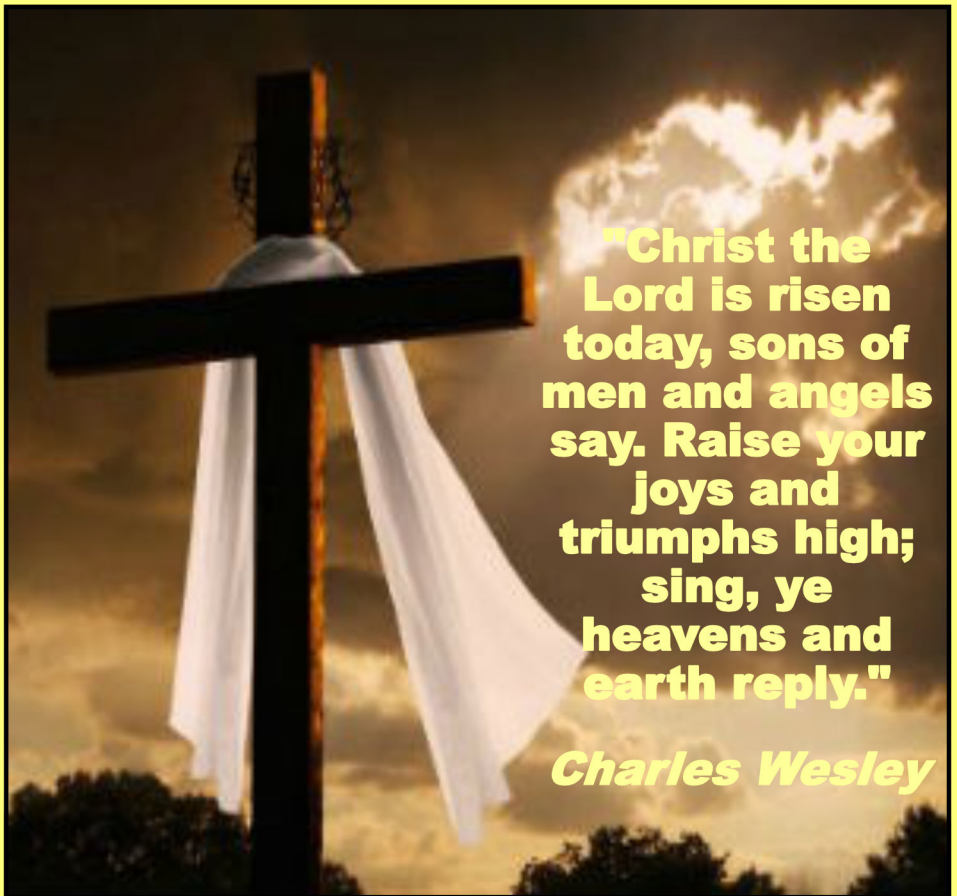


# MEMO

*Middlesbrough & Eston Methodist Outburst*

**MARCH — MAY 2024**



**"Christ the  
Lord is risen  
today, sons of  
men and angels  
say. Raise your  
joys and  
triumphs high;  
sing, ye  
heavens and  
earth reply."**

*Charles Wesley*

# FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

## Dear Friends

As I write this Editorial I have just sent an email to Church contacts asking them if they can send me any news from their churches which can go in Memo.

I don't know what the response will be, but it is a reminder of what 'Memo' is all about. The original title contained the word 'Outbursts' in other words lots of information about the exciting things going on in our Circuit. So please think about how you can share the exciting events which take place in your church. Just send them to Elaine at the Circuit Office please.

This Quarter contains Mothering Sunday, Lent, Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Ascension Day, and Pentecost. Great times to think in more detail about our Faith and what it means to us. What do these festivals teach us about how we follow Jesus in our everyday lives.

In this Memo we have our regular Prayer Diary which I have the privilege of writing. I really hope it can be used as part of your prayer life and maybe churches can have it as part of our prayers each Sunday. The idea of the Prayer diary is to bind us together in Prayer.

We are aware of the fact that our good friend and Minister; Rev Charity, as I write, is still in hospital. We continue to pray for her. Charity's article in the last Memo I found so uplifting and inspiring. How she spoke of her faith and her awareness of the presence of God in the midst of her suffering made me feel very humble and also amazed at the power of personal faith shown by Charity. A 'Memo' article that I am sure inspired many of our readers.

So remember Memo is for all of us, to read, to share with people who maybe don't come

to our churches and to hear again the continuing good news of the Gospel.

Enjoy the pages ahead and pray for all who contribute.

Best wishes

**Dave** on behalf of Anne and Elaine.

## SONGS OF PRAISE

*Trinity Methodist  
Church*

**Pentecost Sunday  
May 19th at 6.00pm**

*Everybody Welcome  
to this Circuit  
celebration*

## **DEADLINE FOR NEXT EDITION OF MEMO**

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

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



# The Superintendent's Letter

**Dear friends,**

There are a staggering number of sporting events which are played for a cup. There is the Ryder Cup, Walker Cup, America's Cup, Gold Cup, Heineken Cup and various world cups to name but a few. I love a good sporting contest and the rugby and cricket world cups were essential viewing in our household through the autumn. To win a world cup is the pinnacle of sporting achievement and athletes train all their lives to hold that special cup in their hands.

Cups have always been associated with victory. When Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem for the final time, James and John (two of his disciples) approached him with a special request. They wanted to sit one at his right and one at his left when he came into power. Jesus responded to their request by asking if they really wanted to drink from the same cup as him. Thinking he meant the victory cup, they responded with an emphatic "Yes". However, Jesus also had another cup in mind. In Jesus thought, "the cup" was associated with suffering as well as victory. Jesus knew that he must suffer before the victory was won and so must his friends.

And this is what happened in the last part of his life. As he entered Jerusalem he stepped into a maelstrom of confrontation and pain which led inexorably to his crucifixion. He prayed to his Father at one point to, "take this cup away". We remember these events in Holy Week. As we hear the story afresh and share together in bread and wine, we taste a little of that cup of suffering ourselves. We perhaps begin to realise that being a follower of Jesus leads us down some costly paths where difficult choices have to be made and where lives are touched by pain. We begin to understand that a cross lies at the heart of Christian faith.

But that is not the end of the story, because on Easter Sunday comes the news of Resurrection. On this day the cup of suffering turns into the cup of victory. The early Christians rightly saw the Resurrection as a victory and as a vindication of Jesus and all he stood for. They saw self giving love have the last word. They realised that human sin and evil had done its worst and Christ had defeated it. They knew that where Christ led, they would follow.

