

MEMO

Middlesbrough & Eston Methodist Outburst

**DECEMBER 2022 —
FEBRUARY 2023**

May the
spirit of Christmas
bring you **peace**

the
gladness of Christmas
give you **hope**

and the
warmth of Christmas
grant you **love.**



Author unknown

FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

It's late October and it feels like we are living in 'strange' times. I, like many of you, would probably choose to live in a settled, organised and reliable world, getting on with life and not having too much to worry about, but that's not quite the case!

Summer is over but we have had some unusually warm and sunny weather for this time of year; a new Prime Minister was elected at the beginning of September who then resigned towards the end of October. We are awaiting news of a replacement in the next week, making for very interesting, unsettling and perhaps unknown times.

Just how easy it would be to let the uncertainty take hold. But we must not forget that we are looked after by a loving, caring God. Hopefully the contents of MEMO will reflect this. Revd. David writes of the importance of Advent, Dave considers the meaning of Christmas and the New Year, others tell about the good old days and unexpected conversations, as well as other news of what's happening in the circuit and much more.

If you have considered writing an article but haven't got round to it, be wary of if it will do or if it will be interesting, just have a go. See below for the closing date, there is plenty of time to get your thinking caps on and have your pens, or keyboards at the ready.

Meanwhile let us remember what the coming festive season means and how important and still relevant it is just now

in our magnificent but difficult world.

Whether you will be with family, friends or on your own over Christmas and New Year have a blessed and peaceful time.

Best wishes Anne,
on behalf of the Communications Team

DEADLINE FOR NEXT EDITION OF MEMO

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

Or email to
mbrocircuit@gmail.com
by 1st January 2023



CIRCUIT OFFICE
The office will be closed from
12.00pm on Tuesday 20th
December
And re-open on Tuesday
3rd January 2023
at 9.30am
**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
HAPPY NEW MERRY**
ELAINE



Dear friends,

Welcome to the Advent edition of our newsletter. You will notice I said "Advent" and not "Christmas". We celebrate three new years in the Methodist Church, January 1st, September 1st and the beginning of Advent (November 27th this year). Advent is the start of the liturgical year as we prepare ourselves for Christ's coming into the world. It is a time of darkness before the light. A time of hope and expectation, of watching and waiting for God's salvation to be revealed.

The themes of Advent are more subtle and reflective than those of Christmas. In Advent we recognise the longing for things to change and to be better. This is a longing which exists in all human hearts and we pray for God to do his work in the world so that our hopes may be realised. It is a season where we have one eye on the suffering in our world and the other eye on God, praying for his kingdom to come and looking for signs of his action in the world. It is a season of the 'now' and the 'not yet'. The 'now' is when we recognise through faith that God is very near and active in our lives. The 'not yet' is when we recognise that there is more to come. We look forward to that new age when God shall be fully known and his glory seen by all.

Advent is, therefore, an important season, not least because it deals with Christian themes which are uncomfortable. Unfortunately, it often gets forgotten or drowned out by the noise and bustle of Christmas. People like the celebration of Christmas without the rather dull or downbeat bit which precedes it. Obviously it suits the commercial interests in our world to focus exclusively on Christmas and so the advertising and the lights all begin at the start of November. The season of Advent gets swallowed up in shopping and school nativity plays.

The church tries to fit in and engage with people in the community in ways which chime with their thinking and expectations. The result is that our Christmas celebrations tend to start in Advent and stop on Boxing Day. No one wants carol services and nativity plays after Christmas, which is when the real Christmas season begins. And so it is right that the Church sings its carols and displays its trees through early and mid December as clearly that is the best way of engaging with the public.

How then do we recover Advent through all the noise of Christmas? We can do it through our personal prayers and look at biblical passages associated with Advent. We can also benefit from the wisdom of our hymn writers while praying for a world in need of God.

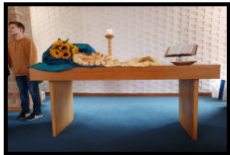
Perhaps it is our hymn writers who, with wonderful economy of words, best express the meaning and spirituality of advent. I end, therefore, with two verses from one of the new hymns in our new hymn book. (written by Jan Berry.)

Praise to the God who waits with us
for hope and joy to reign,
who shares our suffering and our loss,
embodied in our pain.

Praise to the God who comes to bring
comfort to all who mourn.
The whole creation 'Glory' sings
as Christ the light is born.

**With best wishes for the advent and Christmas season,
Rev. David Godfrey**

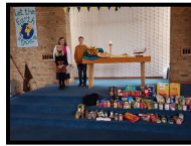
Nunthorpe Harvest Festival - 25th September 2022.



Following last years restrictions, to having a Harvest display, due to Covid, there was a real buzz and excitement to having a wonderful display this year.

Jean Scarlett- Carr made the display using the Ukrainian flag colours, a vase of lovely Sun

Flowers, and loaves of both wheat and gluten free bread placed on the Communion Table. She arranged the generous food gifts and monetary gifts, brought in by the congregation, on the stairs below.



Following the last hymn, and the sending out prayer, Jean explained to the congregation what various things in the display represented. The over all theme being the opening of gates and closing of chasms. Jean, Oliver and Delia, then distributed the buns to members of the congregation.

The lectionary this year was Luke 16.19-31, concerning Lazarus and the rich man. In this life the rich man feasting and wearing the finest purple linen, whilst Lazarus outside of the rich man's gate, is starving, and dogs are licking the sores on his body. When the men die, Lazarus is taken up to the bosom of Abraham, whilst the rich man is in agony down in Hades,- their situations are reversed. Somehow this parable seems to be at the right time, following the Governments not so mini budget on Friday 23rd September.

This year the harvest, including the money, a magnificent total of £383 is to be given, to the Genesis food bank at St. Oswald's Church, along the road in Grove Hill.

Following the service, whilst the congregation were enjoying eating their bread rolls Kath Dean, the Deacon at St Oswald's, thanked the congregation for their Harvest gifts, and gave details to those present, concerning the Genesis project that provides not only food, but also clothing and other goods to people in need. The project even has a garden where flowers and vegetables are grown.

