

PRAYER DIARY

MARCH 2ND We pray today for our Circuit, and for Rev David Godfrey as our Superintendent Minister. Pray also for our Preachers and Worship Leaders for the Preacher's meeting taking place on Tuesday. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent, we pray for guidance in this special time of our Christian year. Pray for Stainton in their final time together that they may be blessed with the great work done over so many years by this Church family and all who have gone before them.

MARCH 9th We pray today for the work of the Mission team based at Linthorpe Road. Pray for Rev Charity Hamilton as she pioneers this special ministry to the Town Centre

MARCH 16th We pray today for the Circuit Meeting and for all those people who are members of that meeting. Help us to feel guided by the Holy Spirit so that the decisions made are the result of careful thought, discussion and prayer. Pray for Rev John Howard-Norman and for Grove Hill.

MARCH 23rd We pray today for all those people who are ill, those in hospital, hospice those being cared for in Homes and in their own homes. Bless and encourage all who care for the sick, and especially those who lovingly care for family and friends at home. Bless Rev Anne Coates and Marton.

MARCH 30th On this Mothering Sunday we pray for all mothers. Pray for the mothers sadly no longer with us, we thank God for their love and their influence and the memories which will never go away. Pray for new mums, for mums who are struggling and for families who have broken up. Pray for the Avenue Community Project for John Martin and for Linthorpe Road Resource Centre and Andrew Glazebrook. Pray for Nunthorpe.

April 6th Pray today for those who are involved in Education in our churches. Pray for Christian teachers and Lecturers and for School Governors. Pray for Elaine at the Circuit Office and for David our Webmaster. Pray for Normanby

April 13th On this Palm Sunday we remember how Jesus went into Jerusalem to face his enemies and

we pray we may always be brave enough to stand up for our faith. Be with those who in various parts of the world are persecuted for their faith. Thank God we have the freedom to worship and to confess our faith. Pray for all the special events of this Holy Week.

April 20th On this Glorious Easter Day we pray that we may celebrate the Resurrection with joy and thankfulness. We remember Jesus risen from the dead and for his promise that where he goes we go also. Bless the many celebrations going on today which will remind so many people of the risen Jesus.

April 27th We pray today for our troubled world, we think of those countries where there is division, hate and death. We pray for peace. Pray for Methodist Asylum Project and for Billy Barnes.

May 4th We pray for all who are new to our churches, those who are seeking faith who are beginning their Christian journey. Bless those who will support them and make them feel welcome in our church families. Pray for Methodist Homes for the Aged at Montpellier Manor and for their chaplain Barbara Robinson.

May 11th We pray for those members of the Stainton church family as they seek new places of worship, grant that they will be welcomed which ever church they decide to make as their Spiritual Home.

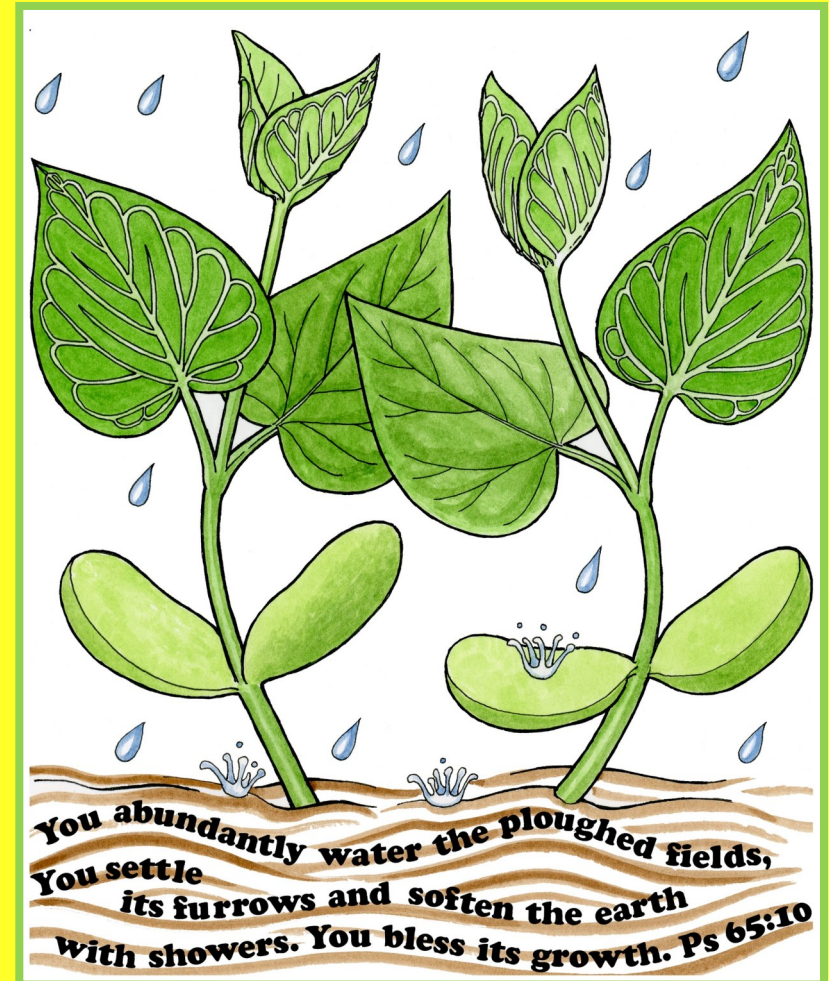
May 18th We pray for the Methodist Women in Britain and for the Circuit Men's Fellowship groups. Pray today for all the different groups meeting in our churches. Pray for Trinity Family Friendly Centre, for the church family at Trinity.

May 25th We think of Ascension Day on Thursday we pray that we might understand the meaning of this day seeing Jesus being with his Heavenly Father. Pray for the Darlington District, for Carolyn Godfrey coming to the end of her year as Vice President of the Methodist Church and for Rev Richard Andrew, the Chair of our District about to start his year as President of the Methodist Church.