So in many ways, Easter is a story of two cups. In order to understand Easter, and indeed, to understand what Christian faith is all about, we need to have both cups clearly in view. Why not come to our Holy Week and Easter day services, hear the story of Jesus afresh and marvel with us at the greatest love the world has ever known.

May I wish you all a joyful Easter,

**Rev. David Godfrey.**

# MARTYN LAVERICK

I have felt so inspired by Martyn's preaching and his story of how he answered the call to preach. Sadly, at the end of this Quarter Martyn will be retiring from Preaching and I find that a very sad piece of news. He has his reasons and I fully respect him, but this will be a loss to our worship.

When there used to be Thursday lunch time services in the old Linthorpe Road church I used to lead those services on a regular basis. I was always aware of a very smartly dressed person in the pews towards the back of church. I eventually found out this was Martyn who was coming slowly back to church life. He returned to Avenue, where he eventually volunteered to go on the list of readers then sometime later, and somewhat to his own surprise, he volunteered as a Worship Leader. After some time people were saying to him that he should think about preaching. I know Martyn was not particularly sure about the 'call.' However, God has a habit of not letting us go if he needs us and so it was that Martyn gave in and answered that call, training to be a Preacher.

All of us thank God that he did answer that call, for I feel Martyn's services are so inspiring. They make us think about our faith, which is important. We listen to a man who is a true Christian, his faith shines from his leadership of worship. He has given so much in his relatively short ministry of preaching, but we are thankful for the time he has given.

Thank you Martyn, may God bless you in your continuing journey of faith.

Best wishes

**Dave Elliott**

## Methodist Women in Britain



### MWiB DISTRICT EVENTS

**MINSTERACRES OVERNIGHTER** - Friday/Saturday 15th/16th March.

**ASCENSION DAY OF PRAISE AND REFLECTION** - Thursday, 9th May at Peterlee Memorial Methodist Church. Refreshments from 10.15am, service starts at 11am. Please bring packed lunch, drinks provided. Afternoon session: 1.30 - 3.00pm.

**PRESIDENT'S SUMMER EVENING** - Thursday 18th July from 6.30pm to 8.30pm at Great Ayton Methodist Church - details to follow.

**Beryl Haggath**



# March 1st - David's Day

Or is it Davids' day? Punctuation watchers among our readers will realise the significant positioning of that possessive apostrophe. Does the day belong to one David or more than one? In MEMC it's obviously more than one David. Not only do we have David our Superintendent, David [Dave] our Local Preacher, our [David] Web Master but in our church membership there are other Davids, A Bye, and an Alford to name but two. No wonder there can be confusion.

Within our faith history too there are Davids. David of Bethlehem and the Psalms, and of course in Wales: St David. Dewi Sant. He lived in Wales in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century and as with most saints, what is legend and what is fact can be hard to distinguish. For those hard of hearing, complaining about sound reproduction in our churches, David would be popular as apparently, he could make himself heard to thousands, preaching in the open air. There is a story, that one time as David spoke the ground rose up under his feet until it became a mountain and that was why everyone could hear him. The story of how the daffodil/leek became the emblem of Wales is also attributed to David's advice. Two armies met in a leek field in a narrow valley and because there was not much space in the valley, the soldiers from each side, Wales v England I imagine, quickly became mixed up together. It was difficult to work out who was a friend and who was an enemy. David said to his people, 'Pull up the leeks that are growing around you and stick them in your helmets!' They did so and were then able to tell who was on their side and who was on the enemy's side.

You can tell from this that David was a common sense sort of saint. His last words were recorded by a follower and they contain good advice for Christians. He said: **Remember to do the little things.** It is so often little acts of dedication, kindness which people remember. So, on March 1st let's thank all our own Davids [no apostrophe] for their varied contributions to the work of our churches and Circuit. When I was a girl there wasn't so much dressing up in Welsh Costume but here is a little girl who dressed up some years ago, some of you may recognise her.



**Ruth Lewis**

Midwives are good listeners, not necessarily making quick judgements, but listening and looking carefully for signs of activity or concern that are not yet visible. It's an attentive rather than a directive approach. The Church would do well to do the same. Listen carefully to our people and our communities and tune in to what is going on beneath the surface, becoming aware of what needs bringing into the light and recognising treasure when we find it!"

*(Rev'd Gill Newton, Presidential address, Methodist conference 2023)*

# The Caretaker's Story



*I wrote this poem many years ago at a writing day in Durham. I wrote two pieces and handed one in, which was published in a book, but I didn't hand this one in because if I had done so, I would have lost it forever (no computers in those day. It was just scribbled on a piece of paper) I have been wanting to share it for a long long time, and I'd rather it was late than wait another year.*

I'm proud of my church - (I always think of it as mine, you don't mind do you?)

I sweep the floor every day, then mop it, and every Friday afternoon I polishes it - you could eat off the floor in this place, although I says it meself.

But there's the old woman, well. Actually, you really could eat off the floor when she's been around. Folks bring her food buns and stuff and she sits in that corner by thelectern there and honestly, she puts more on the bloomin' floor than she eats. And such a noise she makes - no teeth left, y'see, and she sort of slurps well. I'd rather not think about it.

She's dressed in rags, too, and she smells. But she never leaves the place, been here for years. Sometimes she gets down on her old knees and prays for hours on end, looking up to the big window above the altar with her eyes wide open, jabbering away there under her breath. I goes home at night and when I comes back in the morning she's still there, hasn't moved.

But yesterday the most amazing thing happened - a young couple comes in with a baby- the young man had two pigeons in a basket- come to offer them. Baby must have been a week old - brought him for the purification they had.

Well, first of all Simeon- he's another of our regulars- he's old too, but he's all there all right; well, he takes the child in his arms and his face sort of lights up, and he starts to sing softly, looking down at the baby:

"O Lord, let me your servant leave this life peacefully, for I have seen the light that lightens all people- Jews and Gentiles alike". He hands the baby back and walks slowly out; and I've just heard, he went home, and he died in the night.

But the old lady, well she's sort of come back to life. She's actually gone out of the building and she's telling everybody in the street she's met the Messiah.

**Irene Barratt**

*See Luke 2:22-38. This is a Candlemas story and is normally celebrated at the beginning of February.*



**British Summer Time starts on  
Sunday 31st March 2024**

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

# My name is Thomas

It wasn't Jesus I doubted,  
it was what they said.  
They said my Lord and Master had risen  
from the dead.

Now, I am just a simple man  
with a level head,  
so when they said they had seen him My  
heart filled with dread.

