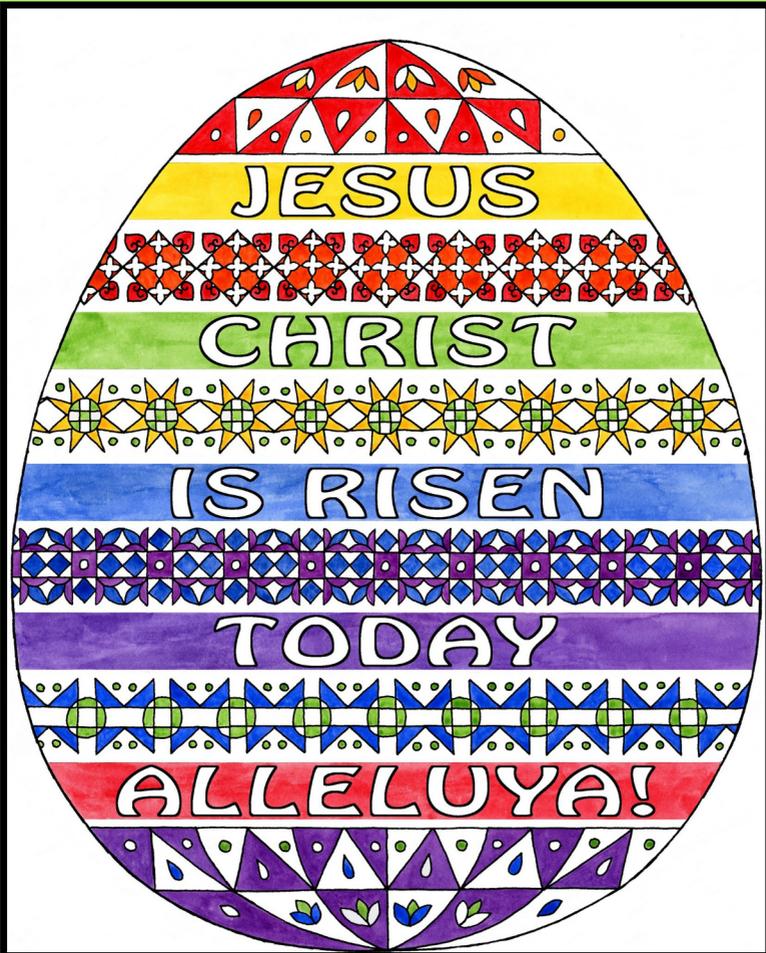


# MEMO

*Middlesbrough & Eston Methodist Outburst*

MARCH — MAY 2026



# FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Dear Friends

Christmas is over as I write this and when you read Memo we will be on our way to Holy Week and Easter. It is amazing how quickly I find time going past and in some way these Festivals help to mark that time. They also help us to learn more about our faith each year. So Lent is a time of learning and of meditation as we approach Easter time, I hope it will be beneficial to you all. We recently held a Memorial Service to thank God for the life of Rev Mike Harland who sadly passed away after a time of illness. I always felt Mike offered so much in his capacity as a Minister and Superintendent I also knew him well through PROBUS to which we both belonged. He was much liked and respected in that company and had contributed much to the running of the Club. We pray for Mike' family and friends at this sad time It reminds us of how important our Ministers are; past and present, of how much they bring to our church lives and indeed to our faith.

As Elaine and I look at Memo we feel that some times the aim of the Magazine is missed. It's purpose is to share news from all our churches and to inform people about what is going on at Church and Circuit level. People do ask me about certain aspects of the Circuit. Please think about what your church is doing and be prepared to share it with the Circuit. We always have the Circuit Meeting report in Memo, to inform our readers of Circuit events. For example, we shared the sad news that Avenue has been sold, a lot of people didn't know that and when they did find out were sorry to hear that news. I want to thank Elaine in the Circuit Office for the excellent job she does in putting Memo together and getting it out on time It should be in church on the last Sunday before the Memo period

begins, so in this issue it should have been available in church on Sunday February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Thank you to the Memo distributors, they do a great job of making this deadline happen

So I wish you a happy and successful 2026, in your own life and in the life of our churches.

Best wishes  
Dave and Elaine  
The Editorial Team.

## March to May

### A season of transformation

From the reflective steps of Lent to the joy of Easter and the Spirit's coming at Pentecost, these months are a gift. They remind us that faith is not static, but a living journey, one rooted in Jesus Christ, experienced in community, and expressed in love and service.

As we walk this path together, may we be open to the transformative work of God in our hearts and in the world around us.

## 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](mailto:mbrocircuit@gmail.com)  
by 1st April 2026



# The Superintendent's Letter

**Dear Friends,**

I write this letter as we approach the season of Lent, the traditional time when Christians focus on the spiritual disciplines of our faith. The word discipline seems rather severe especially when it is applied to something like prayer, a particular focus of Lent. Many Christians feel inadequate and ill equipped when it comes to prayer. We are often filled with a sense that we don't spend enough time on it, or have the right knowledge, or the right words to do it well. We often lack confidence in our own praying and are conscious of so many other people, 'doing it better than me.'

I remember feeling all these deficiencies in prayer when I was growing up as a teenager. I remember listening to local preachers praying in the pulpit and marvelling at their heavenly language and fancy words. I remember attending the old Methodist Prayer Meetings, which would frequently turn into 'prayer competitions' for the super spiritual, who vied with each other to produce the best extemporary prayers. The result of this was that I didn't dare pray out loud until I was into my 20s and had begun to grow in personal confidence. Even then, praying aloud in front of someone else required a leap of bravery and courage. I was afraid that people would laugh if I stumbled over my words.

And yet prayer in its purest form, is such a simple thing. When we look at the prayers in the Bible, they can be really short. "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13) and "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). We are told that Jesus responded very positively to both these one line prayers. Perhaps the most profound prayer we can utter in our daily lives is, "help me God". The truth is that fancy words and long sentences are not required when it comes to talking to God. What God wants more than anything is us. He wants our honesty, our personality and all that we are. Prayer is about noticing God in our daily lives and placing ourselves where he is.

The Methodist Church has produced a study series on prayer designed to be used in small groups. It is part of the "Sunshine and Showers" series of studies, which reflect on some of the uncertainties (or mysteries) of our faith. The series on prayer is designed for six sessions, each session exploring a pertinent question as follows:

- 1. Is prayer boring, or life giving?**
- 2. Do we pray sometimes, or all the time?**
- 3. Are your prayers eloquent, or silent?**
- 4. Does God feel absent, or present?**
- 5. Do you get answers, or no answers?**
- 6. Does God act, or do we act to answer prayers?**

I hope to be able to run this series in the circuit between Easter and Pentecost. (Watch this space!) It will be a series for beginners as well as for seasoned Christians, although as I write this sentence I want to affirm that we are all beginners when it comes to prayer.

