

## **MEL BROWN 23 JANUARY 2022 – Aylesbury Methodist Church 10.30am service**

In 2015, over 100 of us completed a Healthy Churches questionnaire. This identified the need to fund and appoint a full-time Family & Youth Worker for a three-year contract. Mrs Melvina Brown met or exceeded all we asked for in experience and qualifications and Mel's qualifications included a Master's degree in Youth and Mission. She began here in September 2017. Albert Odro and I were involved in both the recruitment process and Mel's ongoing pastoral support. So, with our knowledge and contributions from Arthur Sara, who was on the interview panel, Chris Sara, Margaret Miskin, Dawn Wright and, via his youth report, Charlie Levitt, let's do a quick recap of her time here.

She supported all our youth work. In Sunbeams, she made friends with the mums and dads, giving them her expertise, advice, and help, even finding time to tutor those who weren't fluent English speakers. She supported Boys' Brigade and was an officer in the Girl's Brigade, who still talk about her, and the girls miss her. She always came up with exciting activities of games, crafts, and cooking, relating them all back to the Bible. She taught in J Team, went to Andrew Kirk's youth choir, and joined in some of the German exchange trips.

Mel also began a new youth group with a four-week plan of social, discussion, drama and singing. For two years before COVID she organised a Youth Ball with 40-50 youngsters all dancing and having fun with a photo booth, disco, quiz and food. At the start of lockdown, she was able to continue meeting online. The Northants Methodist District also benefitted from Mel helping to organise some District youth events to which she took along some of our own young people.

Helen Kirk handed over the running of Messy Church to Mel who brought inspiration to the band of merry helpers. One little girl said that she loved coming as that was where she learned all about Jesus from Mel's stories. Baptismal Secretary became another of her roles, and she was fully involved in our pre-COVID plans to launch a Listening Service.

She opened doors for us at the Grange School where she ran a weekly lunch time prayer group. The school was in discussion with Mel and

Richard about taking assemblies and having our trained listeners available for pupils, until the pandemic stopped all that.

Pastorally, as part of the In Touch team, she kept in close contact with five families. She helped in the coffee bar where she warmly interacted with the clients. She attended the Bible studies where her contributions were insightful and demonstrated her own desire to continue to learn more.

Moving to more general comments, Arthur and Chris valued all Mel brought to the life of our church. Margaret said that God really blessed us with the arrival of Mel. She was a breath of fresh air with her work in all our youth groups. And Dawn said, "It's funny how, as soon as you think of Mel and what to write, a smile comes to your face – I guess that says it all. Warmth, empathy, faith and what a sense of humour!" She went on to say that Mel was really respected by the young people. She had a talent to reach out to any age – child, young person or adult.

I was once asked to describe Mel in one word. I chose 'listener'. I believe the reason she was able to reach out to any age was because of her ability to listen. In turn, this is based on her genuine interest in everyone she meets and on her deep faith.

Several of us were hopeful that at the end of her contract, Mel would apply for another role we had identified the need for - a Community Development Worker. But as we began the funding process, coronavirus came along, Methodist funding was frozen, and we couldn't go ahead. So, Mel left during lockdown in the summer of 2020 without us being able to say a proper thank you. In a moment, Gill Marks will do something about that. But first, can we say a big 'Thank You' to Mel and show our love and appreciation by giving her what she deserves – A STANDING OVATION!  
Thank you, Mel.

Peter Green