MEMO

Middlesbrough & Eston Methodist Outburst

MARCH — MAY 2025



FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

It seems as though the year is rolling by with great speed. I am writing this on January 16th and you will read it on or around March 1st! Spring will be just round the corner and hopefully life will seem more pleasant for us all!!

This Quarter comes with some special times to lift our spirits. On March 4th Shrove Tuesday, give us chance to be 'shriven' of our sins as we begin the journey through Lent. Ash Wednesday will see our usual midweek service at Normanby become a Circuit Service to allow us all to think of the importance of Ash Wednesday. (March 5th)

Lent of course is the time when we remember Jesus being tempted in the Wilderness. During Lent we will endeavour to spend more time thinking about our faith and is so doing may wish to give something up, although that is not compulsory. It is seeing the value of Lent as a Holy Time to help us spiritually to prepare for Easter.

The Easter weekend comes along with Good Friday on April 18th and of course Easter Sunday April 20th. I have written more about Easter in this 'Memo'

Ascension Day comes on May 29th right at the end of this Quarter. A time to be reminded again of Jesus as the Son of God. So let us use these special times to help us to grow in our faith.

Lots of interesting items in this Memo. Thank you to the people who have contributed your thoughts and ideas which are so valuable to us all. Thank you to Elaine in the Circuit Office for the wonderful job she always does putting the 'Memo' together.

We are a Circuit and 'Memo' helps us to remember that important fact as we share together.

Lastly we think of our friends at Stainton as they complete their wonderful mission spreading back so many years. I have mentioned them in the Prayer Diary, let us remember them at this time.

Dave
on behalf of Anne and Elaine.

CIRCUIT ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

*Normanby Methodist
Church*

5th March at 10.00am

**Led by
Rev. John Howard-Norman**

Everybody Welcome

DEADLINE FOR NEXT EDITION OF MEMO

**Please send all contributions
to the**

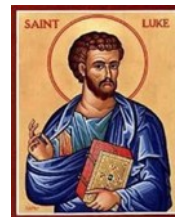
**Communications Team
C/O the Circuit office,
Nunthorpe Methodist Church,
Connaught Road, Nunthorpe,
Middlesbrough TS7 0BS**

**Or email to
mbrocircuit@gmail.com**

by 1st April 2024

Answers to Quiz on Page 11

1. Japan
2. Holi
3. Daffodil
4. Lent is the 40 days of fasting before Easter
5. Mars, the Roman God of War
6. Dusty Springfield



Just what the Doctor ordered

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first, were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (Luke 1 1-4)

Saint Luke, the gospel writer and author of the Book of Acts, is celebrated on 18th October. It reminds me of a series of sermons which we once had in church.

One sermon was on the law, and a doctor preached about them. When my turn came up, I had to talk about doctors. In my daily work as a lawyer, I frequently work with medical colleagues. The two professions have one big thing in common: that is that we both *deal with evidence*.

Of course, we have different types of evidence to consider. A doctor needs evidence of someone's symptoms to make a diagnosis, while a lawyer needs witnesses or paper-work to prove a case. (Though sometimes, when clients come to tell me about a problem, they are surprised when I ask what witnesses or papers they have as evidence. Without that, the case is not going to get very far.)

I wonder if that is why Luke was chosen as a gospel writer. He explains in the opening verses of his gospel that he relied on "eyewitnesses" and that he, himself, had also "...carefully investigated everything from the beginning."

So, his faith, like our faith, was based not on feelings and made-up stories, but on *hard facts*. Just what the doctor ordered!

Almighty God, you called Luke the physician, whose praise is in the gospel, to be an evangelist and physician of the soul: by the grace of the Spirit and through the wholesome medicine of the gospel, give Your Church the same love and power to heal; through Jesus Christ Your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

The Parish Pump

An update on Methodist governance.

Conference is the governing body of the Methodist Church. As Conference only meets once a year, until relatively recently **The Methodist Council** undertook ongoing work on its behalf - budget setting; policy development and host of other work being delivered and to be delivered by The Methodist Church across the connexion.

Until September of last year, I was the elected lay representative from the Darlington District to **The Methodist Council**. The position used to alternate every four years between an ordained Presbyterian and a lay volunteer.

As part of a wider re-structuring programme and in a drive for greater effectiveness and efficiency a new **Connexional Council (CC)** came into being at the commencement of the Methodist year in September 2024. The new CC is significantly reduced in member numbers and its workload will be strictly controlled in an effort to ensure that it beds in well, can hit the ground running so to speak and is able to respond to the many challenges presented to it by Conference. There will still be representation from Districts but it will not be as comprehensively served in member numbers as was previously the case. The work of the CC will be reported on line via The Methodist Church website where any interested party will be able to tune in to the fine detail.

I look back on what has been an interesting, challenging and educational four years as your lay representative and am grateful for the interaction I have had not only with previous Council members but with grass roots Methodist members who have made enquiry and/or feedback contact with me.

Mark R. Braithwaite

LIFE QUOTES, TALES AND KINDNESS

It's nice to be nice, my dear man would often say.
Then in the next breath, she said walk don't run as Rome was not built in a day

Manners cost nothing may be an old wives tale,
Memories can last forever in the heart without fail.

Treat everyone you meet with a smile on your face,
Don't judge, be a good listener, fall back into place.

Put into practice be happy and content,
Follow the lords way, be happy a gift from Heaven sent.

Peace from within you will then brightly shine,
Appreciate family and life, and all will be fine.

Amen

Mrs D. Louth (Normanby)



The Superintendent's Letter

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Easter edition of Memo. Once again we read the familiar stories of the cross and the empty tomb and we join with Christians around the world in celebrating the most important festival in the Christian year. I love to read the gospel accounts of resurrection. It is easy for us because we know the end of the story, but the initial reaction of those witnesses who first encountered the risen Christ is one of confusion and fear.

