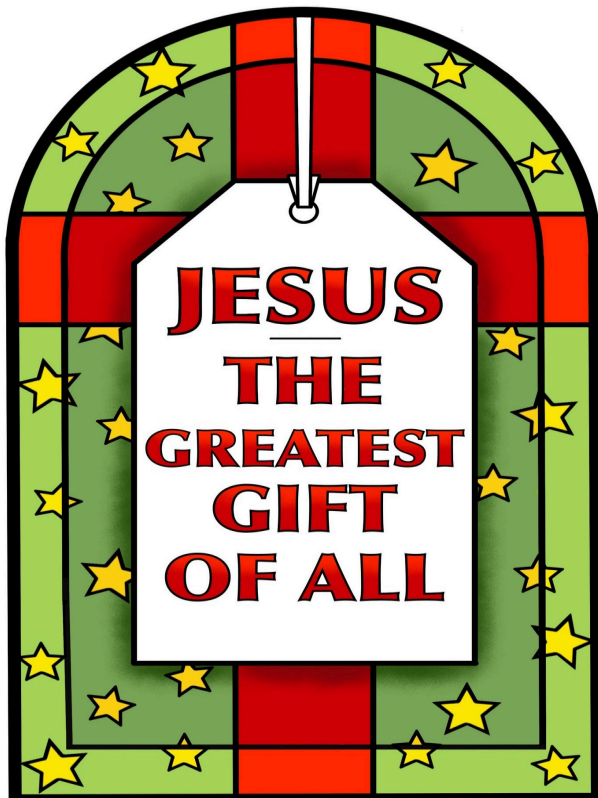


MEMO

Middlesbrough & Eston Methodist Outburst

DECEMBER 2025 -
FEBRUARY 2026



FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Dear Friends

I hope you are well and that you are getting ready for Christmas. We say this every year in our house, 'How quickly it comes round!' I guess that's because we are getting old.

I have to say I love Christmas, even though our grandson will be 15 in December, he still enjoys the special season, in more 'grown up' ways.

I am fortunate to be in Primary schools and I enjoy being invited to lead Christmas assemblies and see the Children perform their Nativities.

In church it is a wonderful time of celebration. To sing Christmas carols is so uplifting and my hope is that lots of you will attend the Circuit Christmas Celebration to be held at Grove Hill on Sunday December 7th at 2pm. This will be a real celebration enhanced by the Mosaic choir who will be providing Christmas music.

The joy of Christmas can be lost in all the other aspects of the season.

But please take time out as I am going to do. Stop and think how amazing that in this world so caught up with hate and division, here is a message of the greatest love ever. God so loving us that he sent his Son Jesus to be our Saviour. He loves us so much that he knows the only real way to help us was to become one of us in Jesus. The message of the Incarnation, surely the best celebration of all. And in return for all this love, we are asked to love one another as God loves us, not just at Christmas but every

day of the year. Let us then be thankful and really rejoice at this amazing news. That love in practical terms is manifested in all the joy of this season, in the giving and receiving of gifts, in the parties, in hopefully caring for those who won't have much of a Christmas, for all kinds of reasons.

I wish you all the very best, I hope your Christmas will be all you want it to be. As always, welcome to 'Memo'.

Thank you to all of you who have contributed this time and thank you to Elaine at the Circuit Office who does such a wonderful job of producing 'Memo' It was good this time, when we met to prepare 'Memo' that Elaine told me she has received lots of material, so that is really good news. I hope we can keep up this progress.

All the best
Dave and Elaine,
The Editorial Team.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT EDITION OF MEMO

Please send all contributions
to the
Communications Team
C/O the Circuit office,
Nunthorpe Methodist Church,
Connaught Road, Nunthorpe,
Middlesbrough TS7 0BS

Or email to
mbrocircuit@gmail.com
by 1st January 2026



The Superintendent's Letter

Dear Friends,

This Advent and Christmas the Methodist Church is introducing 'Gifted', a campaign to help people engage with the Church and the Christian faith. I am therefore using this edition of Memo to inform you about the campaign and summarise the essential information about Gifted.

The aim of Gifted is to reach people in the Christmas season who do not normally attend Church or who only do so occasionally. The Gifted team emphasises that Christmas is a great opportunity to engage with new people and should not be missed. Gifted provides accessible resources to help us stand alongside those seeking faith.

The campaign is based on a three-step approach that represents the journey of people who come to faith. The three steps are:

People are a gift - made by God with love

Church community is a gift to others - for inviting them to be blessed

Jesus is the ultimate gift - freely given

These steps offer a process towards faith and discipleship. They allow us to communicate appropriately with people at different stages of their faith journey. For example, someone who has had a difficult experience of Church in the past may need to realise that they are themselves a gift who is much loved by God. This realisation will need to come before they recognise the gift of their local Church, or the ultimate gift of Jesus.

No two people are the same and Gifted is not intended to impose a prescriptive process. People will engage with the Church at different stages of their faith journey which may itself + years. Gifted provides an idea of the likely steps people will take with the Methodist Church.

The Gifted team produces a range of resources available for viewing on the Methodist Church website <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/christmasresources/>. These include digital resources such as video clips and social media templates. There are also worship resources including a liturgy for a Blue Christmas service and for the lighting of advent candles. Small group resources and free posters and postcards for distribution are also available. Finally, the website provides ideas for church activities including offering food, music, storytelling or silence.

