

# MEMO

Middlesbrough & Eston Methodist Outburst

**DECEMBER 2023 -  
FEBRUARY 2024**



# FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Last year's editorial started with the words 'It feels like we are in strange times' and just now I feel that we are still there!

Perhaps it is me growing older and feeling uncomfortable about things like the spate of very unsettled weather we have been having. I remember the time when winter was cold and snowy and summer was blue skies and sunshine (most of the time!) yet this year it seems much more of a mix up.

There's nothing wrong with memories but we can't live in the past. Times are changing and we have to move on, and on the whole we have much to be thankful for. With a new year in the offing it is good to look back but it is important to look forward.

MEMO as usual contains a variety of articles relevant to the churches in the circuit and forthcoming events ranging from meetings to a pantomime.

We thank all the contributors for the time and effort taken to make another interesting and informative read.

By the way, if you would like a good, entertaining evening or afternoon go and see the pantomime at Trinity. They always put on a good show.

New Year Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year from the  
Communication team

**Anne, Elaine and Dave**

## CIRCUIT SERVICE

*Normanby Methodist  
Church*

*Ash Wednesday Service*

*14th February 2024  
At 10.00am*

## CIRCUIT OFFICE

The office will be closed from  
12.00pm on Friday 22nd December

And re-open on Friday  
5th January 2024  
at 9.30am

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND  
HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**ELAINE**

## 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 OBS

Or email to  
[mbrocircuit@gmail.com](mailto:mbrocircuit@gmail.com)  
**by 1st January 2024**



# The Superintendent's Letter

**Dear Friends,**

Advent and Christmas greetings to you all.

In popular perception, Christmas is supposed to be a time of joy and happiness, of parties and presents, of eating and merry making. It is supposed to be a time of generosity, when you show your love for those near and dear to you in the giving and receiving of presents. It is supposed to be a time for families to get together and for goodwill to be found in abundance. It is supposed to be celebrated with eating and drinking, singing and laughter, shopping and parties, wrapping of presents and yet more eating. And...oh yes... Christmas is supposed to be white, made pure with a sparkling carpet of snow. This is how Christmas is supposed to be in the minds of those amongst whom we live and work.

However, the reality of Christmas is somewhat different. For many people the past year has been a difficult one with inflation, rising interest rates and a tightening of belts all round. Many people cannot afford presents for their children and are worried about putting food on their tables. Some people are deeply lonely while many are in conflict with their families and find them hard to live with. The Christmas card ideal of a merry Christmas is nothing more than a dashed hope for countless people in Middlesbrough and in the wider world.

The church has a story to tell about the hope and the reality of Christmas. The hard reality centres on a cruel Emperor imposing taxation on his people and demanding a census to be taken of an entire population. An unmarried pregnant teenager travels to her place of registration only to find there are no beds. She gives birth to a boy in the straw where the animals live. And then she has to flee persecution with her child and become a refugee in a foreign land. It is a story with a contemporary ring to it and it is a story earthed in the reality of human life.

However, in that desperate story there is also hope. Not the illusory hope of a Christmas card scene covered in glitter and good wishes, but a real hope. It is the hope that in the birth of the baby, God has come. It seems fantastical that God should choose to reveal himself to the world in the vulnerability of a baby. It seems a stupid idea, totally at odds with the values of the cruel world in which we live. And yet it is precisely because that hope was born in the midst of a cruel world that it endures to this day and sustains countless millions around the world. God is with us. This is the Christmas message and the hope that we carry around in our hearts. Let us take that hope with us and proclaim it in word and deed.

May the love and peace of Christ be with you in this Christmas season.

**Revd. David Godfrey**

# *News from the Circuit Meeting 14.9.23*

**Appointments - New Circuit Steward** – Julie Thomas was elected as a Circuit Steward (Thanks were expressed to Julie O'Key as her appointment as Senior Circuit Steward ended on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023, although she will remain a member of the CLT.

**EDI Training** – (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion) and Unconscious Bias training is available on line. The meeting was reminded that this is compulsory for Circuit and Church Stewards, Local Preachers and Ministers and should be completed by the end of 2023

## **News from the Circuit Invitation Committee**

It was agreed that Rev John Howard-Norman will continue to work in our circuit for this connexional year.

Rev. C. Hamilton Invitation Extension – the Chair of District has identified a role and funding for September 2024 for Rev Charity. She would work primarily to develop town centre ministry under the umbrella of 'New Places for New People'. She would remain as a Circuit Minister and have some pastoral involvement across the Circuit. By creating this funded role, it has enabled the Circuit to apply to stationing for a new Circuit Minister for September 2024 for Trinity, Grove Hill and Normanby.

**Trinity Redevelopment** – the kitchen has been enlarged and is now finished. The café is open on a Tuesday from 9.30am and all are welcome. If more volunteers were available, it could possibly open on other days. The disabled toilet is installed and a second toilet is also in place.

**Grove Hill Centenary** – Celebrations have been taking place throughout the year, and a centenary booklet has been created. The final celebration will be a Christmas Songs of Praise at Grove Hill on Sunday 3rd December

**Avenue** – the sale of Avenue Church was authorised. The meeting noted grateful thanks to John Martin and Paul White who have overseen the running of Avenue for many years.

**MAP and LRRC** – it was noted that both were being well used and supported.

**Methodist Way of Life** – A presentation was shared with the meeting highlighting the 12 parts of discipleship, imagining it as a journey. The Revs David and John are working on material to share across the Circuit.

**Walking with Micah** – is now being 'rolled out' from Conference – information will be shared in due course.

# Methodist Women in Britain



## MWiB DISTRICT EVENTS

**ADVENT SERVICE:** Friday 1st December at Zetland Park Methodist Church, The Crescent, Redcar TS10 3AU from 1.00pm to 3.30pm. The service will be from 1.00pm to 2.00pm and will be followed by afternoon tea and a presentation by Mrs. Debs Coggrave on her Advent journey to Bolivia, with a collection for Tabitha House.