Fear is a natural reaction to things we don't understand. In Matthew's gospel, the women go to the tomb to grieve, expecting everything to be in order, but when they get there they find a chaotic scene. The tomb is open, the stone is rolled away and the guards are shaking with fear. No wonder the women are afraid. At the heart of it all is a heavenly being with a message, 'do not be afraid'. In a sense the gospel has come full circle. It began with God's message to Joseph about not being afraid to take Mary as his wife, for God's plans are about to be fulfilled in the baby. It ends with the same reassurance that God's plans are still being fulfilled, not just in the lifetime of the baby, but to the end of time.

It is a wonderful and very timely message for us to hear as well. Back in our October Church Council at Stainton a very difficult decision had to be made. After much consideration, the Church Council voted unanimously to 'Cease to Meet' as a Church. It was a tearful conclusion to an ongoing conversation, but through the tears we could trace the hand of God guiding us. God has been working his purposes out through the chapel at Stainton and he will continue to work his purposes out in that village and in the world to the end of time. The chapel may close (Subject to the permission of Circuit Meeting and Synod) and say that it's purpose is fulfilled, but God's healing and reconciling work will continue. This is the message of Easter after all. 'Do not be afraid', for death and loss are not the end of the story.

Sometimes in the muddle of 21st century living, we become confused and fearful. It is good to hear that message 'do not be afraid' and to know that even through the fog of doubt and uncertainty which sometimes pervades our lives, God's plans are still being fulfilled. Resurrection is an important sign of that fulfilment and in Christ, God has given us a foretaste of what is to come when all creation will be made anew. Even now resurrection still breaks into our ordinary lives. We see God at work in the world when lives are transformed by Christ and when acts of love and service are done in his name. In Christ even the bleakest situation can be turned around through his transforming resurrection power.

And so I invite you to come and explore the resurrection hope with us this Easter time. None of our circuit churches claim to have all the answers, but we try to learn from Christ and allow his teaching and his risen presence to shape our lives. We gather around his Resurrection story because in it we find hope for ourselves and for our world.

May you receive every blessing in Christ in this Easter season.

Rev. David Godfrey

CELIA SHIRES ORBITUARY

27.3.1942 – 27.12.2024

Celia was born into wartime Grangetown and grew up there and in South Bank, and, for a while, in Glasgow. She was the eldest of four children in the family. She was educated at Eston Grammar School. Unfortunately she was denied a place in the sixth form and so she left school at 16 and secured employment with the Department of Health and Social Security as a typist.

In 1964 she met Alf Shires at a dance in Redcar and they married the following year. Celia took time out from work following the birth of their son Andrew in 1970 but returned to working for the DHSS from 1978 until retiring in 2004.

She pursued her academic dreams and in the early 1980s she achieved a pass in A Level English Literature and later Theatre Studies. She enrolled for an Open University degree in the Humanities and in 1992 was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree, in a ceremony at Ely Cathedral.

Celia had many other interests and talents. She enjoyed holidays with family and friends, in later years including visits to Andrew who settled in Boston, U.S.A. She had a lifelong fascination with the works of William Shakespeare and visited the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) at Stratford and London on several occasions and also volunteered to assist with the wardrobe of RSC during their local productions while on tour. The world of science fiction and fantasy had a great attraction for her. She loved the various series of *Star Trek*, but also *Doctor Who*, the *Harry Potter* books, the *Abbey Girls* and *Chalet School* stories, and not forgetting *The Lord of the Rings*. She also took up water-colour painting.

Above all, Celia was a woman of great faith. As a teenager, she attended the youth club at the Methodist Church in Normanby. It was there that she received her grounding in the church and began her life-long association with that church. It would be true to say Normanby Methodist Church was her life. It was there that as a youngster she grew in faith and came to love her Lord and Saviour. It was there that she offered her many gifts and time to the service of God and his people, in so many ways. She served for many years as Church Steward, Member of the Church Council, Church Council Secretary, Circuit Synod Representative. She ran the playgroup, served on the Ways and Means Committee, and was a regular speaker at the Sisterhood and Wives Group, and her delivery of monologues at the Harvest Social is the stuff of legend. She arranged the appointment of preachers for Wednesday services at Normanby and also found time to volunteer at MAP, the Methodist Asylum & Refugee project in Middlesbrough.

She became a fully accredited local preacher in 1964 and spent the next 60 years proclaiming her faith to the congregations of this Circuit, who came to know and love her, and greatly appreciate the humble sincerity of her preaching. Early in 2024 Celia was awarded a certificate from the President of the Methodist Church marking her 60 years in the pulpit. Sadly because of her continued ill health during the past year, the opportunity to have a formal presentation never arose. It was, however, on prominent display during her Service of Thanksgiving.

She was always a very enthusiastic singer, whether in church or on the stage in musicals and pantomimes, and had a lovely voice. After watching an episode of *Songs of Praise*,



2025 marks 80 years since the end of the Second World War, with Victory in Europe (VE) Day on 8th May 1945 and Victory over Japan (VJ) Day on 15 August 1945. The Royal British Legion is planning events to mark these momentous anniversaries to ensure that the service and sacrifice of the Second World War generation is always remembered.

Victory in the Second World War would simply not have been possible without the combined efforts of all the Allied Forces, from the Commonwealth and beyond. Therefore, the veterans of our Second World War generation from across the UK, Commonwealth and Allied nations, will be at the very heart of all commemorations.

Everyone in modern Britain today has a connection to those who served during the Second World War, either through their family or community heritage. RBL activities will thank surviving veterans and pay tribute to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and lost their lives, without whom the way of life we enjoy today would not have been possible.

