

High Wycombe Circuit 23/27  
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1<sup>st</sup> January 2024

Dear Friends,

**Happy New Year to you all! I write to you at the beginning of a new calendar year and part way through the Methodist year, with greetings for a happy and healthy New Year and to bring you news of some forthcoming changes to the circuit which will impact on you and to ask for your help.**

Firstly, I write to inform you that Rev Georgina Bondi-Simpson, following her decision in July to enter the stationing process, has been successfully matched to the Wantage and Abingdon Circuit. We are pleased that Georgina has found a successful match and know that she will be a blessing to her new circuit. Georgina will finish in the circuit with us at the end of July. The Circuit invitation Committee did not pursue a profile for a replacement Presbyter, so currently I have been asked to look after the two churches/societies in Georgina's pastoral charge from 1 st August 2024, which are Wesley and The Avenue.

Secondly, I currently hold the post of Deputy Chair of District and in June 2023 Rev Helen Cameron was appointed President Designate. Helen leaves the District at the end of May 2024 to take up the role of President in preparation and I have been asked to stand up, with my colleague Rev David Alderman, to Chair of District from mid-May 2024 until Aug 2024 when the Rev Sonia Hicks takes over as Chair of Northampton District. Although I do not anticipate this will mean me leaving the circuit a great deal as I can do most of the work remotely, I will need to give extra time to the role during this period.

Thirdly, I have, with the backing of the Circuit Meeting, changed the senior leadership of the circuit. We now have as before, Staff and Circuit Stewards, but now we have included a group of people from across the circuit to form a wider Circuit Leadership Team. These people bring to the table wisdom in areas of finance, evangelism, property, preaching, consultation and practice. Some have held positions before, some have excellent listening skills, and all are picked for their ability to work as a team for a strategic vision for the circuit with Kingdom values as their goal.

The year holds for us challenges friends; this is not an ideal solution for anyone across the circuit. When I was appointed, we had a staff team of 4 full time staff. At the beginning of the next year we will have 1.0 full time one and Rachael, as a probationer, is 0.75. We need to work together, to decide where best to put our resources which are now limited. The newly formed CLT are looking at finance, property, safeguarding, GDPR, training, and

staffing as one picture across the circuit and helping me to lead us through this time. We have the possibility of trying to appoint, on Helen Cameron's advice, 'Mission Enablers'. These would be lay people to help myself and Rachael, as we work across the circuit to reach missional aspirations, but we really need to know what direction we are going in missionally, what the churches expectations are of us as Ministers, and what extra support would look like in order to help us to help you.

The CLT are meeting at the end of the month to plan a vision day. This will hopefully bring together the whole circuit, with a chance for everyone to talk together in the light of these changes. A chance to share what's happening in your churches, to ask questions about property and finance, to help everybody understand more of how Methodism works and how we are connected together, so that the decision we make, are 'all of our decisions'.

Key things that we will need to do in the next few weeks as a circuit are:

☐ Think about what work a mission enabler might be able to do in your church

☐ Prepare for the vision day to 'tell your story to the circuit'. What do you want to say? What do you want to ask?

☐ If you are one of the churches where I am currently your Minister – how can you make room for your sisters and brothers in Christ? – what can you let go of or someone else do?

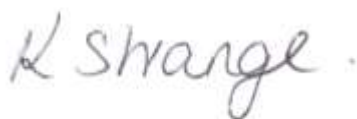
☐ If you are one of my new societies – what is it you would like from me as Minister? What could a mission enabler do? What could others in the church do moving forward?

☐ Think about services – we will be losing another 13 appointments on each plan. There has been some really positive feedback on assisted local arrangements - what other ideas might we be happy to try?

I have every confidence that we will find a way forward. I have the most amazing team of wise and knowledgeable people that are committed. We do have to think creatively and be flexible, just as the wider Connexion is currently, to navigate this change. We will do this so much more effectively by working together. Advent taught me a precious lesson, that God changes the ordinary into extraordinary moments, and we have many, many extraordinary God moments all across our circuit. God's not done with us yet!! Please watch out for news of the vision day and I thank you all for your unwavering support.

**God bless you all in your ministry**

Warmest regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "K Strange".

Rev Kate Strange