**MINSTERACRES OVERNIGHTER:** Friday/Saturday 15th/16th March - details to follow.

**Beryl Haggath**



**Christmas is a season not only of rejoicing but of reflection"**

**Sir Winston Churchill**

## **WORLD MISSION FUND 2022/2023**

	<b>NETWORK</b>	<b>JMA</b>	<b>OVERSEAS</b>
	<b>EASTER</b>		
	<b>OFFERING</b>		
<b>MARTON</b>	<b>81.20</b>	<b>59.97</b>	
<b>NORMANBY</b>	<b>210.50</b>	<b>149.26</b>	<b>450.45</b>
<b>GROVE HILL</b>	<b>50.00</b>		<b>346.26</b>
<b>SERVICE COLLECTION</b>	<b>64.00</b>		
<b>TRINITY</b>	<b>155.62</b>		
<b>STAINTON</b>	<b>46.75</b>		
<b>NUNTHORPE</b>	<b>168.75</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>776.82</b>	<b>209.23</b>	<b>796.71</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,782.76</b>		

Many thanks for all contributions

God's blessing

**JUDITH BONE ( Normanby)**

## **A MOMENTOUS DAY**

Sunday, 3rd of September, was a momentous day at Normanby Methodist Church, for several reasons. It was the first Sunday of the new Church Year and we had a packed church for the baptism of two small boys. Brothers, Zachary and Joey. The Baptismal party were in their best clothes, and there were lots of children gracing the occasion, who were all on their best behaviour.

We celebrated the fact that we had new chairs!

Then we had a presentation to our organist, Mrs. Gillian Moore, who has been playing the organ for church services for over 60 years, in many different churches, Methodist, Anglican, Roman Catholic. It was a well kept secret as Gillian had no idea of what was to happen. Rev. David Godfrey presented her with a leather bound music copy of Singing The Faith, and a poem written for the occasion was read out.

After a short sermon, we celebrated Holy Communion and I got very emotional when many of the young children went forward and took part.

It was a great start to the new Methodist year.

**Celia Shires**

## **SIXTY YEARS**

Sankey, Wesley, Issac Watts too,  
These names are all well known to you.  
Mornings, Evenings, (Those were the days )  
Your playing's helped us all to praise.  
Old Hymns, New Hymns, you play them all  
To congregations large and small.

Summer, Winter, Autumn, Spring.  
You praise the Lord in your playing,  
Sometimes you make the rafters ring,  
and make it easy for us to sing.  
This is your weekly offering  
of service to your Heavenly King.

Some preach, some teach, some make the tea  
some steward and some count money.  
God gifts us all: yours is the best,  
The reason why I'm sure you've guessed.  
It enhances all that we can bring  
to praise and laud our Heavenly King.

South Bank, Normanby and Ormesby,  
Methodist, C.of E. and RC.  
All these are places you have played  
and what a difference you have made.  
These sixty years your best you've given.  
You've surely earned a place in Heaven!

We thank God for his gift to you  
and that you've shared it with us too.  
So Gillian, thank you from our hearts  
for the joy your playing imparts.  
All that is left for me to say is  
Three cheers for Gill, Hip Hip Hooray.

**Celia Shires 22.8.23**

## **An update from your Methodist Council representative.**

This report seeks to update on matters subject to discussions/decisions at the **October 2023** Council meeting.

With Revd. Sonia Hicks in the chair, fifty five (55) members of the Council from across England, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands, the Isles of Man and Scilly met on-line via the Zoom platform in the 24hr period - lunchtime 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> October. What a fantastic innovation these video-conferencing platforms are – folks from across the whole Connexion are able to attend virtually and contribute to discussions and the decision making process from the comfort of their own home/office with little or no carbon footprint or cost involved.

Session One opened with an update of the work of the Strategy & Resources Committee followed by a report from the Connexional Secretary Doug Godfrey-Swanney detailing the myriad of work ongoing across the Connexion. Broken down under the category headings of **Worship, Learning & Caring, Service and Evangelism**, Council members were heartened by the sheer breadth of work currently being undertaken under the umbrella vision of '**Our Calling**'. The report served to highlight the operational impact of decisions taken in Conference and the pressing need to bring more scrutiny to the commissioning process so as to ensure that a 'right sized' connexional team is able to focus on supporting the most important areas of work.

Jude Levermore, Head of Mission within the Connexional team, delivered a stark and sobering update on the direct impact on staff members stationed in Jerusalem following the recent horrific outbreak of violence. Although the situation continues to be fraught and uncertain for many in the region, Jude was able to confirm the current safety of employees stationed in the Middle-east describing in detail the ongoing liaison and safety work that continues to be undertaken.

A proposal to curtail the work of the (hitherto volunteer) Medical Committee in favour of outsourcing to a professionally accredited occupational health company was endorsed along with significant revisions to the Health Policy relating to those candidating for ordained ministry.

Discussions took place on various safeguarding aspects within the Methodist church with more detailed proposals on 'next-step' requirements to be presented to the March 2024 Council meeting.

A report from the Birmingham, Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury Districts proposed the

amalgamation of the two districts in similar fashion to conversations taking place elsewhere in the North-West region. This proposal generated a particular interest with some council members as the western-most boundary would be in Wales. (the Council representative of Wales Synod Cymru was happily enthusiastic to anticipate the potential ‘reclamation of territory’!). It was agreed that further consultation of Circuit meetings and Synods of the participating Districts was required to be undertaken before any final proposal was submitted to Conference in 2024.

Closing devotions to day one were led by our own District Chair Rev. Richard Andrew with support from our own Vice-President-elect of Conference Carolyn Godfrey. The carefully and sensitively constructed prayers, music/singing accompaniment and scripture reading focussing very much on our troubled world was as powerfully resonant amongst council members as it could possibly be.

