

MEMO

Middlesbrough & Eston Methodist Outburst

**SEPTEMBER —
NOVEMBER 2021**



LEST WE FORGET

FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Here we are again at the start of a new Methodist year. September sees the start of other things too – universities and schools return, leaves start to change colour and fall from the trees and the nights are drawing in. Church Meetings are up and running and questions will be plenty - are will still doing this? Is that gong to happen? What about the other things that have been waiting for the right time and place? Already some churches are planning for future events i.e. Christmas Fayres

After being in differing stages of lockdown for so long no doubt there will be many more new starts and changes to be made in our lives. Some of these may be huge life-changing experiences while others may be little tweaks to daily living. The same goes for our churches. There have been difficult decisions to make, changes to worship format, no face-to-face meetings and even though restrictions are loosening things will not be 'normal' for a while and future events may still not be held without change or may even have to be postponed.

The constant thing in all of this is that God is still at the centre of everything. We don't need to be in church to know he is always with us but it is good to be together in a worship space wherever and whatever that space may be. How good will it be to be able to sing praises as we gather together.

As you turn the pages you will find regular items and news but we would really like to hear from you in the next edition(s) of MEMO so keep your articles coming in. We are hoping for some more '100 Words' (that is about six lines of average typing) or even longer items. You will find one or two short pieces in the following pages. One of them came out of a conversation in our Hope café! Here's hoping you will rise to the challenge for next time and we thank you if you have contributed to this edition of MEMO

Best wishes
Anne
On behalf of Dave and 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 0BS

Or email to
mbrocircuit@gmail.com
by **1st October 2021**

The Superintendent's Letter

Dear Friends,

They say that “time flies when you’re having fun!” It hardly seems possible that I arrived in Nunthorpe with my wife Carolyn a full year ago. How quickly that year has flown! Of course, there is a second theory about the passage of time which states that time goes quicker the older you are. I like to think it is the ‘having fun’ rather than the ‘getting old’ theory which applies to me!

Jesus attitude towards time is informative. There were occasions in his ministry where it seemed he didn’t have enough time. These were the days when crowds pressed in on him and he taught and healed to the point of his own exhaustion. He was also constantly interrupted in what he was doing as people wanted to speak to him, or seek healing for themselves or others. There were times of real rush and urgency about Jesus’ mission to the extent that he had to send his disciples out in twos to multiply his work.

But this is not the whole story. There were other occasions when Jesus seemed to waste time. He had a knack of leaving crowds of people, just when the work was taking off, and disappearing to the wilderness or “to the other side of the lake”. He wasted time when Lazarus was ill, preferring to stay where he was rather than rush to see his friend. He would spend long periods alone or just with his very closest friends, rather than getting on with mission. By modern standards Jesus was very poor at time management and yet he made an impact upon the world which no one else, before or since, has ever made.

Today we find ourselves at a time of great change. The recent pandemic has been a trauma for individuals, church and society at large, the consequences of which will be felt for many years to come. There is a need for us to use our time wisely and decide what is really important to us. Perhaps there are things in church life which were unproductive and which we do not need to take up again after the pandemic. And then again, perhaps there are new things which have potential into which we should devote our resources. Where do our priorities lie? There is an urgency about the mission of God today, but then there is also a need to discern where to devote our limited time and energies. In all of this we need to balance our activity with stillness, prayer and rest.

And so as we work together through these changing times we remember the lessons from Jesus’ life and mission, that prayer, friendship, rest and the ability to say “no” are all important too. When we get the balance right between prayer and action, work and rest, then our work for Christ becomes more effective and will have a greater impact upon the communities we serve.

I wish you all well for the new church year.

Rev. David Godfrey

Reflections on my Placement

As part of my studies to become a Methodist minister I have been shadowing David and Charity since Easter. I have managed to visit most of the churches and enjoyed sharing worship with everyone, I've listened in on Circuit Leadership Team meetings and been taken on a walking tour of Parliament Road, the town centre and, Charity's highlight, the dinosaurs and Transporter Bridge. All rather different from my home circuit of North Yorkshire Dales! It has been wonderful to meet people across the circuit over the past couple of months. I am thankful that my placement coincided with activities re-opening as Covid restrictions relaxed and you have been able to give me such a warm welcome.



I have visited the Methodist Asylum Project at Avenue Church several times and seen what a fantastic service is being offered to those who end up in Middlesbrough seeking refuge. Speaking to project manager, Ailsa, she told me about what is offered. There's English language practice sessions, support coping with day to day life in Middlesbrough and second-hand clothing and household goods. Much of the activity had been moved on-line due to Covid, but Ailsa had begun offering much needed food support on Wednesday mornings which meant they stayed open. Helping on Wednesdays was a wonderful way of meeting volunteers, some of whom were asylum seekers themselves and others from congregations across the circuit. I enjoyed chatting, listening to people's stories and seeing how God's love is shared.

Another place where God's love is shared is the Trinity Family Friendly Centre. The café re-opened in May and I was able to call in a couple of times and spend time talking with customers, volunteers and Sharon, the Project Co-ordinator. She explained the amazing amount of support for the local community which comes out of Trinity Church. Food deliveries, second hand clothing, exercise groups and well-being projects. Plans are progressing for a community garden behind the church and ideas for other activities too.

I've also joined in with a Zoom Young Sunday session, Zoom coffee mornings with Nunthorpe on Tuesday mornings and David kindly let me assist at a number of funerals and a baptism. Where ever I've been in the circuit there have been smiling faces and in all of that I have seen over the past couple of months, there's been a sense of God's love at work in all sorts of ways.

