

Methodist Recorder

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AROUND THE
CONNEXION**

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**ANGLICAN &
METHODIST
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**A VIEW
FROM THE
PEW**

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Whitechapel Mission in rail initiative to tackle begging

IN a new venture, the Whitechapel Mission is working with the London Overground rail network to discourage passengers from giving to people begging for money on the network's walk-through trains, but instead to make a donation to the work of the mission. Posters on the stations and notices in all the car-

riages say: **by JOHN SINGLETON**

riages say: "To help someone you see begging on London Overground, donate to the 'Whitechapel Mission'. Any donations will be used carefully and your generosity will be welcomed."

London Overground, part of the

Transport for London (TfL) network and operated by Arriva London, has been concerned about the rise in the number of people asking for money on its trains which serve more than 100 stations on nine different routes. The

Whitechapel Mission, part of the Tower Hamlets circuit, is just minutes from Whitechapel station which serves the Overground, District and Hammersmith and City tube lines (and Crossrail at a future date). The mission currently provides breakfast for around 250 homeless men and women a day, together with other

essential advice services.

Whitechapel Mission director Tony Miller said they had entered discussions with London Overground just before last Christmas because of the amount of complaints the train network was receiving from passengers regarding the high level of begging on trains and at stations.

"They were hoping for advice regarding dealing with the problem that would not upset passengers," he told the **Methodist Recorder**. "A possible solution considered was to use British Transport Police (BTP) to arrest or remove these individuals, but likely to upset passengers and not good for public relations. However, following numerous meetings and having to get Transport for London's agreement to any solution - including wording on posters - a solution was reached. It was only one line to begin with, but now we have rolled it out further."

Outreach

Staff from the mission were now engaged in outreach work on the trains and stations, accompanied by BTP and London Overground staff, said Mr Miller. "We are making a big show of offering advice, encouraging people to use the mission and identifying legitimate homeless people from those feeding a drug habit or 'professional' begging. The professional beggars are being removed from trains and stations by the police; those begging to feed an addiction are being given warnings; and others in need are being referred to the mission.

"The current posters were the best we could get out of TfL -

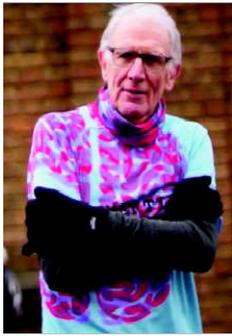
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People & Places

SUPERNUMERARY minister the Rev Malcolm Brookes (pictured), aged 74, has run more than 130 marathons. He was diagnosed with dementia a few years ago, but this has not stopped him and he is still continuing to run marathons and in a couple of weeks' time will be running in the London Marathon, motivated by his positive mantra "I can, I will, I am!" Mr Brookes will be running for the Dementia Revolution, a year-long campaign from two charities – Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer's Research UK – who have come together as the official Charity of the Year for this year's London Marathon to raise awareness of dementia and fund vital dementia research. For more information see Mr Brookes's video and blog (www.dementiarevolution.org/blog/blog-i-can-i-will-i-am-my-dementia-wont-stop-me-running-marathons).



Whitechapel Mission in rail initiative to tackle begging

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although they have now agreed to better wording – and are there to discourage passengers from giving directly to people begging, in the hope that it will stop being a productive activity. They are being asked to give directly to us instead. So, basically it is a carrot and a stick approach."

Mr Miller said they had currently seen an additional £4,400 income to the mission from the venture and a number of companies had approached them to offer support after staff had seen the posters – including London Overground staff, some of

whom were now volunteering at the mission and arranging fundraising events.

When a member of the **Methodist Recorder** team travelled on the London Overground from Shoreditch to Hoxton last week, he was approached by a young man with a bed-roll walking through the train asking for money. The team member pointed out one of the posters in the carriage and the young man said that he visited the Whitechapel Mission "every day", but still needed money.

Advice from most of the charities working with homeless people is that the public should not give money to



A poster at Hoxton train station.

people begging on the streets, but offer food or refer them to the nearest appropriate agency or project.



Bulletin Board

"CULTURE and Communication" is the theme of this year's Spectrum conference to be held at Willersley Castle, Cromford, Derbyshire, on May 20-22. The speakers are tutor at Queen's Foundation the Rev Dr Gary Hall and *Methodist Recorder* columnist Christine Kinch. Day visitors are welcome if booked in advance. For more information and cost details, telephone 01788 570616. Spectrum, formerly known as the Fellowship of the Kingdom, is a community for Christians of all denominations, although it has strong Methodist links. Spectrum encourages groups and individuals, lay and ministerial, to explore the Christian faith in depth.

April stipends

SOME April stipend payments have been incorrectly paid. A statement from the Church said: "A computer error resulted in new tax codes being applied early to some ministers' stipends leading to either over or underpayments in April."

The Payroll Team is in the process of contacting the 18 ministers who have been affected and making reimbursements where required. Anyone who has suffered additional losses, such as bank charges, should contact the Payroll Team.

Death of former President of the Conference

FORMER President of the Conference the Rt Rev Prof Peter Stephens died in hospital last week, following complications after a hip operation.

Prof Stephens, who was born in 1934, was still active in ministry and had not become a supernumerary minister. He had returned to live in his native Cornwall and was a member of the West Cornwall circuit team.

He had served in a number of circuit and academic appointments, including

Professor of Church History and Dean of the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Aberdeen, and was a former Presiding Bishop of The Methodist Church in The Gambia.

A scholar, following his time at Cambridge he studied in France, Germany and Sweden. His writings included volumes on the Swiss reformer Zwingli and he was working on a major book on Zwingli's successor, Bullinger.

He was a linguist who travelled and

preached in many countries and was closely involved in the Conference of European Churches and served on World Methodist Council commissions. When President of the Conference he visited Pope Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

He was a regular presence at the British Methodist Conference, including serving many terms as a Conference-Elected representative.

A full obituary will follow in due course.

District spring synod

WALES

THE representative session of the Wales synod met in Newtown church in Powys. Opening devotions were led by the Rev Rosemarie Clarke. Synod heard good news from the Neath Port Talbot circuit where two churches had provided a night shelter for the homeless over a number of weeks during the winter. In the South West Wales circuit, Hall St church, Llanelli, had been involved in a Holiday Hunger project which had fed and provided activities for families during the school summer holidays. Synod heard how both projects had blessed those offering help as well as those in receipt of it.

Synod agreed a report which put on hold conversations with Synod Cymru for the creation of a new Synod in Wales, in order to allow Synod Cymru time to undertake further necessary preparatory work. Synod agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Rev Dr Stephen D Wigley be invited for a further three years from September 2020 and to send a memorial to the Conference about Israel/Palestine.

Keynote speaker was Secretary of the Conference the Rev Gareth Powell who inspired synod as he spoke about the Connexional support offered to the Church to help us fulfil "Our Calling".

The morning concluded in the sharing of the Lord's Supper when the Secretary of the Conference presided and the preacher was the Chair. – **Rosemarie Clarke**



Methodist Recorder

NEW POSTAL ADDRESS

Please note the change of postal address for the **Methodist Recorder**. It is now:

Methodist Recorder,
1 Merchant Street,
London E3 4LY.