Day two opened with devotions led by the newly installed Youth President 17yr old Thomas Hart. Using ‘Christ as the Conductor’ as his theme, Thomas referenced his musical credentials (piano & trumpet) and the necessity to ‘tune up and tune in to Christ’ in all that we do. With careful thought and helpful verbal contributions (that I personally observed in sub-group discussions), with young folks such as this in the ascendancy of Methodist tradition we have much to be proud of.

Session Two was taken up predominantly with administrative matters – authorisation and delegation permissions; nominations and appointments to various committees (including Southlands College and its Methodist association with the University of Roehampton) but also included an update on work directed by Conference provided by the Connexional Secretary Doug Godfrey-Swanney. Although thirteen (13) pages long and with entries going back to directives from the 2017 Conference, Doug reminded Council members that this report used to be **much** longer and that significant progress had been made in recent years to complete programmes of work and reduce outstanding matters significantly.

Council acknowledged the progress made and welcomed a subsequent report from Matt Tattershall (Executive Director of Finance & resources) who was seeking endorsement to establish a ‘Conference Scrutiny Committee’. The justification for the establishment of such a group was to ensure much greater scrutiny of Conference decisions that impact not only on financial resources of but just as importantly on the ability of Districts, Circuits and local churches to deliver. Council members were keen to support this proposal acknowledging that there was/is a limit to what can realistically be achieved by the Methodist Church of today.

A report updating the Council on progress with the review of the church’s complaints and discipline process referenced the recent appointment of an independent Complaints and Standards Consultant whose work had recently commenced with document reviews and interviews with key staff members and office holders across the Connexion. A report on the outcome to this work is anticipated to be brought forward in early 2024.

I hope this summary serves to inform District Policy Committee, Circuit meetings and Churches across the Darlington District about the work of the Council – if more detailed information is required, the Methodist Council web-site is the go-to place in the first instance where all Council papers are published (see ***Latest Council papers*** [Methodist.org.uk](http://Methodist.org.uk)).



As your Darlington District representative, I am content for anyone to contact me direct. I would welcome comments on any of the topics currently under discussion so as to properly discharge my role and ensure that communication and consultation across the District and wider Connexion is as good as it might be.

**Mark R. Braithwaite**

*Darlington District Methodist Council Rep.*

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## The Twelve Days of Christmas

There is one Christmas Carol that has always baffled me. What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and especially the partridge who won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas?

This week, I found out. From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their Church. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality which the children could remember.

- The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.
- Two turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments.
- Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.
- The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.
- The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.
- The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.
- Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit--Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.
- The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.
- Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit--Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control.
- The ten lords a-leaping were the ten commandments.
- The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.
- The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.



So there is your history for today. This knowledge was shared with me and I found it interesting and enlightening and now I know how that strange song became a Christmas Carol...so pass it on if you wish.

**Lesley Duffield**



## **EVENTS AROUND THE CIRCUIT (not on the PLAN)**

### **METHODIST ASYLUM PROJECT (MAP)**

MAP'S Nativity For All – Check for details at [mapmiddlesbrough.org.uk](http://mapmiddlesbrough.org.uk)

### **GROVE HILL**

Saturday 2nd December - Christmas Concert by the Mosaic Choir at 2.00pm. Admission £5.00 pay on the door.

Saturday 23rd December - Carol Singing on the Grass at 10.00am

Monday 25th December - Christmas Day Service 11.00am led by Rev. John Howard-Norman

### **MARTON**

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

Monday 25th December - Christmas Day Joint Service at Nunthorpe 9.30am.

### **NORMANBY**

Saturday 2nd December - Christmas Fayre 10.00am to 12.00 noon - all welcome

Saturday 9th December - Craft Fair 10.00am -12.00 noon

Saturday 16th December - Chocolate Tombola Coffee Morning 10.00am to 12.00 noon

Monday 25th December - Christmas Day Service 10.00am led by Celia Shires

### **NUNTHORPE**

Saturday 2nd December 2023 - 10am till 12 noon We are holding 'Creative Christmas' - a Craft event based on the Nativity story for children under 7. All welcome, tickets £5 per child (adults free). Seasonal refreshments will be available.

Thursday 7th December - Luncheon Club Christmas Dinner 12.00 noon for 12.30pm

Tuesday 11th December - Short Christmas Service before Coffee 10.00am

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

Monday 25th December - Christmas Day Joint Service 9.30am led by Rev. David Godfrey

### **STANTON**

Wednesday 13th December - Ecumenical Village Carol Service at 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall led by Rev. David Godfrey and Rev. Laura Wild. Light refreshments

Monday 25th December - Christmas Day Service 10.30am led by Rev. David Godfrey

### **TRINITY**

Monday 25th December - Christmas Day Service 10.00am led by Rev. John Howard-Norman

## Let heaven and earth combine StF 208



I remember back in the 60s, my father used to get irritated by older people who would say, “Ah, well Christmas is really for children isn’t it?” His sound theological point was that it’s for more than children: it’s for old people, young men and women, everyone, us. Matthew and Luke’s differing nativity narratives expressing great theological points are bursting with rich images well-used down the centuries by St Francis, great artists and many carol/hymn writers. We enjoy singing about donkeys, cattle, angels, kings, gifts, stars, earthy mangers and heavenly glory, and non-crying babies. And, over Advent and Christmas, how we love to see children in church too, holding flickering Christingles, performing a tea-towel Nativity, showing us their presents and attempting to sing *Away in a Manger*. But... maybe Charles Wesley should have the first and last word in his great Christmas hymn: *Let heaven and earth combine*.

Not for Wesley our sentimental preferences, instead he sums up the theology of the Incarnation brilliantly with “...our God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man.” The six syllable word fits and scans perfectly. Wonderful! Another magnificent line, our Christmas present is “...he wrapped him in our clay..” alluding to the dull clay with which, in the Genesis story, God made Adam... but also a stark contrast to his [God’s] shining “glory” laid by for the incarnation to happen. We can now experience God the hymn says, because “we the life of God shall know for **God is manifest [shown] below**” God has wrapped his present to us: Himself, Jesus.