Thank you all for having me!
God bless,

Rachel Pinkney
Student Minister

Methodist Women in Britain

**Incorporating Women's Network and British
unit of the World Federation of Methodist and
Uniting Church Women**



There are no Network meetings planned in the Circuit at the time of writing. We will review the situation at a later date regarding the annual committee meeting and possible meetings.

However, the Darlington District committee have planned two meetings for 2021 as follows.

Autumn Day on Thursday 14 October at Peterlee Methodist Church.

The day will include a celebration of the 10th Anniversary of MWiB with guest speaker Mrs Alison Judd, WFM & UCW President. Advance booking is required for this so please see your Church MWiB secretary as soon as possible if you are interested in attending.

There is an Advent Service planned for Friday 26/11/21 at Barnard Castle Methodist Church. The speaker will be Mrs Ruth Dent. More details later.

Kath Smithies

Circuit Methodist Women in Britain Secretary

Darlington District Charity 2021/22

This is DKMS, a blood charity whose strapline is "We delete blood cancer"- a big ask. Every 20 minutes someone in the UK is diagnosed with blood cancer. A stem cell transplant can give that person a second chance of life when conventional therapies fail, and for those needing a stem cell transplant, the chance of finding a match is like finding a needle in a haystack. That's because only 2% of the UK population are on the stem cell register.

DKMS want to change these statistics and increase the number of people on the register to make finding a match a simple exercise. Raising awareness is key. Getting on the register is incredibly easy. All it takes is a cheek swab and 2 minutes of people's time. The eligible age range is 17 - 55.

Their aim is to recruit and retain potential blood stem donors to provide a second chance of life, raise funds to match registration costs and improve blood cancer therapies with research of their own.

DKMS is based in London but there are local contacts who are connected to this charity. Your church MWiB secretary has more detailed information.

Kath Smithies

New Beginnings

I do enjoy my job as a Partnership Tutor working for the Redcar Teacher Training Programme. This is a job I have done since I retired and I also acted as a Professional Mentor when I was working full time.

One of the great joys of this work is seeing trainee teachers going through their demanding year of training and then at this time of the year, we meet to award Qualified Teacher Status to those who have completed their training successfully.

Being able to work with new teachers is a joy and a privilege, to see them achieve their QTS makes it all worthwhile. They will truly have new beginnings once they start their first jobs. This year has been really tough for our trainees and to have come through all of the obstacles is a true sign of their tenacity and dedication to their new careers. Sadly this year there is a shortage of teaching posts and it has been disappointing and worrying for many of the trainees, having been through all of this and not to have the chance for that new beginning.

I hope when you read this we will, as a country, be in new beginnings with the restrictions that have in many ways put lots of pressure on us, being lifted. No guarantee of course, but we can hope and pray.

Think also of the new beginnings which have been made possible with the advent of the vaccines. A true answer to prayers and hopefully those vaccines will continue to be developed to keep us all safe in the future. Once more people have received the vaccine then the possibility of even more new beginnings is ahead of us.



September sees the beginning of a new Methodist Year, with exciting possibilities of developing further our mission to the people of our communities. We also look forward to new beginnings in each of our churches. None of us can stand still and within our church families will be a wealth of ideas and inspirational thinking as we review our purpose as churches and look to God to direct us by the power of the Holy Spirit on all sorts of exciting journeys.

When we look back on the difficult times we have experienced then we thank God that as churches and as individuals we have survived, even more reason to seek to move forward and to maybe develop further some of the new beginnings which have grown from the Coved months. The increased use of technology to hold meetings, to stream services, to use our Website to reach out to more people than would be the case if our message only went to the people attending church. Worship at Home has become very popular and seems to be an established part of our mission. So we can see positives from the last months which can continue to enhance our mission.

In our own lives of faith there are new beginnings. Different life experiences can make us have doubts and then other experiences can bring us back to a stronger faith. For me I have had a faith life of ups and downs, of many new beginnings. We have a sense of the presence of Jesus, who forgives and redeems us as we journey forward into our new beginnings. A faith that is made even stronger by the fact that the resurrection gives us

hope that even in death there is a new beginning. So let us be thankful for all those opportunities to keep on moving forward.

Dave Elliott

God's Garden at Trinity

There are two Richard Cooper's in my life, which sometimes can get a bit confusing. My cousin Richard Cooper lives in Cumbria where he runs Silverband Falconry and is surrounded by all kinds of animals. But the other Richard Cooper is a member at Trinity Methodist Church. If you've not met Trinity's Richard Cooper then you're missing out. He's a gentle, quiet and prayerful soul who is often spotted walking around Middlesbrough, a seeming unending energy for life and a deep appreciation for 'the outdoors' and all that God has painted into the ground and onto the skies.



Richard has been tending our garden at Trinity for some time now. When I'm sitting in Hope Café at Trinity, he will often appear with something dug out of the soil or plucked from a plant, in fact I've just finished the garlic he gave me last week...!

Being outdoors is really beneficial for our mental and physical health and the garden at Trinity always makes me think of that oft quoted poem "One is nearer God's heart in a garden, than anywhere else on earth" there is something really powerful about being out in nature and focused on a simple task like digging, or planting or watering.



Richard & Andy Preston



Sharon, Helle & Charity

The garden space at Trinity is big and part of it is set aside for growing, we are currently 'dreaming and scheming' all kinds of ideas about this space and how we can combine growing food with helping people to eat. We've been able to introduce a lot of people to Richard lately and to show them round the garden, if you'd like to meet Richard and see the garden get in touch... but even better if you love to garden and would like to spend an hour a week helping out get in touch with us.

