

# The Methodist



**Norwich Circuit Magazine**  
**December 2024 issue 115**

## STAFF

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# Christmas message



Growing up in Africa Christmas was a time of high expectations. For me personally, may be with a few other children of my age at that time, Christmas was not about the birth of Christ. It was about a new dress and maybe a new pair of shoes and loads of special food. Growing up in a deprived environment, limited in what we could have as a family, but our parents tried to provide for our Christmas needs. It was a time of anticipation for something completely different from what it means today.

Having said that, there is resonance then and now. Christmas is still the coming of something new and special for my spirit and not for my body as before. Christmas in Zimbabwe brings a physical and spiritual joy and hope. Families would share whatever little they had in thanksgiving. On Christmas Day churches would be filled with grateful and hopeful souls despite limited provisions. The believers would rejoice in the Lord despite their challenges. Paul encourages believers in Philippians 4:4 to rejoice in the Lord despite their circumstances. In Zimbabwe, there is so much deep faith in God despite a limiting and less providing environment.

Even though Christmas in Zimbabwe could be celebrated differently from other parts of the world, there is a common ground of Hope in Jesus Christ the light of the world. The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world is to clothe us with righteousness and salvation in preparation for eternal life. John 3:16 is a promise of a special gift, sent from heaven by God; a gift wrapped in earthly cloth and lying in a manger made by man's hands. Christ is the special gift that is accessible to all despite circumstances. He was born in a stable so that even the animals and the poor may witness such a wonderful birth. He is Christ who came to liberate the rich and the poor from bondage of sin (Isaiah 61:1).

It is humbling to think that God reduced himself to a mere baby born in a stable and lying in a manger, for our sake. As we celebrate and enjoy with our families let us remember that there is more to Christmas than just eating and being with families. It is time to reflect on that special sacrificial love, love that cannot let us go. It is time to step back and reflect on what we could do to show

our appreciation of such love. As we open our presents let us also open our hearts to the love and warmth of Christ.

A stanza in hymn 204 Singing the Faith - In the bleak midwinter says “What can I give him poor as I am? If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb; If I were a wise man I would do my part; yet what I can I give him -give my heart”. Yes, that’s all we can give our Lord Jesus Christ; our hearts. He loved us first, we should therefore share the love with those in challenging and difficult situations. Love is not love until and unless it is given away like Christ did. As we celebrate let us remember those who are homeless not because of their own fault but situations beyond their control. Let us enjoy the special gift with joy, adoration and humility.

Merry Christmas everyone!!

Every blessing  
Mary Sachikonye



# News from the Norwich Circuit

## **Stationing 2025**

Our Stationing Profile, requesting a Superintendent for September 2025 when Revd Andy Burrows retires, has been submitted. We await the outcome of the Stationing Matching Group. If a successful match is made, we will be arranging a visit weekend to Norwich possibly in late November for the matched presbyter and family. Please continue to pray for this process hoping that God will go ahead of us and the right match will be made to secure a bright future for the Norwich Circuit.

## **Staffing**

Thank you to all who have kindly stepped up to fill appointments on the plan during Andy's period of ill-health. Please continue to hold Andy and Ruth in your prayers at this time.

Revd Mary Sachikonye has been appointed as acting Superintendent in a temporary capacity, supported by our very able staff team, who will together guide us through the coming weeks.

Pastor Stephen Lau has begun his three-year part-time training to become a Methodist Minister. Stephen will be juggling his heavy study workload alongside his busy full-time job at Bowthorpe Road, so we ask God for strength and wisdom to allow Stephen to have the stamina to carry him over the next few years.

We warmly welcome Yan to the staff at Bowthorpe Road. Yan is supporting Stephen and Pastor Mike with the ever-growing pastoral work, serving a large church family of 250 attendants.