Anyway, I wish you well as you embark on your Lenten journey this year. I hope that you may find light in the season of Lent and know the assurance of God’s presence with you as you pray to him day by day.

With every blessing,

**Revd. David Godfrey.**

## Thank you - you're stars!

A big thank you for all of the stars you made for us in the town centre - literally thousands!

We had a wonderful time making stars, packing stars and giving away stars to people in the town centre. All kinds of organisations, businesses and individuals were given a star along with a postcard with a blessing on it.

It's weird when you do things like this because when you give them away people begin by looking at you with suspicion, probably thinking "what do you want in return?" Or "what do we have to do/ go to?". It's a lovely moment when you explain "it's just a gift from the church to you, no need to do anything or be anything!"



And you see their faces light up. We had wonderful conversations with people and everyone was genuinely pleased to receive a bit of light in what can be a dark time for some. A little hope, a little light, a little love, a lot of God. And you, YOU bunch of stars in the Circuit who prayed and made and made and prayed those stars

have been part of something really big, really meaningful and really important. Small things, big impact.

So thank you for being part of the town centre mission. You're a bunch of stars.

**Revd. Charity**

**"Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see."**

**Mark Twain**



## Remembering Reverend Mike Harland:



It is with great sadness that we report the passing away of a former Minister and Superintendent in the Middlesbrough and Eston Circuit, Revd. Mike Harland. Mike's health had deteriorated in recent times, necessitating his move away from Nunthorpe to be with his family. He died on 3rd December 2025, at his son Ian's home in Scotland.

When Mike first visited our circuit, his wife Jo was more keen on a move further south. However, Mike was an outdoor enthusiast and when Jo saw the Cleveland Hills on the doorstep, she knew immediately that they would be choosing Middlesbrough. Mike was a very keen hill walker. On one occasion he hiked the skyline as seen looking south from Nunthorpe, with others, to raise funds for the Church. This was a distance of 26 miles, climbing up from Faceby and descending from Roseberry Topping.

Mike will be remembered as an energetic and innovative Superintendent Minister. He was instrumental in setting up the Circuit Office with the aim of providing administrative help to the 11 churches in the circuit at that time. He quickly brought the printing of Nunthorpe News and Memo in house. His conduct of worship was often very creative as well. His daughter described him as 'a bit of a rebel' arranging barn dances and outings and even allowing clapping in church! He introduced Iona songs to his congregations and many people will remember the pilgrimage he organised from the Circuit to the island of Iona.

Mike always retained an interest in mental health. In 1999 he left the circuit to work as a Chaplain at St Luke's hospital. He would often visit their secure mental health unit which housed severely ill patients some of whom were convicted criminals with severe mental health conditions. He also worked with a psychiatrist and others to establish a support group for people whose loved ones had taken their own lives. This used to meet weekly at a church in North Ormesby. At this time he and Jo moved to live at Ingleby Barwick and attended Yarm Methodist Church. It was with great delight that the congregation at Nunthorpe welcomed them both back when they downsized to a bungalow within the community.

Sadly, Mike lost his beloved Jo in 2023 and then his health began to deteriorate necessitating a move away from Nunthorpe to live with his family. The last nine months in particular saw a rapid deterioration in Mike's health as he lost both his mobility and speech.

Mike's family and friends met on Saturday 17th January, at Nunthorpe Methodist Church, for a special service of thanksgiving for Mike. Together we remembered the initiatives he started in the Circuit, his innovative conduct of worship, his humour, his energy, his love of the outdoors and his ministry to those who struggle with their mental health. We also celebrated Mike's love, friendship and pastoral concern which permeated all his activities. We continue to give thanks to God for Mike's ministry among us and we rejoice that Mike is now in the near presence of God.

**Revd. David Godfrey**

# World Hearing Day



Each year on **3rd March**, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** invites the global community to observe **World Hearing Day**. A day to think about the gift of hearing, how to protect it, and how we can support those who experience hearing loss.

Hearing is central to the way we connect with God, with one another, and with the world around us. From sharing stories and laughter to singing hymns and worship songs together, good hearing enriches our lives. World Hearing Day raises awareness about **preventing deafness and promoting ear and hearing care** — including simple steps like protecting our ears from loud noise, checking our hearing, and encouraging others to do the same.

The theme for **World Hearing Day 2026** — *“From communities to classrooms: hearing care for all children”* — highlights the importance of making sure young people’s hearing is cared for early, helping them learn, communicate, and flourish.

In our Christian life, listening is also a spiritual practice. Just as we listen to God in prayer and Scripture, we are called to listen *to* one another with patience, compassion, and respect. Supporting those with hearing difficulties — whether through a gentle conversation, thoughtful seating, or inclusive worship practices — is a simple way to live out Jesus’ command to *love our neighbours as ourselves* (Mark 12:31).

This World Hearing Day, let’s be mindful of the gift of hearing, care for it well, and create a welcoming space in our church where every voice is heard and valued.

## World Health Organisation

### Here are Spring Quiz questions to get your brain working



1. Who sang the original 1968 hit: *Son of a Preacher Man*?
2. In what country do Cherry Blossoms signify the beginning of Spring?
3. What major Jewish festival occurs in Spring?
4. Who composed the music: The Rite of Spring?
5. Which month is the “cruellest” according to TS Eliot in his poem The Waste Land.
6. Approximately how many Spring tides are there every year? [1, 12 or 24?]

**ANSWERS ON PAGE 20**

# Methodist Women in Britain



## SPRING DAY

**Thursday 30th April** - service to be held at Sacriston Methodist Church, Wesley Close, Sacriston DH7 6JG - led by Mrs. Anne Offler, "Living in Harmony."

Refreshments from 10.15am, finish at 3.30pm. Please bring your own lunch and drinks will be provided.

**Beryl Haggarth**

## MONTPELLIER MANOR CHAPLAINCY NEWS

We wrapped up a very busy Christmas and give thanks to Reverends David, John and Charity for their continued support of all we do here. We also thank all those from the different Methodist congregations who come along to our Community Church services on the First Sunday of the month.



Our Christmas services were all well attended, beginning with a Community Carol service on Sunday 14th of December, Blue Christmas 21st December, Christingle and Epiphany services. We also had a Montpellier Christmas Eve Carol Service at 11am followed by sherry and Christmas cake. The year ended with a memorial service on New Years eve, for all those who died here at Montpellier Manor in 2025.