Rev. Charity Hamilton



Father hear the prayer we offer StF 518 H&P 436

What should we make of this little hymn? Do we really pray to God welcoming or asking for challenges, or more likely do we find ourselves praying for “ease” from any difficulty, threat, illness? At my school, the hymn was a regular in our assemblies. At first my little friends and I giggled, [silently of course - we were good girls] at the idea that God the father could be a “Guide” with badges and a whistle, in blue uniform like us! When older I just concentrated on diligently scraping my bow across my cello’s strings as the orchestra played the tune *Sussex* while behind me the schoolgirls’ voices soared. In our youth, maybe, asking for challenge is apt, now we’re older the implicit *what can’t be cured must be endured* “rejoicingly” message is less palatable.

Its four verses are from a poem published in 1859 by an American, named Love [yes, really] Maria Willis. By the time she had written this not only had she lost two of her siblings and three of her cousins but when she was six, her father had died in 1841 after an accident handling a horse. So, she had known sorrow and challenge. Her husband Frederick Willis was a childhood friend of Louisa May Alcott and is believed to have been the inspiration for dishy next door neighbour Laurie in *Little Women*! Because of Frederick’s Spiritualist beliefs, in 1857 he was expelled from Harvard Divinity School and instead re-trained as a doctor. Love Maria had met him in the Spiritualist movement and now stood by him, subsequently marrying him. The hymn shows a faith that the greater the trial, the greater the opportunity to glorify God by standing the test in a Christ-like manner.

Her original poem was edited, polished and improved by the American poet Longfellow [of Hiawatha fame] and became over the years a much sung hymn. David Russell Hamrick comparing the versions, shows how Longfellow tightened scripture references to the 23rd Psalm “green pastures...still waters” and Exodus “smite...the rocks”; how he substituted the words “ease” and “Strength” but kept her words to live life “courageously”. Physical courage is found in the Bible, with warriors like David and Jonathan, but also moral courage, like Esther and Ruth. You and I are never likely to stand alone in a winner-take-all duel against a giant or go before an emperor to plead for the life of a people. We may not be called upon for the kind of thrilling heroics we read about as children, but life is hard, uphill all the way, as my dad used to say. We have seen this particularly in the past eighteen months: life is a challenge. In the pandemic we have seen many kinds of courage. Now as we face our later years, we could ask the caregiver who watches over an invalid in declining health, day after day, if it takes strength and courage to be the support that loved one needs. It does. Some of us are that care-giver.

Although some situations can’t be cured, some can, and this hymn clearly urges us to leave our “idle” rest and “smite” rocks. Rocks of injustice, poverty, cruelty should be challenged. In the 1850s the anti-slavery movement was growing, and Willis’s poem was published in a magazine edited by an abolitionist lawyer. So, if we find ourselves on a “steep and rugged pathway” maybe we are called to do more than endure, maybe we are called to smite and remove them in whatever way we can to release “living fountains” of abundant life, especially for others. The question is not whether we will

experience hard or stormy times, but how we will respond. The tune we sing, *Sussex* is one of the pretty folk tunes collected in the early 20th century and adapted by Ralph Vaughan Williams and itself maybe one reason for the hymn's continued popularity. I admit to ... in my youth... finding the hymn amusing and unappealing ... but these days... I think I get it. Do you?

Ruth Lewis

Connect / Junction42

Connect is starting at Linthorpe Road Methodist Church in September, as part of Junction42.

Connect forms community, around gatherings where ex-offenders, drug-users, and the homeless, can grow in faith alongside long-standing Christians. Connect communities are marked by being grassroots, passionate and missional. They are full-on, real and raw, they are not dumbed down, or seeker friendly. They are full of people who have met with Jesus in very real ways, and they provide companionship and support on a shared path.

JUNC+ION⁴²

CONNECT
Middlesbrough

LAUNCHING!

September 27th
7pm-9:30pm

- Transformed Lives
- Community
- Food & Worship

Linthorpe Road
Methodist Church
Linthorpe Road
Middlesbrough
TS1 2JH

Working in partnership with Tees Valley Community Church

Connect is not about providing services for 'the poor'. Rather, it is a unique community where we dare to believe that 'the poor' actually want to worship Jesus, not just in ones and twos but whole households and communities. We have discovered we are not here to *do for* but that we *do with*. We have seen that those from the margins are passionate about their beliefs and faith. Connect doesn't desire to be a 'social action project' – rather, it is a space for individuals to express their faith in community.

John O'Connor
Connect Network Lead
www.junction42.org

For more information
contact
Rev. Charity Hamilton at
charity.hamilton.org.uk

Betty Oxo coupon doll



After the first World War
Very few folk were rich
All the rest were really poor
Every day patch and stitch!

They were the dole days The “pancrack”
For children no costly toys
Lloyd George and the means test
whip and top for girls and boys.

Hopscotch, spyo, itchybay
These games we used to play
If we had one skipping rope
The gang would play all day

Chewing carrots and turnips
Sweets were too dear by far
For holidays - a walk in the park
Few people had a car

I remember a special doll
She was mine long ago
Stamped upon her ragdoll foot
“My name is Betty Oxo”

Rosy cheeks and flaxen hair,
Eyes a beautiful blue
Gay dress with pintucks here and there
In checks of rainbow hue

Each Oxo cube had a tiny box
Of cardboard red and white
Spread them out flat, collect a pack
For a doll, a sheer delight

Five hundred boxes must be saved
This lovely gift to gain
Aunties, friends and neighbours
All to the rescue came

Buying a card at the corner shop
I thought with a pang of regret
I haven't got one uncle or aunt
In the land of the living yet

But I've a son and daughters too
Time goes rolling on
Of all the dolls I've ever seen
Betty Oxo was the best - bar none.

**This poem was
Written by
Gladys Thompson
1918-2005.**

**Thanks goes to
her
daughter
Estelle M King**

About Autumn

Autumn is a season famous for harvest time, turning leaves, cooling temperatures and darkening nights. Keats called autumn the 'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness'.