Gifted is intended for both faithful members of the Church and those seeking something more, perhaps longing for transformation but feeling stuck. Through it we aim to demonstrate their inherent worth, which is not based on possessions,

achievements or contributions, but on their identity as loved children of God. People are valued in God's eyes and are wonderfully created. They are a gift to the world and to the Church. The most effective way to convey this truth is through personal conversation and by inviting people to accessible and inclusive events and services.

I hope this information is helpful and will encourage you to explore the gifted material and make the most of it during the coming Advent and Christmas season.

With every blessing,

Revd. David Godfrey MA.

CIRCUIT SERVICES

CHRISTMAS SONGS OF PRAISE

With the Mosaic Choir

**Grove Hill Methodist Church
7th December at 2.00pm**

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

**Normanby Methodist Church
18th February at 10.00am
Led by Revd. John Howard-Norman**

Everybody Welcome



Here are Winter Quiz questions to get your brain working

1. "Now is the winter of our discontent" is the opening line from which William Shakespeare play?
2. 'Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents!' is the opening line of which classic American novel?
3. The Winter Palace can be visited in which city?
4. Which Christmas carol is based on a poem by the English poet Christina Rossetti?
5. The 1924 Winter Olympics, which were the first ever, were held at a site at the foot of which mountain?
6. How many sides do all snowflakes have?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 21

News from the Circuit Meeting 17.9.25

Marton – noted the loss of Margaret Gibson, and remembered the amount of work she did quietly within the church and community, not least the Marton Tuesday toddler group. A group of volunteers has enabled a rota to be created and the group is able to continue.

The annual Charity coffee morning takes place annually on the first Saturday in October, and a monthly ‘pop in and chat’ coffee morning is held on the first Saturday of the other months.

Chinese Church – while not a big congregation there are 15-20 children who attend regularly, language is a problem in Sunday school, however Rev Charity has organised some English support to help/enhance the work being done. 7 children and 1 leader are going to 3Generate which is the National Methodist Youth Event. It is hoped that this will be a good experience which can then be shared across the wider Chinese church and community.

Nunthorpe –they have become a Dementia Friendly church and all pastoral visitors have had dementia training. Since Covid, an outdoor carol service has been held on Christmas eve and this has attracted many people to join in, but last year they also had indoor service which was well received by all who attended including residents of the local care home. There is also a weekly toddler group and a termly craft/prayer session which has been expanded and taken into the local care home.

Normanby – A Mcmillian Coffee Morning was held in the Autumn. Other coffee mornings are held regularly and there is a monthly social event. These are well supported by the community, but it was noted that this does not reflect in the numbers on a Sunday. However, a small number of young families now attend on a regular basis.

Trinity – have now raised the funds to move on the next stage of their redevelopment plan which is to enlarge the ‘crush hall’ and café area and work is planned to start early in the new year.

TFFC – noted that the Eco Shop is proving very successful in serving the community with up to .40 people using it regularly. ‘Still useable’ supermarket food and fresh produce from the church members and the Trinity gardens have ensured the shop is well stocked and avoids food wastage.

Montpelier – hold regular services and some members from Stainton are now worshipping there.

Circuit Mission Plan – the meeting voted to accept the plan which has been produced on the results of the circuit review and collated to create a working document showing the direction of travel in our circuit

Town Centre Mission and MMH – Rev Charity noted that many good things had spun out from the community reaction to the Middlesbrough riots last year, particularly making links and building relationships. She reminded the meeting that it is a Circuit project and anyone who would like to pop along to any of the ‘happenings’ would be most welcome.

Appointments

Rev Charity Hamilton has been re-invited to our circuit from September 2026 until August 2028.

Mark Braithwaite was re-appointed to serve as Safeguarding Officer for this connexional year.

Vacancies

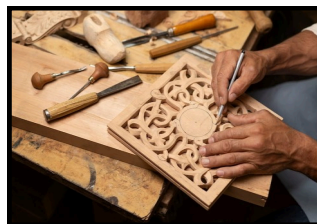
Two of the circuit team will be 'retiring' from their roles over the next two years, both having served for much longer than the usual 6 years - Julie O'Key (Property) will continue until August 2026 and Lesley Duffield (Treasurer) will continue until August 2027 (or sooner), allowing time for training and handover. Could you consider undertaking either of these crucial roles, Rev David or Julie/Lesley would love to hear from you.

What you have in common with a woodcarving

Woodcarving isn't as straightforward as it seems. You don't begin with a block of wood; you begin with a piece of paper. The first step is to draw a plan of what you want to carve, and only when you've got that right do you start to shape your piece of wood.

The carver then works his block with his plan alongside it. He cuts those bits of wood away that he doesn't want, and shapes what's left until it ever more closely resembles that original plan.

Only when the design on the wood and the paper plan *are identical* has the carver finished his job. He's then made exactly what he'd hoped for, while working all along from that original plan.



It's the same for our lives. God is the master carpenter. He has a unique plan for each one of us, which is a blueprint of what He hopes we will become.

As we go through life, God shapes us, cutting away those bits of us that He doesn't want and which would spoil what He hopes we'll come to look like. He then gradually moulds what's left until we look ever more like that original blueprint. Only when the two are identical will God's work be over.