Thinking grief had affected them,  
to calm them I tried,  
"I need to see his hands and feet, touch  
his wounded side.

and then I will believe" I said  
"what you think you've seen"  
and that is why I doubted them  
I just hadn't seen.

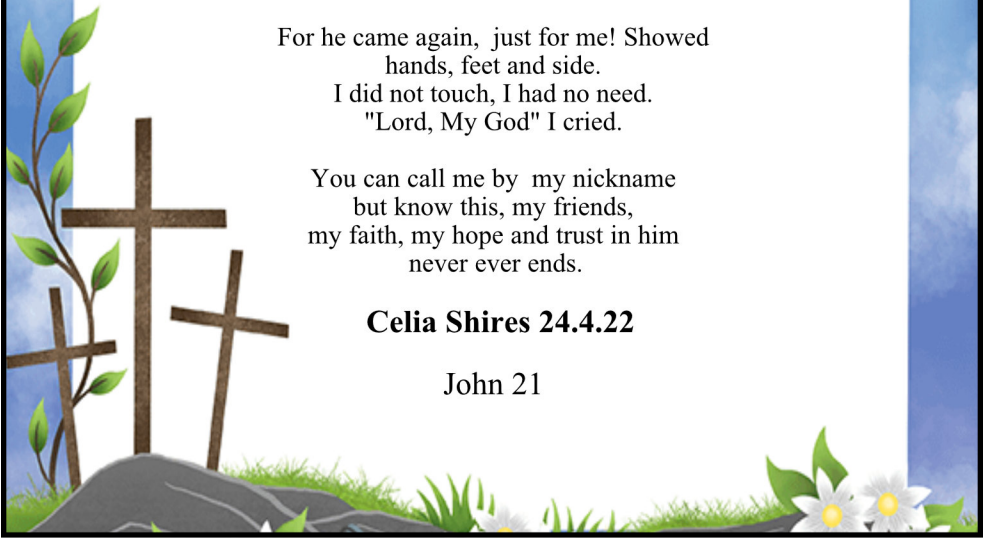
For Jesus was my greatest friend  
and my grief was great.  
So you must know the joy I felt  
on a later date.

For he came again, just for me! Showed  
hands, feet and side.  
I did not touch, I had no need.  
"Lord, My God" I cried.

You can call me by my nickname  
but know this, my friends,  
my faith, my hope and trust in him  
never ever ends.

**Celia Shires 24.4.22**

John 21



## StF 284 There is a Green Hill Far Away

This hymn was a favourite for Sunday Schools in the last century, and the century before. Written by the wonderful Mrs C. F. Alexander [1818-1895], like one of her many children's hymns [*All Things Bright and Beautiful*, *Once in Royal David's City*] designed to teach the gospel to the young, it is memorable because of its simplicity and vivid language. Who as a child has not thrilled, visualising that "green hill", the "city wall" or puzzled at what exactly "without" means? Telling the story of the passion, it sums up the theory of what we Local Preachers have learnt is "Substitutionary Atonement". There are other theories. Alexander reminds the little children to whom she is presumably speaking that no one but Jesus could be found "to pay the price of sin" because "there was no other good enough." Therefore, we must not only "trust" that the blood of his sacrifice will redeem us, but must also "try his works to do." It is very emotive with the last verse repeat "dearly, dearly" has He loved. It is usually sung to the tune Horsley [1844] which I find a bit bland.



When we were young, the chapel my brother and I attended every Sunday had a congregation of about 20 older, no, let's be honest, elderly people. Not unlike some of our churches today. My mother felt I needed some younger "Christian folk" to mix with. There was an evangelical tent mission for young people in a nearby country village and I was dispatched there on my own. To "mix". I can vaguely remember in the dimly lit darkness of the tent an earnest conversation about whether Jesus' miracles were "true" but the stand out memory for me was the band. Yes, it was the 60s! Not an organ or a piano, but a rock band, playing and singing: *There is a Green Hill Far Away*. They did not sing it to Horsley, but instead sang it to The Animals hit of the time: *The House of the Rising Sun*. Fresh from my old-fashioned little chapel, I thought: Wow! That tune! Originally based, probably, on various English and American folk ballads, the rock song is a cautionary tale of dissolution, regret with a fantastic arrangement. In the mission tent, the singer imitating Burdon's rasping voice grabbed my attention straight away. There is a version on Youtube

Even Wesley's hymns were designed to be sung to popular tunes of their day. It was one of Methodism's appeals. Today there are some wonderful modern tunes thanks to Kendrick and others. But too often the tired 19<sup>th</sup> Century tunes we find ourselves singing each Sunday are uninspiring and off-putting to people not brought up in our rather old-fashioned church culture. If we want younger generations in our churches, we need to raise our game. We need to meet people brought up in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century culture. There are some great 19<sup>th</sup> century tunes in our hymn books and I wouldn't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater, but maybe we could make a start and try *There is a Green Hill* to *Rising Sun* this Holy Week. A tune of ruin held by words of redemption. It works!

**Ruth Lewis**



## GROVE HILL

We have come to the end of our Centenary year. We have enjoyed many events, but one of the highlights for me was our Celebration service in September when the church was packed and we worshipped God for his great work in our church.

We have had other events, and invited the Circuit to the Christmas Songs of Praise and to the concert given by the Mosaic singers. A Grove Hill Centenary booklet was produced to share the history of the church and to be an important document along with the Silver and Gold anniversary Booklets.

I am very proud to be a member of Grove Hill Methodist church. It is so much part of my life and indeed Sue and my shared lives.

I enjoy the fellowship which exists in the life of the church, in worship. We have our monthly Faith Lunch fellowships and also our monthly Discussion sessions when we share our faith and ask important questions. We also have monthly Men's meetings which are Circuit events, and we have speakers and again the joy of fellowship.

We are fortunate in having some children come to church each Sunday and we have Sunday School known as Steps and Strides. We are lucky to have a very well attended Toddler's group and also Brownies and Guides.

Later this month we begin again lunches on Fridays, a hot two course meal for a very reasonable price. This is important outreach which is part of our church challenge. We also have our Foodbank so important in the present times. This is mainly staffed by friends from Coulby Baptist church, but is still part of our outreach.

We are now a Bronze Eco church which is important in our lives together. We are aiming to be Silver by this summer.

Our numbers of people attending church have increased rapidly over the weeks..

We are very pleased to have a new minister. Rev John came to the Circuit some months ago as a retired minister having pastoral care on a part time basis for Grove Hill and other churches. I remember meeting with him early in his time with us and we had a long conversation which ended with me saying 'I wish you would be our minister' He said this couldn't happen as he was retired. Yet it has happened, prayers have been answered and I know he is going to lead Grove Hill into a very exciting future.