As we begin 2026, we look to create further opportunities for continued involvement with the Churches in the Circuit.

Thank you to Trinity Methodist Congregation for the gift of beautiful warm hand knitted prayer rugs to keep our residents' knees warm

### **We are looking forward to Lent and Easter.**

A Good Friday (3rd April) reflection at 2pm followed by hot cross buns in the Coffee shop.

Easter Sunday will be celebrated with our Community Worship service also at 2pm on 5<sup>th</sup> April.

We will again be supporting the Eco Shop with our Lenten Appeal.

Please know you are welcome to drop in to our coffee shop for a coffee and chat, meet with friends between 10-4 on weekdays.

Peace and God's Blessings,

**Barbara Robinson**  
Chaplain.

# The History of Mothers Day



Mother's Day, or Mothering Sunday in the UK and Ireland, is a day to show love, gratitude and appreciation to all wonderful mums everywhere, through acts of kindness and the giving of Mothers Day gifts and flowers.

Mothering Sunday and Mother's Day both have different origins; although they represent the same meaning, they originated very differently. We all celebrate the day but very few people actually know its origin. The original meaning of Mothering Sunday and Mother's Day has been somewhat lost but it's still a day to solely appreciate mum.

Mother's Day celebrations date back as far as the ancient Greeks where they would celebrate Rhea, the Mother of the Gods and Goddesses, every Spring with festivals of worship. The Romans also celebrated a mother Goddess, Cybele, every March as far back as 250BC.

Mothering Sunday has been celebrated on the fourth Sunday in Lent, in the UK and Ireland, since the 16th century. The date varies in other parts of the world. Many countries follow the US and celebrate Mother's Day on the second Sunday in May, whilst other countries enjoy the day on March 8th which is International Women's Day.

**History of Mothering Sunday** Like many traditions and festivities, Mothering Sunday began with a religious purpose. Held on the fourth Sunday in Lent, exactly three weeks before Easter Sunday, it was originally a day to honour and give thanks to the Virgin Mary, also known as Mother Mary. Such celebrations required people to visit their 'mother' church - the main church or cathedral in a family's area. The spread of Christianity throughout Europe in the 16th century increased the celebrations and firmly put Mothering Sunday on the calendar. It was believed to be essential for people to return to their home 'mother' church to make it a true family honoured occasion. The gatherings reunited families and gave children who worked as domestic servants, or as apprentices away from home (from as early as ten years old), the opportunity to have the day off to join their family and see their mother.

Throughout the year in England and Ireland people would regularly and devoutly visit their nearest chapel, their 'daughter' church, whereas on Mothering Sunday, as well as baptisms, people would visit their 'mother' church loaded with offerings of thanks. Such celebrations were similar to, and most likely adopted, the Roman ceremonies of the Mother Goddess. The religious day increased its scope from thanking Mother Mary to a 'mother' church celebration and finally opened up as an occasion to thank and appreciate all mothers; thus creating Mothering Sunday.

Whilst the day had a firm following for many centuries since the 16th century, by 1935 it started to decrease in popularity and was celebrated less and less in Europe, until WWII. The Americans and Canadians celebrated Mother's Day during the war, feeling a crucial need to give thanks to their mothers whilst away at war. The British and other Europeans followed their comrades and they too gave thanks to their mothers; since then it earns pride of place on the UK calendar.

**Mothers Day Origins** The US celebrates Mother's Day on the second Sunday in May.

The holiday was formed much later than Mothering Sunday, and was created in 1908 by a lady named Anna Jarvis from Grafton, West Virginia, in honour of her late mother. Jarvis pushed hard for a holiday to celebrate all mothers after the death of her own, and after lots of hard work, determination and promotion President Woodrow Wilson finally made it an official holiday for the US in 1914.

However, as the holiday grew more and more established it became more and more commercialized much to the disgrace of Jarvis, who named it "Hallmark Holiday". Jarvis went on to oppose the day and regret what the day had turned into, and she died in 1948 very unhappy with what Mother's Day had become. Nonetheless, in the US Mother's Day still remains a popular holiday making it one of the biggest days for sales of flowers and cards.

**Mothers Day Gift Giving** As with any national holiday, Mother's Day involves the giving of gifts and cards to show Mum how much she's valued and appreciated.



Traditionally Mother's Day gifts included flowers and a Simnel cake. The flowers were picked by the workers on the way home from work for a day with their mum; they'd pick wild flowers from the country lanes. It is still a tradition today to spoil mum with a stunning colourful bouquet of flowers, as well as more modern gifts such as perfume, clothes or jewellery.

## Parish Pump

## My Memories of Mothering Sunday

As I wrote three years ago for Memo, I have vivid memories of Mothering Sunday. My father would make a great effort on the Saturday to find a bunch of violets from the market for my brother and me to give to our mother. We did not buy cards and I can't remember making them but we usually made an effort to give mum breakfast in bed! Perilous! Toast crumbs in the sheets with added smears from greasy butter fingers and sticky marmalade thumbs. Aaargh! Mum seemed to like it. I, in turn, pretended to love it when my own children would give me breakfast in bed! A bowl of cornflakes with milk swishing around dangerously! And of course smiles of pleasure at the posey given to me in church!



Nowadays I really DO like it when my daughter cooks me Sunday lunch on Mothering Sunday. I confess I've never made a Simnel cake, but does your family have any Mothering Sunday traditions?

Ruth Lewis

**British Summer Time starts on Sunday 29th March 2026**



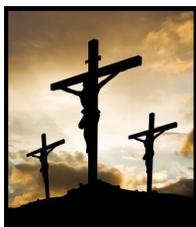
**Don't forget to put your clocks forward one hour.**

## StF 273 Here hangs a man discarded

We live in challenging times. Abroad, many authorities today, deal with opposing viewpoints using brutal violent repression, and at home it is surely a scandal that sheer poverty, mental health problems plus addictions leave too many people, adrift on city streets, discarded like the “man” in this hymn. But that anonymous man is Jesus.

It’s a hymn I have never chosen, or to my memory even sung. Not popular maybe because of its scandalous imagery, yet it echoes with Paul’s description in 1 Cor 1:18-19 of the crucifixion as a scandal, a foolishness.

First appearing in 1975, many said that the images used in the first two verses were inappropriate. Under the headline “Worzel’ image isn’t right for Jesus” in the Methodist Recorder of 8 March, 2012, one reader complained that the opening lines of the hymn, “Here hangs a man discarded, / a scarecrow hoisted high”, conjure up an image of Worzel Gummidge – a man-made effigy stuffed with straw. “I feel that to describe Jesus as a ‘scarecrow’ and a ‘clown’ is both insulting and offensive” s/he wrote.