Here are some autumnal facts.

Do you know ...

i) that there are two different dates when autumn could be said to begin i.e. the autumn equinox, when the days and nights are approximately the same length of time, falls on either 22 or 23 September. However, to record climate information, it is important to have set dates for comparison purposes, so meteorological autumn always begins on 1 September.

ii) that the shorter days are a sign to trees to begin to prepare for winter. During winter there is not enough light for photosynthesis to occur, so as the days shorten the trees begin to close down their food production systems and reduce the amount of chlorophyll in their leaves.

iii) about colours?

Chlorophyll is the chemical which makes tree leaves green and as it declines other chemicals become more prominent in the leaves. These cause the vibrant ambers, reds and yellows of autumn. The chemicals are types of flavonoids, carotenoids and anthocyanins. Some of these chemicals are the same ones that give carrots (beta-carotenes) and egg yolks (luteins) their colours.

iv) people born in autumn live longer

A study in the *Journal of Aging Research* found that babies born during the autumn months are more likely to live to 100 than those born during the rest of the year. USA statistics found that 30 % of centenarians born during 1880-1895 were born in the autumn months.

v) why the days get shorter?

The word equinox comes from the Latin *equi* (meaning equal) and *nox* (meaning night) marking the time when day and night are of equal length. We often notice the nights begin to draw in from this point as after the autumn equinox, the nights are longer than the days, until this is reversed at the spring equinox.

vi) about 24 September 2303?

Generally speaking, the autumn equinox always falls on either 22 or 23 September, but not always. Because the Gregorian calendar is not quite in perfect symmetry with the Earth's orbit, the autumn equinox very occasionally falls on September 24. This last happened in 1931 and will next happen in 2303.

vii) anything about Persephone's return?

In Greek mythology, autumn began when Persephone was abducted by Hades to be the Queen of the Underworld. In distress Persephone's mother, Demeter (the goddess of the

harvest), caused all the crops on Earth to die until her daughter was allowed to return, marking spring.

viii) about Autumn and Fall?

We typically think of 'fall' as the North American version of the word 'autumn', but it was in fact in widespread usage in England until relatively recently. Originally a shortening of the phrase *fall of the leaf*, the phrase was common in England in the 17th century. The word autumn entered English from the French *automne* and didn't become commonly used until the 18th century.

Anne Smith

Catching up with Young Sunday

Young Sunday have been having a good time finding out about and understanding more of the Methodist Way of Life. After what seemed a very long time using Zoom we have, at last, started to see each other in 'real time'. We looked at Service (which started off with serving each other with doughnuts, using a broom handle, a fork and some duct tape, because we were not allowed to pick up our own; then looking at the parable of the Good Samaritan, and climate change issues before creating a banner) and then Evangelism in the next session.



The following two sessions considered Worship from our own experiences. As well as the serious stuff, there was fun and games (including toasting marshmallows and 'gunging' a minister) in Noah's Garden at Nunthorpe, then at Trinity we looked to planning a service and finding out about the various parts of a church worship space.



The latest meeting was at Marske, on the beach, on a glorious day. This was a taster in advance of a future overnight camping trip where we will be looking up to the stars. With a campfire, barbecued sausages, 'baked' bananas, wide games, building inukshacks, prayers and serious discussion it was definitely a feel-good experience.

One future event we are planning for is to fill the town centre with angels at Christmas time, as a reminder of and tribute to those who we have lost in the last two years or so. The idea is to have an Angelic Host hanging from the ceilings in the town centre shopping areas in central Middlesbrough. We would really appreciate help as it means hundreds (or more likely thousands!) of angels - large, small and in between - will be needed to fill the space. If you feel that you can help in any way contact **Charity, Kay or Anne** for more details.

IS IT SAFE TO GO IN?

Maybe this is a question on a number of peoples' minds as we have had 'Freedom Day' and been told we can go back to near normal in church.

As I write this piece (July 28th) cases in our area are still high as are hospital admissions.

There is a sense that we can't be too careful. We are hearing of people catching the virus even when they have been double jabbed.

It is so difficult for our Church Leaders to make the right decisions about how we organise our worship.

For so long we have been told what to do. As Preachers we had made the decision to have half hour services and maybe to ask organists to play a couple of hymns but we didn't sing. We had to wear our masks and book to attend worship. There were other restrictions including social distancing, which in many ways made us feel safe. When things were really bad at the start of the year, Rev David made a strong suggestion to all Church Councils that we should not meet for worship. At Easter many of us opened our churches again, still with the restrictions.

As Church leaders we had to be absolutely certain we were doing all we could to keep our congregations safe.

We now have freedom, but instead of everyone abandoning all the restrictions and having a great sing, we are still cautious. I really looked forward to the day when we would be free, I was going to be able to have some wonderful hymns. On Sunday this didn't happen, although I did ask people at my church to sing behind their masks as there was a mixed reply to my question should we sing?

All our churches are having Church Council meetings to decide the way ahead. As Plan makers we have made the decision for churches to return to one hour services as of September and to sing. However this is still up to individual churches and I will inform preachers of any changes your church may be making.

So, is it safe to go in? How much do we want to worship, to sing hymns to go back to 'normal?' How anxious are we about doing this?

My simple answer is that we have to move forward in faith, but we also have to show love and concern for members of our church families. Whilst the views of our congregations may well be mixed, we must never lose sight of the fact that we are a family sharing the love of God with each other. We all play our part in ensuring everyone is comfortable and their views accepted and assurance is given that every possible measure is in place to keep us safe. Along side this there is an element of faith in being able to worship in the best way we can to praise the God who continues to lead us on into better times.

So for me; yes it is safe to go in and to worship in the best and safest way we can and to feel confident about our future.