Following on from the enormous success of D-Day 80 - 6th June 2024, in which we all commemorated the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, France. By the lighting of over one thousand beacons and five hundred lamp lights of peace throughout the United Kingdom, and UK overseas territories that night. The focus is now on the celebration of the 80th Anniversary of VE Day, with the theme Lamplight of Peace

On Thursday 8th May 2025 we are encouraging the lighting of Beacons and Lamp Lights of Peace at 9.30pm, the raising of a unique VE Day flag at 9.00am and, where possible, holding parties of celebration throughout the day in the streets, gardens at home, churches, villages, town halls, pubs, clubs, hotels and all manner of locations throughout the United Kingdom, and UK Overseas Territories.

McDonald MP, Chris Cook, elected Mayor of Middlesbrough, local councillors and representatives from Cleveland Police.

We were also hosts to representatives from Middlesbrough Environmental City and ACTES Trust (a Middlesbrough based charity dedicated to supporting people across the Tees Valley to live more prosperous lives) who, along with FareShare, have been instrumental in giving advice and help with the setting up of the shop.

Of course many of our volunteers were there too, wearing their aprons, to denote that they are 'staff', helping to serve customers.

All in all a very successful occasion. You may even have seen or heard about the shop on BBC Look North or Radio Tees.



As I mentioned earlier, volunteers are always welcome, following Safer Recruitment, a current DBS certificate or successful application, and will need to undertake the Foundation Module of Safeguarding Training. If you are interested in coming to help please contact June Howard-Norman by email june_hn2000@yahoo.co.uk or phone 07801549931

The shop also welcomes donations of food (non perishable only, please) toiletries and sanitary products and household cleaning items. Again, please contact June, or drop them off at Trinity.

Better still, why not come along on a Tuesday morning and have a coffee in the cafe and do some shopping - it's only £4 for up to 10 items and you'll be helping to stop food waste going to landfill.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

Thank you for thinking about helping us and I look forward to hearing from you.

June Howard-Norman

Trinity Silver Eco Certificate

Bernard Nixon being presented with Trinity's Silver Eco Church certificate which they have just received by Andy McDonald MP.

EcoChurch has been a passion of Bernard's and the church since 2006 - one dream then was the EcoShop and now almost 20 years later it exists. Bernard's final statement after the presentation was - and now we're going for gold!



which was signed, she learned British Sign Language (BSL) as she thought it would be a good thing for her to do in church. Proclaiming the gospel not just through the words of her preaching but through her signing, a practice she also followed as a normal member of any congregation.

For many years Celia was a member of Women's Network which later became Methodist Women in Britain (MwiB). In the 2014/15 year Celia had the honour of serving as District President.

People also remember Celia through the variable colouring of her hair in recent years, and her Christmas jumpers which she donned at the first sign of any winter chill.

Celia had a wonderful gift for writing poetry. She was a true poet, and was able to pour out her heart onto the page, in words that were filled with beauty and meaning. With Andrew's help her poems, reflections and stories, some of them going back to the 1970s, were published in three slim volumes which have been a source of joy and inspiration for all who have read them. Her recent collaboration with Peter Howe, who set many of her poems to music, made her very proud. Celia was so good with words that the legacy of her beautifully crafted poetry reminds us of her ability to convey simply and eloquently the great truths of her Christian faith and to observe the mundanities of everyday life with that engaging sense of fun which she possessed in bucket-loads.

Always eager to help others, Celia, along with other local preachers, took on the role of mentor, guiding and nurturing the development of new local preachers during their training. Here I can interject a personal note as when I started my own training in mid-2002 Celia was appointed my mentor. Sadly this was for only a few short months before her husband Alf died but she demonstrated one particular trait in her preaching which I admired and have myself tried to adopt ever since. That was, where possible, to start a sermon with a personal experience relevant to the theme. During Advent in 2023 Celia was planned to preach at Normanby but was unable to do so because of her illness. I was privileged to present her service word for word as she had prepared it, apart from the prayers. I remember becoming quite emotional internally while delivering some of her powerful words and feelings towards the end of the service. The way she said things could indeed have that sort of impact on people.

From around mid-2023 Celia's health deteriorated, and there were many stays in hospital, the longest running to almost two months. The thing was that she always seemed to bounce back. She had a resilience that came of an inner strength of spirit, so that even when her body failed, she pushed on, as ever the adventurer that she was. Just before Christmas, she was admitted to James Cook hospital again, and this time it was clear that this would be last time. With Andrew at her bedside, Celia went home to her Lord, at 5.40pm on Friday 27th December, aged 82 years.

Following a private family service at the crematorium her Service of Thanksgiving at Normanby Church was, as could be expected, well attended. Rev. John Howard-Norman led the service the content of which reflected Celia's wishes. Two of her poems were included; *In Your Embrace* was read, while *On a Beautiful Night* was sung meaningfully and movingly by her friend Peter Howe.

I can do no better than finish this tribute with Celia's second verse to that song:

*On this beautiful night, while the stars twinkle bright,
 O Saviour from heaven come down.
 Let the song of the angels ring out round our hills,
 Where nestles our humble home town.
 And like wise men of old we will offer our gold,
 As we sing of your love and your care.
 Let love for each other; each sister and brother,
 Be our frankincense, gold and myrrh.*

(I am grateful to Rev John Howard-Norman for sending me the eulogy he delivered during the service which provided much of the background information mentioned.)

Ron Mapplebeck

In Your embrace

Though I don't see you face to face
 I know I'm held in your embrace
 Amazing Love! Amazing Grace!
 You died to save the human race.

I sing the hymns, I read your Word
 and many sermons I have heard
 which tell me how much you have cared
 and with your blood we sinners spared.

How can it be that I should gain
 redemption through my Saviour's pain?
 A mystery it must remain
 My Saviour now with God does reign.

In your embrace I am set free
 Lead me, Lord, to where I must be.
 Together, Lord, oh let us be
 Now and throughout eternity.