We all sat and listened and found the project to be most deserving of our support.

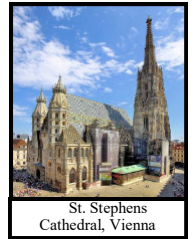
Dorothy Pearson.



BEING OPEN ABOUT OUR FAITH.

We have just returned from a lovely cruise on the Danube. We spent time in Budapest, in Bratislava, Vienna, Melk Abbey, and other lovely places. We visited lots of churches, and when I look at my photographs, they are either trams or churches!!

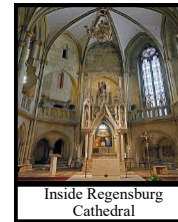
When we were in the Cathedral in Vienna there was a group of Primary school children, the whole school, being blessed by the Priest. They then sang some lovely songs. We felt privileged to be there in that place as those children experienced a faith community. We also visited another amazing church in Vienna and chanced upon an organ recital which was very special. I have to say though that after all these wonderful churches full of wealth, we couldn't help wonder about the feelings of the poor and needy and how this equates with our faith which is about caring for all.



St. Stephens
Cathedral, Vienna

What is obvious in these places we visited, is that there are lots of churches, and it seems lots of people attending them. One lady in our party, did say she is not really wanting to go in another church for some time as she felt she had had her fill!!

We did notice the wayside shrines which were very special and, in many ways, made us feel close to our faith in the ordinary places.



Inside Regensburg
Cathedral

It seems that in the countries we visited, people are not afraid of showing their faith. In some places churches receive tax payments to help them, so the church is regarded as being important.

In Regensburg on Sunday, we visited the greatest Gothic Cathedral in Bavaria and had to wait for the large congregation to come out before we were allowed in.

So how visible is our faith? One challenge we thought about at Grove Hill was exactly that question. We do have a sheet in the window which tries to explain what we are about as a church and as Christian people. However, it does seem to me and I am happy to be contradicted, that in our country, it is not always a priority that church is important, or that we make much of a show of our faith. I know that in our church families people show their faith by the lives we live, and that is the best show of faith. However sometimes being more visible is important.

I do love worshipping at Grove Hill and in all our churches round the Circuit. Much as we marvelled at the churches we visited; we are most comfortable in our own church!

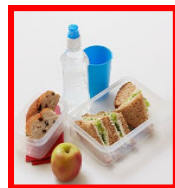
But maybe we do need to make our faith more visible, how do we do that? Well, I have my thoughts, maybe you could think about this too?

Dave Elliott

Warm Welcome Tuesdays at Nunthorpe Methodist Church

During the coming winter months through to the end of March, every Tuesday between 10.00am and 4.00pm Nunthorpe Methodist Church is opening its doors to offer people in the community a warm welcome.

Instead of shivering at home alone why not come to our warm building where there will be friendly folk to offer you a hot drink as well as other activities!



Join our regular Coffee Morning and pay what you can! The second Tuesday morning of the month, there will be a short service at the start. Then, if you want, bring a sandwich or cup-a-soup and stay over lunch! In the afternoons once a month there will be an informal talk from a guest speaker, or sometimes a talented musician will entertain us. Other afternoons

there will be table games like draughts, dominoes and Scrabble available for you to join in with... but you don't have to! Perhaps you want to join Nunthorpe Knitters, or even do some embroidery or mending or whittling!



Maybe you just want to sit and read, or sit and chat, or possibly you just want to sit. We don't mind. Whatever you chose to do, you will get a **warm welcome at Nunthorpe Methodist Church.**

CIRCUIT MISSION ACCOUNT - OVERSEAS 2021/2022

Sunshine Bags

	£.
Marton.	8.40
Normanby.	52.00
Network.	20.00
Total.	80.40

Adult Overseas

	£.
Marton.	----
Normanby.	501.38
Network.	54.00
Nunthorpe.	40.00
Total.	595.38

GRAND TOTAL. £675.78

Many thanks for all contributions through these hard times.

Gods blessings

Judith Bone (Normanby)

StF 206 *It was on a starry night* [and StF 191 *Away in a Manger.*]

<https://youtu.be/MCHL2t7xxus>

The Nativity Play! Today, people sometimes complain that unlike in some imagined rose tinted past, our country ignores Christianity but every December that claim is checked. Up and down the land you will find the Nativity Play is alive and kicking. In church Sunday Schools, in primary schools, small children will dress up in tea-towels, tinsel or more elaborate gear to “do” a Nativity and sing Christmas songs. They are very popular. Parents nostalgic for their own memories of Christmas Nativities past, still love to see their little ones as Mary or Joseph or even that obscure 5th shepherd or an unexpected Spaceman. Indeed, just like *Star Wars* there is a whole series of films called: *Nativity* about the adventures of hapless teaching assistant Mr Poppy and his school’s Christmas nativities for example *Danger in the Manger* and *Dude: Where’s my Donkey?* They are delightfully silly but I still recommend them. They are bound to be on your TV sometime this Christmas. But you may well ask, in Nativity Plays, where is the theology, the incarnation, the gospel message?



Dressing up and acting as characters from the bible, especially the Holy Family can be frowned on by stricter Christians and indeed some parents of other faiths may draw a line at that, preferring that their tiny children just be in the school choir, where they might well sing this modern hymn StF206: *It was on a starry night*. Like the more traditional StF 191 *Away in a Manger*, it has all the elements of Luke’s birth story: hills, shepherds, cattle shed, angels, heaven, baby, King, peace, but not 191’s almost throwaway theological line “and fit us for heaven” [atonement] nor its implicit prayer “Be near me... I ask you... Bless”. Whereas the older carol beloved of our childhoods is a lullaby with a slow plaintive tune *Cradle Song* by American WJ Kirkpatrick, *It was on a Starry Night* written by Joy Webb, now retired from her work in the Salvation Army’s 60s pop group *Joystrings*, is up-beat and modern. Parents watching their children in a Nativity, as well as hearing those key words, will see the story being signed energetically to a catchy tune. It’s happy, feel good and why not? It’s Christmas: Joy [Webb] to the world!