Dave Elliott



God in Love Unites Us

Read: John 6:1-21

It's one of the most well-known stories of Jesus in scripture, the feeding of the five thousand but it has more to tell us than simply a miracle of multiplication.



Eularia Clarke 1914-1979 Methodist Modern Art Collection CLA/1965/1 Image Copyright © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes The Methodist Church Registered Charity no.

Can you remember the last time you prepared food for others, the last time you gathered with friends or strangers to eat together? I love to cook and to share that food with people, in these pandemic times I've really missed being able to gather people around my table, share food, laughter, tears, love with one another. What was the last thing you ate? Were you good or bad? Was the food you ate good or bad? Perhaps you didn't give the food you consume moral weight, maybe it's fuel to live, or maybe you love food so much you live to fuel? Maybe what you last ate fits into a plan of eating you have for the day where numbers of macros and micronutrients are carefully worked out and you know what you are 'allowed' and what you are not 'allowed.' Perhaps what you last ate was limited by health issues and you wished you could've had something else but your body prevents you. Perhaps you struggle with eating from a psychological perspective and food and eating are battle

grounds for you. It may be that you can't always afford food, and that poverty is a thief that steals your right to eat with enjoyment. Whether we give food moral weight, whether we objectify it, whether we limit it or over-use it, whether we thrive because of it or struggle with it, whatever our relationship to food it is just that – a relationship. It is a relationship in which some of us are in a constant negotiation with food, some of us are in a stand-off with food whilst others of us are ambivalent about food. Our relationship to food matters on all kinds of levels, from the physical need for food to the mental dialogue with food, but there's also a connection between faith and food.

The story of the feeding of the five thousand is really well-known by those of us brought up in the Church, we may have first heard it at Sunday school and like me, you may have been amazed at this miracle of how food could multiply much like the magic sweet bag Enid Blyton's book *The Magic Faraway Tree*. We've been taught to notice the miracle but I want you to imagine for a moment that you are hearing it for the first time, that you've no prior knowledge of it at all, that it's all new to you. What do you see in this story? There's the people, tired and hungry; there's Jesus and the disciples; there's the food and the eating; there's the grass they're asked to sit on; and there's the generosity of a small child.

There are some who argue that Jesus' preaching persuaded the crowd to share their hidden food, still others who argue it is an absolute miracle; for me though the miracle and the 'matter' isn't in the multiplying of food, the miracle is in the generosity of the boy with his five loaves and two fish and the 'matter' is in the feast that followed.

This is a story where food and eating show us the abundant hospitality of the generous heart of God. Jesus and a small boy, between them they host a giant picnic in which everyone is fed, everyone is satisfied and everyone was able to notice God. The feeding of the five thousand reminds us of a number of things about the nature of God, it reminds us that God can take whatever we have and make it into something that generates community, feeds others, and ultimately points towards God. God can take our small contribution and make it into a feast. It reminds us that we are called to eat together, to sit at 'table' together, to share with one another, and that in such sharing together God is present, knowable and known. It reminds us that after the party, even the most outgoing amongst us may need a little time alone just as Jesus withdrew to the mountain by himself; but it also reminds us that even when the party has drawn to an end the community still remains and Jesus is still with us saying 'It is I, do not be afraid'.

At the Methodist Conference earlier in the summer, the Methodist Church in Great Britain spent some time with a report called *God In Love Unites Us*, which had been discussed across Methodism for the past three years; this report explored a number of things around good relating, marriage & relationships including cohabitation and same sex marriage. The headlines after the conference were 'Methodist Church agrees to marry LGBT+ people' and 'Methodist Church to marry people in same sex relationships'; but those headlines really missed the point of the report *God in Love Unites Us* and the vote in conference. John Wesley said: *Though we may not think alike, may we not love alike?* The report and the decision in conference was really about that quote, about what it means to love alike. We always live with contradictory convictions in the life of the Church, we do not always think alike but we do try always to love alike. So when it comes to marriage and relationships we may not all think the same but we can definitely all love the same. That is what it means to sit at table with one another, what it means to show the radical abundant hospitality of the generous heart of God. God's picnic is for all, all are welcome to find a space of grass and sit and share in the nourishing provision that God offers us.

Food and eating matters to Methodist people, we're good at putting on a church tea, we are good at making meals for people, we are good at packing tins into bags for food bank, we are a people for whom food and eating matter, and they matter because how we do food and eating reflects the hospitality that God has offered to us. So you see whatever your or my views are on marriage and relationships, a more accurate headline would have read: 'Methodist people share a picnic with Jesus to which all are welcome.'

During the Autumn quarter the churches in the circuit will spend some time considering the vote at conference and thinking about whether they would like their buildings to be registered for same sex marriages. David, Christopher and Charity will help each church to have those conversations.

RAMBLING THROUGH LOCKDOWN

I was bringing some milk for our Foodbank when Anne asked if I could do her a favour – would I write something for Memo. I thought it would be reasonably easy, but still kept putting it off but here goes....

Over the past 18 months or so we've all lived in a very different world, but for me, many good things have come out of it.

I attend morning prayers, started by Rev. Christopher and continued successfully while he has been on Sabbatical. I now have a second Church to Trinity – I call it “Zoom Church”. I've met and made new friends, (one or two have dog's - but as yet I'm not sure that they have legs, the people I mean). During the service a hymn is read and one morning someone read one of my favourite hymns, No. 303 in “Singing the Faith” – the hairs on the back of my neck went berserk – it gave another new meaning to the words. And of course “The Lord's prayer” is always said. After reading Matthew Ch. 6 v 6-13 over and over again in both Churches – I imagine I'm on my own in a quiet room and often say the prayer out of sync with others. I hope I do it quietly and not upset others present.