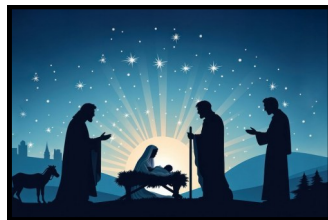
But there's one big difference between a human being and a block of wood. A block of wood sits impassively on the carver's bench while he works at it. The wood cannot help the process along and has no idea what's happening to it.

God very much hopes that we'll help Him in the process of being moulded and shaped into His pattern. That's why we read the Bible and worship and pray: to find out just what His plan is for each one of us. Only when we have some idea of what He wants us to be can we help Him in the process.

The Parish Pump

StF 217 Silent Night

This very popular carol was actually designated an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2011! It was composed in 1818 and first recorded in 1905. It is one of the most recorded Christmas songs. I'm not sure it's a favourite in our Methodist tradition for carol services, though.



All through the 19th century it was sung from royal courts to popular folk-singing village shows. In the 20th century the words by Father Joseph Mohr and the tune by Franz Gruber, organist and school teacher, featured in film versions of how the carol came to be. The legend involves a flood damaging the church organ, or even mice having a role in the crisis. There is an animation, there's a TV special *Silent Mouse*, narrated by Lyn Redgrave, a documentary narrated by Simon Callow. And a 1968 TV film called *The Legend of Silent Night*. There are also many Christmas-set feature films where strains of the carol played by a handy nearby Salvation Army band, act as a Christmas signifier. There's even a Sainsbury's TV ad of 2014, depicting the Christmas Truce of 1914 which



here, is started by the sole voice of a German lad in the trenches singing *Stille Nacht*. He is joined by first one English soldier singing *Silent Night*, then all soldiers join in singing in their own languages. Sainsbury's message is "Christmas is for sharing". Chocolate and rye bread are secretly exchanged by the young soldiers, after an improvised game of football in No-Man's-Land until the

guns resume, calling them back to war. The ad shows the power of *Silent Night* and Christmas to overcome hostilities, they shared singing the carol, shared a game of football and the implication is that Sainsbury's can still supply goodies to share.

Originally written in German, there are different versions of the words. In StF the line usually sung as "Sleep in heavenly peace" is translated as "Sleeping in heavenly rest". I think "peace" is a far more powerful word than "rest". It speaks more of our world's yearning for peace, both from a crying baby and from the end of hostilities. Rather than StF's bland "rest" from one's daily labours, the "peace" word is emotive and explains the popularity of this carol. The familiar nativity pictures are painted by simple words: holy family, in stable bare, shepherds, star and the angels, and finally the light, love's pure radiance beams from the baby's face showing God's grace. It is simple yet full of mystery, and its haunting tune also lends power.

Because it is an iconic carol, embedded in Western Culture, we include it in our Carols on the Grass because the people attending, who, by and large don't usually come to church, will know it and will enjoy singing it. Recorded by hundreds of artists as wide-ranging as Bing Crosby, Percy Sledge, Elvis, Mariah Carey, Katherine Jenkins, there is also a Simon and Garfunkel version called *7 O'clock News*. This track is a sound collage which places side by side, Simon and Garfunkel gently singing *Silent Night* against a simulated 7 o'clock news bulletin which gets louder and louder. The news bulletin consists of actual events from 1966: A planned march by Martin Luther King; calls for the National Guard to be sent in; disruption by protesters at the House Committee of un-American Activities; hearings into anti-Vietnam War protests. The result is a poignant, ironic commentary on social ills of the time by juxtaposing them

with tenderly expressed Christmas sentiments.

However, any carol we sing, at any time has as its background news bulletins of our world still full of social ills, wars, intolerance, noise: this particular carol celebrates peace and the birth of the divine in a land full of occupying soldiers. The night is “holy” because of this birth. The words may be popular, sentimental even, but we should not just consider it a quaint, nostalgia-evoking carol, but instead sing out the depth of what the words mean. For the “dawn of redeeming grace” is something far greater and grander than any song we could ever write.

Ruth Lewis

MONTPELLIER MANOR CHAPLAINCY NEWS

We celebrated Harvest Festival with Stainton Methodist Church and guests from Trinity Methodist Church.

June Howard-Norman gave us a very interesting talk and slide show of the work done at Trinity Eco shop. Which was our chosen charity for our Montpellier Manor Harvest Appeal.



Thank you to both Stainton Methodist Community and Trinity in joining us for the service led by Rev. Howard -Norman, Anne who played the piano to accompany the singing and Claire for the Bible reading.

As part of our Inter-faith outreach, we visited the North Ormesby Hindu Temple by invitation of our Volunteer Charu, to see the Diwali celebrations. This was followed by a lovely day where we did rangoli art and tasted some authentic Indian dishes, whilst learning about the Hindu faith and culture.

November will be our First Sunday Community Church Service at Montpellier Manor at 3pm Sunday 2nd November.

We will also be holding a Remembrance Sunday Service at 11am on Sunday 9th November at Montpellier Manor.

December will be a busy month.

Sunday 14th December will be Carols by Candlelight at 2pm At Montpellier Manor followed by Community Church at 3pm.

Sunday 21st December will be our Blue Christmas Service at 2pm held at Montpellier Manor.

Wednesday 24th December will be our Homes Christmas Carol Service at 11.00am.

Community are always welcome at any of our worship services.

Peace and all Good blessings,

Barbara Robinson (Chaplain).