The tune we sing it to [St John] attributed to William Henry Havergal, with its climb up the octave in the last line adds to its power. And, by the way, William Henry was father to Frances Ridley, writer of *Take my life and let it be*. What a gifted family, musically and spiritually! Wesley’s hymn is magnificent...and if, like me, you are jolted every time by Wesley’s description of Humankind “us” and our “vileness”, you might reflect on this year’s vindication of Wesley’s word choice, in what we see in Ukraine, Gaza and much social media. This is a truly a Christmas hymn for grown-ups. As a group, grown-ups maybe need Christmas more than children, although children in inner city poverty or shunted in refugee camps or escaping vengeful armies need love, peace and other presents too.

So my Dad was right, Christmas is for grown-ups. But Dad didn’t stint on Christmas for us children; at home we had Christmas trees, decorations, presents, charades, crackers, Morecambe & Wise, silly songs, carols and went to church on Christmas morning and sang the colourful carols in a rather drab chapel devoid of tree or tinsel but full of warmth. Each year to remind us of the Incarnation, we maybe need to sing Wesley’s great hymn at least once in the Christmas season... but we can sing *Little Donkey* and *Away in a Manger* too!

**Ruth Lewis**

## MY ADVENT JOURNEY; On what it means to wait expectantly...

“We’re all just waiting for you to come back to us” is a beautiful message I’ve received numerous times from people across the circuit over the last two years whilst I’ve been in and out (mostly in!) hospital.

“I’m just waiting to be well enough... I’m just waiting to be strong enough... I’m just waiting for a surgery... I’m just waiting to be nutritionally stable...I’m just waiting...” are the various replies I’ve offered in return, alongside and very loudly: “I can’t wait to be back with you.”

Waiting can be hard. A lot of the waiting we all do has no clear end point in sight, we’re expectant and hopeful but we don’t always know if the thing we are waiting for will materialise or what it might look like if it does happen.

When I became poorly in December 2021, I waited for an ambulance which I knew would take me to James Cook hospital and as I waited I knew that once there they would give me fluids, pain relief and possibly scan me. I knew what I was waiting for.

That changed quite quickly. As I laid in a hospital bed waiting for the doctors to come and see me, waiting for the results of the scan I’d had, I began to imagine what it would show. I hadn’t imagined that the results of that scan would throw everyone round me into sudden, fast, immediate activity.

The surgeon at James Cook phoned Mr B, (the surgeon in Leeds who had previously looked after me) and before I knew it I was being blue lighted from ‘Boro down to Jimmies in Leeds. (That was a very bumpy and scary ambulance journey!)

Once at Leeds there was more waiting, more scans, conversations, decisions; they wanted to ensure I was receiving nutrition, managing pain and keeping me hydrated, so that I would be strong enough to survive any future surgeries. And so, we waited. Two Christmas’ and two Easter’s in hospital waiting; punctuated by long periods of time during which I was critically ill.

Over the last two years there’s been lots of waiting, often interrupted by dangerous crisis, blood clots, sepsis, perforations, internal bleeds, organ failure, time out of intensive care, weight loss, emergency surgeries, planned surgeries. We didn’t wait because we wanted to, we waited because there was no real choice, to not wait would be to seriously and significantly risk my life. It raised that age old question - “*is it worth waiting for?*” *I think it was.*



Whilst in hospital I thought a lot about circuit, about the churches and the people I had ‘left behind’ I prayed everyday for the communities and for individuals. I thought about what it was God had called me to and I decided that life amongst you all, life restored was a gift worth waiting for but the time of waiting itself was important too.

Mr B came to see me every day, some days he looked empty and shattered and I later found out from my specialist nurse that the waiting was causing him sleepless nights, he was struggling with the waiting and contacting colleagues from across Europe to get advice, to make sure he was doing everything he could. He constantly checked on me and wouldn’t let any of his juniors make any decision regarding my care and treatment without him first agreeing it. He wanted others to wait.

On my second Christmas in a row in hospital he came to visit me with his daughter after they'd been to mass at the catholic cathedral. I was very poorly, they waited for me to have a break in between pain and sleep to talk to me about the sermon they had just heard and to wish me a peaceful Christmas.

That period of waiting is not worthless, that time of waiting has value in and of itself. I would never want to be poorly, I did not enjoy the scary life threatening times at all but that time of waiting had within it all kinds of joy, love, mystery and abundance.

This Christmas I hope not to be in hospital. After two years of 'active' waiting I'm beginning to get stronger, I have energy and I feel like I have life.

I've learnt such a lot from this two years of waiting, I've seen and experienced God in such profound and powerful ways often through the smallest of things. Whilst I've waited I've encountered God in the nurse who held my hand whilst twelve doctors crowded round my bed pushing fluids through me with the crash trolley on standby expecting me to arrest. Whilst I've waited I've encountered God in the charge nurse who brought me in some fairy lights to brighten my room. Whilst I've waited I've encountered God in the healthcare worker who gently washed me when I couldn't wash myself. Whilst I've waited I've encountered God in the housekeeping staff who walked around the hospital to find a ward that had a spare yogurt when I just wanted to taste something and that was all I could manage. I've encountered God in the nurse who redressed one of my surgical wounds with such gentleness and care, the same nurse held my hair back when I was vomiting, the same nurse showed me photos of her new doggy reminding me there was a whole world out there. I've encountered God in the student nurse who had to give his first injection and was super nervous but did brilliantly. I've encountered God in the radiologist who went and found me a pillow (they're like gold dust here!) so that I would be comfortable during a long procedure. I've encountered God in the most unlikely and unexpected places, spaces and people. These "hospital-people" have been for me real "*theotokos*" - God-bearers, hope-bringers, life-givers.

