



Rev Dr Bonni-Belle Pickard, superintendent

Bonni-belle.pickard@methodist.org.uk

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Dear Members of N Kent Methodist Circuit,

A year ago I was arriving in Singapore for the start of my wonderful sabbatical! That now seems very long ago and far away. Instead, I'm writing to give you an update on my health concerns which began to emerge a few months ago.

In mid-December, I had a radical hysterectomy to address the early detection of a cancerous polyp in my womb. Six weeks later, I have made a generally good recovery and have begun a phased return to work. I am very grateful for the love and support which so many of you have given me over the past few months!

Though the biopsies from the hysterectomy all came back negative with no sign of further spread of the cancer, the biopsy of the original polyp indicated it was indeed of an advanced and aggressive nature. A twelve-week regimen of chemotherapy has been recommended to help ensure that the cancer does not pop up elsewhere. That regimen is to begin on 11 February and continue through the end of April. During that time, I will probably have 'bad' weeks, 'good' weeks and 'not so good' weeks, but at this point, it's hard to know exactly how my body will react.

In consultation with others, it has been agreed that I will be on medical leave from 11 February through the end of April. During that time, Rev Alex Terrett will be Acting Superintendent with other members of the circuit ministerial team taking on some additional responsibilities. James Walker will continue to be the first port-of-call for operational matters.

This, of course, was not how I had envisioned spending my last year of active ministry! I had big plans for preaching in churches across the circuit during the coming months before my retirement. I'm grateful that many Local Preachers will step in to fill that gap, but I am sad that I won't be able to be with you in person. I do intend to continue producing a monthly online circuit service (which I can pre-record during a 'good' week!). I will also continue to be the pastoral link for the Union Street church as it enters the crucial stages of its building repairs and renovations. The past six weeks has reminded me I need to stay involved with some 'work' for my own mental health!

As you will be hearing from Henry Chung (our Sr Circuit Steward) and James and others, there are several circuit matters to be resolved over the coming weeks, not least being stationing. I will do my best to cover as much circuit work as I reasonably can before 11 February, and after that I will continue to pray for those taking on extra duties in my absence and for all the circuit ministry.

We do not travel these strange paths alone. As John Wesley said: "The best is: God is with us."

Yours in the Spirit,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bonni-Belle Pickard".