Above all because of its simplicity it is inclusive and with the signing even hearing-impaired can appreciate its infectious spirit. Inclusivity, atonement again, how did God “fit us”, all of us, for heaven? Well, he sent his son. Schools too have a mission, a need to include, and fit everyone on their Nativity stage that is why there is often a variety of personas [never found in the bible] who visit baby Jesus in the stable! The 5th shepherd, Wise Men’s pages, the innkeeper’s wife, his mother-in-law, lost penguins and others come with maybe a line to say, certainly a knee to bend and honour to give to the baby “King of all the world”. In Nunthorpe how we used to love our Nativities when our small children would dress up for exceptionally well attended services with wonderfully directed and costumed Nativity plays. At both our Carol Services and Christmas morning services, as a group, children would stand at the front and sing *Away in a Manger* delighting the older members of the congregation with their sweet singing of the familiar carol. But Covid saw an end to that. Last year, out of Covid necessity, Nunthorpe decided

to break with its traditional Christmas Eve Carol Service, instead thanks to David Everitt our **Christmas Carols on the Grass** service brought between 180-200 socially distanced Nunthorpe people [including some well-behaved dogs on leads] together outside the church to sing carols. Over 60 carol sheets were distributed and a further 121 people clicked on-line to access the words of the carol on their mobiles. But we made the decision not to sing *Away in a Manger*, instead we sang *It was on a Starry Night*, why? Because these days, as it is sung in schools, it is now more widely known, more inclusive and upbeat. And yes, fortunately the weather did permit. There was no rain, it was truly, on a starry night! I hope you too get to enjoy singing both lovely carols this Christmas.



Ruth Lewis



Where did the Wise Men come from?

Magi from the East – it isn't a lot to go on. The Magi had originally been a religious caste among the Persians. Their devotion to astrology, divination and the interpretation of

dreams led to an extension in the meaning of the word, and by the first century the Magi in Matthew's gospel could have been astrologers from outside of Persia. Some scholars believe they might have come from what was then Arabia Felix, or as we would say today, southern Arabia.

Certainly in the first century astrology was practised there, and it was the region where the Queen of Sheba had lived. She of course had visited Solomon and would have heard the prophecies about how one day a Messiah would be born to the Israelites and become their king.

Matthew's gospel (chapter 2) is clear that the Magi asked Herod: 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.' So it is possible that in southern Arabia the Queen of Sheba's story of how a Messiah would one day be sent to the Israelites had survived. Certainly there are a number of other early legends that connect southern Arabia with Solomon's Israel.

To many people this makes sense: that the ancient stories of a Messiah, linked to later astrological study, prompted these alert and god-fearing men to the realisation that something very stupendous was happening in Israel. They realised that after all these centuries, the King of the Jews, the Messiah, was about to be born.

One more interesting thing that gives weight to the theory that the magi came from southern Arabia is this: if you study any map of Palestine as it was during biblical times, you will find that the old Arabian caravan routes all entered Palestine 'from the East'.

The Parish Pump



CHRISTMAS.

As I write this, we have only just begun the month of October, yet already the shelves are filling with Christmas goods and cards. In some places there is Christmas music playing already, how do the staff cope?

As I think about Christmas nowadays it is about family. We will be having our son and grandson here for Christmas dinner as our daughter in law will be on duty as a sister at a local hospital. We will also see our other son and his partner at some time in the day. Without that presence of family, I feel much would be lacking from our Christmas. But for many people Christmas day will be another time of being on their own. I remember a colleague who was single and who told me he would rather be on his own than be part of other people's Christmas!

What is it then about Christmas which engages us in this time of family?

In many ways we read the gospel story of the birth of Jesus and it is centred on Family, yet a family in poverty, homeless and eventually in exile. Nothing romantic or warm and cosy. The thing for me is that God chose that family in all their poverty, he led them to Bethlehem to be in a place of such poverty when his Son Jesus was born. He led them to exile and then brought them home. Christmas tells us that family is vital, but that God loves and cares for all of us, no matter what our economic status may be, even in those times of real difficulty when family life is tested, if we trust in God, he will see us through. Christmas has over the years become so rosy and yet the real story was about a family having very tough times.

Whilst I thank God every day for my family, I know that we have also had our tough times when we needed each other and when we needed the power of prayer to see us through and we know that eventually God saw us through. Christmas for many this year in this very troubled world will not be happy or comfortable. We cast our thoughts to Ukraine and see the horror of life for so many families. Those families who managed to flee many of them to our country, will feel a sense of sadness this year, away from their homes and maybe from male members of their family who have had to stay behind in Ukraine. The message of Christmas love will be very prevalent in those homes where refugees are being cared for, all the year not just at this time.

Many families facing the harsh cost of living increases will find their opportunity to do what they usually do, very different. Thank God for those wonderful charities who will try to bring some Christmas hope and cheer to those who really need it.

So, we remind ourselves that God so loves us that he sends his Son Jesus to be our Saviour.

Think again of what this means. Take away some of the wrappings of Christmas and get to the truth, this is about our God who loves us, no matter what, and who bids us to continue loving each other and this is even more important at the present time and in this coming Christmas.

I have many favourite Christmas hymns but one that says a lot to me is in 'Singing the Faith' 222. Have a look at it and read the verses, and look especially at the last two lines of each verse. 'God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas day' If you

don't know the hymn it is set to the tune 'Scarlet Ribbons'

So, despite all that is tough and difficult, may our Christmas be a time of joy and blessings and an even greater awareness that God loves us and so all is possible through him.

Best wishes to you all

Dave Elliott

Update from your Methodist Council (MC) representative

This report updates on matters subject to debate/decision at the October Council meeting.

This was the first MC meeting chaired by Revd. Sonia Hicks (Past President of Conference) who took over from Jill Baker in September. Discussions took place on a wide variety of subjects on-line using the Zoom platform and there were 54 attendees from across the connexion.