We look after our son's dog quite a lot, and you could see Jean and I on Sandy Flatts field round about 7am saying things like “Are you going to give the ball to your “Grandma and Grandad” people must think we've gone barmy. But recently we were also looking after Milo, my other son's African Grey parrot. One Thursday morning Jean had to go out and I was down to read the prayers from the ‘Methodist Prayer Handbook’ from which we read every morning, towards the end of the service, everything was quiet, Murphy, the dog was asleep at my feet when Milo started to sing “Happy Birthday to you” I fought back giggles, completed the prayers and after saying the Grace to each other I was asked whose birthday it was and I had to carry the lap-top to show everyone the Parrot in his cage – it's a good job it doesn't swear.



Jean has continued doing a weekly handout at Church and a notice was sent from the Circuit Office asking people if they would like to join in a Northern Pilgrimage, which was included. Rev Charity invited readers to join her on this, a walk over 2 days from Gainford to Durham. The first day being 13 miles, the second day about 17 miles. As some of you know we have a rambling group at Trinity but have not been able to meet due to lockdown restrictions. What an opportunity! But not having walked more than a couple of miles at one go, we were more than concerned about the distance and made it clear that we would not be able to do the full walk. Luckily the distance was changed! The first part of the pilgrimage would now be Gainford to West Auckland – a total of 7 miles and the second part West Auckland to Escomb was 5 miles – much better but still a lot.

Last Saturday, eight of us walked the 7 miles in torrential rain, stopping for lunch at a Church at Ingleton – toilets in a pub down the road. The walk, in “heavy” rain, along uneven paths, long grass was excellently led by our leader. When walking with

someone, you talk, listen and grow as you get to know each other. Two memorable moments – first, stopping at a place called the “Crossroads” where we had a short Bible reading and prayer – in the pouring rain, then we were appropriately asked to decide which way to go, the less muddy route which was longer or the possibly muddy route, which was shorter – we chose the shorter and walked in silence for a mile or so to enable us to listen to God and take in the quietness of the woods. Secondly as we approached West Auckland, Rev. Charity phoned to ask our organiser to put the kettle on we’ll be there in 10-12 minutes.



You only hear one side of the conversation – “Oh no!, what! The church is not open and you’re sitting in your car in this rain. Never mind, see you soon. And as we stood in the car park, soaked to the skin, a bible reading, a prayer and a vote of thanks were said and like drowned rats we returned home.

Ah yes, Jean and I, hope to meet at West Auckland next Thursday to complete with others the next part of the Pilgrimage.

Well, there are some of my ramblings of Lockdown – definitely more talking than walking!!

Bill Reeve

The Secret of Happiness?

Scientists have been trying to work out a ‘formula’ for happiness. The result is incomprehensible to most of us, beginning as it does with Happiness $(t)=w0=w1$, running on for three lines, and then ending with jRPEj.....

But, in plain English, the neuroscientists at University College London (UCL) have concluded that happiness depends not so much on how well you are doing, but on whether you are doing better than you expected to be doing.



And one professor added: “The ephemeral nature of happiness means we might be better off thinking about happiness in a different way. Happiness is a tool, not a goal in itself. It can help us better understand what we care about, what we value,” and we can adjust our lives accordingly.

The Parish Pump

What will you miss about lockdown?



More than half of us admit that we will miss some aspects of the Covid-19 restrictions, especially spending more time at home with our family, and appreciating the quieter roads.

A recent study by King's College London and Ipsos Mori found that around one third of us feel the past year has been similar or better than normal, while 54 per cent of us say that we will miss some of the changes.

Three in ten of us feel closer to our immediate family than we did before the pandemic, while just one in six of us say that we have grown further apart. One in five of us say that our finances are better because of the pandemic.



Overall, it seems that while the public would rather the pandemic hadn't happened, that doesn't mean it's been all bad for everyone, or that people see it as deeply affecting their future lives.

The Parish Pump

We would love to hear what you will miss as lockdown ends.

The Editors.

Daily Bible Study

My New Year's resolution is

Every January, I start off with my New Year's Resolutions along the typical line of, eat less chocolate and cake, read the bible more, etc, etc and by the time February has arrived I have failed miserably at all of them. When it comes to daily bible reading, I am full of good intentions that generally get swept aside in the tide of life. Then there was always the problem of, do I start in the Old Testament or the New, do I follow the Lectionary Readings in the Prayer Handbook or just read the Bible randomly, which I have found out is never a good idea, well not for me anyway.

So this year I am not going to make any January 1st New Year's resolutions but I am however really going to try a Methodist New Year's resolution, starting on September 1st I am going to start reading my bible every day aided and abetted by a book I recently bought off the charity bookstall in Wilkinsons in Thornaby, which was the Daily Reading Bible by Cambridge University Press, dated 1989, it is a New Revised Standard Version arranged in Short Daily Readings spread over two years.

I am sure there will be more up to date versions around but with my eye for a book bargain, I couldn't resist picking this book up off the table to give it a go, perhaps a New Years Resolution made in September will last longer for me, who knows? I can only try.

Lesley Duffield



...the treasurer made the most of his moment in the limelight

Don't forget the other half

When my daughter said her bedtime prayers, she would bless every family member, every friend, and every animal (current and past). Then one night, after we had finished the nightly prayer, she added: "And all girls." This soon became part of her nightly routine.

Finally, my curiosity got the best of me and I asked her why she had begun adding the part about all girls. Her response? "Because at church the minister only ever says 'all men!'"

The congregation

A minister was considering a move to a busy town-centre church, and wanted to know what the congregation was like, and especially the church council. So, he rang the minister who had just retired from that church. The retiring minister hesitated a moment and then replied: "Some of them are wise; some are otherwise."