We have much to thank God for in the life of our church.

**Dave Elliott**





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



## Marton & Stainton

**Thursday 28th March** - Sectional Maundy Thursday Communion Service at 7.30pm at Nunthorpe led by Revd. David Godfrey.

**Friday 29th March** - Walk of Witness from Nunthorpe Methodist Church at 8.50am to Marton Methodist Church Good Friday Sectional Service at 10.00am led by Revd. David Godfrey.

## Normanby

**Saturday 23rd March** - Easter Coffee Morning 10.00am

## Nunthorpe

**Wednesday 27th March** - Holy Week Easter Devotions at 2.30pm led by Revd. David Godfrey.

**Thursday 28th March** - Sectional Maundy Thursday Communion Service at 7.30pm

**Friday 29th March** - Good Friday Walk of Witness from Church at 8.50am to Marton Methodist Church for the Sectional Service at 10.00am

## Trinity

Reflective Services during Holy Week—6.00pm Monday to Thursday led by the Worship Leaders

**Friday 29th March** - Good Friday Service at 10.00am led by Rev. John Howard-Norman

## Easter Payer

Thank you, Father, that you raised Jesus from the dead on that first Easter Day and that He is alive now and forever. Thank you that whoever believes in Him and turns away from selfish living and towards you can be forgiven through His name. Thank you that Jesus is the same today as He was then and will always be.

Thank you for the Bible – your inspired, unchanging, and living Word to guide us. Help us to hold fast to Your teaching and not to be led astray. Your Word is truth. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit, Lord, that we might be Your faithful, fruitful Resurrection People.

In the name of our living Lord, Jesus. Amen.

**Daphne Kitching** (The Parish Pump)

# EASTER SUNDAY



I think Easter Sunday is the most important day of the Christian year, but I am happy for people to disagree, even to say that all our festivals are important.

Easter Sunday is the climax for all that Jesus has talked about all the miracles he has done, in many ways this day shows that it is all true. If Jesus was raised from the Cross, then he must be the Son of God so therefore his life in the Gospels, his word is for us the absolute truth. What a joy that should give us all.

Easter Sunday also reminds us that Jesus overcame death, it is no longer something for us to dread, it is possibly not something we look forward to!!! but it does mean that where Jesus has gone we can go too. The resurrection is for you and me so no wonder we celebrate this special day.

Easter Sunday is also about salvation. Jesus said he died to take away our sins, the resurrection proves that this has happened. If we believe in Jesus and confess our sins then we do receive true grace and salvation. This is so much part of our Methodist doctrine.

So maybe I like to think that every Sunday is a celebration. We have Sunday as our Holy day to remind us of that special Easter Sunday. It is not a Sabbath, but a celebration as we gather to worship the risen Jesus every day, but especially on a Sunday.

So what about Easter Sunday celebrations. I really hope to preach on Easter Sunday and have done now for many years. It is a joy to lead those celebrations with God's people in whichever church I am planned, but even more special when I share it with my own Church family at Grove Hill which I am doing again this year.

For me celebrations are about music and what great hymns, both old and new, we have to choose from on Easter Sunday because I feel the right hymns which everyone can sing makes the joy of Easter worship even more special. I have to say I won't pick an unknown hymn on Easter Sunday!! I look back to the days when Leslie Sturdy was the organist at Queen St Central Hall at Scarborough. There were the two services on Easter Sunday, then a special 'Music for Sunday Evening at 8.15pm when the church would be full. There would be wonderful music from the choir and great congregational hymns with that inspirational organ accompaniment. What a joy those services were. Sue and I would often travel to Scarborough to attend the evening celebration.

I also remember attending a Methodist Youth Conference in 1971. It was held over the Easter weekend. On the Sunday we were taken to Coventry Cathedral for the Easter Day service. We started in the old Cathedral so badly bombed in World War 2, we then processed to the new Cathedral as a symbol of the new life and the forgiveness of Easter. That was really special and something I will never forget.

So what are your memories of Easter Sunday? What does it mean to you?

I pray that this Easter the news of the Resurrection may be even more special for us all and bring hope and new life to our sad and troubled world.

**Dave Elliott**



**“Police? This is St Mary’s ladies Knitting & Vigilante Circle. We’ve detained two gents trying to nick the church silver.”**

### *Adam & Eve’s true nationality*

A Brit, a Frenchman and a Russian were viewing a painting of Adam and Eve frolicking in the Garden of Eden.

“Look at that garden they are maintaining so well,” mused the Brit. “They must be British.”

“Nonsense,” the Frenchman disagreed. “They’re naked, and so beautiful. Clearly, they are French.”

“Ah, but no clothes, no shoes, no shelter,” the Russian pointed out, “they have only an apple to eat, and they’re being told this is paradise.

They are Russian.”

### *Dial*

They have Dial-a-Prayer for atheists now. You call up, and it rings and rings but nobody answers.

### *Heaven*

An exasperated mother, whose son was always getting into mischief, finally asked him, “How do you expect to get into Heaven?”

The boy thought it over and said, “Well, I’ll just run in and out and in and out and keep slamming the door until St Peter says ‘For Heaven’s sake, Dylan, come in or stay out!’”

### *Go!*

A teenager was always asking his father if he could borrow the family car. Pushed to the limit, the father asked his son why he thought that God had given him two feet. Without hesitation, the son replied, “That’s easy, one for the clutch and one for the accelerator.”

### *Present*

For their elderly minister’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, the congregation at St Mary’s decided to give him a present of a new suit. The minister was so moved by the gift that the following Sunday he stood before everyone and began his service with a tear in his eye, “Today I am preaching to you in my birthday suit.”

### *Palm Sunday Visit*

It was Palm Sunday, but because of a sore throat, five-year-old Bobby was kept home from church with his grannie. When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm fronds and Bobby asked them what they were for. “People held them over Jesus’ head as He walked by,” his father explained.

Bobby was aghast. “I don’t believe it! The one Sunday I don’t go, and He shows up!”

# Methodist Council – January 2024

The Methodist Council met online on 29 and 30 January 2024 and opened with a report from the Strategy and Resources Committee, and the Connexional Secretary updating the Council on the work of the Connexional Team.

## **Annual Reports and Accounts**

The annual report and accounts were presented to the Council for approval. The Executive Director of Finance and Resources, Matt Tattersall, explained the process for producing the annual report and accounts and the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee set out the work the committee had done to assure itself of the robustness of the accounts. The Council heard that the total funds were lower due to reductions in investment values but these were anticipated to recover in future years.