Ongoing work and consultation touching on a review of District structures is an agenda item for discussion at this evening's meeting so for the purposes of this update I will simply report that there continues to be a wide variety of views about what direction this should take and although some Council members are keen that restructure should be progressed asap, others, including myself, are taking a more cautious approach seeking to ensure that whatever future structures might look like are a) well thought through, b) well consulted upon and c) sustainable in the longer term. The Secretary of Conference acknowledged that this work was not straightforward but is 'necessary and urgent'.

An update was provided for a numerically smaller and shorter Conference to be introduced from 2024 with an acknowledgement that it was important to ensure that representative balance was maintained. Further work is to be carried out by a sub-group brought together to examine this and bring recommendations for change to the spring Council meeting.

An updated report from the Committee for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) was received and various resolutions relating to it agreed included in which was that connexional guidance on associated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) matters should be issued to Districts. Again, this is an agenda item for discussion at this evening's meeting so I will not expand further at this stage.

Three papers linked to Safeguarding within the Methodist Church were presented, one touching on a review of safeguarding contracts; a second seeking to examine alternative management structures for District & Regional safeguarding officers and a third recommending that supervisors should be trained in safeguarding to the advanced level. The first paper was noted, the third acknowledged and agreed whilst the Council felt that further consultation needed to be carried out before any recommendations on management and oversight structures for safeguarding were considered further. The Council was very much aware that the national Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) was due to report on 20th October and that there were likely to be recommendations emanating from that requiring wider consideration.

Day 2 began with a comprehensive update followed by sub-group discussions on the 'Walking with Micah' project. By way of reminder, 'Walking with Micah' is a two year project seeking to help the Methodist Church explore what it means to be a justice seeking church. The project sits comfortably alongside the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy. 'Walking with Micah' has involved conversations across the connexion as well as taking account of reflections on theology and history together with workshops at this years Conference. A final report on the project, expected to be presented to Conference next year is anticipated to include proposals on the three P's (Principles, Priorities & Practices) which will support the Methodist church in it's justice seeking over the next 5 years.

Under the title 'Methodists for Ukraine' the Council received an informative (if stark) presentation touching on Europe's largest refugee crisis since WW2, that of Ukrainian people displaced from their homes and country as a result of the hostilities with Russia. Applications from individuals and families wanting to come to the safety of the UK number circa 3,500 per week with 96,000 having arrived already (more than the current population of Darlington). Although much work is ongoing with strategic partners (CofE, Baptists Together, Salvation Army, Citizens UK and others) around host support, safeguarding, vetting etc.. homes in are short supply and a question was raised/discussed regarding the use/occupancy of vacant manses for such purposes. Model arrangements apply in such circumstances but essentially if a manse is vacant, it can either be let to a refugee family at current or below market rental value or alternatively, funds derived from manse rental income could be used to support refugee families. The presentation provided a summary of what Government support was currently available (£350 per month for host families) but that this was time limited and future proofing arrangements were uncertain to say the least.

Other 'staple diet' topics including Model trust arrangements; nominations and appointments; authorisations and delegations as well as a comprehensive summary of the ongoing work of the connexional team were noted by Council members who, as a result of the wonders of modern technology (Zoom) were able to join in discussions, fellowship and worship from all corners of the UK.

I hope this summary helps inform DPC discussions/decisions – if you require more detailed information check out the Methodist Council web-site in the first instance where all the salient papers are published or alternatively get in touch with me. As your District representative to the Methodist Council I would welcome comments on any of the topics currently under discussion so that I am able to ensure that consultation across the connexion flows as well as it might and to properly discharge my role.

Mark R. Braithwaite

Darlington District Methodist Council Rep.

Email – markbraithwaite@btinternet.com

Phone – 07771 771360



EVENTS AROUND THE CIRCUIT (not on the PLAN)

AVENUE COMMUNITY PROJECT

Wednesday 14th December - MAP'S Nativity For All at 11.00am. Everyone is invited to come and join us for refreshments followed by this multicultural experience.

GROVE HILL

Saturday 3rd December - Christmas Concert by the Mosaic Choir at 2.30pm. Admission £5.00 pay on the door.

Saturday 24th December - Carol Singing on the Grass at 10.00am

MARTON

Saturday 24th December - Christmas Eve Carol Service 5.00pm

NORMANBY

Saturday 3rd December - Christmas Fayre 10.00am to 11.30am - all welcome

Saturday 17th December - Chocolate Tombola Coffee Morning 10.00am to 11.30am

NUNTHORPE

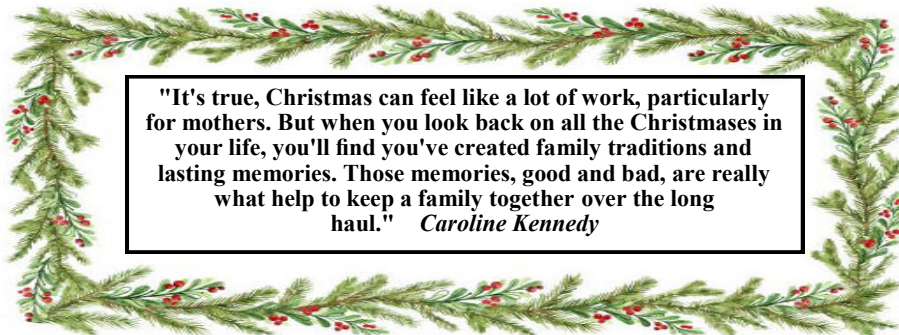
Thursday 8th December - Luncheon Club Christmas Dinner 12.00 noon for 12.30pm

Tuesday 13th December - Short Christmas Service before Coffee 10.00am

Saturday 24th December - Christmas Eve Carol Service on the Grass 6.30pm

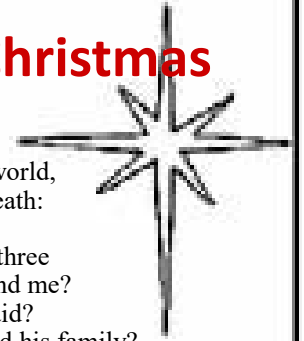
STANTON

Wednesday 14th December - Ecumenical Village Carol Service at 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall led by Rev. David Godfrey



"It's true, Christmas can feel like a lot of work, particularly for mothers. But when you look back on all the Christmases in your life, you'll find you've created family traditions and lasting memories. Those memories, good and bad, are really what help to keep a family together over the long haul." *Caroline Kennedy*

My heart weeps for Christmas



My heart weeps for Christmas:
the innocent child born into a cruel world,
forced to flee his home to escape death:
the long trek to another land.
Were they welcomed those fleeing three
were they sheltered by folk like you and me?
or did they feel outcast, alone, afraid?
Was the father allowed to use his skill to feed his family?