The Sunflower Dream Project

It began as a normal coffee morning at Nunthorpe Methodist Church with the usual group drinking tea and coffee and attempting to put the world to rights. The only difference was that Norman's son, David joined us. David has lived in the USA for over thirty years and has dual citizenship. He was very quiet for most of the time until the word Trump was mentioned—I don't propose to repeat what was said! Then he was asked if he was still working and his reply was most interesting. Semi-retired was his response and he said he had spent much of the summer in Ukraine. Our attention was caught. What was he doing there?



Apparently his link with the Ukraine had begun with his volunteering to work in a kitchen in Lviv supplying dried food for the Ukrainian troops. He was looking for something else in which to be involved when he was there, when he came across Natallia and Yustyna Paviluk, two artists in Lviv who worked with children in art healing classes. The children were all refugees who have lived through the trauma of war. These classes take place 2-4 times a week. Visitors in Lviv who were welcomed to view the artwork were surprised at the beauty, talent and resilience shown in the paintings - works filled with dreams, joy and love for family and home. (see picture insert). David says, "The children paint of their dreams, hopes, of their heroes and of their love for family and country in the brightest of colours. Only when you know their stories in this atrocity of war can you see the sadness and pain in some of their paintings."

Having met Natallia and Yustyna, David volunteered to show the artwork their children painted, wherever and whenever he could. He managed to gather a group of like-minded volunteers to facilitate this project. The team is multinational and all have served as volunteers in Ukraine.

The project organises exhibitions in the European Union, the United Kingdom and North America. It is entirely volunteer run and those volunteers give their time to house exhibitions of all sizes and lengths outside Ukraine. They have no external funding. The pictures are shown together with their back story which makes them so poignant. Initially they sold the paintings at the exhibitions, but they realised they would run out of material, so now they sell high quality reproductions.

David showed us at Nunthorpe some of these reproductions and found them deeply moving - so moving that we asked if it might be possible to host an exhibition in Middlesbrough and would he, David be willing to talk to one of our groups? We are hoping that something will be arranged in February. It will be widely publicised nearer the time.

Any funds raised are sent back to Lviv to support the Sunflower Dream Project which has such a beneficial effect on traumatised children in Ukraine.

Ann Gartside



EVENTS AROUND THE CIRCUIT (not on the Plan)

GROVE HILL

Wednesday 24th December - Carol Singing on the Grass at 10.00am followed by refreshments

Thursday 25th December - Christmas Day Service 11.00am led by Dave Elliott

MARTON

Wednesday 24th December - Christmas Eve Carol Service at 6.30pm

Thursday 25th December - Christmas Day Service 10.30am led by Revd. David Godfrey

NORMANBY

Saturday 6th December - Christmas Fayre 10.00am to 12.00 noon - all welcome

Saturday 20th December - Chocolate Tombola Coffee Morning 10.00am to 12.00 noon

Thursday 25th December - Christmas Day Service 10.00am led by Revd. John Howard-Norman

NUNTHORPE

Tuesday 9th December - Short Christmas Service before Coffee 10.00am

Thursday 11th December - Luncheon Club Christmas Dinner 12.00 noon for 12.30pm

Wednesday 17th December - Carol Service 2.00pm

Wednesday 24th December - Christmas Eve Carols on the Grass 6.30pm

Thursday 25th December - Christmas Day Service 9.30am led by Revd. David Godfrey

TRINITY

Thursday 25th December - Christmas Day Service 10.00am led by Revd. Charity Hamilton

CIRCUIT OFFICE

The office will be closed from 2.00 pm on Friday 19th December

And re-open on Tuesday 6th January 2026 at 9.30am

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

ELAINE

REJOICE

Around the world, with wings unfurled,
the Angels employ their tongues with great joy.
"Peace and Good Will to all the Earth,
for this is the time of His birth."

"Our hearts are full of love and joy,
for Mary has given birth to a boy.
He is the Lord of all the world"
sang the Angels with wings unfurled

The Church bells ring: The children sing:
for Christmas is here! The time of good cheer!
Sing your songs of Peace and Good Will, for
Jesus is here with us still.
for Jesus is here with us still.

Celia Shires
28th December 2021



Methodist Women in Britain

Advent Day

This event will take place at the Middlesbrough Methodist Hub
(Linthorpe Road Methodist Church) on Wednesday 3rd December 10.00am - 3.30pm.
"Look to the stars"; a day exploring hope on the edges of Middlesbrough led by Rev.
Charity Hamilton

Beryl Haggath



Reflecting Faith: Taking down the Christmas tree decorations



Traditional most people take their Christmas decorations down around Twelfth Night (January 5th) or the Epiphany (6th January), which marks the end of the 12 days of Christmas and is associated with the visit of the Three Wise Men. Other common times are right after Christmas on December 26th or around New Year's Day.

But how do we manage them for the rest of the year, after we have taken them down? Our Christmas ‘baubles’ come in all colours, in matt and shiny, in all shapes and sizes. They can remind us of people, who also come in all shapes and sizes, colours and tones. Baubles are very fragile, like we are sometimes.

This year as you take down your decorations, have a good look at them and think about the care that you take to store them safely, so that they will not break.

How much more care do you take in looking after the people who make up your life? Your family, friends, neighbours, church, colleagues, local shop keepers, and so on?

It’s quick and easy to pick up the decorations and just drop them in a box, but without some gentle care, will they be okay for next year?

It’s too easy to pass folk by, and get on with what we are doing for ourselves, our own plans and goals; but aren’t people worth more than that?