Much like advent, we wait, we are hopeful and expectant and we know what it is we wait for, but that advent waiting is never passive or devoid of activity. It's full; full of God working and being. The big secret of advent though is that we have to try and notice God in the waiting. We have to look for the presence of God as we wait.

So as we journey through advent this year, I may not be physically with you but I'm there. I am holding you in the light; I'm waiting with you, expecting God to show up - not just as this tiny baby in a stable but also in those we walk alongside, in the small acts of hope, in the people we encounter during our waiting, there too may we encounter God. Let's make this advent about actively waiting, about living the life we are gifted and in doing so may we notice and encounter God.

Wait well, wait expectantly, wait hopefully.

"Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" - Psalm 27:14 NRSV.

**Rev. Charity Hamilton**





**“The minister’s still miffed that one of the parents got £250 from You’ve Been Framed for their video of last year’s nativity play**

### *Ministry on ice*

As a chaplain to the local hospital, I sometimes get called out early. In a rush to work one morning, with no time for breakfast, I pulled up to the drive-through window at a fast-food restaurant, determined to at least grab some coffee. Because I was in a hurry, I asked them to put a couple of ice cubes in the coffee so it would cool down more quickly and I could drink it faster. I sat there at the pick-up window for a few minutes, wondering where they had to go to get my coffee, when a frustrated teenager finally came up and said, “I’m sorry for the delay, but the ice you wanted in your coffee keeps melting!”

### *Visiting Father Christmas*

A mother took her young daughter to visit Father Christmas in his grotto at the garden centre. He greeted the youngster merrily and asked: “And what would you like for Christmas?”

The little girl stared at him, open-mouthed with horror.

**“Didn’t you get my email?!”**

### *Good Home*

After the christening of his baby brother in church, young Jason sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, the boy replied, “That minister said he wanted us to be brought up in a good Christian home, but I want to stay with you.”

### *A dog’s life*

A couple had gone to their minister for counselling because their marriage was in trouble. The husband began by complaining that he led a dog’s life at home. To the minister’s surprise, the wife immediately agreed. “After all, he rushes into the house with muddy feet, tracks across my clean floors, barks at nothing, growls at his food and makes himself comfortable on the best furniture. Then he falls asleep and snaps at you if you disturb him.”

### *What NOT to give her for Valentine’s Day:*

A box of chocolates, clumsily rearranged, because you ate all the caramel ones.  
Any food item with the words: ‘diet’, ‘light’, or ‘high fibre’ on the label.  
Any household appliance or power tools.

# The special gift of Christmas for people living with dementia



Christmas time, with its music and traditions, offers “a special gift” to people living with dementia. Christmas can act as a powerful reminiscence therapy, especially for Christian believers, who will have long term memories of past Christmases, even though their short-term memory (working memory) has faded.

So says Louise Morse, a cognitive behavioural therapist and author of several books about dementia (Lion Monarch and SPCK) and old age. So, this Christmas she is urging families who have someone with dementia to use those long-term memories and help a loved one who is suffering memory loss.

Louise Morse explains: “Reminiscence therapy helps us recall the past as a means of owning it, and strengthens a sense of self. Grandma may have only a tenuous grasp of herself in the present, but in the past, she knew who she was – and therefore, still is.”

The effect of music on the brain is well known, and so Louise Morse urges that traditional Christmas music can play a big part here. She quotes a line from the hymn ‘O Holy Night’, when ‘the soul knows its worth.’ She says: “And bound up in Grandma’s memories of Christmas will be worship. Worship unites us with God, and we enter into His peace.”

Louise Morse also advises other music. “There are also the popular songs Grandma would have heard in her day, like Bing Crosby’s ‘White Christmas’. Perhaps record a selection and play them through wearable earphones. Also, don’t be surprised if she ‘time-travels’ temporarily to a familiar place in the past!

If this happens, “don’t ask them, ‘do you remember?’ or even say, ‘I remember when,’ because it will challenge and disturb your loved one. Instead, when showing family photographs or memorabilia to them, simply frame the memory with enthusiasm and warmth by saying, ‘that was the day our Kevin ...’ Or ‘this came from Aunt Mabel when ...’

“Let the rhythms and music of Christmas do their work.”

**Louise Morse** is a writer and speaker for Pilgrims’ Friend Society ([www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk](http://www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk))

**The High Court has ruled that they cannot have a nativity in Whitehall. This wasn’t for any religious reasons.**

**They couldn’t find three wise men!!**







## It's Christmas

*Christmas is a time that is celebrated all round the world. Many people's ideas of Christmas include glittering pine trees, Santa Claus, stockings and presents, but it can look vastly different around the globe. Here are just a few:*

**Croatia** - Christmas celebrations in Croatia begin early, with some traditions starting in November. Like other Europeans, Croatians also celebrate St. Nicholas Day in early December, whereby children leave their shoes out, expecting St. Nick to leave them candies and small gifts. Many families in Croatia plant wheat on December 13th with the belief that if it grows well, the next year will be prosperous for them.

**Japan**- For most in Japan, Christmas is a secular affair, rather than a religious one. Many Japanese people celebrate the holiday much like Valentine's Day, with couples spending the day together. It is common practice to go on dinner dates and stroll around looking at Christmas lights with their partners.

A 1974 marketing campaign called "Kentucky Christmas" launched a practice that is now celebrated by millions of Japanese people. Pre-orders for "seasonal meal packs" begin around seven weeks in advance. A spokesman says "Every year, the busiest day is December 24th which is about five to ten times busier than the annual average"

**Philippines** - Some 92% of the Philippines' 110 million people are Christian. Christmas is the most important time of the year in the Philippines, and the country is said to celebrate the holiday from September to January. Families celebrate Nochebuena, which is a big family celebration on the night of Christmas Eve, which involves having a big feast and sharing gifts." Another important tradition is Simbang Gabi, which means "mass at night," where people wake up before dawn to attend mass for nine days from December 16th to 24th. It is believed that those who complete all nine days can ask for a blessing.