Celia Shires 16.4.23

ECOSHOP At Trinity

Hi Everyone,

We're opening an Ecoshop at Trinity. Oh - a Food Bank? No. Erm - a Community Pantry? No, it's neither of those. It is a shop where anyone from the community can come along and choose 10 food items for £4. There is no need for any form of referral.

The project has been in the planning for months. Sharon Sewell, organiser of TFFC, made all the initial enquiries and applications for funding, which were successful. Unfortunately she stepped down from her post last autumn but the trustees agreed that the project should continue. A number of people were each working away to make the project work and I was asked to co-ordinate their efforts.

The shop will be provided with goods by FareShare. FareShare is the UK's national network of charitable food redistributors, made up of 18 independent organisations. Together, they take good quality surplus food from right across the food industry and get it to nearly 8,000 frontline charities and community groups. The food redistributed is nutritious and good to eat. It reaches places such as school breakfast clubs, older people's lunch clubs, homeless shelters, community cafes and Ecoshops, like ours.

We have a number of volunteers, who will help on a rota basis. There are two 'sets' - one group will help shelf filling and bagging fresh foods on a Monday, ready for when the fun begins on a Tuesday when the shop will be open from 10am to 1pm. Our launch date is 21st January and if you would like to volunteer, we would be happy to add you to the team following safer recruitment. Any offers of help would be gratefully received.

Whilst we are setting this up, we are also needing more help in the Café at Trinity as it is becoming busier. It is open from 10am to 2pm on a Tuesday. If you'd like to join a rota to help there, we'd love to hear from you too. Again we will need to follow safer recruitment guidelines.

UPDATE

Well, what a day! I am writing this following the opening of the Ecoshop@Trinity by the President, Revd Helen Cameron, and Vice President of Conference, Mrs Carolyn Godfrey (yes, that's David's wife!) We were very lucky to be able to involve them in the celebrations as they were filming in our local area with the Methodist Church media department, and so we hi-jacked them!

Helen and Carolyn were accompanied by Andy



March, April and May Flowers and their meanings

March: Daffodil and Jonquil

As March is the month where spring officially begins it makes sense that the **daffodil** is the primary birth month flower for March. These flowers return each year like little drops of sunshine. They are such happy flowers that they're seen as a sign of good luck and celebrated in Wales as the national flower. Daffodils have been around in the UK since the 17th century. Even Shakespeare was a big fan of them! While they are most commonly yellow, you can also find white and orange daffodils too. Symbolising rebirth, luck, vanity and prosperity we see the people who are born in March to be happy, cheerful and optimistic folks who can easily brighten someone's day



Jonquils are just another variant in the daffodil family. These look almost identical to daffodils, however they have bright white petals with a yellow centre. These carry similar meanings to daffodils, but they also symbolise desire and friendship. These flowers are attached to compassionate, dreamy, independent and loving personality traits.

April: Daisies and Sweet Pea

Daisies symbolise innocence, loyalty purity, and love that conquers all. So, April babies are sweet, kind, loyal people to have in your life. Not only are daisies great to give to those born in April but as some say they also represent fertility and motherhood. While the sweet and simple daisy are more popular out in the fields than in a vase, giving someone born in April a wonderful bouquet of bright gerbera daisies will no doubt put a big smile on their face. Did you know that daisies are said to be one of the oldest flowers on earth? Scientists found drawings of them carved in stones that dated back to at least 3000BC. But they could've been around for millions of years before that!



Sweet peas symbolise blissful pleasure. They originated in the UK, and Southern Italy. And now they bloom all over the world after bursting into mainstream cultivation in the 17th century.

May: Lily of the valley and Hawthorn

Traditionally, **lily of the valley** is known to symbolise humility, sweetness, the return of happiness and motherhood. Making them perfect gifts for mothers if their birthday happens to be in May. Popular amongst royal brides, lily of the valley features delicate little florets that carry a beautiful sweet scent. You will often see bridal bouquets featuring at least one sprig of these wonderful blooms. There are many myths and legends surrounding where lily of the valley came from. Some say they appeared where Eve's tears fell after she was evicted from the Garden of Eden. But others say that when St. Leonard fought a terrifying dragon for hours, the lilies grew wherever the brave warrior's blood fell.



Hawthorns are unique flowers that feature bright white petals and distinctive antennas in the centre. They also have small red berries that can be used in any bright flower arrangement! Hawthorns represent hope, happiness and faith.

EASTER

When I was teaching, I was often in trouble because of Easter as it disturbed the timetable regarding exam preparation, completing the syllabus and other issues. As I was the R.E person I always had to deal with the complaints, but of course I could do nothing about it. How is Easter date set? Well of course many of you will know.



Here is the answer; Easter is decided by the first Sunday after the first full moon that occurs on or after the Spring Equinox!!

However, I wonder if Easter disturbs us? I feel that Good Friday should be disturbing us. We remember that Jesus was prepared to stick with his principles, despite the opposition the shout of Crucify him. After all on Palm Sunday the crowds had shouted Hosanna, they hailed him as a hero. Within a few short days their cries changed to Crucify him!!

Jesus went to that Cross that unbelievably painful death, deserted by all who followed him, the death of a common criminal. That disturbs me why should Jesus have done that for me, or for you? What have we done that enables Jesus to go to the cross to save our sins? It disturbs me to wonder if I am always worthy. Yet the wonderful word Grace, so much part of our Methodist vocabulary, reminds me that love and forgiveness the death of my sins on the cross are given freely. It disturbs me to think that Good Friday is now so often ignored by so many, life goes on and this Holy Day is only remembered by a minority. Maybe we need to be more open about the greatest sacrifice of all, to be so disturbed that we want to do something about it, about sharing the news, about ensuring our lives are able to respond to that sacrifice that amazing love. As hymn 287 in STF says; Love so amazing so divine, demands my life my soul my all.