Who do we know that would greatly benefit if we gave them just a bit more time, a bit more consideration?

So as we put them away, have a look at your decorations and see if any of them need a bit of refreshing, some TLC, (tender loving care), just as we all do.

The Parish Pump

Nunthorpe & Marton Knitters

Nunthorpe and Marton Knitters are often asked to provide knitted items for various groups and charities in our community. Recently we were asked to knit for communities much further afield, by a Doctor at James Cook Hospital. He goes to India to help run anti-natal clinics, however the uptake wasn’t very good. Mothers just were not coming to the clinics, where vital check- ups are given, which could prevent serious problems for mothers and babies later in their pregnancy.

We were asked to knit pretty baby cardigans with little hats to give to expectant mothers as an incentive to attend the clinics. This has been very successful with many women journeying from their villages to attend the clinics.

Our knitters were delighted to assist in this request for help.

Val Lynas





Does anyone have a light, please?"

What would you like for Christmas?

A little girl visited Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and asked what she would like for Christmas.

She gasped, and stared at him in horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"

Bible

A father was approached by his small son, who told him proudly, "I now know what the Bible means!" His father smiled and asked him to explain. "It's easy. It stands for Basic Information Before Leaving Earth."

Taste

A woman wasn't feeling well and went to A&E. The nurse asked her: "Have you experienced a sudden loss of taste?"

"No," admitted the woman sadly. "I've always dressed this way."

Christmas carols

One night as Christmas approached, some friends decided to go carol singing. A man answered the door of one house, and gasped as they launched into the opening lines of the first carol. Within half a minute, he looked stricken. Soon tears were welling up in his eyes. The carollers sang and sang, and the man looked very moved by what he heard. One caroller ventured: "I understand – our singing reminds you of your happy childhood Christmases."

The man looked at her with misery in his eyes. "No," he whispered back. "It's just that I am a musician!"

No news

A traveller was marooned in a small town because of a landslide caused by heavy rain. It fell in torrents for three days. Looking out of the window of the restaurant, he finally remarked to the waitress: "This is like the flood."

"The what?"

"The flood. Surely you have heard about the great flood and Noah and the Ark?"

"Sorry, sir," she replied. "The internet's been down for three days."

Home Visit

A parishioner called the minister during a power-cut caused by a blizzard and said she urgently needed a pastoral home visit. "I'm sorry, but I can't get out because of the heavy snow," the minister explained.

Unsatisfied, she barked, "But I can't watch TV because the power is off! So what else am I supposed to do?"

The Parish Pump

DEMENTIA ACTION TEESSIDE

Nunthorpe Methodist Church

Jillian Lambert (Senior Steward) attended an event at the Riverside Stadium in September celebrating Dementia Friendly Middlesbrough.

She received certificate from Mayor of Middlesbrough Chris Cooke acknowledging the Church's work in becoming officially recognised as Dementia Friendly.



ECO Update

Grove Hill

We are very proud of our Eco status and feel very strongly about the work we try to do, to look after God's wonderful creation.

We have installed two bat boxes. We have developed our Bee friendly planting area at the front of church. Here we have our lovely flower bed which has bloomed so well and given people so much pleasure.

We have also installed recycling boxes for used batteries and ink cartridges in

We are making good progress at offsetting our carbon footprint, and we have twinned five of our toilets with Developing countries.



Dave Elliott on behalf of the Eco Team.

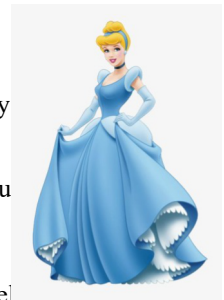
It's Panto Time

As you'll see from the fabulous poster on Page 15, it's almost Panto time again! **Oh yes it is!!** The cast of ACTS are currently rehearsing hard to put on 'Cinderella' in January 2026. It's the second time we've performed this one in the last 23 years of putting on Pantos at Trinity, and it's definitely one of our favou

Best of all, in this time of prices rises everywhere, we've maintained our admission costs, so you're getting a bargain for an evening of great and fun entertainment! And you'll be helping to raise funds for very worthy causes - this year it's 'The Junction', a Redcar based charity that supports young carers.

Come and give us your support! Thanks a lot.

Linda Harkins



ACTS PRESENTS

In Affiliation With Trinity Methodist Church

CINDERELLA

YOU'RE INVITED TO THE BALL



SCAN FOR TICKETS

7TH - 10TH OF JANUARY 2026

7PM Nightly with Matinee at 2PM & 6.30PM on Jan 10th
Tickets - £28 Family, £9 Adult, £6 Concession

Contact us at 07305348059 to book or go online using the link to buy tickets
www.ticketsource.com/cinderella26/cinderella/e-yjxjme

Trinity Methodist Church TS5 4JS | Find Out More At www.facebook.com/ACTSMbro

How the New Year and Resolutions began



1st January was not always the start of a New Year. The Babylonians began their New Year on 23rd March. For them, it was a logical choice, as with the arrival of Spring, crops were being planted, and a new cycle of life was beginning.

For centuries the Romans agreed with them, but they chose 1st March for New Year. It was the Romans who brought in the idea of making resolutions at New Year, mostly along the lines of acting more noble, and doing good to others.