Arguably, this is precisely the point of the hymn: Christians used to the inoffensive vagueness of hymns like *There is a Green Hill far away*, re-experience the shock-factor of early Christian belief. The Corinthians knew the full horror of what crucifixion entailed. It was a common punishment they had actually seen: agonising death by slow suffocation, with blood, pain and humiliation. Birds flapping around trying to peck at the exposed and vulnerable flesh. Why would you admit to such an end? And for your God too? Why would Christians

glorify in it?

The Methodist Church website tells us that prolific hymn-writer Brian Wren [aged 90 this year] was also addressing another issue. Crosses in our Protestant churches are empty, signifying that Jesus is risen and victorious. Indeed, we are often repelled by the gruesome crucifixes, emphasizing suffering to be found in many Catholic churches. Wren noted that most passion-tide hymns also announce the cross as a victory, as deliverance from human-kind’s anxieties of death-and-extinction and guilt-and-condemnation. Yet modern life for many people is not victory but rather a sense of emptiness and futility. Wren wrote: “‘Christ is risen’ shouted to one who sits in the darkness of emptiness and meaningless is as incapable of being good news, as would be an invitation to a neighbour overwhelmed with depression to join the party next door”.

Wren believed the Church’s message to such a person should not be, not at first, news of victory and hope, but rather of the Christ who goes into darkness, without foreknowledge of the future, and for us dies desolate and alone. ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ Wren wrote: So, the verse of my Good Friday hymn states in modern terms the ‘sheer folly’ of the cross, the folly it is today, as it was to the Greeks of Corinth, in the sense of something that is (not seems) without sense, laughable and absurd: Of course, Jesus can share our emptiness only if he is not dead but alive. But in his risen life he still shares our emptiness, and suffers with us.

Set to be sung to Bach's Passion Chorale, the juxtaposition of Wren's dark, stark modern words to this classic well-loved melody adds to its power in a Good Friday service. Many people today are feeling left behind by "drums of dazzling progress", like AI, and see modern cruelties, from authorities as regression, an echo of the barbarity of the Romans. I particularly like the plea in the last verse that Christ should "hold the hand of promise". That is what our neighbours need, a hand and a promise. God is with us. We might sing StF 273, this coming Holy Week.

**Ruth Lewis**



**Marton Methodist Church**  
Presents  
**Teesside Apollo**  
**Male Voice Choir's**  
**WINTER CONCERT**

**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 7pm**

**Tickets £8.00 Including Refreshments**

**Available from Teesside Apollo MVC tel 07729 626449**

**And The Church email [marton.bookings@icloud.com](mailto:marton.bookings@icloud.com)**

**Proceeds in aid of Church and Choir Funds**

**[www.teessideapollomvchoir.co.uk](http://www.teessideapollomvchoir.co.uk)**

## **EASTER EVENTS AND SERVICES AROUND THE CIRCUIT (not on the Plan)**



### **Grove Hill**

**Friday 3rd April** - Good Friday worship at Trinity  
10.00am - joint service with Grove Hill led by Revd.  
John Howard-Norman

### **Marton**

**Thursday 2nd April** - Sectional Maundy Thursday Communion Service at 7.30pm  
at Nunthorpe

**Friday 3rd April** - Good Friday Sectional Service at 10.00am led by Revd. David  
Godfrey

### **Normanby**

**Saturday 28th March** - Easter Fair 10.00 - 12.00 noon Cake Stall, Chocolate Egg  
Tombola, Raffle . £1.50 includes refreshments

**Friday 3rd April** - Good Friday Service at 10.30am led by Ron Mapplebeck

### **Nunthorpe**

**Thursday 2nd April** - Sectional Maundy Thursday Communion Service at 7.30pm

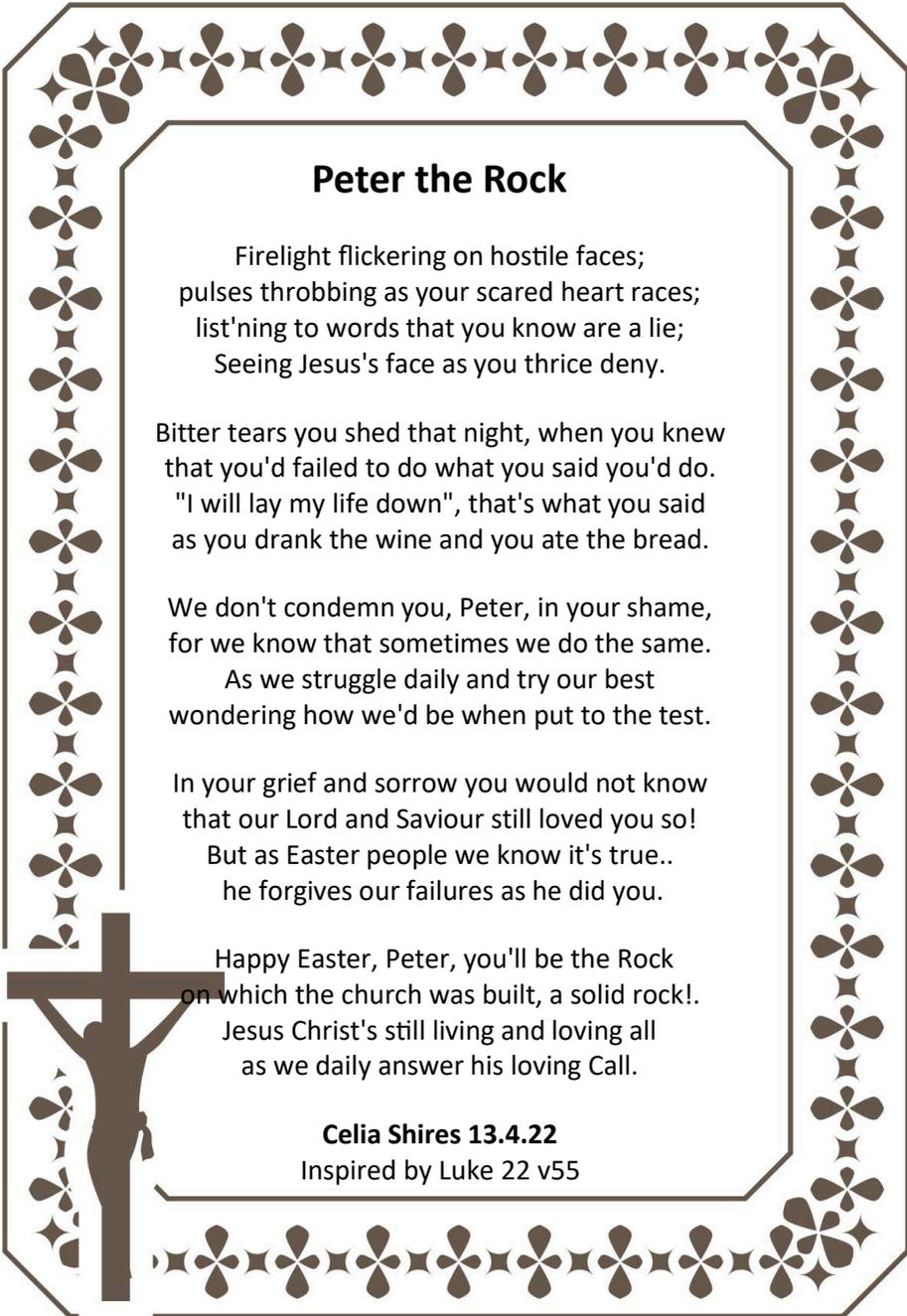
**Friday 3rd April** - Walk of Witness from Nunthorpe Methodist Church at 8.50am  
to Marton pe Methodist Church, for Good Friday Sectional Service at 10.00am led  
by Revd. David Godfrey.