Easter Sunday can also disturb us. On this glorious day the women went to the tomb to prepare Jesus' body for burial as they couldn't have done it on the Saturday as this was the Sabbath. They find the body gone, how much did that disturb them? They had seen a vision of Angels who told them Jesus was alive.

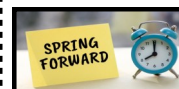
What amazing news, we are faced with the reality that Jesus really is the Christ, the Son of God able to rise from the dead and to say where he goes we go also.

How does that shake us, this Jesus is not a comfortable Saviour, but one who raises from the dead conquers death and sin, and asks us to follow him.

He also reassures us that when we face that disturbing prospect that all our lives will end, we should be strong enough in faith to believe in that gift of Eternal Life. If we believe in this risen Jesus what difference does that make to your life and my life. Surely Easter should disturb, should shake us up, should inspire us to start again.

Dave Elliott

British Summer Time starts on Sunday 30th March 2025



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

STAINTON METHODIST CHURCH

1840-2025

“There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens” (Ecclesiastes 3: 1) “Everything and everyone is created for a divine purpose”. (Proverbs 16:4)

Our purpose is fulfilled.

God has planned out our life and he knows exactly what will happen and when it will happen. There is an appointed time for everything. All you need is to have faith in knowing that the Lord's time is perfect.

Thus it is that Stainton Methodist Church has fulfilled its purpose and in May (with the permission of the Circuit Meeting and District Synod) we will cease to worship and hold a service of celebration.

It was with a very heavy heart that at our October Church Council meeting this emotional decision was made. Our Chapel has been a faith community home since 1840 as well as serving as a billet for soldiers and a blanket store during the war. How many treasured memories have been made from the days when it was a cold, draughty building with no heating or facilities and tram like pews to the cosy, welcoming building it is today? How many ministers and local preachers have led worship here? How many hymns of praise, words of prayer and Bible readings have been shared?Innumerable!

We remember with great fondness happy, poignant and memorable services especially Easter, the Big Sing and Harvest.



The time came however, when our congregation began to dwindle, time took its toll and people were no longer able to undertake the required roles for the Chapel to function.

We will all move on, probably to fresh places of worship with new people and continue to sing familiar hymns with new friends.



The Gardener

Spring's a time for planting in the warming earth
Seeds and saplings growing at this time of birth.
Carefully we tend them, pulling out each weed
Watering and weeding every plant and seed.

Yet we are just helpers – nothing done alone
For without our Father, nothing will be grown;
He's the Creator, He alone can bring
Growth into our gardens each succeeding spring.

Let us praise our Maker who makes life appear,
Praise Him in the springtime, and throughout the year;
Praise Him for all nature – every tree and flower
Gaze upon the garden, praise Him every hour!

God the gracious gardener cares for more than plants
As to us, His children every breath He grants.
He that for salvation gave His only Son,
Do not fail to praise Him for all that he's done.

By Nigel Beeton

The Parish Pump



The biggest lie I tell myself is “I don't need to write that down.”

I'll remember it.”



Kindness

I felt I had to write this after seeing so much doom and gloom in the newspapers and on TV. There are many acts of kindness and good things happening but there is a great lack of these being published, I suppose they are not really newsworthy but they do exist.

Bill and I were recently in the Lake District for a few days staying at Portinscale. We set off for a visit to Ambleside on a beautiful sunny morning. We had a lovely drive through spectacular countryside and decided to go to Hayes Garden Centre for our coffee and to have a look around. As we weren't that far from Conistown we decided to continue our journey there as we hadn't been to that part of the Lakes for some time. As we were driving down a very quiet road with hills on either side we heard a 'bang' and the car started behaving very strangely. I was driving at the time and when Bill got out to look we found that there was a great gash in the front passenger side tyre. We managed to hobble to a small car park just a little way further along and pulled in there.

I phoned the RAC for assistance but unfortunately there was no mobile signal in that area. We didn't know what to do. Just then 3 walkers who were parked further into the car park came past just beginning their walk. They asked if they could help and we told them the situation. One of them, a young man, said that he was sure that the farmer just over the way, whom he knew vaguely as he bought his meat from him, would let us use his landline to make a call. He very kindly said he would take me over and we left Bill with the car. I made the call and the farmer's wife made me a cup of tea (poor Bill didn't get any) and said that I should wait there in case the RAC phoned back. Jo her name was, had to go to work, she was an artist and had a studio on the farm, she said that I should make myself another cup of tea and use the 'facilities'. She also said that not to worry if it couldn't be repaired that day, she had plenty of room and we could stay the night with them. About two and a half hours later Bill came over to the farm with an RAC officer and said that we would have to wait another couple of hours for the mobile tyre repair man to come. We were getting a bit worried by this time as it was starting to get dark. I went back to the car and left a message to that effect for Jo (the farmer's wife). The tyre repair man came within the hour but in the meantime other walkers gave us something to eat and we were offered another bed for the night and given their mobile number. Numerous people stopped and offered help for which we were really grateful. We were quite overwhelmed by the kindness of so many people.

I sent a text to Jo to thank her for her kindness and had this reply from her:-

"I'm not at all religious but I was brought up in a Catholic household and I respect and try to practice the Golden Rule "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". Or in other words, just be kind to one another! "If everyone followed this 'golden rule' what a wonderful world we would have."



Jean Reeve

We are hoping to grow our relationship with Montpellier Manor and share a monthly service with the residents where our Church Family will meet together once again.

Just as the communion table, pulpit, lectern, chairs, hymn books and every cup, saucer, and spoon have enabled us to remember just what has taken place during the life of the Chapel and no doubt will continue to fulfil their purpose in other places, we too will move on elsewhere but will never forget the major role Stainton Methodist Church played in the development of our faith and help lay the foundation for us to continue **our** purpose in the eyes of God.

Claire Tate

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

We thank you, O God,
for the ministry of this church over these past 185
years?