Then in 46BC Julius Caesar changed the Roman Empire's calendar. His new Julian calendar realigned the year to the sun, and also began on 1st January. Caesar wanted to honour Janus, the two-faced god who looks backwards into the old year and forward into the new. January 1st didn't have any astronomical or agricultural significance, it was just a random date selected by Caesar.

A New Year Prayer for 2026

If we put our hand in God's hand
As we enter this New Year
Not knowing what the future holds
But that our Friend is near,

We shall not fear what lies ahead
If He is by our side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If He will be our guide.

The Sinless One from heaven came
To dwell with us on earth,
He sought and bought us with His blood
And offered us new birth.

Now as we travel through this year
He knows the things He's planned,
O let us trust and know just this –
Our times are in His hands.

Megan Carter

The Parish Pump

MAP Update

It has been an eventful year for MAP. At the time of writing the Autumn is well underway and Christmas is looming.

Our attendances at our activities are being sustained and we hope to introduce some more activities in the year ahead.

For those of you unaware, our normal activities are a visit to Middlesbrough college on Tuesdays, Clothing and household goods distribution on Wednesday mornings. On Wednesday afternoons we move to Redcar Baptist Church for our English drop in Thursdays we return to Borough Road for our music café and welcome hub (joined by the Red Cross) at 12.30pm the women's craft group replaces the café and Hamid has a barber service for men in the back room.

Finally on Fridays we have our 'come and chat' English lessons followed by our weekly shared meal, so wonderfully prepared by Bob and Belle our cooks.

During the summer Hamid and some of our volunteers led walks to Albert Park, providing fresh air, a chance to get to know each other and practise English informally. We intend to greatly expand on this practice in the year ahead.

We had several trips in the summer and early autumn. First in July, a huge trip to Danby and the moors centre where we took over a hundred people, including families, for a lovely day out of town' The weather was wonderful, and people were very happy on the way home.

In August we made a trip to Redcar for the day and were very kindly provided with hospitality by Zetland Methodist church who allowed us to use the church hall as a base for the day. This was an excellent situation as the beach is only across the road and there are play zones nearby. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't good but everybody made the most of the opportunity and we had a full coach, everyone seemed to have enjoyed the excursion.

Our final trip was to Guisborough woods in late September those who went had a good walk and felt refreshed by the experience.

General feedback has been that people really like trips so going forward we are planning to see how we can work more opportunities for new experiences into our yearly programme.

We could not carry out our work without the support we have from funders, not least the Methodist Church, so thank you so much. Particularly though I would like to say thanks to all our volunteers who devote so much time and energy to making MAP work. We really need them and value them. If anybody is interested in volunteering its great fun and we have many roles so, please get in touch.

To say thank you to our volunteers we had a summer meal together at the Persian Cottage giving them a chance to meet with each other and relax together over excellent food.

I won't need to tell you about the current atmosphere at large, but you won't be surprised to hear it worries many of our service users. We provide as much guidance and advice, and comfort as we can, though it is hard at times.

You may be unaware that the ‘move on’ time for asylum seekers whose claim is accepted, has been reduced again to 28 days from 56 (to which the Government extended it late last year). This time is the number of days they have to leave Home Office accommodation and make their own arrangements for income housing and many other necessities. Bearing in mind that 28 days includes weekends, when all the services they need to consult are closed. This is already started to increase stress as effectively people have 20 days to sort their lives out and make vital decisions for their future.

MAP is currently going through significant changes. Some of you may be aware that The Avenue Church is under new ownership; by the time you read this we will have been relocated to Borough Road. This will centralise most of our operations. However, it will cause a little disruption as we move and resettle. We especially think of our long serving volunteers who are really engaged but might find the change hard so things will take time to adjust to the new setting.

Our biggest event of the year is always the Christmas Party which will take place on 6th December at 1.30pm at 54 Borough Road. This is always joyous, and Bob and Belle’s food is stunning. However, the party is not so relaxing for the volunteers, so we are having another trip to the Persian Cottage in Mid-January.

The work continues and we keep busy Hamid, and the Trustees have been a great support to me in the past year, and I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to them. They really do keep me going.

I wish you a very happy Christmas and a fulfilling New Year.

Many thanks

Billy Barnes

Project Manager

Have you ever wondered where the name ‘Jesus’ comes from?

The name Jesus is a transliteration of a name that occurs in several languages. It is of Hebrew origin, ‘Yehosua’, or Joshua. There is also the Hebrew-Aramaic form, ‘Yesua’. In Greek, it became ‘Ἰησοῦς’ (*Iēsoûs*), and in Latin it became ‘Iesus’.



The meaning of the name is ‘Yahweh delivers’ or ‘Yahweh rescues’, or ‘Yahweh is salvation’. No wonder the angel Gabriel in Luke (1:26-33) told Mary to name her baby Jesus: “because He will save His people from their sins.”

The Parish Pump

December, January and February Flowers and their Meanings

December: Narcissus and Holly

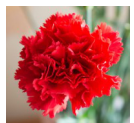


A cousin of the daffodil, the **narcissus** (also known as the paperwhite) stands for purity and unconditional love. While some believe the flower has negative connotations due to its Grecian namesake (the vain demigod Narcissus), gifting the flower conveys a truly selfless message: "You are the one."

Often used in holiday decorations, **holly** represents protection, happiness, and goodwill. Mirroring the festive season's spirit of joy, holly plants were beloved by the ancient Romans for their beauty and symbolic nature.