### **Trinity**

**Thursday 2nd April** - The Institution of the Lord's Supper 6.00pm Revd. John  
Howard-Norman

**Friday 3rd April** - Good Friday worship at Trinity 10.00am - joint service with  
Grove Hill led by Revd. John Howard-Norman





## Peter the Rock

Firelight flickering on hostile faces;  
pulses throbbing as your scared heart races;  
list'ning to words that you know are a lie;  
Seeing Jesus's face as you thrice deny.

Bitter tears you shed that night, when you knew  
that you'd failed to do what you said you'd do.  
"I will lay my life down", that's what you said  
as you drank the wine and you ate the bread.

We don't condemn you, Peter, in your shame,  
for we know that sometimes we do the same.  
As we struggle daily and try our best  
wondering how we'd be when put to the test.

In your grief and sorrow you would not know  
that our Lord and Saviour still loved you so!  
But as Easter people we know it's true..  
he forgives our failures as he did you.

Happy Easter, Peter, you'll be the Rock  
on which the church was built, a solid rock!.  
Jesus Christ's still living and loving all  
as we daily answer his loving Call.

**Celia Shires 13.4.22**  
Inspired by Luke 22 v55



## Where did your Easter egg come from?

Your Easter egg can be traced back to the early Church in Mesopotamia.

Since ancient times, people had been giving each other eggs at pagan Spring festivals, as eggs were a symbol of the new life and rebirth in nature all around them. Then came Jesus and His death and resurrection, which made Easter the ultimate time for Christians to celebrate new life and rebirth. After that, it was only a matter of time before eggs found their way into commemorating Easter.

This seems to have first happened with the very early church in Mesopotamia, where those early Christians began dyeing their eggs after Easter, to celebrate the new birth that Jesus had given to them. The practise of using eggs in Easter celebrations then spread to the Orthodox Churches, and from there to the Western Churches across Europe.

***This year, why not buy an extra Easter egg or two, and donate them to your local food bank? You will make some local children very happy!***



**The Parish Pump**

## Easter Prayer

Living Lord Jesus, We, your Easter People of today, thank You for the Easter People of the Gospel accounts.

For the women, who loved You so much that they went to the tomb, early in the morning, while it was still dark. Thank you especially for Mary, who wept, then rejoiced, then ran to tell the others, "I have seen the Lord!"

Thank you for Thomas, who doubted, then devoted his life to You, his Lord and his God; for the disciples who ate breakfast on the beach with You; for Peter, who was forgiven and re-commissioned by You.

Thank You for them and Your witnesses through all generations. Thank you for Your true and living written Word, proclaiming You, our true and living Lord, who lived and died and rose again to offer us forgiveness and life.

Thank you, Lord that because You live, we have hope and assurance, whatever challenges the world might bring.

***Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Hallelujah!***

**Daphne Kitching**



**Henry is making a real effort for  
Lent -**

**He's giving up the remote control  
and walking to the TV**

### *Easter chocolate dilemma*

364 days of the year we tell our kids:  
“Do NOT eat anything you find on  
the ground, or anything from  
strangers!”

On Easter morning we tell them:  
“Why don't you go outside and  
search in the dirt for chocolates that a  
strange giant bunny has left for you?”

### *Joseph's tomb*

Pontius Pilate: “Joseph, I really don't  
understand you. You're one of the  
richest men in the region, and you've  
just spent a fortune on that new tomb  
for you and your family – and now  
you want to suddenly give it to this  
man Jesus?”

Joseph: “Well it's just for the  
weekend.”

### *Good Friday*

I was standing in line at the bank when  
there was a commotion at the counter.

A woman was very distressed,  
exclaiming, “Where will I put my  
money?! I have all my money and my  
mortgage here!! What will happen to  
my mortgage?! You can't do this to  
us!”

It turned out that she had  
misunderstood a small sign on the  
counter. The sign read: WE WILL BE  
CLOSED FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

### *Mr Bones*

The orthopaedic surgeon I work for was  
moving to a new office, and we, his staff,  
were helping transport many of the items. I  
sat the display skeleton in the front of my  
car, his boney arm across the back of my  
seat. I hadn't considered the drive across  
town. At one traffic light, the stares of the  
people in the car beside me became obvious,  
and I looked across and called, “I'm  
delivering him to my doctor's office.”

The other driver leaned out of his window. “I  
hate to tell you, lady,” he said, “but I think  
it's too late!”

### *Snoring*

A clergyman consulted his doctor about his  
wife's snoring. “It has to STOP,” he  
insisted.

The doctor was intrigued: “Does it really  
bother you that much?”

“Well, it's not just me,” confided the  
minister. “She is bothering the whole  
congregation.”

## Some Spring Flowers from Verses in the Bible:

**“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys”.**  
**(Song of Solomon 2:1)**

Lilies are often associated with purity and innocence in the Bible. In the Song of Solomon, the lily is used as a metaphor for love and beauty. Lilies also represent resurrection and new life, as they bloom in the spring, symbolising the promise of eternal life in Christianity



**The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. (Isaiah 35:1-2)**



Although the specific flower mentioned in this translation is the crocus, many scholars interpret it as a reference to the rose. The transformation of the desert into a blossoming garden, represents God's promise of restoration, hope, and renewal for His people. The blooming rose in this context signifies the divine intervention that brings life, beauty, and joy to an otherwise barren and desolate land.