Grateful thanks go to all our lay officers serving on our Circuit financial team. It has been a time of change and transition since the death of our dear friend John Walters. We warmly welcome Graham Thompson and Tina Chan and thank them for agreeing to join the team as Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. Our grateful thanks go to Marilyn Hood as she steps down from the Circuit finance team and to Eric Steward who has carried much of the financial work

load through the spring and summer, and skilfully guided us through the hand-over process to Graham and Tina.

### **Celebrating Mission in the Norwich Circuit**

This summer 38 young people from Bowthorpe Road joined the annual, residential bible youth camp, served by 15 church members. The camp started on Tuesday, and ran until Saturday. It included bible-based talks, group discussions, leisure activities and times for sharing. It was a fun, action packed time of learning, sharing and growing in Christ. In addition, there was a summer half day camp, from Monday to Friday, serving more than 25 younger children from the Bowthorpe Road Sunday School. The holiday camp had the usual mix of talks, games, crafts, singing and learning about the love of God and how to care for each other. Pastor Stephen and the whole church family have a real heart deepening their faith through serving the local community. They have a Tuesday Coffee Morning to serve the neighbourhood and to offer support to the local foodbank. Those who have emigrated from Hong Kong most recently, are invited to come along to build bonds of friendship and experience mutual help. The concept of Christian ‘drop-in cafés’, has developed with a number of our Circuit churches around Norwich. We have ‘Open Doors’ in Wymondham, ‘Coffee Stop’ in Hethersett, and a ‘Re-new Wellbeing Café’ held twice a week at Sprowston, to name just a few. In a country facing epidemic proportions of loneliness, isolation and anxiety, opening our doors to provide compassionate listening, friendship and a place to be in community, seems to be meeting a need. These cafes provide ‘a safe haven’, a quiet place, with no pressures, hidden costs or expectations. The cafes aim to be ‘salt and light’ in their communities especially for those in society who feel ‘disconnected’ for whatever reason. Please pray for the teams and the guests attending the cafes, and ask that God will continue to bless the work being done in His name and for His glory.

### **Place of Sanctuary Award**

We congratulate Chapel Field Road on being awarded the status of ‘Church of Sanctuary’ by the City of Sanctuary movement in Britain.



## Messy Church

We have a brand-new Messy Church initiative in the Norwich Circuit. Wymondham had their first event in September with a Harvest themed morning led by Sarah Emmens, the children's and families' worker at Wymondham Methodist Church, and her team of willing volunteers. It was a fabulous occasion, the 17 children and their families, made approximately 50 people sitting down to enjoy a delicious lunch together, after a packed morning of crafts, games, fun and family worship.

Our next Messy Church events in the Circuit will be:

Sprowston Methodist Church Saturday, 16th November, 5 -7 pm 'Jesus is Coming'

Wymondham Methodist Church Saturday, 7th December, 10.30am -12.30 'Celebrating Christmas'

Please pray for all the families attending these events and the teams supporting them.



Many thanks to all the Circuit staff, lay officers and church members who have worked tirelessly over this past year.

With every good wish to all in the Norwich Circuit for a blessed Advent and Christmas Season.

Sue Skinner  
Senior Circuit Steward

# Profile

Liz Thetford

by Joy Southam

Liz was born in Heacham and spent her first 10 years in Hunstanton before moving to live in Heacham. Her family included a long line of Methodist local preachers, organists and even a minister. Her mum occasionally went to church but her dad did not. She went to Sunday School until she was 7, by which time her brother was in to athletics and her sister into swimming. Liz fol-

lowed her sister into many years of competitive swimming.

After completing her A Levels, Liz joined Barclays Bank, working in Kings Lynn, Hunstanton and Norwich. She made the last-minute decision to attend a friend's housewarming party where she met Ian who had also decided to go at the last-minute. They were married in 1986 – on the day Chernobyl blew up. They moved to Hethersett in 1990 and had their daughter Sarah two years later.

Liz was 35 when she went back to church, first attending the Christmas carol service at Hethersett, and then soon afterwards attending on a Sunday morning as she wanted Sarah then 3½ to join Sunday Club.