**Mexico** - Christmas in Mexico is marked by large parades with colourful floats and costumes, candy-filled piñatas and nativity scenes. One of the country's most popular customs is Las Posadas, a celebration during the nine days leading up to Christmas. Every night, people form a singing procession that is meant to represent Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. These processions typically end at someone's house, where everyone gathers for a party with food such as tamales, Christmas punch and candies.



**Antarctica** - Currently, the South Pole is home to 70 permanent research stations representing 29 different countries. Since the usual commotion of Christmas is missing, stations find creative ways to celebrate among colleagues. "Each of our five Antarctic research stations celebrates Christmas in their own way, dependent on the weather," said Kathleen Maclean, a representative of the British Antarctic Survey. Some may roast a turkey and eat tinned and frozen vegetables, while others sing carols, watch Christmas films and play board games. Despite the festivities, research continues since "long-term monitoring data still needs to be collected."

### **International Space Station**

Despite the festivities, research continues in the space station. Such is the spirit of



Christmas that humans have found a way to celebrate it 227 nautical miles (420 kilometres) above Earth. According to NASA, astronauts aboard the ISS have celebrated Christmas, Hanukah and New Years for the past 21 years.

Celebrations include decorating the station, enjoying plastic pouch versions of traditional foods like turkey, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes and cookies, and filming videos of holiday greetings which are sent back to earth. Christmas also comes twice on the Space Station since it falls on January 7th on the Russian Orthodox calendar, which many Russian astronauts follow.

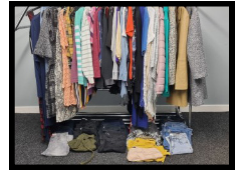
Anne Smith



## MAP Project Managers Report

Autumn 2023, has arrived and we are under way with a very full programme of events in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. We continue our Clothing distribution and drop in at the

Avenue church on Wednesday mornings (10:00 am-12 noon). In the past reporting year (until 31 Aug. 2023) we have welcomed 272 people and distributed 866 bags of clothing, as well as a considerable amount of bedding and household goods. Unfortunately we can no longer accept furniture as we have lost our storage facility. Whilst these figures are good, and donations regular, could **I appeal for more clothing and goods** as our stocks are frequently depleted and the need remains great.



We are also grateful, for the attendance at the drop in, of the welfare staff from Mears housing (the Home Office contractor) who have proven invaluable in resolving many of the issues presented by our service users.

Recently we have been able to introduce an Internet Café at the Avenue (as well as at our drop ins in Redcar and Linthorpe Road) this is helpful for those who wish to use the internet but have limited phone data).

Following our Wednesday morning at the Avenue we remove to Redcar for the afternoon drop in and English session in Park Avenue Baptist church. In the last year we have hosted 85 service users many of whom are regulars. However, due to a variety of changes, numbers are a little lower toward the end of our recording period. Changes to the speed of processing claims has meant that a significant number of members have had to move or make very sudden decisions about where they will live. Until recently the Government gave up to 28 days for a person to transition after they had been given leave to remain; and this started from the point at which they received their new ID without which the transition process is not possible. Many people have been given only 7 days in the new system, so without ID, or time, they have to negotiate a complex mixture of housing, benefit, job and education needs. This includes decisions like where in the country will I live and what will I do? As you can imagine the whole process is causing great distress and charities are feeling overwhelmed in trying to manage the fallout.

The other reason for reduced numbers is a sign of success. Many service users are improving their English with us to the point of wishing to attend college and develop even further. Unfortunately there is a time clash in many cases so people can't make some of our events.

Our Welcome Hub drop in on Thursdays (at Linthorpe Road) is showing a considerable increase in numbers and has a lovely atmosphere. As well as the Music Café we now have Internet Café and a free barber service. Our partners from the Red Cross join us regularly to help deal with complex issues for our service users. Another recent addition to the drop in has been a women's crafting group started by Eilish one of our volunteers and providing a vital service. Terry Doyle continues his meditation sessions on Thursdays and has extended his work to include Tai Chi, body work and breathing exercises. All of this helps with stress and long term issues. Thursday also hosts our IELTS tutor Janice who prepares those wanting the exam with advanced English. The Welcome Hub has hosted 190 people in the past year.

Friday is also a busy day at Linthorpe Road. Come and Chat English is one of our main events each week, like Redcar numbers are down a little at present as Middlesbrough College currently has classes that clash. Total attendance over the past year was 231 with a footfall of 1467. We follow classes with a meal which is as popular as ever, many thanks to Bob and Belle for providing this; then finish with singing led by Emily and David (averaging 15 people but with as many as 25 some weeks).

Terry's Health and Wellbeing work has also been extended to Redcar in St Hildas Church, Roseberry Road on Friday afternoons. This has had a slow beginning but we hope to increase numbers when we start minibus trips to experience the benefits of nature and escape the built environment.

On top of events we continue to work one to one with individual issues. I am very pleased that Hamid is now full time and is proving a wonderful colleague in managing the many facets of our role.

In August we took a coach trip to The Moors Centre at Danby it was a lovely day, great weather and a chance for everyone to relax, de-stress and feel good. We walked, picnicked and had a tour of the museum.

We have a Christmas party planned for 16th December at Linthorpe Road at 1.00pm all supporters are welcome to join us but please let us know in advance for numbers and catering.

We are deeply grateful for the continuing service and gifts of time and resources, of our volunteers. We do hold you all in high esteem and value your presence.