In the same quote as Lily from the Song of Solomon, the rose is used as a symbol of beauty and love. “The rose of Sharon” signifies the beauty and perfection of the beloved in the love story between the two main characters in the book. The verse highlights the appreciation of beauty and the deep, passionate love that exists between lovers.



After a long cold winter, when the soil is barren we look forward to signs of Spring in the form of flowers. In the same way, in difficult times of our lives we look for signs of God's promise of renewal, resurrection and new life.



**“I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon, he will send down his roots; his young shoots will grow. His splendour will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon.” (Hosea 14:5)**

Although this verse does not directly mention the rose, it carries a similar symbolism. The passage speaks of Israel's restoration and the blessings that God will bestow upon His people. The blooming flowers, including the lily mentioned in the verse, are reminiscent of the rose's symbolism of beauty, love, and hope. The passage emphasizes the power of God's love to transform and renew, bringing forth new life and spiritual growth.

While roses are not explicitly mentioned in many parts of the Bible, their symbolism of love, beauty, and hope is present in various verses that describe flowers or the blossoming of plants. These quotes highlight the significance of roses as symbols of divine love, intervention, and transformation.

## Trinity Redevelopment

Over the past year, Trinity has seen a growing number of people coming through its doors.

Following the creation of our new kitchen in 2024, the café in our entrance foyer has developed into a lively and well used space. Week by week, people have been coming to meet, talk, rest, and enjoy a warm welcome. What began as a practical improvement has become a clear sign of how deeply our building is serving the life of the community.



As this activity increased, it became clear that the existing space was no longer meeting the needs placed upon it. We began to ask a simple but important question: how could we make Trinity more open, more welcoming, and better suited to the ministry and hospitality we are being called to offer?

The result is the redevelopment work now under way. A glazed screen is being installed four metres into the worship space, creating a larger, brighter café area whilst also forming a separate, well insulated room with its own heating. This new room will be suitable for community use and available for hire, helping Trinity continue to support local groups while generating income for the church's ongoing mission.

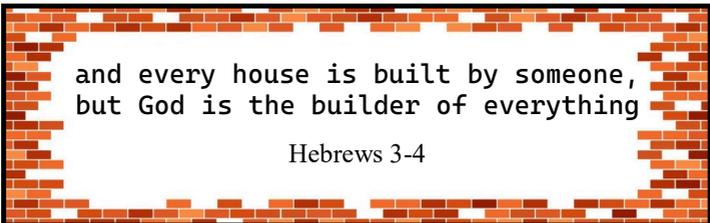
The need for this additional space has only grown. Since opening our ECO shop in January 2025, we have welcomed an average of forty people each week. This steady flow of visitors confirms what we already sensed: there is a real appetite in the community for warm, inclusive spaces where people can gather, shop responsibly, and feel at home.

Looking ahead, plans are already being developed for a further phase of work that will make the new space more visible and inviting from the street, with larger windows and new doors in the front of the building. These changes will help Trinity speak more clearly, even before people step inside, of openness, welcome, and belonging.

Construction began on 12th January 2026 and is expected to last eight to ten weeks. During this time, worship has temporarily moved to the main hall, and the ECO shop and café continue to open on Tuesdays from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm. As always, everyone is warmly welcome.

This redevelopment is not simply about bricks, glass, and doors. It is about making space for people, for conversation, for community, and for God's work among us. We look forward to sharing the renewed space with all who enter it.

**Bernard Nixon**



and every house is built by someone,  
but God is the builder of everything

Hebrews 3-4



At the beginning of November 2025, we successfully moved all of the MAP activities at the Avene Church into the Middlesbrough Methodist Hub (formally Linthorpe Road Resource Centre). A big thank you to everyone who helped in the move which we think will be beneficial now we have all of our Middlesbrough activities in one place. MAP activities in Redcar continue to be delivered on Wednesday afternoon at the Baptist Church in the town

We would also like to add a very big thank you for all your kind donations in December which enabled us to give small gifts to all the 150 asylum seekers who joined us for our Christmas party. A wonderful time together.

We are desperate for essential toiletries and nappies. If you can help, donations can be dropped in to the Middlesbrough Methodist Hub any Wednesday from 10am to 12 noon.

To continue running all our weekly activities we need to recruit more volunteers. Could you give a few hours of your time on either Wednesday, Thursday or Friday mornings to ease the pressure on our current volunteers? Help distributing clothes and household goods, serving tea/coffee, supporting new arrivals to find their way around our town and encouraging conversation to improve their language skills are areas where your help would be most appreciated.



If you would like further information please contact Billy Barnes, John Hinton or Brian Glover whose contact details are all in the Circuit Handbook

Many thanks

**The MAP Trustees**

## Some perks of getting old

- There is nothing left to learn the hard way.
- Things you buy now won't wear out.
- You can eat supper at 4 pm.
- You get into heated arguments about pension plans.
- You can sing along with lift music.
- Your eyes won't get much worse.
- Your secrets are safe with your friends – because they can't remember them either.





## Remembering Revd. Bob Cooper who died 19.1.26

Born on Teesside in 1950, Bob Cooper came to Nunthorpe when his wife Rev Helen Jobling became Superintendent Minister of the Circuit and our minister at Nunthorpe some years ago. Bob was already a well-published and prize-winning poet, as well as being an ordained Methodist minister. Looking a bit like an OT prophet with his greying beard and big boots, Bob was a hardy fell-running, rock climbing and mountaineering type of Methodist, looking to the hills as the psalmist puts it. As he had previously done in Newcastle, Bob soon began teaching Creative Writing at Nunthorpe Church through the Adult Education Service. He inspired many, some recently retired, to try their hand at writing: poems, autobiography, his classes were very popular.

He also took services, where his distinct creative approach meant they were always special. On New Years' Eve, he and Helen always hosted a little soiree at Windsor Crescent. After midnight a wee dram of Talisker Whisky would be brought out, malt whiskies being one of Bob's special subjects. The other specialist subject, of course, was words. He won numerous poetry prizes, and published several poetry books as well as articles to newspapers, journals and magazines in the UK and abroad. Bob's gift as a writer, one reviewer wrote, was "to imbue low-key detail with significance, everything matters, and what we barely notice can matter most of all. The poems refuse to shout, or even sing too loudly. Cooper leaves what he touches trembling and humming".

