

High Wycombe Circuit 23/27
www.highwycombemethodist.org.uk

Superintendent Minister: Rev Kate Strange 37 Orchid Drive, High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire e-mail:kate.strange@methodist.org.uk

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Dear Friends

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“Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”. I start this letter of communication with you as I reflect that our written communications with other people are so hurried, so instant (think texting, email, or social media, ‘whatsapp’) that I wonder if we consider our words, impact or meaning in the same way as we might have done when we write to each other – “long hand”. Of course, writers in early Christian times often put a great deal of thought into the words they used. The Bible is filled with many such examples. A particularly notable one is this one the apostle Paul uses in each of his letters to church congregations preserved for us in the Bible. The Hebrew word for “grace” is *hēn*, pronounced like “hen.” This word is commonly translated as “favour,” which means acceptance and goodwill regardless of whether we’ve earned it. In other words, grace is undeserved favour. Grace can’t be earned; it is something freely given to us by God.

When we take time to read and understand something, like that simple greeting from Paul, and the simple greeting to which I address you all in this letter, and you sit and reflect on it, “**I send you Gods undeserved favour, and peace in your life, this is from God, and the Lord Jesus Christ**”, it really is quite a gift, something that no text or emoji can outdo!!

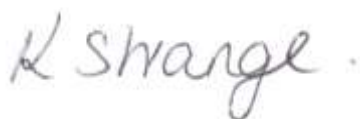
I write to you all as we begin the new connexional year together. This year requires us, I believe to take time to reflect, on that same ‘**grace, that undeserved favour**’, that Paul addressed the early churches with, as we navigate our way through the year ahead. We have before us, tremendous opportunities in the new circuit grant scheme, the hope of a new minister joining our team and there is almost a tangible feel of energy across the circuit. Yet it would be foolish to deny the plan that accompanies this letter, which challenges us, at our root, of our worship of God. I want to thank all of you who are leading worship in your local churches, for the creative ways in which you enable your folk, locally to ‘**draw near to God**’. I am delighted that almost all the churches across the circuit have made use of the circuit grant to update their AV systems to be ‘more creative and adventurous in worship’.

We as a staff team remain committed to trying ways to ease the burden on those locally leading worship. You will notice that this plan we have taken helpful feedback, and there are two of our 4 circuit services for the year on this plan. There is a weekday ‘service of light’ at Marlow on

November the 5th. This service is a short meditative, reflective service for those who are remembering those they have lost, with the act of lighting a candle. There are refreshments in the café afterwards and chance to fellowship. The second circuit service is a 'hybrid', committed to trying something new. Churches will have 2 options. Option one: Rachael will be preaching the service out of Marlow and churches can live stream from that. Option 2: Churches will be sent a pack from Sharon with 2 recordings of Rachael's sermon and a meditation from Karen our circuit safeguarding officer, plus the order of service and prayers. I will be preaching the same sermon at Cryers Hill and playing the meditation on their new equipment, so all the churches will have the same service, but the choice will be yours how you receive it. We will be pleased to receive helpful feedback from you about this.

We are all aware that the world is moving and changing. Some things for the better and some things many of us lament. However, those of us appointed into leadership positions are committed to watching over the churches and 'ringing the bell', so to speak, of changes that are coming upon us. We are starting a circuit wide conversation beginning on one side of the circuit, but all churches will be included eventually, to see how best we can adapt to the changes that are coming while remaining '**in favour**' with what we believe God is calling us to do in our locations and communities with '**grace and goodwill**'.

Paul begins his letters with the unmistakable message that God is a God of grace. So Paul brings greetings of grace to the churches of God to which he wrote. In context, he is saying to them, "**May God's abundant and loving grace be with you all.**" I close my letter with that same message. This year ahead will have its challenges for us, but I have every confidence that by working together with **Gods abundant, loving grace**, and showing that grace to each other as we navigate the year ahead, Gods blessings will be upon us as we strive to work out the kingdoms plans. Thank you all again for your unwavering support.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "K Shrage". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small dot at the end.

**Superintendent Minister
High Wycombe Circuit**