My heart weeps for Christmas
when children starve and die
while we feast on turkey and mince pie!
Why can't we love one another, Lord?,
it doesn't seem too much to ask.
To care for others as we care for ourselves .
Is it so hard a task?
Forgive us, Father when your children weep
for food, for shelter and for love.
Send your Holy Spirit from above
and show us again how to love.

Lord, I want to have a Christmas where everyone is loved,
where no-one is weeping,
Where church and home resound with praise
that you came, and loved and lived your days
and died and rose and loved us still
and sent your Holy Spirit to fill
our lives today, until we fulfil our Father's will,
to bring His Kingdom in.
so that we all may dwell with you forever.

Celia Shires



News from the Circuit Meeting 15.9.22

Welcome

We were pleased to welcome to the Circuit Meeting Rev John Howard-Norman a supernumerary minister from the Stockton circuit. He is working part time with us to help plug the huge gap left by Rev Charity as she continues to struggle with health issues. Also, Rev TC Luk from the Chinese Church, Neil Mapplebeck as a Circuit Steward and Chibuike who is the treasurer at Grove Hill.

Circuit Consultation – the information collected from individual church reviews was collated to form the Consultation Report which has 5 main themes regarding direction of travel. A lot of work has gone into producing this document and Church Councils are encouraged to study/discuss it and consider how they can use it to build on what is already happening in their churches.

Young Sunday – The group have not been meeting over the summer, but a re-launch is planned at the end of October half term as ‘New Beginnings’, when it is hoped that there will be new members joining as some of our young people have now moved into Secondary education.

Stationing -The meeting agreed to extend an invitation to Rev Charity for one year from September 2023, with a further consultation to be held in June /July 2023 regarding the possibility of a second extension

Safeguarding – We are grateful to Mark Braithwaite as he has offered to continue as Safeguarding officer for another year.

Points to note – training is ongoing, Mark continues to hold information on all DBS forms and ensures people are informed when renewals are needed.

Safer recruitment – when appointing volunteers, they also need to comply with the same safeguarding processes as paid workers and people in office

All churches to ensure their safeguarding policies are accurate and up to date

Project News

MAP - Earlier this year we said farewell to Ailsa Adamson as she retired and welcomed William (Billy) Barnes to the position of Project Manager. MAP continues to grow particularly in Redcar and Cleveland. The project is short of winter clothes and would be grateful for any contributions.

TFFC –The café opens on a Tuesday; unfortunately, volunteer shortage mean it still remains closed on Thursdays. Revelation Wellness, which is a Christian based fitness class is up and running.

Avenue –The building continues to be well used although one church did move away as they wanted a 5am service but a further 2 groups have started to use the premises.

LRRC – The shops units continue to be rented out and the building is being used by various groups; MAP; the Chinese Church; Millennium Meals and Junction 42 who work with vulnerable people in recovery from addiction. It is hoped to appoint a part time administrator to look after bookings and promote the centre to enable it to work on a wider community vision.



“We’re looking for something to help us survive our church’s early morning Winter services”

Next Christmas

The grandson had just taken a photograph of his grandmother who’d come to stay for Christmas and her 89th birthday. ‘Grannie, I sure hope I’m around next year to photograph you on your 90th birthday,’ he said tactfully.

‘Why not?’ his grandmother shrugged. ‘You look healthy enough.’

Winter Travel

A government warning said that anyone travelling in icy conditions should take: shovel, blankets, sleeping bag, scarf, hat and gloves, 24 hours supply of food and drink, de-icer, rock salt, torch, spare batteries, road flares, reflective triangles, tow rope, a five gallon petrol jerrycan, first aid kit, and jump leads. So ... I looked a complete pratt on the bus this morning!!!!

Picture

The teacher asked her Sunday School class to draw a picture of a Bible story with a Christmas theme. She was puzzled by Kate’s picture, which showed four people on an airplane. She asked her which story it was meant to represent. ‘The Flight to Egypt,’ was the reply.

Pointing at each figure, the teacher ventured: ‘That must be Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus. But who’s the fourth person?’

‘Oh,’ explained Kate happily, ‘that’s Pontius – the pilot!’

Visitors

The minister came home after church one Sunday morning looking very satisfied.

“Many people in church?” asked his wife, bustling around the kitchen.

“Yes, and we had at least three strangers, though I didn’t see them.”

“Then how do you know?”

“Because there were three £10 notes in the collection plate.”

With epiphany in mind...

I was telling my three boys the story of the Nativity and how the Wise Men brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh for the infant Jesus. Clearly giving it a lot of thought, my six-year-old observed, “Mum, a Wise Woman would have brought nappies.”

All Year

Christmas is in my heart 12 months a year, and thanks to credit cards, it’s on my Visa card statement 12 months a year as well.

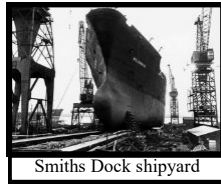
The Parish Pump

Memories of South Bank and Normanby Road Methodist Church back in the good old days!

Maybe some Slaggy-Islanders might like to read a piece that I wrote a few years ago now..... I was born in the autumn of 1948, in a place called South Bank, a small industrialized town, that had its roots tangled deep in the marshes of the river Tees. In those days South Bank was part of the North Riding of Yorkshire, and even today, if I spoke the truth, I still think of myself as being a Yorkshire lass at heart.