Below is one of Bob's poems. Here a church parade with communion service where worshippers access their divine father through bread and wine, links to a child's legal access to her father, who's now separated from her mother. I like the detail of the minster clumsily opening a tin of sardines. How we preachers try to make it relevant! Yet the parallels and relevance are often beyond what we can see, as Bob shows in this poignant poem. His voice will be sadly missed.

### The Sacrament of Access

In her brownie uniform, bought by her mum, she waits outside to be given a hug as she's handed a carrier of clothes, chewing gum, then left as she lines up, parades in, is handed a hymn book and sits glancing round at the banners, or to the seats behind at families soberly dressed and patient. She swings her legs then stands, sings, sits, listens as the Minister walks round, smiles, clumsily opens a tin of sardines, rips open bread rolls, laughs, talks about a picnic where everyone's famished, and a small boy. Then, before some form a queue for a crumb and a sip of wine, with her eyes closed she hears about those in other countries who're hungry, and *all those hereabouts who're starving for love*. Outside she's met by her father, smelling of beer, who takes the bag, lifts her, ruffles her hair as they grin and she's asked about school, about today's breakfast, and he mentions Pizza Hut, Saltwell Park, a choice of ice-creams, then *hot dogs and coke for tea on the boats*.

**Bob Cooper**

## Wednesday Afternoons at Nunthorpe – Fortnightly

It used to be the Women's meeting, but after deciding to open it to men too, it's now just called Wednesday Afternoon. Everyone is welcome! Even folk from other churches, and folk from no churches. It's promoted on the memc.uk website.

We have a wide range of speakers and activities. Last year we had a Strawberry Tea, this history of the Welsh on Teesside, a Team Quiz, a mass STAR making session to help Rev Charity [see p4]. We've clapped different styles of music from John Summersgill's Cole Porter on the piano one afternoon, to Eric and the Band's Beatles on another. We were also moved to hear from Sarah Stephenson about the vital work of Middlesbrough charity My Sister's Place, supporting victims of domestic violence and abuse. We were able to give her not only a cheque but also several bags bulging with toiletries and underwear to give to people who often have to flee their homes with nothing.

In February TC Luck will tell us all about Chinese Methodists and David Elley will tell us about the Sunflower Dreams Project (See article in the last edition). David, son of one of our members, is working tirelessly for this charity which brings the art of the Ukrainian children who are attending art healing projects, raising awareness of the plight of these traumatised children of war. They organise exhibitions in USA and Europe. There are astonishing stories, dreams, and resilience amidst the ongoing war. We also held a Big Breakfast in February to raise funds.



In March, John Hinton will fascinate us again as he examines the music and message of the folk group The Young'uns. Later in the month, perhaps there'll be some sober stories from Morgan McClintock, who recently resigned from Middlesbrough Council, talking about: Ups and Downs of being a Councillor.

The programme is so varied, there's bound to be something that interests you, so check the website and join us at Nunthorpe on Wednesday Afternoons. Coffee, tea and really nice biscuits too!

**Ruth Lewis**

### Answers to Quiz on Page 6

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Dusty Springfield | 2. Japan           |
| 3. Passover          | 4. Igor Stravinsky |
| 5. April             | 6. 24              |

## The RHS Chelsea Flower Show – world's greatest flower show

19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> May brings us the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. The most prestigious gardening show in the world, it attracts about 168,000 visitors a year. Its cutting-edge garden designs have been called the 'haute couture' or 'World Cup' of gardening.



### Here are 12 interesting facts about the Show:

The RHS Chelsea Flower Show is organised by the Royal Horticultural Society.

The Show began in 1913, with about 250 exhibitors in a large single tent. Today the Show covers more than 23 acres with more than 550 exhibitors and gardens, not to mention the Great Pavillion.

The Great Pavillion is HUGE – it covers 2.90 acres, with enough room to park 500 London buses.

The Show has been held in the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea in London every year since 1913, excepts for gaps during the two World Wars and Covid.

It takes just under three weeks to build a Show Garden, and five days to take it down.

In 1927 there was a campaign to get the RHS to ban foreign exhibits, to reduce competition. The RHS refused, saying 'horticulture knows nothing of nationality'.

The late Queen Elizabeth II attended RHS Chelsea more than 50 times.

It takes 14 judges and two moderators 25 hours to judge and assess all gardens at the show. It takes 50 judges and four moderators three hours to judge all the exhibits in the Great Pavilion.

Garden gnomes have always been banned, except in 2013, the show's centenary year. That year, well-known supporters, including Elton John, Dame Helen Mirren, Joanna Lumley, and Mary Berry painted gnomes to sell for charity.



2020 brought the first ever virtual RHS Chelsea, during the Covid pandemic.

It is not Britian's largest flower show, that is now the RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival.

One very wet year the show was nicknamed the 'The Chelsea Shower Flow.'

### The Parish Pump

"Where flowers bloom so does hope."

Lady Bird Johnson

# Called by God: Vocations Sunday



Vocations Sunday this year is Sunday 3rd May. We are all invited to reflect on the many ways God calls each of us to live and serve. In the Methodist tradition, vocation is not limited to ordained ministry or church leadership. It is about responding faithfully to God’s call in every part of life.

The word “vocation” comes from the Latin *vocare*, meaning “to call.” God calls each person by name - into relationship, into community, and into service. Some are called to preach or lead, while others live out their calling through family life, work, study, care, and service in the wider world. Every calling matters.

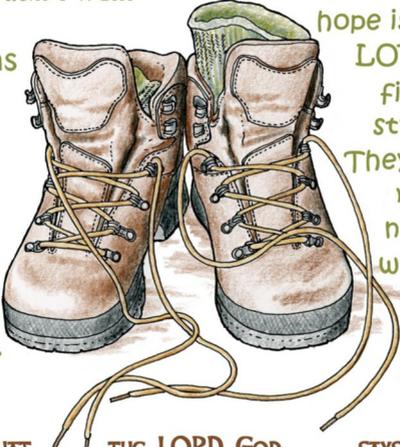
John Wesley taught that faith should shape daily living. Methodism affirms that all Christians are called to ministry, wherever they are. Our everyday actions, acts of kindness, justice, and compassion, are powerful ways of sharing God’s love.

On this Vocations Sunday, we are encouraged to pause and listen. Where do our gifts meet the needs of others? How might God be inviting us to serve today? As we listen and respond, we trust that God equips us for the journey.

May we continue to discern God’s call together, and live out our vocation with faith, courage, and love.