January: Carnation and Snowdrop

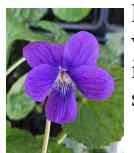


In Ancient Greece, **carnations** were used as home decorations and strung into garlands. The meaning of these ruffled blooms is directly tied to their colours. Red and pink symbolize love and affection, while yellow is much less cheerful, representing disappointment and rejection. If the flower is striped, regret is in your future.

As one of the first flowers of the year to bloom, often peeking up through the snow, **snowdrops** are seen as a symbol of hope and new beginnings. This birth flower also represents the Greek goddess Persephone; its bloom signalled that she was coming up from the underworld to usher in a new spring.



February: Violet and Iris



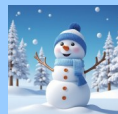
Resilient in nature, these common houseplants bloom during the depths of winter. During the Regency era, a gift of **violets** was a declaration of true intentions. That goodwill has carried on today, violets of any colour symbolize modesty, faithfulness, innocence, and everlasting love.

The most intellectual of spring flowers, **irises** represent wisdom and courage. Named for the Greek goddess of the rainbow, this birth flower also symbolizes the link between the earth and the heavens. These days, they are also commonly associated with the passion of Christ and the resurrection, probably because the flower blooms in spring around Easter.

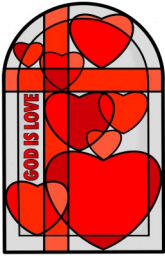


**"What good is the warmth of summer,
without the cold of winter to give it sweetness."**

John Steinbeck



Love is all around us



God obviously approves of romance – after all, putting Adam and Eve alone together in the Garden of Eden was His idea. And romance has been around ever since.

The history of the Israelites began with three great romances: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Rachel. The on-going history of Israel was deeply affected by later romances: Esther and King Xerxes, David's love affair with Bathsheba, and Solomon's marriage to hundreds of foreign wives.

There is even an entire book in the Old Testament devoted to the love of a man and woman: the Song of Solomon!

When we reach the New Testament, we find real love between Joseph and Mary (even when Joseph thought Mary had been faithless, he did not want to harm her). St Paul, though himself a bachelor, nevertheless spent a lot of time urging Christians to love and be kind and faithful and considerate to their spouses. He even wrote 1 Corinthians 13 – the great love chapter that is read at millions of weddings worldwide 2000 years later.

Down the centuries ever since, romantic love has been critical in shaping history (Antony and Cleopatra), in shaping cultural ideals (King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table). Some of our favourite stories are built on romance : Puccini's *Tosca*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

Romance remains as prominent now as it ever was, added to which we have films, television and drama all flying the romantic flag. Wherever we look, whatever we do, romance continues to permeate every aspect of life.

People make amazing sacrifices for love. They defy their family, forsake their culture, turn their back on wealth and position, to be with their loved one. People give their loved ones amazing gifts. Surely the most extravagant was the gift of the Shah Jahan, who built the Taj Mahal in India for his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal.

Romance is still alive and well in Britain – last year we sent about 25 million Valentines to our beloved ones.

And what of the future? Well, just as the Bible begins with a love story, so it ends with one. *And you are involved!* For actually the greatest Love Story of all time is that between God and His people.

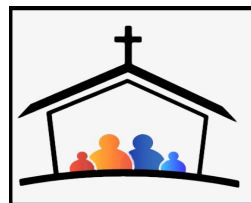
Christ is described in Revelation as our heavenly Bridegroom, and the Church is His beloved Bride. He has given us the most expensive present of all Himself. And, just as in all the best romances, the story will end with the bride and groom getting together at last, so at the End of Time, Christ will return for His Bride.

The Parish Pump



CHURCH TWINNING

Many towns and cities in the UK are twinned with towns and cities in other countries. This is for their mutual benefit and understanding, and to forge better relationships.



My suggestion is for our churches to consider something similar. The idea is that we contact a Methodist Church in another local circuit, for example the Stockton circuit (where there are 9 churches) or the Cleveland and Danby circuit (where there are 14 churches). We ask them if they would like to consider twinning with ourselves. **WHY?**

We can learn from one another. The church you twin with, may have done something that was a huge success. On the other and they may have made mistakes. We too, may have had similar experiences. The idea is to learn from one another. So, can we help each other? Can we learn from another's mistakes?



We could also join each other for worship and praise, perhaps you visit them once a year, and they visit you once a year, perhaps on each other's church anniversary? It might be helpful too, if a member of your church council attended the others church council once per year and vice versa.

If your church is running any Advent or Lent study groups you would invite members from your twinned church also. And the same would apply in reverse. Also you could invite the other congregation to any special event you may hold.

I have no idea

It would work

If churches in the other circuits would agree to be twinned

How it would really work in practice

How much we would actually learn from each other How congregations would respond

BUT I would like it to be considered.

David Lyness

Answers to Quiz on Page 4

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Richard III | 2. Little Women |
| 3. St. Petersburg | 4. In the Bleak Midwinter |
| 5. Mont Blanc, Chamonix, France | 6. Six |

Looking back—and forwards

A man had spent many years as a drunkard and a layabout. But through the Salvation Army, he turned to God, and his life gradually changed. He joined a local Church, and became known for his honest, if unusual, prayers.

As the New Year dawned, he stood up in church and prayed: “Lord, we’re not what we want to be, we’re not what we oughta be, and we’re not what we’re gonna be – but thanks to You, Jesus, we’re not what we used to be!”