Yet it has to be said that South Bank possessed none of the charms of North Yorkshire. There was no loveliness of any kind to be seen when you pulled back the curtain and looked out of our front window. No, the grim backdrop to our town was painted in only two colours, black and grey, and it was a backdrop of ugliness.

Coke ovens, furnaces, steel plants - all of these raged along the Tees estuary and these black towering chimneys spewed their curtain of soot over the rooftops of our homes every day. The women folk of the town did their best to sweep these thick black particles of dust away - some, I hasten to add, with more gusto than others - and the men folk took great pride in rolling up their shirt sleeves and heaving and shovelling and blackening the air still further. And there, at the very heart of this sooty deposit loomed the cranes and the hoists of Smiths Dock shipyard; a shipyard that could boast about building some of the finest liners in the world.



Of course I can think of prettier places to spend one's childhood, there was nothing beautiful about the place where I was born, yet within an hour's walk, you could be rambling across Eston Hills, within two hours walk you could be hiking close to the edges of the moors, or if it was the salty spray of the sea that you craved upon your tongue then a bus or a train would trundle you along the coastline and drop you off in the seaside town of Redcar.

But to me, a little girl born with cerebral palsy, South Bank was the very centre of my world. I couldn't climb Eston Hills or go rambling on the moors, so instead I filled my head with pleasant thoughts and gleaned whatever beauty I could from the books that I found on the shelves of our living room.

Of course I knew that I was 'different.' I knew that I couldn't run as fast or skip as well as my friends, I couldn't even walk as steadily as they could. But to me, this was simply a fact of life. And I soon learnt that if I wanted to play alongside these small friends and be accepted by them, then I would have to put twice as much effort into every game that we played together. And if this meant peddling my tricycle just that little bit harder and still coming last in every race, then this is what I had to do. Yes, life was tough and I'm not going to deny it, but there was something about living in South Bank - maybe it was the gritty determination of its people, I don't know - but I grew up being immensely proud of my roots and looking back it seems to me that I was born at precisely the right time, amidst precisely the right sort of people.

South Bank, in those days, was a thriving, self-sufficient little town, with its own

police station, fire station, town hall and library, and like every other industrialized Northern settlement, the people who lived there went about their lives with a certain dignity.

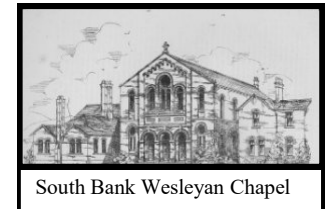
There must have been at least forty different families living in our street alone and when you come to think about it, that's forty different ways of living; forty different ways of coping with life, and yet the struggles that were acted out around the hearth-rug of every home in our street were all pretty much the same.

The families all around us had their own private problems of one sort or another and every now and again these problems would come to the surface and they would be talked about, wept over, and discussed with the neighbours. We all lived too close to one another to have deep secrets of any kind. Mr. so and so, a few doors along had a chesty cough that never seemed to disappear, one of Mrs. Jones' sons was about to join the army and she was frantic with worry, and the youngest sister of Annie Smith was about to have a baby and she wasn't even courting.... Oh yes, I heard everything that was being whispered around the doorsteps. And me, well I had problems of my own to contend with, but my problems were as visible as the nose on my face.

And as with every community, the people who earned the greatest respect from their neighbours were the people with the biggest hearts and the kindest voices. The sort of people who went out of their way to do a kindly deed. And let me tell you, there was an abundance of good people living within the grid of long terrace streets in South Bank. People who genuinely cared and feared for one another.

South Bank in those days was a town of contrasts. Maybe it was because of the ugliness which saturated our lives, I don't know, but the people who lived there searched for beauty wherever they could find it. Some would immerse themselves in classical music, others - like my Mam - joined a drama class or a church choir, and me, well I found all the sustenance I needed in the Wesleyan Chapel on the corner of Normanby Road.

It's strange, but the outside of the building gave no hint of the serenity which could be found within its walls. There was no inspiring bell towers or church steeple, no intricate stone masonry, no fascinating east window, in fact there was nothing at all about the building that drew the traveller's eye. But once inside those stout double doors, there was a beauty and a grace that is hard for me to describe. It had to be experienced. And from my earliest days, it became for me, a place of refuge, a place of learning, and a place of profound peace.



The people who met there were a community within a community if you know what I mean, and yet everyone was welcomed. I can't remember anyone being disregarded or turned away.

It was inside the chapel that I experienced the changing of the seasons, the excitement of Christmas and the jubilations of Easter. It was there where I shyly sung about the Lord, read about His goodness and heard educated views on His teachings. And this sufficed me. It more than sufficed me, it quietly emboldened me.

As I grew from childhood into womanhood I listened carefully to these clever, well-spoken ministers and in my quiet thoughtful mind I drew my own conclusions about life. So consequently, the precious gift of faith, which was nurtured in me in that beautiful South Bank Chapel, has helped me to become the person that I am today. And through good times and bad, Methodism has never let me down.

Lynda Galilee

You just never know!

Recently I went on a shopping trip to a lovely store in Middlesbrough town centre. I top up regularly with their ethical body products and a regular buy, in the hope that it will help the facial wrinkles at bay, is called Vanishing Cream. Strangely, on every visit, I can never seem to find it on the shelves and always have to ask for help! This time was no different so a very pleasant assistant went upstairs to raid the store room, and of course on looking along the shelves again while she went to find the product, there it was in full view! Abject apologies were given and I went to join the queue when the assistant said "Are you Mrs. Smith" to which I answered in the affirmative. That got me thinking of how she knew my name.

At the till I handed over the products to another assistant who asked the same question. Now this was a very strange experience and she must have seen my puzzlement. It turned out that she and the other lady as pupils, and myself as a young teacher all started at a secondary school in Yarm in 1977!