**What does the LORD God want from you? To respect Him, walk in all His ways, and to love and serve Him. Deut 10:12-13**

Even though I walk through valleys as dark as death, I will not fear any danger, because You are with me. Ps 23:4



Those whose hope is in the LORD will find new strength. They will . . . run and not tire, walk and not faint. Is 40:31

**THIS IS WHAT THE LORD GOD SAYS, “STAND AT THE CROSSROADS AND LOOK. ASK FOR THE ANCIENT PATHS, THE GOOD ROADS. WALK IN THEM AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.” JEREMIAH 6:16**

## Some thoughts on May 24th

I mentioned in my Editorial the importance of our faith festivals. I share with you some of my thoughts about Aldersgate Sunday and Pentecost all on May 24<sup>th</sup> this year.

### ALDERSGATE SUNDAY

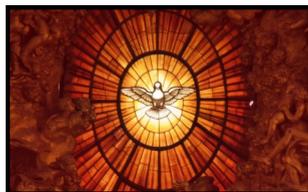
I am proud to be a Methodist, and so this particular Sunday makes me think about the significance of John Wesley's warmed heart experience in Aldersgate Street on May 24<sup>th</sup> 1738. It was for him a key moment of recognising his faith. He was a clever Theologian. He studied at Oxford University. When I was at Westminster College in Oxford, we went most Sunday mornings to the service at the Wesley Memorial Methodist church in the city. It was opposite the part of the college where Wesley lived whilst there and where he and his friends became so disciplined in their observance of Prayer and the study of Scripture. They would rise from bed to do this at a very early hour. They were so Methodical in their prayer lives they were nicknamed 'Methodists' For all this disciplined life it was the experience on that Sunday listening to a preacher in the street that really lifted Wesley into such amazing inspirational faith. Look what he did, found a horse and went all around the country preaching and teaching. He inspired so many people and those people passed on the faith we know today, especially through the hymns written by John and his brother Charles. They inspire us and make us a people who enjoy singing.



So, when May 24<sup>th</sup> comes along think about this great man of faith and of his legacy, our Methodist church.

### PENTECOST SUNDAY

It is good that also on May 24<sup>th</sup> is the festival of Pentecost. This time remembers the coming of the Holy Spirit. The disciples were afraid of the Jewish authorities who may be looking to persecute them for their time with Jesus. So they remained locked away in a room, although they were well aware of what they should be doing, Jesus had been a great teacher, yet they just didn't have the courage to speak out. On that Sunday they felt the power of the Holy Spirit coming to them in flames of fire and a great wind. They opened the door and began preaching the good news of Jesus. So many joined them that day and that was the start of the spread of our faith. Read about the event in Acts chapter 2.



On that Sunday there is an opportunity for us like Wesley, to feel our hearts warmed by the Holy Spirit and our faith making us want to share the good news of Jesus.

The Jewish festival of Pentecost celebrated the wheat harvest, thanking God for his gifts. It also celebrates the Divine revelation of the Torah, the books of Law, given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Like our Pentecost a celebration of God's gifts to us in different ways. So, I hope May 24<sup>th</sup> will be special to all of us this year and I hope as preachers on that Sunday, we can make it very inspirational and have some great hymns!!

**Dave Elliott**

# PRAYER DIARY

**MARCH 1<sup>st</sup>** On this Sunday pray for our Circuit. Pray for Revd. David Godfrey and Marton.

**MARCH 8<sup>th</sup>** Pray today for the Circuit Meeting taking place on Tuesday, praying for all who have places at this meeting. May we be guided by the Holy Spirit and may decisions be made for the good of all members of our churches. Pray for Revd. Charity Hamilton and for the Mission and Ministry to the people of Middlesbrough.

**MARCH 15<sup>th</sup>** In this season of Lent pray for all those people in discussion groups or in their own meditation trying to understand more about our faith. Pray for Revd. John Howard-Norman and Grove Hill.

**MARCH 22<sup>nd</sup>** Pray for children and young people in our churches. Pray for those who work with them. Pray for Christian teachers and Governors in our schools and University. Pray for young people away from home at University and College. Pray for Rev. Anne Coates and for Nunthorpe.

**MARCH 29<sup>th</sup>** On this Palm Sunday we remember Jesus entering Jerusalem and facing up to those he knew would put him to death. Bless all our Holy Week services and meditations. Pray for Normanby.

**APRIL 5<sup>th</sup>** On this glorious Easter Day we worship the risen Jesus. We celebrate his Resurrection and his presence amongst us in every part of our lives. We thank God for the gift of eternal life. Be with all Christian worship in our town today whatever the denomination that there may be a real sense of hope for our churches and communities.

**APRIL 12<sup>th</sup>** Pray today for all those people who are unwell, those living with disabilities, those who are old and unable to get out and about. Pray for all who care for the sick in our hospitals and Homes. Pray for those who look after loved ones in their own homes. Pray for Trinity and for the Trinity Family Friendly Centre.

**APRIL 19<sup>th</sup>** Pray today for Christian people who have an influence on our

Communities. Pray for Local Councillors for our MPs and all who make important decisions in our community. Pray today for Elaine at the Circuit Office and for Andrew at the Linthorpe Road Resource centre.

**APRIL 26<sup>th</sup>** Pray today for those who may feel ostracised by Society those who feel left out. Pray for the Methodist Asylum Project for Billy Barnes the Project Manager and all who work with the project to help people feel at home in our community.

**MAY 3<sup>rd</sup>** Pray today for those who are old and those in need of residential care Pray for the work of MHA Communities Teesside, for Montpelier Manor. Pray for Barbara Robinson their Chaplain.

**MAY 10<sup>th</sup>** We pray that as we celebrate Ascension Day on Thursday, we may pray about what this day means to us. We pray for all who are Local Preachers in our Circuit and for anyone who is thinking and praying about becoming a Preacher. We pray too for those who are contemplating becoming Ordained Ministers, and those who are in training at this time. May God bless them in their calling.

**MAY 17<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for the witness of our churches in their communities that as Christians we may reach out to share the love of Jesus. Pray for the Chinese Church in our town. Pray for Revd. Rachel Williams in her Chaplaincy role.

**MAY 24<sup>th</sup>** On this Pentecost Sunday we thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit given to those first disciples. Help us to also feel the presence of the Holy Spirit inspiring us to move forward in our faith. Also, on this Sunday we remember how John Wesley felt the power of the Holy Spirit when he attended the meeting in Aldersgate Street as he felt his heart strangely warmed.

**MAY 31<sup>st</sup>** We pray for the Darlington District for the Acting Chairs; Revd. Beverly Hollings and Revd. John Squares. We pray too for the Revd. Richard Andrew the President of Conference and for World Methodism.