A few months later, Liz had to cope with the devastating death of her mother. She continued to attend the church although at the time she didn't really know why.

She completed an Alpha Course saying the prayer of commitment in the privacy of her home, but then her journey ground to a halt. She wasn't certain of her beliefs. The minister at the time David Hart invited her to become a member of the church but that invitation was destined for the bin. At this time Liz was writing as village correspondent for the evening news.

Eventually Liz agreed to attend the membership course and found truth and God.

She became a member in June 2001, opening the service with a call to worship that she was told made even the lectern shake. Liz insists she is a shy person. Her only previous experience of public speaking was in 1996, reading her report as chair of the playgroup.

Within a few weeks of becoming a member she became JMA secretary; she went on to do the Worship Leader Course before becoming a steward just 15 months after becoming a church member.

In 2004, Liz applied for Foundation training but was turned down. She found it hard to get over the feeling of disappointment and rejection at the time but didn't walk away. She completed her Local Preacher training in 2008, taking just 2 years as she had worked on the course before.

Liz has had health issues since being diagnosed with Crohns when she was 23, she experienced two bouts of depression and in recent years has suffered mobility issues but still continues to do what she can to serve the Lord. In 2018, she took over from me as Local Preachers' Secretary a role which she has really got on top of making good use of her IT skills. She also serves as Worship Coordi-



nator within her church Leadership Team and deals with promotional publicity.

Liz realises she should call herself a born again Christian but feels the discomfort this causes to some of those closest to her. When asked to give her testimony for the first time, she was struggling to write what she was going to say. She asked God for help and the next day received the Leprosy Mission Catalogue in which she saw a card with the words of Isaiah 41:13 2 “I am the Lord your God who Takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear, I will help you.”

All of us, as Christians, need our hand held sometimes. Liz is very appreciative of the support and encouragement she has received from ministers and church friends over the years. Here is a story which she gave me which illustrates this perfectly.

“I remember the day when the TV repair man came to repair the black and white TV. I was about 8 years old and watched avidly as he took the back off the TV revealing the inner workings. I sometimes wonder if this was the beginning of my excitement in modern technology. Some 35 years later I was intrigued when the speaker at the men’s breakfast at Hethersett Methodist appeared to have the same name as the TV repairman. I happened to be there just as he was preparing to leave and I wondered if I dare speak to him, knowing that if it was him, he would remember my grandmother, a staunch Methodist in Hunstanton. I sidled up beside him and timidly asked if the name Hilda Grey meant anything to him. He stopped, looked at me and very firmly said “Yes. I do!’ It was more than the vague ‘Yes, I remember her’ that I expected. And yes, this was the man who repaired our TV and Hilda Grey was one of the early encouragers in the Christian journey of the Reverend Alec Callaby. As it turned out, it was soon his turn to be one of my encouragers.”

Liz’s enthusiasm and joy in the Lord are evident when you talk to her and her fervent prayers mean so much to those she prays for. Hethersett and the Norwich Circuit are fortunate to have her.

# Reflection

## Advent Hope

by David Ingham

“ The people who walk in darkness will see a great light- a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow” Isaiah 9:2 “For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest upon his shoulders.....he will rule for ever with fairness and justice..... the passionate commitment of the Lord will guarantee this” (Isaiah 9:6,7)

This very familiar promise is read every year as we approach Christmas as a foretelling of the greatest story ever told. The great thing about this extract from Isaiah is the hope it brings. It is on that hope that I wish to focus. Advent hope. As I grow older I find myself staying within the spirit and purpose of Advent for as long as I possibly can and not allowing myself to arrive at Christmas until as late as possible. I try to hold on to the hope which Advent offers as I struggle with the darkness which surrounds us and the fears which lurk within. Fears of the darkness never going away, fears of never ending wars, never ending poverty, never ending greed never ending.....(you can add your own fears to the list.) The world with all of its darkness needs to see the possibility of light and the only way that can happen, for me, is to focus thoughts, prayers, and actions on those words of Isaiah and on the ‘guarantee’ of hope which is offered by the promise of a son being born.