We had a short time of reminiscing and she recalled that the class used to take the mickey out of my accent when I asked them to make sure they had their cookery books (said in the Durham way of 'cook' and 'book' not 'cuck' and 'buck') She reminded me that she had passed her GCE in Home Economics, and still found the shared memories funny after all this time. We all had a good chuckle together and also had a giggle when I told them that it was a great way to be remembered after forty five years rather than all the odd things that had flashed through my mind, just a few minutes earlier, about how they knew my name.



I have to say that I was amazed at being remembered after so many years, but it also made me think. You never really know what affect you have on others, in a good or a bad way. What we do and say lives long in people's memory and we rarely know about it. Finding out things like the one mentioned above is humbling. Even more humbling is when you are told, by other staff members, of the effect your words have had on pupils going through hard times, without realising what you have said or done.

No apologies given for writing about things we all probably know, but think it is good to have a reminder and a nudge occasionally.

Anne Smith



Prayer is kryptonite to the Devil.

As a Christian we must be alert to the times and the seasons in our walk with Jesus, things are happening in the unseen and seen, the day of His second coming is vastly approaching.

I woke up suddenly a couple of weeks ago, I had this imprinted on my heart 'I want to have my lamp FULL!' I realised these last few years my oil was running low.

'At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.'

'At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet Him!' Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out'. 'No', they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

'But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was SHUT!', 'Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!', But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.'

'Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.' Matt 25-1:13

As Christians we must see how privileged we are to be able to read the bible whenever, wherever we want, we understand that Jesus is the word, He is our daily bread, reading the bible, gaining knowledge to know Him, revelation to know His ways and understanding to discern the times and the seasons. I often thank God that I have been born at this time, when we can see things unfolding around us. The world is left wondering 'what is going on?!' But as His children, we understand that all this must happen to bring about the last days. But how would we gain this understanding if we are wandering around like lost sheep. We are the generation who has access however don't give priority to reading the bible, spending time with the Lord. This is how we get FULL of oil, this is where we get to know Jesus. Relationships grow through connection, and it is no different with God. Going to church is great to connect with Him, but that is only for an hour a week, if you're not praying, spending time in His presence, reading His word then 1 hour a week at church will not suffice to keep your oil FULL.

Christians were denied access to their bible for 1000 years, the church actually discouraged them from reading bible on their own, even forbidding translation of the bible into native languages.

Fate of William Tyndale in 1536 C.E: William Tyndale was burned at the stake for translating the bible into English. According to Tyndale, the Church forbid owning or reading the Bible to control and restrict the teachings and to enhance their power and importance.

We are the generation who has everything at the tip of our fingers, we have access to the bible in every language, books, commentaries and much more. Let us wake up! Press in

to know our Lord Jesus, Our Saviour. To have a relationship with Him, which will ensure we will not be deceived into thinking we are doing enough just by attending church once a week.

Prayer is another word used to describe our communication with God, how can we have a relationship with Him if we don't commune with Him?

Set a time aside to pray, lift up His Holy name. bring your confessions to Him, your wants and needs, ask Him to bring your love ones into the Kingdom of God. Sing praise to His name, this is another way to spend time in His presence, making sure your oil is FULL.

Having a grateful heart, thanking Him for Gods provision in your life.

The enemy our adversary prowls around like a lion ready to devour, he makes sure he distracts, puts you off, busy, anything to prevent you from praying because prayer is like kryptonite to him, leaving him powerless, he knows this is where you are giving oil, making you FULL. He deceives you, making prayer an afterthought, something you can rush through..... as long as you say all your close relatives' names, that will suffice.

I believe as a church we can AWAKE O'SLEEPER, we can pray for transformation, for revival for our church community, and the community we serve. We are all brought to the Kingdom for such a time as this!

Let us be ready, because it says clearly He will come as a thief in the night.....will you be ready?

Please **pray** for TFFC, we need funding for future plans, to expand Hope Café, for resources, food etc please pray for the community we serve, that we will have new families come to the project.

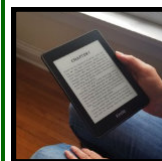
Funding; please pray our applications will be successful.

Revelation Wellness; pray for this project, that people will come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour as I evangelise. Pray for my health, that I will be fit and healthy, ready to take on any challenges.

Pray that we gain funding for school holiday project, that we gain funding, more volunteers, ideas for creative, fun things for children of all ages. We are planning on doing some forestry activities next year and to help Richard with the Garden project. Pray for the garden project, that we secure some funding to enable us to work with the community, teaching them how to grow their own fruit/vegetables, Richard is doing a grand job, working with the youth offending team, as they complete, pay back to communities. Pray for funding to enable us to improve the outdoor spaces for future picnics and outdoor play.

Most importantly pray that many will come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour through this ministry. Pray that we disciple others, God is the God of multiplication disciples make disciples of all nations!

Sharon Sewell
Project Co-ordinator



The 'joys' of the Internet! (when things are never as easy as they sound)

I decided it was about time to purchase a new Kindle as mine is a second generation one. I have had it for a long time and was notified that because of its age it would not be possible to access my library or order new books in the near future. So now was definitely the time to make a move. I like to know all the ins and outs of how to do things and surely it would be a straightforward process as all other returns had been so.

To the Amazon web site and decide which one should I order. After a bit of research, the decision was made a black one, simple to use, not a Paper White version.

This is a chronology of what happened

It would arrive in six days.

It arrived two days after ordering.

It was a white one. Never mind, the colour doesn't really matter!

Found out how to access My Library and also ordered two new books.

Read one of the books (one of the latest from LJ Ross which was OK but not one of her best)

A message arrived to say 'Your Kindle will be delivered today'?!? A black Kindle was delivered!! It turns out that I had somehow ordered twice!

It would have to be returned, by using the QR code included in the website returns section.

That should be easy enough, I had a QR scanner app on my phone!

After more research I found out the nearest place to take the returning parcel was at a small supermarket just around the corner.

That was good as it was a very hot and sunny day.

The machine was not set up to process that kind of parcel.

The nearest alternative was just round another corner.

Yes! Managed to print out a returns label and left the parcel to be returned.



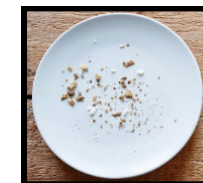
Back in the house for a nice cuppa, feet up and start on the other L J Ross.