The Council heard how the trustees of the lay pension scheme were progressing with their investment strategy to reduce risk through an insurance buy-in. The Council approved the acceleration of deficit payments to the pension scheme and a contingency budget to facilitate this work. These decisions do not commit the Council to progressing with an insurance buy-out and separate proposals will be brought forward for consideration at a later date.

## **Nominations to the Connexional Council**

The Council received an update from the Secretary of the Conference, the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, on the work of the nominations to the Connexional Council (this being the new body established to replace The Methodist Council in September this year). Jonathan explained that the scale of the work was significant and had included taking advice from HR colleagues to establish the correct recruitment process. He reassured Council members that the necessary work is being done thoroughly and that role descriptions have been appropriately put together and scrutinised. The recruitment process for the Connexional Council is now in progress with shortlisting and interviewing taking place in the next few weeks. The Council received the report and agreed a process for considering the nominations prior to the next meeting in April.

## **Action for Hope funding**

Matt Tattersall, presented the paper which asked the Council to approve £3m of grants from the Connexional Priority Fund for Action for Hope grants. This money was received from property levies received in 2022/23 and has remained unallocated. Mr Tattersall told Council members that the money would be made available to Districts for the specific purpose of achieving the target of Net Zero by 2030. It is intended for making existing activities more sustainable and for making carbon-reduction adaptations to existing assets. Council members discussed the plans and the draft criteria for allocating the funds in groups before coming back together and directing that the £3m be allocated to districts to fund Action for Hope grants.

## **Embedding the Justice-seeking Church report**

The Council was updated on the strategy to embed the Conference report A Justice-Seeking Church in the Connexion. The Director of Social Justice and Social Action, Rachel Lampard, presented the report which sets out the vision for a justice-seeking Church underpinned by four strategic aims: Integrating the 'Principles for justice', collaborating between partners, engaging with the practices and supporting local churches to engage with local communities within a justice framework. Council members took part in group work to discuss the paper and voted to receive the report.

## **Investors in People (IIP)**

The Connexional Secretary, Doug Godfrey-Swanney, informed members that the Methodist

Council has been awarded Silver accreditation by Investors in People. Doug told members that IIP is an established and recognised management standard and gaining it is an acknowledgement of the hard work and a commitment to success. Only around 15% of organisations receive the Silver award on their first attempt. Work will now start on an action plan for changes that require to be made as a result of the feedback received.

### **Safeguarding**

Proposals to update the Foundation Module Safeguarding Training were approved by Council members who heard a presentation from Judith Davey-Cole, the Chair of the Safeguarding Committee. Judith explained that the module is updated every four years and is due to be updated this year. She told members that recent developments within safeguarding and in the church will be taken into account in the update, including resources from the Conference's Theology of Safeguarding report. The Council voted to receive the report and approved the updated training module which it is hoped will be ready to use by Easter.

In a separate proposal, Mrs Davey-Cole explained to members that those in senior leadership roles in the Church would be required to have advanced safeguarding training to inform and support senior leaders in their handling of and responding to serious safeguarding concerns. The Director of Safeguarding, Tim Carter, told members that the Church of England's training lead had advised in developing the resource. Chairs, Assistant and Deputy Chairs and other senior leaders (lay and ordained) in the Connexion will be required to complete the training. They will be required to refresh their training every four years. The Council approved both proposals.

### **North West England District; Consultation with the Manchester and Stockport District**

Council member David Matthews provided members with an update on the consultation with the Manchester and Stockport District concerning whether to join the new North West England District, as well as with the four Districts which had already agreed to form part of the new District. He reported that after consultation with the relevant Synods and Circuit Meetings, a vote on whether to join the new District was carried by a greater than 4:1 majority. Noting that there had been some who voted against the plans, the Council heard that work is ongoing with those circuits that had expressed reservations and voted against or marginally in favour of the proposal and this work will continue while plans are made to amalgamate. The President prayed for the new district and for those who feel outside of the process. The Council voted to receive the report and agreed to recommend to the Conference that the Manchester and Stockport District forms part of the new North West England District, which is anticipated to come into being on 1 September 2024.

### **Financial Planning**

The Council approved the parameters for how the Connexional Central Services Budget will be set in 2024/25. The District Assessment is to be reduced by a further 3% with the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF) being used to cover the transitional impact of these cuts. It was confirmed that where districts engage in reorganisation, any savings from reducing the number of Chairs would be made available to the affected districts until the end of 2027/28.

### **JDS Committee**

The Chair of the JDS Committee, Revd Charity Nzegwu, gave an update on the strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity and how it is being taken forward in practice. There was a discussion on the training aspect of the strategy with Charity telling members that it has generated lots of conversations and there has been some resistance which is putting pressure on the EDI officers in each district. The Council received the report.



## Update on Part 11 Review

Joanne Anderton, the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice, presented an update on the progress of the review of Part 11 of Standing Orders, which covers the Church's complaints and discipline process. The report proposes a series of recommendations designed to improve the process in several areas including communications, record-keeping and to be more flexible in terms of proportionality. Dave Orford, Complaints and Standards Consultant, took Council members through the proposed new processes and group work followed. The Council voted to accept the report and endorsed the recommendations directing the Task Group to continue its work, noting that the full report will come to the next meeting of the Council before being presented to the Conference.

## Minutes of the Conference and Directory of the Methodist Church

Joanne Anderton, explained to Council members that the Conference has agreed that the Minutes of the Conference and Directory of the Methodist Church should be separated in order to enable the best circulation in the light of GDPR legislation. The Law and Polity Committee is working on the Standing Order amendments that are required to effect this change, and brought particular recommendations to the Council to clarify some of the questions that have arisen in the drafting. The Council agreed the recommendations in the report and will review the draft Standing Order at the next Council meeting.

The Council noted with thanks the grants provided in 2022 and 2023 by the Joseph Rank Trust. The grants made by the Trust support a number of Methodist Church communities across the Connexion.

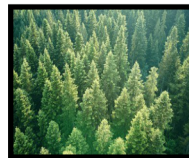
The next Council meeting will be 'in person' and held April 13-15 in Leamington Spa. I hope this summary is informative – if you require more detailed information check out the Methodist Council web-site in the first instance where all the salient papers are published or alternatively get in touch with me. As your District representative to the Council I would welcome comments on any of the topics currently under discussion so that I am able to ensure that consultation across the connexion flows as well as it might and to properly discharge my role.

**Mark R. Braithwaite** Darlington District Methodist Council Rep.  
Email – [markbraithwaite@btinternet.com](mailto:markbraithwaite@btinternet.com) Phone – 07771 771360

## LOOKING DOWN

Have you ever been to Kew Gardens and walked along the raised walkways in the greenhouse, as you look down on the trees you get a birds' eye view.