As I write, there is an anniversary of a moment of darkness when the Sycamore Gap tree was felled releasing an outcry of sadness. At the time it seemed as though another act of irreparable damage had been done to our environment, thumbing its nose to God’s amazing Creation in a destructive way. But we now find Advent hope as cuttings which were taken from the tree begin to sprout,

bringing the promise of new life, not just in the gap but in many other places. (I chose this as a simple example rather than those horribly real ones such as the wars raging in so many places.)



As we look back through history we can imagine peo-

ple in darkness of seemingly never ending warfare, yet that same history having shown the awful destruction also shows us the talking and repairing and reconciliation which grew, like saplings, out of the leadership of brave people who sought a fair and just conclusion to hostility and the beginning of a new way. I look forward to the opportunity to sing again the wonderful Advent hymns and especially ‘There’s a light upon the mountain (StF 188)’ with its glorious assurance of the brightness for which the people have longed

‘weary was our heart with waiting and the night watch seemed so long; but his triumph day is breaking and we hail it with a song’

Our challenge this year, as every year, is to be people of that light, bringing hope and optimism to those totally overwhelmed by the darkness, whether that be personal or a view of the world.

There is a warning though. In our increasingly selfish and materialistic world, there is a stampede towards Xmas as people who are hunting for something good to happen seek to immerse themselves in an unaffordable spending spree. That world is one which finishes at Christmas and is put away with the wrapping paper and the debris of spending. It is our duty, as Christians to offer a season of hope which leads to CHRISTmas and sees this not as the end but the beginning of a new era of light, fairness and justice. Christmas is never the end but the beginning of the age of hope which we know in the wonderful stories of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus, our Christ. Going back to my favourite Advent hymn, I quote from verse 3

‘ but his angels here are human not the shining hosts above and the drum beats of his army are the heart beats of our love.’

So, let us begin again the work of Christ as we become those human angels, turning Advent hope into Christian expectation. Remember the quotation with which I started, when the Lord, speaking through Isaiah, offered this new world to us under his GUARANTEE. You and I are part of the angelic guarantors spreading light in our communities.

Brothers and sisters let Advent joy ring out for as long as possible, enjoy the birth of Jesus but then make it a new start of his mission to change the way we live, and work and have our being. If we do this then those people walking in today’s darkness WILL see a great light and a great new future for this amazing world.

Cont. over

## Let us pray

Let us pray for Hope to invade nations in place of armies. Let us pray for expectation to overcome doubt that a new way can ever triumph in this world.

Let us pray for an increase in recognising Christ as the beginning not the end and let us pray for those who, like us, are determined to bring light this winter.

A final prayer:

God our Master and Friend we thank you for the hope, even expectation, we find in you. When you could so easily reckon us as hopeless failures because of our constant human failings, your love offers grace and mercy.

When we lose confidence in our ability to have any effect in the face of such daunting odds, remind us that what we do is in your strength, not in our own.

Most of all heavenly Father, make us ever mindful of the debt we owe your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ and the astonishing love he took to his cross and then released again into the world through the power of the Spirit as you raised him to eternal glory. That same Spirit which can work through us if we let it, Lord give us the courage to open ourselves to the vulnerability of service for you.

Help us become your servants bringing expectation of new ways and a bright light of recovery replacing desperation and brokenness with joy, peace and hope-full love.

Amen



# Felice Navidad

by Frances Middleton

Christmas in Peru in some ways is like ours - going to church , Christmas markets, celebratory fireworks and of course, lots of special and delicious food, like paneton and Chaucacacake, and hot chocolate! Not so many piles of presents, though, in a country where money for most people is hard won and carefully used. There are street processions and salsa dancing, and frequent visits to church in thanksgiving. Peru is a very spiritual nation, combining their ancient native traditions of respect for elders and ancestors, with the Roman Catholicism that the Spaniards brought to South America. Everyone will go to church on Christmas Eve, Noche Bueno, and have a feast at home afterwards.