In the end the positive things did outweigh the negatives but what a frustrating process. Perhaps It's an age thing and my technology know-how is sadly lagging behind. Never mind, I have come to like the new version even if I still don't always tap the right portion of the screen to turn the pages!

Anne Smith

Staying

A church pew sheet reported that Mr and Mrs Brown had left for a ten-day motor trip, and that their two young daughters were **starving** with relations during their absence.



Methodist Women in Britain



MWiB DISTRICT EVENTS

13th December 2022 - The Advent Service will be at Newton Aycliffe Methodist Church, Neville Parade, Newton Aycliffe DL5 5DH. From 2.00pm to 4.00pm. Coffee and mince pies on arrival.

MINSTERACRES OVERNIGHTER – Friday/Saturday, 10th/11th March 2023. “A line of women” Facilitator: Mrs. June Anderson. Early booking advisable.

EASTER DAY OF REFLECTION: Monday 3rd April 2023 at Greens Lane Methodist Church, Stockton, TS18 5HP. Refreshments from 10.00am, Service at 10.45am. Please bring a packed lunch, drinks provided.



Looking to the New Year

The month of January is named after the Roman god Janus, who is depicted as having two faces. As we look back on a difficult couple of years dominated by the pandemic, how should we look forward to 2023 with fresh hope? The apostle Paul writes: *‘But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.’* (Philippians 3:13,14).

Firstly, to make a new start, you need to *forget the things which are behind*. Paul saw himself as an athlete running for Christ and purposely not looking back. He refused to allow his past sins and difficulties to define who he was. By God’s grace, he no longer saw himself that way. The same can be true of ourselves, as we confess our sins and failures to receive God’s forgiveness and new life.

Secondly, we need to *focus on the things that lie ahead*. The athlete is entirely focused on winning the race and gaining the prize. Like Paul, we have to be single-minded in making Jesus the focus of everything we do. How can we go deeper in our prayer life and Bible reading this year? What will it mean to better serve Christ in our workplace and neighbourhood, or family and children?

Paul looked forward to the day when he would stand before God, who would say *‘well done, good and faithful servant’*. In light of all that Jesus had done for him, Paul wanted to give his very best to Jesus. As we stand at the beginning of this New Year, let’s ask ourselves, *‘What can I do this year that will help me bring glory and honour to God?’*

The Parish Pump

Visitors



The minister came home after church one Sunday morning looking very satisfied.

“Many people in church?” asked his wife, bustling around the kitchen.

“Yes, and we had at least three strangers, though I didn’t see them.”

“Then how do you know?”

“Because there were three £10 notes in the collection plate.”

14th February—Valentine’s Day Mystery



There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century – one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer’s time the link was assumed to be because on these saints’ day - 14th February – the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine’s Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or ‘sweethearts’ during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love – Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

The Parish Pump

Spotted on a church notice board:

When you were born, your mother brought you here.

When you were married, your partner brought you here.

When you die, your family will bring you here.

In the meantime, why not try coming on your own sometimes?



PRAYER DIARY

DECEMBER 4th We pray for this time of Advent as we think again about our faith and about the time of preparation for the coming of Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem. Pray too for the Preachers' meeting this week. May it be a season which is important to us all. Pray for Rev David Godfrey and Stainton

DECEMBER 11th We pray today for those who are so busy at this time of the year, those working in schools, those in retail, those in entertainment, that they may bring real meaning to this special time. Pray for Rev Charity Hamilton and for Trinity.

DECEMBER 18th We pray today for those churches having special Nativity services, some with children playing their parts to enhance that worship. Pray for those who will sing carols outside and will witness in a real way to the Christmas message. Pray for Rev John Howard Norman and for Grove Hill.

DECEMBER 25th On this wonderful Christmas day we celebrate the miracle of the Incarnation, God so loving us all that he sent his Son Jesus to be our Saviour. We pray for a blessing on all the special services taking place today and all who lead them. Pray for Rev Mike Harland and Nunthorpe.

JANUARY 1st On this the first day of a New Year, we bring before God our hopes and our dreams for all this year may hold for us. We might also bring our anxiety as we look at a world with all kinds of fear and tension. We pray that through all of this we, as God's people, will stay true to our faith. Pray for the Trinity Family Centre and for Sharon Sewell and all who work with this project.

JANUARY 8th We pray today for all who are ill at this time in body, mind or spirit. We pray for all who heal in our hospitals and clinics, for doctors, surgeons and nurses, for those who care for loved ones in their own homes. Pray today for Middlesbrough and Guisborough Live at Home Scheme MHA and

for Montpellier Manor. We pray for Rev Len Karn and Marton.

JANUARY 15th We pray today for those who have had to leave their own countries and seek peace and sanctuary in our town. Especially we pray for the refugees from Ukraine and those who have taken them into their homes. Pray for Middlesbrough Asylum Project and for Billy Barnes and his team. Pray for Normanby

JANUARY 22nd We pray today for all who work in our churches with children and young people, for those who teach in local schools and those who are Governors. May they bring our faith to these young people. Pray for Young Sunday. Pray also for the Chinese Church as they celebrate their New Year.

JANUARY 29th Pray today for our world, for peace and hope in such troubled times. Pray for Linthorpe Road Resource Centre.

FEBRUARY 5th Pray today for those who are in our church and Circuit Leadership teams that they may be directed by the Holy Spirit in the decisions they make. Pray for the Avenue Team. Pray for Elaine at the Circuit Office and for David our Circuit Webmaster.

FEBRUARY 12th As we think of Valentine's Day on Tuesday, we pray for all who are in positive and loving relationships, and for those who will marry or have been married in our churches. Pray for those who have problems in their marriages and relationships, for those who will support and guide them.

FEBRUARY 19th In this coming week we will be involved in the start of Lent, Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday, that as Christians individually or in groups, we may deepen our faith through this time of Lent.

FEBRUARY 26th We pray for the Darlington District for all the many church families and for Rev Richard Andrew the Chair of our District.