It is absolutely beautiful – but a view that only God and the birds would have been able to see for millennia. It is a reminder to me that the world wasn't just designed for humans. You get such a sense of God's majesty in that imagery.



Now, with today's technology, we are all able to see such wondrous sights, especially when you watch nature programmes on television.

**Anne Smith**



## **A simple way to reduce your risk of a heart attack**

This is so easy that most of us can do it at home: simply climb about five flights of stairs a day.

So says a recent study, published in the journal *Atherosclerosis*. It found that climbing stairs on a regular basis may reduce the risk of strokes, blood clots, and heart attacks by as much as 20%.

Climbing stairs is also good for burning fat. This is because you use your largest muscle groups, and so burn more calories. For example – stair climbing burns 23% more calories than running; 250% more calories than swimming, 63% more than cycling, and a staggering 400% more than walking at about three km per hour.

As one biomechanics coach explained: “You can take the steps as fast – or slow – as you like, and still see benefits. That’s because the muscles are contracting and shortening under tension as they push the floor away.”

Climbing stairs is easier on the knees and hips than running, because there is less shock through the body.

### **The Parish Pump**

## **SONGS OF PRAISE**

I have to say that Ron and I really enjoy the planning and the leading of the Circuit Songs of Praise services.

We have always tried to have a theme in past services. The last service we had was our Christmas event which was very special as we managed to sing ten well known Carols and also put in a couple of extra tunes!!

We feel that singing is so much part of our Methodist way of life and that good hymns can really enhance our worship and lift us in our Spirits.

There is a very special feeling about a large congregation singing together.

In the past we have asked people to share their faith stories through the hymn they may have chosen This has been very moving. How often do people other than preachers, have the chance to stand up and share their faith.

We are grateful that churches have agreed to host the services.

The next Songs of Praise will be held at **Trinity on Sunday May 19<sup>th</sup> at 6.00pm.** We will be looking at the fact that Wesley Day (May 24<sup>th</sup>) is close, the day itself will be Pentecost Sunday, so we have much to celebrate.

Once we have planned the service, we will send out information about the content.

Thank you for supporting past services.

Best wishes from **Dave and Ron**

## Travelling Nativity in Nunthorpe

In the last few years we have used a Travelling Nativity to involve our play group families in Christian preparation for Christmas.



The box includes knitted figures of the Holy Family and a donkey with children's books of the Nativity story, some prayers and a battery candle.

This is an opportunity to welcome Mary and Joseph into homes through this lovely tradition originating in Mexico. It is called "Posada" (Spanish for 'inn') and is a Christmas activity which lasts through Advent when small versions of Mary and Joseph travel around different households in the community and stay there for one night. Posada is a chance to host Mary and Joseph – to make room for Jesus at Christmas time!

People sign up in advance, offering to host Mary and Joseph for a night. It's open to everyone, and lots of families find it's a great way to be involved in the Christmas story. The children really enjoyed handling the figures and retelling the story in their own way; older siblings read the prayers and shared in an act of worship.



On Christmas Eve, the figures are returned to church, and presented in the Christmas Day service.

**Julie O'Key**

*Outreach working in the Community, does your Church have similar groups? Our readers would love to here about them.*



### Here are seven "Old" Quiz questions to get your brain working

1. According to Miss Potter, what furry creature was "impertinent" to Old Brown, the owl?
2. How many violinists did Old King Cole call for?
3. What's the other name for the UK's Central Criminal Court?
4. What was the nutty nick name of the 7th President of USA, Andrew Jackson?
5. What are the first two words of the hymn known as The Old Hundredth?
6. In what 19th century novel will you find Little Nell and Quilp?
7. What is the name of the oldest person in the bible?

**Answers on Page 23**



## God's Promises and Encouragement

I am writing this article to encourage you, because I feel we need to be edified more than ever before. Since the pandemic there has been nothing but destruction in the news - earthquakes, wars and floods and it seems to be a time that we have never experienced before in our generation. However, in the bible it states 'do not be anxious' 365 times, one for each day of the year! As the body of Christ we need to lift each other up and make sure we are not consumed by fear! God knew anxiety was going to be a massive issue for the body of Christ. Anxiety tries to prevent us from living the life that God has planned for us. God wants you to know that He has a plan for your life, every single one of you, not just the Minister or evangelist in the church but everyone in the body has a part to play. God says in His word 'He says you have not seen, nor heard, not even imagined anything as great as what He has prepared for you' (1 Corinthians 2:9). You have no idea how great your future is, so great that if you really understood it, you would feel 'that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in you' (Revelation 8:18).

You may feel that you can see how these promises identify with others, but feel you could never be used; you have waited so long and it has not happened yet. Although God promises you a future full of hope and blessings it is not just going to happen automatically. Remember, prayer is the key component, because we are fighting spiritual battles. Our weapon of choice is PRAYER, another is to OBEY God. But do not worry, God will help you if you ask Him. The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee to you that He will help you do what you need to do and bring to pass everything He promised (Ephesians 1:13-14). Just remember every time you pray and obey you are investing in your future. Remember that walking with God does not mean there will be obstacles, there is an enemy prowling around seeking who he might devour! The enemy wants to prevent you from walking out God's will for your life. If you are walking with God, the enemy cannot succeed in his plan.

By living in obedience to His ways, by standing strong in His word and praying without ceasing ensures you are strong in defence to the enemy's tactics. I have had periods of my walk where I have been strong and felt on the mountain tops. However, after standing strong for a long period of time I have felt the battle get more difficult but I have come to realise that God's plan for my life does not happen without a struggle. We need to stand strong and not give up when times get tough. God did say in His word that in this life we will have troubles. We need to not give up and resist the temptation to quit! Ask God to give you the strength and endurance, especially in these difficult times, when we hear rumours of the escalation of wars.

Do not judge your future by what you read/listen in the news or the harsh, judgemental words someone spoke about you. Remember your future is in God's hands not someone who thinks they know you. The only thing that is important is what He says about you. Do not be discouraged if things do not happen as fast as you would like. They never do! God wants to teach you patience.

If you draw close to God and do what He asks you to, if you worship Him in spirit and truth, if you love others, if you speak God's words in faith and pray, you will see

God's blessings poured in your life. There are some things that can only be birthed in prayer.

Remember, God 'is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us' (Ephesians3:20). He has more for you than you can imagine.