*For every person who has shown the love of Christ to another,
for every quiet act of service which helped another,
for every song of praise offered to you
from the depths of a grateful heart,
for every prayer uttered here which gave you honour and glory,
for all the ways in which you have guided and directed these your people.
Amen*

Methodist Women in Britain

DISTRICT EVENTS

Minsteracres Retreat

14th -16th March 2025 Facilitator Mrs. Barbara Easton

Spring Event

14th May 2025 at Bishop Auckland Methodist Church TS14 6EN
Refreshments from 10.00am Service at 10.45am. Please bring your own lunch, refreshments provided Afternoon session 1.15pm to 3.00pm

Beryl Haggath



EASTER EVENTS AROUND THE CIRCUIT (not on the Plan)



Holy Saturday Darlington District Pilgrimage

From Chester-Le-Street to Durham Cathedral, including an outdoor service of Holy Communion and lunch in the beautiful setting of Finchale Priory: 9.30am to 4.00pm, led by Revd. John Howard-Norman. For further information please contact Revd. John.

Grove Hill

Friday 18th April - Good Friday worship at Trinity 10.00am - joint service with Grove Hill led by Revd Charity Hamilton

Marton

Thursday 17th April - Sectional Maundy Thursday Communion Service at 7.30pm

Friday 18th April - Walk of Witness from Marton Methodist Church at 8.50am to Nunthorpe Methodist Church, for Good Friday Sectional Service at 10.00am led by Revd. David Godfrey.

Normanby

Wednesday 5th March - Circuit Ash Wednesday Service at 10.00am

Saturday 5th April - Easter Coffee Morning 10.00am

Friday 18th April - Good Friday Service at 10.30am led by Revd. John Howard-Norman

Nunthorpe

Thursday 17th April - Sectional Maundy Thursday Communion Service at 7.30pm at Marton

Friday 18th April - Good Friday Sectional Service at 10.00am led by Revd. David Godfrey

Trinity

Monday to Wednesday of Holy Week - These reflective services led by the Worship Team will each last approximately 30 minutes.

Thursday 17th April - Maundy Thursday - The Institution of the Lord's Supper 6.00pm led by Revd. John Howard-Norman

Friday 18th April - Good Friday worship at Trinity 10.00am - joint service with Grove Hill led by Revd. Charity Hamilton

GROVE HILL METHODIST CHURCH

Mosaic Singers Concert

on April 26th at 2.30pm

£5.00 entry, payable on the day

We are used to the idea of the gospel as meaning good news, but let's get back to the first word of this deceptively simple yet deep hymn heralding good news. It starts with the word "Now" emphasising, with its insistence on the immediate that Jesus is risen today, **now**, not just the day he rose on that first Easter morning some 2000 years ago.

Ruth Lewis

Spring Clean

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. (Psalm 51:77)

The hyssop plant **symbolizes the chance God offers us to be washed clean of sin.** It's also a reminder that He uses everything, including our missteps and mistakes, for our good. David admits his sinning was against God. He also confesses his human sin nature. He asks God to make him as white as snow by purging him with hyssop. He longs for joy to return to him, but knows he was suffering because God had turned away from him.

People used to have an annual 'Spring Clean' when they would clean the house from top to bottom. Perhaps it was a way of marking the new season or because the longer days and increasing sunlight rays made the dust stand out. Certainly the coal fires used all winter before central heating, would have made the houses dusty!

If you do have a clean-up, why not have a clear-out as well? Some of us are not good at throwing things away. Even if we don't use the thing, we can have a sentimental attachment to it, and not want to let it go.

But what do you do with the stuff you no longer want, without simply adding to landfill? There are online places to sell second-hand goods and local online organisations that advertise things people want to get rid of. You could also sell your items at a car boot sale.

Another way of passing things on is via a charity shop, although charity shops are particular about what they can accept. They reject items that do not have a safety label, and items that could be potentially dangerous, such as electrical goods. If you want to raise money for church funds, how about holding a church jumble sale?

Anne Smith



StF 306 Now the green blade rises

Jesus answered them, **“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit.”** John 12:23-24



Let's examine a pretty yet profound hymn we sing at this time of year, written by John Macleod Campbell Crum [1872-1958]. After the cold and dark of winter, in the spring we delight in seeing the first signs of hope with snowdrops, crocuses and the ubiquitous daffodil emerging from the dead ground. Delightful as flowers are, they are not as vital to our survival as the wheat slowly growing in the fields around us. Instead, it is the small, dry, dead-seeming grain of wheat as it germinates and pushes to the surface, ready to flourish and bear fruit. This grain when crushed becomes our daily bread that is our literal source, as well as symbolic hope, of life. It is the farming image we need to understand for if crops fail, we starve.

This hymn starts with that easily recognisable rural image. From the dark earth in the fields, a shoot, a green “blade”, weapon-like in the struggle for life is a symbol of God's Love which cannot die, but will come again. The grain from which it came was buried and so is also an image of a death. These days when most people are cremated rather than buried in graves in the earth, is it less easy for us to visualise. However in the second verse our gaze is directed to the tomb where Love (Jesus) had been laid out and buried by his friends who thought: “he never would awake again” and a direct link is made with the sleeping grain of the fields.

The third verse triumphantly with the word “Forth” announces Easter. Just as the grain has come up “risen” so too has our Lord “risen” and can be “seen”. The word rhymes with “green” of the chorus. “Quick from the dead” is doubly significant as another meaning of quick is living.

The last verse holds a deep message for us, particularly if we are feeling low for any reason. If our “hearts are wintry” it assures us that God can call us back to life again. Another visual image for such depression is “fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been”. The important message is that God's touch can call us back to life again. We can live after grief and pain.

