.

This tradition has been revived and updated, and it is nativity figures that travel around parishes and communities and so on throughout Advent, staying at different homes, finally arriving at Church on Christmas Eve, to take their place in the church crib at the service, ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day.

Throughout Advent in 2015 Las Posadas took place at Cross Lane United Church, Newton le Willows. Our church has knitted nativity figures,



and the figures of Mary and Joseph and their donkey travelled around the church community and were welcomed into many homes. Their hosts acted as innkeepers and involved them in family life.

The first photograph shows Mary and Joseph looking on whilst their host was

writing Christmas cards, and in the second photograph Mary and Joseph are at Church on Christmas Day with the baby Jesus in the crib,



together with the three kings and the shepherds and their sheep. Here they stay until the twelfth night.

Mary and Joseph's

journey, as depicted in the Las Posadas reminds us that we need to make room for Jesus in our lives, homes and communities.

**Siân Spink**

## OPEN CHRISTMAS DAY AT HEATH ST

My mum and I wanted to do something for isolated and vulnerable people on Christmas Day. Mum asked if we could use the church hall at Heath Street, Golborne & Lowton, which we were able to do and we really appreciated that. The day started around 9am, and we had volunteers ready at church to meet and greet people. Others were serving hot drinks and cakes, and still other people collected individuals from their homes.

We also had volunteers playing the piano, guitars and singing. It was a lovely day and everyone got involved with the carol singing. The food was delivered on time and was amazing. People from the local community had been so generous: Embrace Wigan and Leigh, and Waitrose supermarket helped make all this possible.

This enabled us to give everyone gifts and prizes for a raffle and tombola. We could not have done it without everyone's support and generosity.

Hopefully this is something that we can continue doing in future years at Heath Street.

**Rachel Parkinson**

## MESSY JONAH

Recently the youngsters, parents and carers at Nutgrove Community Centre took part in a Messy Church where they learned about the story of Jonah And The Very Big Fish.

Children had the opportunity to find out what the contents of a whale's stomach feels like(!) and the very brave ones were also given a chance to be 'swallowed up' by the helpful whale who had come along to help tell the story.



**Revd Martin Wood**

## PRESCOT & WHISTON FOODBANK

We continue to work as a team ecumenically and are thankful for our base in the Salvation Army building and for the generosity of all those who give. We have been busy since the new year, seeing a few people we have seen before and increasing numbers of new clients. Many of the people who come spend quite a long time with us - often sharing their story over a cup of coffee or a bowl of soup. We hear stories that we are not likely to forget. We are able to give them food, and we are able to give them time - though this, to us, seems a very small contribution in the circumstances.

We recently had a letter from one of our clients, updating us on her situation and sending thanks:

**'thanks for being there, thanks for listening, thanks for understanding, thanks for being non-judgemental, and thanks for supporting.'**

It is not just about giving out food.

## ASHTON TOY SERVICE

Christmas started early at Queens Road last year, when The Beacon Church asked for permission to use our hall for making up shoe boxes to be sent to a number of countries throughout the world. The hall was also used as a drop off point for many other churches in our area to leave their shoe boxes to be packed into larger boxes and then taken to Liverpool for shipping. Several thousand boxes left our premises, and we are pleased to have taken part in the Samaritans Purse Project.

On November 28th we had our Christmas concert by the New Street Singers, it was a very enjoyable evening, particularly laughable was their droll interpretation of Cinderella, our church was filled with laughter at their antics. Everybody seemed to enjoy the warm mice pies and tea/ coffee during the interval.



On Sunday December 6th we had our annual Toy Service when our congregation all bring new toys to be collected for distribution to families in the Wigan area who are struggling to cope with the expense of Christmas. Stuart from Wigan Family Welfare attends the service to tell us about the work that has been done throughout the year and to receive the toys, he is always amazed by the generosity of such a small church.



On Sunday December 20th was our Carol Service prepared by the Bible study group. Several members of the congregation took part with readings and poems.

We were all asked to bring along friends or family members and it was lovely to see our church so full on such an occasion. After the service we all enjoyed a buffet lunch provided by the church and prepared by outside caterers. It gave everyone a chance to relax and enjoy our day.

Our Christmas Day service led by Revd Iris Musgrove was quite well attended and rounded off our build-up to Christmas.

Our Wednesday Coffee morning (10:30 to 1200) is flourishing thanks to Dianne, Margaret and Janet who successfully completed a food hygiene course, and were duly awarded their certificates, and Gladys who ably assists them.

We now look forward to all of the events we take part in during this next year and would like to take this opportunity to wish the rest of the circuit churches a happy and peaceful 2016.