**Billy Barnes**

**But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;  
But let them sing joyful praises forever.  
Spread your protection over them,  
that all who love our name may be filled with joy**

**Psalm 5:11**

A.C.T.S PRESENTS

# SNOWWHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS



**10TH - 13TH OF JANUARY 2024**

7PM Nightly with Matinee at 2PM & 6.30PM on Jan 13TH

Tickets - £24 Family £8 Adult £6 Concession

To book contact 07305348059 or go online using the link  
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## *Future Developments*

This month we have had a great month at Hope Café, we have a regular attendance of people from all the surrounding areas. It has been lovely to see a few members of Trinity Methodist Church attending, we welcome you all to visit at some point. We have homemade soup and crusty baguette, which has gone down well with the locals. We have had Family Activity Fun Days during the half term, we have made good relationships with local families, providing much needed activities and provided lunch for everyone involved. It has been always important for TFFC to provide meals due to the ongoing financial crisis.

Food poverty in this area effects all families. Working families or those in receipt of benefits, the high rise in utility bills and increasing prices of food, even at food outlets such as the local Heron has had a massive effect and strain on families, and individuals. There has been a rise in Eco Shops in Middlesbrough. These are pop-up shops in schools and community venues providing high quality supermarket food. Because of over-ordering or misprinting on the packaging the food would be thrown away. We want to prevent this perfectly good food going to land fill, so it is distributed to Eco Shops for the food to be used and not wasted.

Local communities can visit an Eco shop (with their own shopping bag), and for a donation of £2-£3 can choose 10 items from a range of high-quality supermarket food. The food in Eco Shops changes each week and mainly consists of a wide range of food and drinks, in tins, jars, packets and bottles. They also have a range of seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables, and these are often free with your shop. Some have chilled and frozen food as well depending on space and equipment.

We need to challenge and change the perception of surplus food and the environmental issues around food waste. We want to ensure 'good to eat' surplus food is being used and not be part of a wasteful food system.

An Eco Shop at Trinity Methodist Church will create opportunities for people to eat well and stop surplus food from being wasted. At present this is only a vision for TFFC, we would be honoured to serve our neighbouring communities, to help relieve the burden of this cost-of-living crisis which has hit us hard since the pandemic. This would ensure people were getting regular portions of fruit and vegetables, which is often missed off the shopping list when people are in food poverty. The closest Eco Shop at present is at St Oswald's, Grove Hill which has been running since the lockdown restrictions were lifted. This is open to anyone, there is no criteria, as everyone could benefit from the Eco Shop.

I would encourage anyone who is interested in attending the Eco Shop at St Oswald's, to see what it looks like in operation. It is open Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 9.30am till 1.30pm.

We would be ordering a weekly delivery of food approximately 100kg – this is the equivalent of over 190 meals per delivery. The total cost would be £100 per month for the delivery of food, I know this is a commitment and I believe God will provide if we step out in faith. I am asking for 20 people to partner with TFFC contributing £5.00 per month, to ensure we can cover the cost of the food supply from Fareshare. Please can I

ask you to pray about becoming a partner, if you feel God has put it on your heart then please get in touch with someone from the Trinity Leadership Team or myself.

**Equipping Ourselves for Battle.** One of my favourite books in the Bible is Ephesians, it opened my eyes to the most life changing revelation ‘Christ in me the Hope of Glory’, that Christ lives in me! I challenge you to read the book of Ephesians out loud, you will see this to be true. The most well know scripture in Ephesians 6, The Armour of God, we need to know how to put on this armour of protection especially in this day of war and terror in the world.

**Ephesians 6** tells us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, so we can stand against the wiles of the devil. **PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.** You will have heard in your walk as a Christian that you are a soldier, this might sound scary to some reading this message, however we must see for ourselves and ask God to open the eyes of our hearts. Ephesians 6:12 *for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the powers of the rulers of this dark age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.....* **THEREFORE, take up the WHOLE armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

I ask you these two questions, is it possible for ALL Christians to put on ‘the WHOLE armour of God’? And how do we practically put it on? In the scripture we have just read, it says we put it on to stand firm in the evil day, when is the evil day? I believe it means the seasons/times in our lives when the ‘battle’ is tense. We do not know when these days will happen, we must therefore wear our armour every day. God provides us with the armour, He does this when we store His word in our hearts. In Ephesians, it clearly describes each item of the armour of God, If you are unguarded in any place then that is where you will be attacked.

**Ephesians 6:14** Belt of truth, without truth we are lost, we are free today as Christians because we know the Truth. We need to see everything through the Gospel of Truth. The Breastplate of Righteousness, this protects your heart. By living a good life, you demonstrate righteousness.

**Ephesians 6:15** Shoes of the Gospel of Peace, walk strong and be ready to share the Gospel.

**Ephesians 6:16** It states that ABOVE ALL take up the shield, this stops the fiery darts of the enemy.

**Ephesians 6:17** Taking the Helmet of Salvation, watch out for the enemy attacking your mind, this is where victory and defeat takes place. Every sin starts in the mind. If you let junk into your mind, you will lose hope. Your mind adapts to the things you do more often. The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, and you need to put the Word in your mouth and mind, and the scripture in your heart. The Word becomes alive, and you start to hear God through His teachings. You begin to know Him intimately. This is how you grow and mature as a Christian, you become equipped with the Full Armour of God, ready for Battle! Even Jesus knew this, He defended Himself through the written Word, He said ‘It is written’. As Christians we need to know the Word.

**Romans 12** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of

your mind.

How do we practically do this? We need to read and study the bible. Get the FULL counsel of God, it is FULL of Swords! Memorise the scriptures, we must have the Word in us, what you do not retain, you cannot use. Get on the attack through evangelism, this could be a family member or neighbour, once you break out and share, it starts to become easier each time you step out in faith. Prayer must become a Holy Habit, we fail to realise everything begins with prayer.

God bless you all, and remember you have everything you need in His Word.

**Sharon Sewell** TFFC Coordinator.



## Ash Wednesday, Valentine's Day - in a rare meeting

This year Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day, share the same date! It seems an odd mix, yet there is an obvious link: *love!* Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, is about learning how to

love God more, as we give Him space in our lives.

Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit (1), where He was tempted by Satan, but demonstrated the path of real love.

Jesus is tempted to turn stones into bread. Love gets to the heart of human need, not just satisfying physical desires.

Satan tempts Jesus to worship him. However, worshipping God is the beginning of love and results in sacrificial service to meet the needs of others.

Finally, he is tempted to put God to the test, by jumping off the Temple. Only real love can change hearts by practical love and care.

Lent teaches us how to live out the love of God in practice, as we follow Jesus in the way of the cross.

Valentine was Christ's follower, committed to sharing God's love with others. We know little about him, except that he was a priest who lived in the 3rd Century AD and was martyred on February 14th. He also helped Christians in Rome during times of persecution and demonstrated the importance of showing real love in action.

*'What, do you wish to know your Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well, love was his meaning.'* (Julian of Norwich).

The Parish Pump





Lent is that time of the year when according to when it falls, the days are getting lighter and maybe there is a sign of Spring. Lent comes from an old English word 'lengthen' By way of an aside I remember Rev Bill Middlemiss telling the Sunday School that fact many many years ago when he was Superintendent Minister in our Circuit!!

Lent of course is the time when we turn our thoughts towards the crucifixion of our Lord. From the Gospels it remembers Jesus going into the Wilderness at the start of his Ministry to be tempted, as the Bible says, by the Devil.

Believe in that what you will, but it is certainly true that Jesus had to look carefully at the kind of Messiah God wanted him to be.

The easy options for Jesus were; Take over the world by force, Do an amazing magic action by jumping off the Temple and turn stones into bread. This would have gathered followers, but for the wrong reasons. Jesus knew what God wanted him to do and although he fasted all the time he was in the Wilderness, when it was over he knew God had been with him and he knew what kind of Messiah he would be.

So our Lent is forty days long. For many Lent is about giving things up. Not a bad idea, self denial is a good form of self discipline and a serious reminder of why we need to keep the time of Lent. Some times the things we give up enhance our health and well being, some times they can make us a better person, a better follower of Jesus.

Giving up more time for prayer and Bible study is a very positive use of Lent. That may be on our own using a Study Guide or with other Christian friends in a Fellowship group. If we come out of Lent, maybe having done our Health and Well being some good, then that is time well spent. If we have had time to study more about our faith and be more prayerful then that is good for our Spiritual Health and Well being.

In my view to see Lent just as so many people see it as just 'giving things up' can be little use. If our actions produce better life and faith enrichment then that is Lent well spent.

**Dave Elliott**

## **Giving up for Lent**

At the end of the pre-Lent sermon, the minister suggested, as an example to the rest of the community, that the congregation should worship in an unheated church for the whole of Lent.

As they made their way into the chill Sunday air the minister addressed one member of the congregation, asking what she had decided to give up for Lent. "Church," she replied firmly.

**The Parish Pump**

# PRAYER DIARY

**December 3<sup>rd</sup>** We pray today for all of our Circuit as we move into a new section of our Methodist year. We pray too that this 'Memo' may bring hope and inspiration to all our readers. Pray for the Circuit Christmas Songs of Praise at Grove Hill this afternoon. Pray for Rev David Godfrey and Stainton

**December 10<sup>th</sup>** We pray for those people who work for different charities especially caring for the homeless and people finding it hard to make ends meet at this time of the year. Pray for Rev John Howard-Norman and for Grove Hill

**December 17<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for Carol services and for Nativity plays and for those people who work hard in our churches to make the season of Christmas so special. Pray for Rev Charity and for Trinity, for the Trinity Family Friendly Centre and Sharon Sewell and her team.

**December 24<sup>th</sup>** On this Christmas Eve, this 'Night of Miracles' we pray for all our Christian family as we celebrate the Incarnation, God becoming human through his son Jesus, to show us the best life. We pray for all who we love and care for on this special day. We pray too for all our services tomorrow.

**December 31<sup>st</sup>** On this last day of 2023, we come with our prayers for a new year. We pray especially for Peace in a year that has seen so much hate and despair. We pray too for hope for those who have found difficulty just surviving in a world of high prices and low income, for those who may have lost their homes, that 2024 will bring better times. Bless the work of our Food Banks.

**January 7<sup>th</sup>** We are now in the season of Epiphany, the time of revelation of who Jesus really is. Pray for Methodist Homes for the Aged and for all who work with our senior citizens, for MHA Communities Teesside and Montpellier Manor. Pray for Rev Mike Harland and

Nunthorpe.

**January 14<sup>th</sup>** We pray for children and young people in our churches and in our local schools. Pray for all who teach and for those who are Governors. We pray too for young people returning to college and University after the Christmas break. Pray for the work of Linthorpe Road Resource Centre and Andrew Glazebrook

**January 21<sup>st</sup>** We pray today for all who serve as Officials in our churches, and the Circuit and those who attend Circuit meetings and Synod. May they be guided by the Spirit in their decision making. Pray for Elaine at our Circuit Office.

**January 28<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for those who find fitting into our communities difficult, those from different cultures. Pray for the work of Methodist Asylum Project, for Billy Barnes and his team. Pray for Normanby .

**February 4<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for all who are ill in body, mind or Spirit, be with those who care for them in lots of different ways. We pray for the Chinese Church.

**February 11<sup>th</sup>** We pray for the beginning of Lent a time for all of us to look again at what we believe and to spend more time in our prayer and devotions. Pray today for our preachers, whether they be Lay or Ordained, for our Worship leaders as they all enhance our ability to worship God and to move forward in faith. Pray for Marton.

**February 18<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for our several communities around our churches, for the opportunities they give us for mission and for care and inclusion. Bless all the work we try to do for those around us as we share the Word of God and the Love of God.

**February 25<sup>th</sup>** We pray for the Darlington District and for the Chair of our District, Rev Richard Andrew.