The writer of this hymn first published in 1928, knew great sorrow. From an Anglican and theological background, he had been educated at Eton and Oxford and was a priest, actually serving as a curate in Darlington 1897-1901. Sadly his wife Edith, died aged 21, after giving birth to their only son. Later, that son too, died young aged 32 while working for the British Council 1942 in Constantinople. Crum married again and as well as composing hymns was a prolific writer of books on architecture, history and theology. He died at Farnham in Surrey in 1958, aged 86.

The pretty yet plaintive tune Noel Nouvelet, in the minor key, to which this hymn was set, is a French folk tune originally a Christmas carol dating from the late fifteenth century. Both French words stem from “News”. It is also the tune for John Bell's Jesus Christ is waiting in the streets StF 251, and another lovely hymn by Marjorie Dobson StF 524.

CIRCUIT MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

I have written about this meeting in Memo on a previous occasion but it has had little or no response!



We so enjoy meeting together as a group of men. Hearing interesting speakers, enjoying discussion and fellowship. We are a very friendly group who would love to welcome men from around the Circuit to come and join us.

Maybe if you gave it a try you would enjoy it. We start at 1.30pm the aim being that if people had to go and pick up grandchildren they could do so. We have our speaker and questions. We then have a cuppa and a cake and enjoy fellowship and discussion. We are usually finished by 3.30 at the very latest but people can go when they wish!! And of course, Grove Hill car park is as safe as any other church car park!!!

So why not give us a try. We are the only Men's group in the Circuit it would be sad to see it closing.

So here is the timetable; all meetings are on Fridays 1.30pm

March 28th - Revd. John 'To be a pilgrim' Walking Camino de Santiago'

April 25th - Steve Frost 'The Castle Eden branch railway'

May 30th - AGM and planning for next year.

We hope to see you.

Best wishes
Dave Elliott



Here are Spring Quiz questions to get your brain working

1. In which country are cherry blossoms considered as a sign of the beginning of spring?
2. What is the name of the Indian festival of colours, marking the beginning of spring?
3. What is the national flower of Wales?
4. How many days is Lent?
5. March is named after which God?
6. Which iconic blonde singer had this breakthrough hit in 1963: I only want to be with you

ANSWERS ON PAGE 23



...between you and me, it's the only way I can remember my PIN number!

Old Love

During a wedding the mother of the bride managed to keep from crying until she glanced at the grandparents. As the bride and groom took their vows, the grandmother had reached over to the grandfather's wheelchair and was gently touching his hand. That was all it took to start the mother's tears flowing. After the wedding, she went over to the grandmother and told her how that tender gesture triggered her outburst.

"Well, I'm sorry to ruin your moment," the grandmother replied, "but I was just checking to see if he was still awake."

Tractors

A little girl was watching her daddy repair his tractor. She asked her mother, "What happens to old tractors when they finally stop working?"

Sighing, her mother answered: "Someone sells them to your father,

Collection

A minister in a rural church had been having trouble with the collections. One Sunday he announced, "Now, before we pass the collection plate, I would like to request that the person who stole the chickens from our local farm please refrain from giving any money to the Lord. The Lord doesn't want money from a thief!"

The collection plate was passed around and for the first time in months, everybody gave.

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."

In place of cabbage

On Sunday after the church service, a woman told the minister that when she had sent her husband to buy a cabbage for lunch, he had fallen and broken his leg.

"That's terrible!" said the minister. "What did you do?" "I opened a can of peas," she replied.

Don't interrupt!

Sir Winston Churchill rehearsed his speeches at every opportunity. A true story about him relates how one morning, when Sir Winston was in his tub, his valet heard his voice above the splashing. Opening the door, he asked; "Were you speaking to me, sir?"

"Not at all," Churchill replied, annoyed at the interruption. "I was addressing the House of Commons."

Preachers



One of our Local Preachers frequently asks is what it says in the Bible true or what truth is it saying. We were asked some years ago by one of our Ministers, if there was a verse in the Bible that was special, important or significant to us?

In 1959 I went to train as a teacher at St. John's College at York, whose motto in Latin translated to "To have life and have it more abundantly". It was after all a C of E College but it took me quite a while to see the connection between its name and motto. I was used to seeing where a group of people collected at a meeting, demo or more often a sporting event, where someone held a placard which simply said John 10 v 10 on it. So yes, this is significant to me.

I remember one of our former Ministers the Rev. C. Jagger (what a memory) telling this story He asked the children from the church that on Christmas morning would they bring to church with them not a present, but something mentioned in the Bible. The usual lambs, bread, water etc were brought up to the front but one little boy took an orange, (perhaps from his Christmas stocking) Rev. Jagger could not think where in the Bible an orange was mentioned and asked him if he could have the orange to show to and ask the congregation about it. The little boy shook his head and quoted to him 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 v 21 which says "Hold on to the good."

Some years ago I was on a residential course, (I can't remember what it was about). When I got to my allocated room, there in the top drawer was the usual Gideon Bible with the printed sheet stuck in the front with suggested verses of verses for various situations. I'm sure you have come across them. On the bottom of this sheet, written in pencil by some well-meaning person was Isaiah chapter 28 v 20. I opened the Bible at that verse and burst out laughing and spent quite some time chucking to myself – it read – "The bed is too short to stretch out on, the blanket too narrow to wrap round you".

At one of our house groups we used some material which said – "If you want to walk on water, you've got to get out of the boat". This has had a big influence on me and it does give me greater confidence in not being afraid to try something new and Matthew chapter 14 v 29 is one of my favourite verses and usually comes under the heading "Jesus walks on the water." In my Bible I always see it as "Peter walks on to the water" The verse reads "Come, he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus."

Recently I asked the same Local Preacher – I do like his sense of humour – about interpreting verses and again he referred to the truth is in the meaning. I'll finish by quoting Ephesians chapter 5 v 18 – "Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit". Does this mean it's ok to drink whisky, vodka or rum etc??

If you have some special verses, whether serious or humorous why not share them with us.

Bill Reeve