Friend?

Arriving at church to attend a wedding, a formidable looking lady in a large hat was greeted by the usher. "Are you a friend of the groom?" he ventured. "Certainly not," she said indignantly. "I'm the bride's mother."

Out to graze

A group of elderly British tourists were touring Holland by bus. They stopped at a cheese farm where a young guide led them through the process of making cheese from goat's milk. She showed the group a lovely hillside where many goats were grazing.

"These," she explained, "are the older goats put out to pasture when they no longer produce." She then asked, "What do you do in Britain with your old goats?" A spry old gentleman answered: "They send us on bus tours!"

Family tree

At a drinks party at a wealthy golf club, the conversation turned to the subject of ancestry. "Of course, we trace our family back to coming over with William the Conqueror," observed one lady with satisfaction. She turned to a second woman, who was new to the club, and asked, "What about you dear? Can you go back very far?"

"Not very far," came the reply. "You see, all the early family records were lost in the Flood."

The Parish Pump

Moving Forward.



I have always felt that September is a time of new beginnings, the start of the school new year, the end of the summer holidays. I used to love going back to school, college and university, sorting through my new stationery, and new bag set to go! It sounds odd now but it gave us as pupils a sense of pride and organisation to succeed. That sense that anything is possible! I feel this excitement and anticipation about what God is going to do at TFFC. We are entering a new season, the time spent in lockdown has served the church well. When I say 'church', I mean the body of Christ, not Trinity Methodist Church. I just wanted to mention that in case anyone misinterpreted by meaning. We have all heard the expression that the church is just a building, because we are the living stones which make up the body of Christ. Jesus is the head of the church and we are His body, left to further the kingdom of God, this is our mission. The church has had a wakeup call, when everything was brought to a standstill, programs and planned events cancelled. God is in control, He knows the end from the beginning, He has seen every plague, disease and disaster happen over the generations. God was not surprised by the events in 2020. Even though my bible explains that these things will happen and I felt I was rooted in Christ, I was surprised, and shocked by what I witnessed on the news. In some ways I felt that we were the 'safe' generation, everything was quite comfortable. This was a year that is unprecedented in my lifetime, I naively had never heard the word lockdown before! Too young to remember the Spanish Flu, I've grown up in a society where we take life saving medicines, medical care and life saving vaccines for granted. It was not even a thought in my mind that in this day and age, a disease Covid-19 could bring the entire world to a standstill and shut down entire economies.

However, I have learnt that it is in the valleys, the darkness, the times of suffering that stretch us, increasing our faith. Isaiah 64:8 'And yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We are formed by your hand'. NLT. I have prayed with all my heart on many occasions, 'God use me, bend me, mould me into whatever you have called me to be, I surrender all.' But the moment things get messy, out of my comfort zone, I don't feel comfortable, I want to run away. However, I know that the road to maturity is through trials of unfortunate circumstances, our faith is tested and our devotion to Christ grows and strengthens. As Paul says in Romans 5 'we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance.' Throughout lockdown the church has found new ways of connecting with one another, remembering that the building no matter how wonderful is just that 'a building', it is the connection and unity of the believers which is important. This is the time to step out of the boat, which is the church building, and walk out on the water.

This is the time for those dry bones to come to life, remembering to keep our eyes on Jesus, stepping out of the boat. Remembering all that we have learnt in the darkness, keeping our connection to God through the power of the Holy Spirit, reading the word of God, which is our daily bread, nourishing our soul and renewing our minds. Praying in the secret place, flows the power for ministry to reach others with the gospel, speaking life in the desolate places. Reaching the community, our harvest field, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Saviour of the world. During lockdown, I got out of the boat, I stood in difficult waves, in uncharted waters, but I stood firm in what God was calling me to do. I stood in queues that were miles long, waiting to shop for

families/individuals who were in crisis due to the lockdown. Finding funding to sustain this giving ministry, supplying many parcels each day and distributing throughout Teesside. Thinking this would be for three weeks at most, little did I know! Giving words of encouragement to those suffering with fear and anxiety, building up trusting relationships with people in the community. Online family activity group allowed people to build relationships with each other. When restrictions eased, we met with families at Stewarts Park for picnic and games, promoting connectedness, building rapport and key friendships. This helps ease anxiety, gives families something to look forward to and promotes wellbeing.



Hope Café opened again after restrictions were lifted, and from day one, the community which include Whinney Banks but also the wider Middlesbrough area have made Trinity their home. The connections made in the wilderness is the fruit we are seeing now, there were many people in this church who were also sowing seeds and I want to thank everyone who delivered food, leaflets, hearts, this has made the difference but most of all to those who prayed! Some people think that they are no longer able to be useful in the mission but PRAYER is the key to success, I ask that those who are pray warriors to stand and cover this ministry. Since opening Hope Café it has been busy, people want community and are trusting us enough to share their lives and ask for support. People know that TFFC project cares and would go that extra mile to serve them when needed most. Hope Café is the heart of what is happening at TFFC and everyone who attends describes the peace their feel when inside the building.

TFFC Gardening Project is going to be the next area to focus on, with Richard Cooper leading this, we aim to work with individuals who are lost and unable to gain any training /employment due to anxiety or lack of confidence. This will be a place where people can increase their gardening skills, growing own vegetables, fruit and herbs. Mostly, this will be a place of discipleship, as with any other project lead by TFFC. Revelation Wellness project will be starting in September and will be focusing on improving health, increasing mobility by using exercises for everyday living. Using exercise as a tool to spread the gospel, I gained a qualification in the lockdown to become a Revelation Wellness Fitness Instructor. I am very excited about this project and know that God is going to use it as a way to bring people to Himself. This will be fun, energetic, it can be for people at every level of ability, a place to be still with God. There will be new projects starting at TFFC in September for mothers and fathers who have babies/toddlers and need recreation due to lack of groups in the area. I have been approached by a Christian lady who wants to set up baby massage, which would be free of charge for those families who cannot afford to attend a group. Baby Movers is also a group that may be able to provide a service at TFFC. A singing group is one idea, hopefully when all restrictions and it is safe, people from all abilities of singing can attend for fun, to increase wellbeing and meet new people.