We all welcome good and positive news instead of the news we are currently hearing daily regarding the war in the Middle East and the cost-of-living crisis. The fear of possible terrorist attacks makes people nervous and terrified for our families, not to mention the random knife attacks on those two innocent youths who were walking back from student party. They suffered a horrendous vicious attack. I think we are all feeling a change in the times, a shift in humanity for the worse; we are all fearful for the next generation.

However, as Christians, we must remember it is our faithful, ever-loving God, who has cared and protected us over the generations. He will continue to protect and provide for us, His children. Keep your eyes steadfast on Him, on the omnipotent Lord Jesus, not on the negative news. Keep strong in the Lord, He is the Prince of Peace.

**Sharon Sewell**

## Hedgehogs need your help this Spring

During the winter when hedgehogs hibernate, their heart rate drops from around 190 beats per minute to just about 20. They breathe only once every few minutes. So, to rouse themselves from that depth of torpor and get back into normal life takes a huge surge of energy.



Which is where you can come in. Hedgehogs are hungry in the Spring. Very hungry. Most of them will have slept until mid-March, and so will now be awake - but starving.

So why not put out some shallow dishes of meaty cat or dog food or cat biscuits and water?

You can even buy or make special hedgehog houses.

Hedgehogs have always been popular, but they are now sadly classed as 'vulnerable to extinction'. Numbers have been plummeting, and now there are less than one million left in the UK.



“With their coat of prickles and inquisitive nose, alongside a penchant for snuffling around our back gardens snaffling up slugs and earthworms, hedgehogs are a childhood memory of delight,” said one scientist. “Sadly, hedgehogs might be banished to memories alone and lost as a source of wonder for our children and grandchildren.”

**The Parish Pump**



# *March, April and May have some wacky and weird events*

## *See what I mean down below ....*

**March 1st to March 2nd - National Day of Unplugging.** Have a 24-hour respite from technology, to inspire you to have a healthier life/tech balance. Take an hour or a full day away from technology.

**March 3rd - World Wildlife Day** An opportunity to celebrate the many beautiful and varied forms of wild fauna and flora and to raise awareness of the multitude of benefits that conservation provides to people.



**March 4th to March 10th - Food Waste Action Week** which aims to raise awareness of the environmental consequences of wasting food and promoting activities that help to reduce the amount of food we waste

**April 10th - Siblings Day** - Based on the traditional Indian festival of Rakshabandhan, which is hundreds of years old, honouring the relationships of siblings.

**March 14th - Pi Day** which is celebrated by maths enthusiasts around the world. It is a day to celebrate the mathematical constant  $\pi$  (pi), which is approximately equal to 3.14159

**April 13th - National Scrabble Day.** This day is observed annually, it was specifically chosen in honour of Scrabble's inventor, Alfred Mosher Butts' birthday

**April 17th - International Haiku Poetry Day.** The day the whole world honours the Japanese poetry form of haiku. A haiku is a poem consisting of three lines and a seven syllable structure. Events including poetry readings, a film festival and haiku gatherings around the world.

**April 22nd - Earth Day.** This is a worldwide event to raise awareness of the environmental issues which face the whole of planet Earth. The Earth Day organisation campaigns on environmental issues worldwide and promotes sustainability and pollution reduction

**April 23rd - National Shakespeare Day.** This was both Shakespeare's birthday and date of his death. Celebrations are held in his home town of Stratford-upon-Avon and around the UK.

**April 25th - Penguin Day.** This awareness day was created to highlight the dangers that penguin's habitats face, as well as the number of penguin species which are endangered.



**April 30<sup>th</sup> – International Jazz Day.** This day brings together communities, schools, artists, historians, academics, and jazz enthusiasts all over the world to celebrate and learn about jazz and its roots, future and impact.

**May 4th - Star Wars Day.** A day to celebrate the Star Wars franchise.

**May 15th - International Day of Families.** A day to celebrate the importance of families and promote awareness of issues relating to families

**May 20th - World Bee Day.** This is celebrated every year to raise awareness of the importance of bees and other pollinators for the ecosystem and sustainable development. The day was first celebrated in 2018, co-sponsored by 115 UN member states



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



**MAY 12TH - 18TH 2024**

Christian Aid Week is celebrated in the United Kingdom on the second week of May every year and this year, it will take place from May 12th - 18<sup>th</sup>.

They hold an annual door-to-door fundraising drive in Britain and it has been held every year since 1957. A task of the thousands of volunteers is to post red collection envelopes to homes across the country. It is Britain's longest-running fundraising week.

Their groundbreaking work began in 1945, when they were founded by British and Irish churches to help refugees following the Second World War. Since then, they have provided humanitarian relief and long-term development support for poor communities worldwide, while highlighting suffering, tackling injustice and championing people's rights.

They work in 37 countries, with people of all faiths and none, **to stand up for dignity, equality and justice.**

It is a founder member of the Disasters Emergency Committee, and a major member of The Climate Coalition, The Fairtrade Foundation and Trade Justice Movement campaigns. Their headquarters are in London and it has regional teams across the UK and Ireland, plus country offices elsewhere around the world.

Our voices and actions are stronger together, **and with your help, we can make an even bigger difference.**

**Christian Aid website**

A burglar breaks into a house. He starts shining his light around looking for valuables. Some nice things catch his eye, and as he reaches for them, he hears, "**Jesus is watching you.**" Startled, the burglar looks for the speaker. Seeing no one, he keeps putting things in his bag, again, he hears, "**Jesus is watching you.**" This time, he sees a parrot. "Who are you?" the burglar asks. "Moses," the bird replied. "Who the heck would name a bird Moses?" the man laughed. "I dunno," Moses answered,

**"I guess the same kind of people that would name a Rottweiler Jesus."**



**The Parish Pump**

# Origins of April Fools Day

Some historians speculate that April Fools' Day dates back to 1582, when France switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar, as called for by the Council of Trent in 1563. In the Julian Calendar, as in the Hindu calendar, the new year began with the Spring Equinox around April 1st.

People who were slow to get the news or failed to recognize that the start of the new year had moved to January 1 and continued to celebrate it during the last week of March through April 1 became the butt of jokes and hoaxes and were called "April fools." These pranks included having paper fish placed on their backs and being referred to as "poisson d'avril" (April fish), said to symbolize a young, easily caught fish and a gullible person.



## Hilaria in Ancient Rome

Historians have also linked April Fools' Day to festivals such as Hilaria (Latin for *joyful*), which was celebrated in ancient Rome at the end of March by followers of the cult of Cybele. It involved people dressing up in disguises and mocking fellow citizens and even magistrates and was said to be inspired by the Egyptian legend of Isis, Osiris and Seth.