**John Harley**

## REMEMBER THE PERSON



Seventeen of us attended the Circuit training session "Dementia Awareness" led by Melissa Critchley (Director of Home Instead Senior Care) on Saturday 10th October.

After the usual friendly welcome at Stockton Heath church with tea/coffee/biscuits in abundance, we started

the session with a simple quiz which made sure that we were all at the same basic level of understanding about this disease.

Dementia is an umbrella term that describes a number of conditions which are caused by progressive degeneration of brain tissue. Indeed, we all handled two weighty packages demonstrating a normal brain and the shrunken brain due to dementia. The degeneration affects memory, thinking, behaviours and the ability to perform everyday tasks. One of the commonest forms of Dementia is Alzheimer's disease.

Melissa was enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and good at passing on her knowledge in a jargon free manner, with lots of anecdotes and illustrations from the clients she meets regularly through her work in domiciliary care – anonymously of course.

"Remember the person" was the watchword as we looked at causes, common behaviours, and how difficult life can become with altered perception – that serving of food is on a plate of real flowers; the mat by the door is a hole in the floor; the modern sparkling tiles in the bathroom look like broken glass and I don't want to walk in there in my bare feet!

We discussed a tool kit of techniques for managing the person's behaviour, for example, how giving simple choices can help the person to maintain a sense of control – soup or sandwich, ham or cheese? – and never to use phrases such as "do this" or "do that". We learned how frightening a mirror can be when the reflection you see is not the person you think you are.

Obviously I can't do justice to an excellent four and half hour training session in a short article. As they say about Woodstock "you had to be there".

We had ample opportunity to share our own experiences with loved ones who have or had dementia and shared ways of coping and entering their reality.

We came away with a list of recommended books, several useful handouts including a list of things to consider when preparing for worship with people with dementia,

Some of the key things for me was realising that it is possible to live well with dementia; the importance of re-introducing yourself every single time you meet – "Hi Mary, it's your sister Anne" – because it hurts to feel forgotten but it hurts that person even more to know they can't remember your name but know that they should; and receiving the advice that we should always leave the person with dementia feeling good - they are stuck in a lonely place.

**Anne Shadbolt**

## TRINITY KINGS CROSS PROJECT



For Christmas 2015 Trinity Kings Cross was able to provide 120 families with a box of food and a bag of toiletries and cleaning items. 282 children and 167 adults received gifts.

The families were referred by social care and health visitors. The hampers enabled the families to have enough food and to provide a Christmas for their children. The social care staff who distributed the hampers said they could not believe the generosity of people in providing the food and toys. One said "I wish you could have seen the faces of the families who received gifts. Thanks to all involved."

The committee would like to thank all those involved for their kindness and generosity of both time and money. Throughout 2016 we are looking forward to supporting and working with local organisations for the benefit of families in Halton.

**Revd Jenny MacGregor**

## CASAI CONFERENCE

My name is Col and I offer pastoral care and companionship to survivors of abuse across the Liverpool District. CASAI is primarily funded by the Methodist church. CASAI (Church Action on Sexual Abuse Issues) has recently been

recognised as a specialised ministry - some women see Casai as their church.

CASAI is ecumenical and offers support to women, in particular those whose faith journey has been damaged, affected or destroyed by sexual abuse.



We work hard to offer safer space and to be inclusive, which isn't always easy, and we celebrate and accept difference.

In June 2015 the Methodist church issued a public apology to the 1,885 survivors it had let down over the years and made a promise that survivors were going to be listened to and cared for in the future. On Jan 9th 2016 Revd Sue Smith welcomed CASAI into Penketh for a Conference which offered survivors space and time to respond to this apology.

One of the CASAI groups called 'Millstone' represented all the women who couldn't be there on the day through powerful dance, drama, poetry and testimony. Miranda as CASAI photographer captured many images of the day which will be shown at different events in the coming year!!

This circuit has been very supportive of CASAI and I am very grateful for your love and prayers and your financial generosity from some churches.



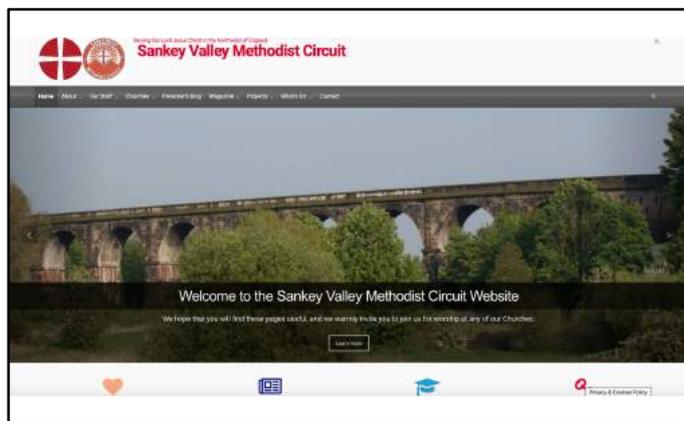
In return CASAI will keep you all in our prayers especially through all the changes and challenges ahead of us this year.