This year ahead I will be focusing on health and wellbeing, sharing the love of Christ with our community through the Gardening and Revelation Wellness Project. I am excited at the new challenges and the new connections that will be made through these projects.

Sharon Sewell

A brief report from the Circuit Treasurer



Considering the difficult year that we have all just gone through, I would like to express my grateful thanks to all of you, the members of Middlesbrough and Eston Circuit for making my job as Circuit Treasurer a little easier.

Finances, in all spheres of life, personal, charity and businesses have been very strained this past year and while the Government has done its best with different grant schemes and help in other ways, it has still come down to us the individual members to keep our churches and circuit afloat.

We have done this by our continued covenanted giving, whether through the collection plate, once services resumed or through direct payment into our particular churches bank account, all offerings both large and small have been most gratefully received.

Over this past year, I have had to draw down £50,000 from TMCP to cover this year's shortfall in the circuit budget, and although that may seem a huge sum to some, it is not as much as I had first anticipated that I would need to balance the books, so to speak.

Although the future is not looking rosy checked for all of our churches I believe that there is about all of them the first flush of getting back to some sort of normality, Churches are beginning to open up to outside sources, rooms are getting hired, classes and groups are beginning to start again. The life and outreach of our churches is beginning to flourish once more, and that in turn secures the life and outreach of the circuit.

No, we are not out of the woods yet, particularly financially, and yes, the circuit will have to subsidise some of the churches again next year and in the following few years to come. This help, by reducing the individual churches assessments to the circuit will hopefully, enable our churches to carry on doing the things that they are good at, namely growing God's kingdom through their worshipping life and through all the various types of outreach and support groups that go on around the circuit.

Lesley Duffield

Food

People at my workplace have started a funny new tradition where they give names to the food in the office fridge. Today I ate a sandwich called Peter, followed by some cake called Rosie.



War and Peace Prayer

War is not a new thing
It's been here from the start,
When Cain slew brother Abel
And their lives were torn apart.



Brother still fights brother
And nations go to war,
It seems these things will never end
Perhaps we need to ask 'what for?'

Man has chosen his own path
Where might and power tell,
But God desires a better way
Where harmony and peace can dwell.

And so a time will come at last
When all man's rule will cease,
Emmanuel will come to reign,
Our Lord and Saviour, Prince of Peace.

Megan Carter
The Parish Pump



Nunthorpe Methodist Church's

Christmas fayre

On Saturday 27th November
10.00am - 12.30pm

Bric-a-brac, Books, Christmas Gifts, Cards, Cakes,
Father Christmas, Tombola, Jams & Pickles
and more ...

Excellent refreshments

PRAYER DIARY

September 5th Pray today for all of our Circuit at the start of a new Methodist year, that maybe life will be returning to some sort of normality in our own lives and the lives of our churches. Pray for Rev. David Godfrey and for Stainton.

September 12th Pray today for all our Preachers, for the Preachers' meeting and for our Worship Leaders. Be with those who feel maybe God is calling them to this special ministry that they may have the courage to answer the call. Pray for Rev. Christopher Wood-Archer and for Grove Hill

September 19th Pray today for all those children starting the new school year, that this year may be uninterrupted and that they may have chance to settle into normal school life. Pray for teachers and Governors and all who work in schools. Pray for Rev. Charity Hamilton, for the University and for Linthorpe Road and the Resource Centre.

September 26th Pray today for groups in our churches beginning hopefully to meet again. We pray for fellowship and friendship, the opportunity to share what is important in our churches, for the rich discussion provided in the Methodist Way of Life resources. Pray for Rev Mike Harland and Nunthorpe.

October 3rd Pray today for all who have positions of leadership in our churches and in our Circuit, for those who represent us at Synod that that they may be guided by the Holy Spirit in the work they do. Pray for Rev. Len Karn and for Marton

October 10th Pray today for those who are lonely, those who feel neglected or ostracised by society. Pray for the work of MAP for Ailsa Adamson and her team. Pray for Normanby.

October 17th Pray today for all who are ill in

body, mind or spirit, for those in hospital or hospice and for all who care for them. Pray for Rev. Sarah Ramsden and her ministry at the Hospice. Pray for Eston Grange.

October 24th Pray today for those who are unsure of their faith, who are seeking answers and a way forward maybe in difficult times. Help us always to be open to the needs of others. Pray today for Trinity Church, for the Trinity Family Friendly Centre and all who help in that outreach.

October 31st As we think of All Saints Day we thank God for all whose lives are a shining example of Christian service. We thank God also for those who have influenced us into faith and service. Pray today for Elaine at the Circuit Office and for David our Circuit Webmaster.

November 7th We pray today for those who represent us in our town and in our country, for Councillors and for MPs, that they may govern with fairness and integrity. Pray for the Chinese Church.

November 14th Pray today for all who have given their lives in the service of their country and who continue to fight for justice and for peace. On this day we remember and thank God for all who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Pray today for the Avenue Team.

November 21st Pray today for those who are suffering sadness at the loss of a loved one, who are having to adapt to living on their own after sharing their lives with a loved one. Be with those who care for them and who comfort them. Pray for the MHA Communities Teesside.

November 28th Pray today for all the many different churches within the Darlington District. Pray for Rev Richard Andrew the Chair of the District.