National Nest Box Week 2026

Let's give our feathered friends a home!

National Nestbox Week is an annual event in the UK. It was launched in 1997 by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), which is a research institute that tracks the changes in bird populations, to inform the public and help form environmental policies.

This year it runs from **February 14th to 21st**. This special week aims to encourage everyone from individuals to schools and communities, to put up nest boxes in their gardens and local green spaces. The week marks the start of the bird breeding season and is a perfect time to provide safe, sheltered spaces for species such as blue tits, robins, and sparrows. Especially as natural habitats and traditional nesting places become scarcer due to urban development and habitat loss.

The best direction for your nestbox to face is somewhere **between north and east** to avoid it getting too hot or wet and not in direct sunlight. Also avoid placing them too **near to bird feeders and bird baths**, as high levels of activity from visiting birds will cause disruption to established nests and may even lead to it being abandoned. Most species of bird are territorial, so having too many nest boxes in one area can cause problems. It should be at a safe height with a clear flight path, and not easily accessible to other animals. Avoid boxes with perches, as they can help predators. To attract the birds put a small amount of natural materials like twigs and leaves in the bottom of the nest box.

National Nest Box Week gives people a first look into the world of birds by helping them pay attention to the world around them and giving people a chance to give back to the natural environment. Don't forget that nestboxes are good for us too. Spending time in the garden and watching birds make themselves at home, are all great stress-busters.

nestbox.com



Week of Prayer for Christian Un

One Body, One Spirit

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed from the **18th to the 25th January**



For 2026, the prayers and reflections for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by the faithful of the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with their brothers and sisters of the Armenian Catholic and Evangelical Churches.

These resources draw upon centuries-old traditions of prayer and petitions used by the Armenian people, along with hymns that originated in the ancient monasteries and churches of Armenia, some of which date as far back as the fourth century.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 extends an invitation to draw upon this shared Christian heritage and to delve more deeply into our fellowship in Christ, which unites Christians worldwide.

Paul's epistles stress the importance of unity within the Church, urging us to live lives worthy of our calling with humility, gentleness, patience and love (Ephesians 4:1-3). Ephesians 4:4 summarises the teachings of Paul about unity, emphasising here, too, that the followers of Christ represent 'one body and one Spirit', united in a single hope. This metaphor signifies the Church as a unified entity transcending barriers of geography, nationality, ethnicity and tradition. Paul uses the metaphor of the Church being the Body of Christ to describe its unity within the diversity of its members.

The Churches Together in Marton and Nunthorpe have organised a Service for Christian Unity on 25th January at 3.00pm at St. Cuthberts Church, Marton. Where all are welcome.

...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be
as white as snow;

Though they be red like crimson,
they shall be as wool.

Isaiah 1:18

P R A Y E R D I A R Y

December 7th On this Sunday in Advent help us to prepare for the wonderful news of the incarnation. Help us to carefully learn from the readings on each of the Sundays. We pray for the Circuit Christmas celebration taking place at 2pm today at Grove Hill. Pray also for the Preachers Meeting on Tuesday. Pray for Revd. David Godfrey and for Nunthorpe.

December 14th Pray today for all the preparations taking place in our Churches for the Advent and Christmas festivals. Pray for Revd. John Howard-Norman and for Normanby

December 21st Pray today for the Carol services taking place in our churches, for the preachers and the musicians. Pray for Revd. Charity and the Town Centre Mission Team

December 25th On this Christmas Day we celebrate the wonderful news of the Incarnation, God so loved the World he gave us his Son to be our Saviour. Be with all those leading worship today. Bless Grove Hill.

December 28th On this Sunday we pray for all who may have been lonely at this Festive Season, families having difficult times. Be with those who help and comfort and support the bereaved for whom this is a difficult time. Be with Revd. Anne Coates and Trinity.

January 4th On this first Sunday of the New Year, we pray for Peace, for Good News, for health and for happiness in all our homes and our churches. Pray for Methodist Women in Britain and for Anne Mapplebeck, their coordinator. Pray for The Chinese Church.

January 11th We pray for all students returning to Colleges and Universities and pupils returning to

school after their Christmas break. Bless them and their Teachers and Governors. Pray the Methodist Asylum Project and for Billy Barnes the Project Manager and all who volunteer. Pray for Marton.

January 18th We pray today for all who are ill in body, mind or spirit. Be with all who care for them in Hospitals and Homes and in their own homes. Pray for Methodist Homes for the Aged Communities in Teesside, for all involved in the caring work of Montpellier Manor and for Barbara Robinson their Chaplain

January 25th We pray for the work of Elaine who runs our Circuit Office. Pray for Mark Braithwaite our Circuit Safeguarding Officer and for David Everitt our Webmaster.

February 1st Pray for those people on our Church Councils and those who have places at the Circuit meeting. Bless them that their decision making may be inspired by the Holy Spirit. Pray for the Trinity Family Friendly Centre

February 8th Pray for all those people who have got married in our churches. Pray as we approach Valentine's Day, for all who are in positive loving relationships.

February 15th As we approach Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday we pray for a blessing on our Lent devotions and discussions. We pray this may be a time of preparing for the great festival of Easter.

February 22nd We pray for Revd. Richard Andrew our President of Conference, for the Acting Chairs of District; Revd. Beverly Hollings and Revd. John Squares. Pray for all the church families in our District.