There's also speculation that April Fools' Day was tied to the Vernal Equinox, or first day of Spring in the Northern Hemisphere, when Mother Nature fooled people with changing, unpredictable weather.

## History of April Fools' Day

April Fools' Day spread throughout Britain during the 18th century. In Scotland, the tradition became a two-day event, starting with "hunting the gowk," in which people were sent on phony errands (gowk is a word for cuckoo bird, a symbol for fool) and followed by Tailie Day, which involved pranks played on people's derrieres, such as pinning fake tails or "kick me" signs on them.

## April Fools' Day Pranks

In modern times, people have gone to great lengths to create elaborate April Fools' Day hoaxes. Newspapers, radio and TV stations and websites have participated in the April 1st tradition of reporting outrageous fictional claims that have fooled their audiences.

In many countries newspapers and the other media participate - for example, with false headlines or news stories. In 1957, the BBC reported that Swiss farmers were experiencing a record spaghetti crop and showed footage of people harvesting noodles from trees



In 1980, the BBC Overseas Service (now called the World Service) tried to convince the world that Big Ben would become digital. They announced to listeners that not only was the iconic clock face going digital, and would change to electronic beeps but that the first people to get in touch could win the hands of the clock. Unfortunately, this did not go down as well as they'd hoped and the BBC was apologising for weeks after the joke was made. Some people just clearly didn't see the funny side!

For the average trickster, there is always the classic April Fools' Day prank of covering the toilet with plastic wrap or swapping the contents of sugar and salt containers.

## The Parish Pump

## CIRCUIT MEN'S FELLOWSHIP.



Ever since I have been attending Grove Hill, since 1974, there has been a Men's Fellowship. I have attended it since then on the last Thursday evening of each month. It has been for me a great place to attend, to make friendships and to enjoy fellowship. Especially in my working life, when it would be a welcome sense of comfort after a demanding day!!

Sadly, over the years members have passed away and some time ago we realised we were becoming so low in numbers that we needed to widen the group and so we invited people from the Circuit to join.

Thankfully new members arrived; from other churches and so our numbers, though still small, remain viable. There was a request from some of the members to change from Thursday evenings to Friday afternoons as some don't like driving at night. This was especially helpful to John, one of our long-term members, who moved to Alnwick. He still comes down for the meetings, having lunch at our house then attending the meeting and travelling back to Alnwick afterwards. That is dedication!!

I do send invitations to the churches and sometimes we are able to welcome new members.

However, in case you don't know about us, let me enlighten you.

We meet on the last Friday of the month at Grove Hill at 1.30pm. We have a speaker usually giving us about an hour of entertainment and education.

We then have drinks and cakes and a time for informal discussion. Usually, people have left well before 4.00pm, although the formal meeting will be over by about 2.45pm.

Let me share some of our programme for this year; **March 22nd** Rev Lisa Opala.  
**April 26th** Rev David Godfrey. **May 31st** AGM and programme planning.  
**June 28th** A musical afternoon. **July 26th** Fish and Chips at Seaton Carew.  
**August 30th** Evening meal at the Bay Horse.

Come and join us, you never know, you might enjoy it and want to come again. By the way you can bring friends who don't go to church!!

**Dave Elliott**

### Answers to Quiz on Page 17

**1. Squirrel Nutkin; 2. Three; 3. Old Bailey;  
4. Old Hickory; 5. All people; 6. The Old Curiosity  
Shop; 7. Methuselah**

# P R A Y E R D I A R Y

**March 3<sup>rd</sup>** We pray today for this time of Lent that it may be an opportunity for us all to think in more detail about our faith. Pray for Rev David Godfrey and for Nunthorpe

**March 10<sup>th</sup>** On this Mothering Sunday we pray for all mothers. We think of those who are no longer with us. We pray for mothers who have real problems bringing up their children, maybe with poverty, maybe having to do this on their own. We thank God for the blessing of family life. Pray for Rev John Howard- Norman and for Grove Hill.

**March 17<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for all who are ill, those being cared for at home and those in hospital. Bless all who care for loved ones and for those who care professionally. Pray today for Rev Charity Hamilton that she may find good health again and be able to return to her ministry amongst us. Pray for Trinity, for The Trinity Family Friendly Centre, for Sharon Sewell and all who serve.

**March 24<sup>th</sup>** On this Palm Sunday we remember how Jesus rode into Jerusalem and faced his enemies and the cross. Pray for all who face opposition because of their faith and for all who stand up for righteousness, sometimes risking their own lives. Pray for Rev Mike Harland and Stainton.

**March 31<sup>st</sup>** On this glorious Easter Sunday we rejoice at the news of the resurrection, Jesus rising from the cross and giving us the gift of eternal life. Bless all the special services taking place today to celebrate this wonderful news. Pray for all our Local Preachers and Worship Leaders as we seek to spread the good news of Jesus. Pray for Rev Anne Coates and Marton.

**April 7<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for the lives of our churches, for those who are in positions of leadership, in the churches, and in the Circuit. Help us to be guided by God's Holy Spirit in all the decisions we make. Pray for Mark Braithwaite our Circuit Safeguarding officer. Pray for

Normanby

**April 14<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for children and young people as they return to schools, colleges and Universities. Pray for those who teach and for those who are Governors. Pray too for all who work with children and young people in our churches. Pray for David Everitt our Circuit Webmaster

**April 21<sup>st</sup>** We pray for those who have positions of responsibility in the local communities. We think of those who are Councillors that they will care for the people they serve. Pray for Elaine and the work she does at our Circuit Office. **April 28<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for those people who are sometimes unable to fit into our communities, those who may feel left out for all sorts of reasons. Pray today for the work of the Methodist Asylum Project, for Billy Barnes and his team.

**May 5<sup>th</sup>** On Thursday we will celebrate Ascension Day. We pray that we may fully understand the meaning of this day as we see Jesus ascending to be with God. A true sign for us of who Jesus is and of this sense of his Divinity. Pray for the Linthorpe Road Resource Centre.

**May 12<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for the senior citizens in our churches, and in our communities, that they may feel they still have much to give. Pray for MHA Communities Teesside at Montpellier Manor and for the Communities Manager; Tom Ward and Hannah Pearson, the Chaplain.

**May 19<sup>th</sup>** On this Pentecost Sunday we praise God for the gift of the Holy Spirit. On that first Pentecost the disciples were inspired to share the news of Jesus. We pray we may too be filled with the Holy Spirit and share what we believe.

**May 26<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for young people at school and college taking important exams at this time. We pray for the Darlington District, for all the many church families and for Rev Richard Andrew the Chair of District.