God bless us all with peace in our hearts, Col.

**Col Ritson**

## THE NEW CIRCUIT WEBSITE

Although it was only about three years old the old Circuit website was looking decidedly outdated and in an era where websites are viewed on mobile phones and tablets as well as on desktop and laptop computers, a new modern website was the order of the day. The new website has been built using Wordpress technology, which currently powers over 25% of the worlds websites and is therefore the most popular website technology. The new website can be viewed on all current devices, since it recognises the size and shape of the screen on which it being viewed and responds by rearranging its layout to suit.



Although the website has been built to be viewed on modern devices, it can also be viewed on older computers. However, please be aware that if you use an old Windows computer running the Windows XL or Vista operating systems, not all the features of the new website may work correctly.

The basic design of the new website is intended to be a window, through which the world can view the activities of the Sankey Valley Methodist Circuit, as well as also helping to improve communications within the Circuit. Websites can be viewed all over the planet and therefore the new site is not just intended to provided information for members of the Circuit, but to also to be a vehicle to extend the Christian message to the whole world. This is the objective behind the 'Preacher's Blog' menu option. It is intention is for members of the Circuit Ministry team or Local Preachers, to release new blogs at around monthly intervals, through which a Christian-themed Message can be shared with the world.

The 'Magazine' menu option of the website is intended to contain a variety of items which a Church going Christian may find interesting and informative, but not necessarily relating to the Christian message. Think of it as reading a

Christian magazine containing articles on a variety of subjects. We of course will be extremely happy to receive articles or suggestions for publication under this heading from any member of the Circuit's Churches, which should be sent to the Circuit Office.

Church events may be advertised under the 'Church Events' option which is listed under the 'Diaries' menu option. However, please be aware that advertising an event on a website is not the same as advertising an event on your Church Notices. Just a few lines of text which may be suitable for your Church Notices are not suitable for a website, where we need something much more eye catching. If you wish to place a notice on the website, imagine that you are writing it for a small column of 2 to 3 inches in length in a high class magazine and draft the text accordingly. Also please include at least one image, which may be a photograph or drawing. Every website item requires an image to draw the eye to the article. Remember, an image is the equivalent of a thousand words!

Finally, the current website is not intended to be the finished article. There are further developments under consideration which will add whole new dimensions to Circuit communications. For example, the continuously updated National and International Christian News from Premier is now available on the Circuit Website, which is the first website in the world to have this feature! There are exciting times ahead, so please keep on viewing and use the comment facilities to let us know what you think of the articles.

**Chris Betts**

### THE CIRCUIT NEWSLETTER SUDOKU

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## THE CIRCUIT IPHONE APP

The Circuit Communications Team is delighted to be able to promote the release of the new SVMC Circuit App. This handy app for iPhone devices provides convenient access to all the information about the Circuit.



As well as listing all the details about our churches and staff, this app will give you the means to submit Prayer Requests so that all users can

pray with you and for you. The Calendar lists all the special events coming up in the Circuit, and from here you also have full access to the current Plan, which you can then easily sort to find any services quickly. There's so much more to explore!

Download it now by searching the Apple App iPhone Store for 'SVMC' or contact the Comms Team for assistance. [media@svmc.org.uk](mailto:media@svmc.org.uk)

**STOP PRESS** - The Android Phone Version is now in development, with a planned launch at the June Circuit Meeting!

**Revd Stephen Froggatt**

### NEXT ISSUE

*While we continue to welcome articles, news, events and permission-cleared photographs to [crc@svmc.org.uk](mailto:crc@svmc.org.uk), the Circuit Comms Team is reviewing the need to maintain production of a printed Newsletter in this form, rather than just publishing on the new Circuit Website. If you would like us to keep the printed Newsletter, please get in touch. (Contact details on Page 1)*

### FUTURE CIRCUIT MEETINGS (7.30pm)

Tues 28 June 2016 at Stockton Heath  
 Mon 19 Sept 2016 at Bold Street Warrington  
 Wed 22 February 2017 at Nutgrove School

### FUTURE LP & WL MEETINGS (7.30pm)

LP & WL 7th March 2016 at Lymm