There will be Retablos in every home, a Peruvian version of the Nativity, carefully carved in wood or fashioned in clay, with Mary and Joseph and any visitors to the stable, all resplendent in Peruvian hats and shawls and llamas bowing the knee to Jesus! They are lovely, as I hope you can see from my photos. Often, I am told, Baby Jesus is depicted with a thorn in his foot, as a reminder to the devout, of the end of his life. Sometimes families like to add extra characters to the Retablo in their home, may be the local baker, the campesinos on the farm, the village ice-cream maker... This sounds a lot of fun!

Look carefully at the pictures. Can you see the Andes Mountains in the background? Can you spot the llamas? What gifts are people bringing to Jesus? A different version of our loved and familiar story and just as important to our brothers and sisters in Christ who live far away.



Happy Christmas, whatever your family will be doing.



**From PRAISE AND PROTEST  
The Methodist Prayer Handbook 2024-25.  
Revd David Hardman, Methodist Liaison Officer Jerusalem.**

Prince of Peace it is hard to give you thanks... under the shadow of the wall, waiting at a checkpoint, facing a soldier or a settler whose finger is on the trigger of an automatic rifle, watching the atrocities of occupation and violence unfold, and as we try to make sense of the propaganda.

Hard as it is, we give you thanks for every non-violent act of resistance from Christians, Jews and Muslims.

For every peace-loving Israeli and Palestinian who refuses to choose the way of violence and oppression and lives a life that challenges injustice, division and hatred.

For all these saints in the Holy Land we give you thanks. Amen



by Zing Eagling

Latitude Festival is a colourful festival of music, comedy, theatre, art, dance, creativity, poetry, literature, science, fun and relaxation for all ages and is set within the 4,200 acres of Henham Park, near Blythburgh, Suffolk. The first festival took place in 2006 and has continued annually (apart from 2020 when it was cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic) and continues to be popular with all generations.

Part of the Latitude Festival are the Festival Pastors and the Lowestoft Chaplaincy who creatively and inspirationally engage with festival attendees to serve, to care, to listen, to pray for the 40,000 attendees and staff throughout the four day festival. Revd Peter Livey and his wife Revd Liz Livey lead a team made up of 45 festival pastors on site at Latitude and hundreds of other different Christian churches in the UK including Chapel Field Road Methodist Church, Norwich. Different countries support the work through prayer each day of the festival, praying for the attendees, voluntary workers and festival pastors.

In June whilst working on my sermon an email from Network Norwich popped onto my screen advertising for festival pastors for the Latitude Festival. I deviated from my writing to view the email...applied, which took only minutes, and returned to my work. A few hours later I wondered what I had applied for and read the email again, I did not think I would receive a reply due to the huge number of people applying and I am not sure why I applied as I am not keen on camping. A couple of days passed and I received an offer of an interview via zoom. I still had doubts about camping as the ground seemed too far away! At the end of the interview I received an invitation to join the team! I was waiting for "we will get back to you"...all I could say was "bless you". My mind was buzzing...why was the Lord sending me?

All equipment bought and ready to go forth! I attended a full day's induction, total of newbies five...I felt privileged and honoured to be part of the team. I set out on Wednesday, 24th June with very little knowledge of music festivals and camping, (I last camped in my 20s) but I had the tools the Lord required of me in my "toolbox" and faith in abundance that I will be well looked after. I was met at the Yellow Gate and my hand was held in registering and setting up

my tent. I was fed, watered and given a lovely warm welcome into the “family” of festival pastors.

Days 1-4 my structured day was as follows; 9am. Start with morning prayers in the marquee followed by housekeeping, we were given our duties and assigned to our partners for the day. It is a 6 hour working day with staggered start times. Shifts are two hrs on (1hr and 2 hrs break) finishing at 6.00 pm. The night team commences at 10 pm until 4am. The average amount I walked each day was six miles.

Every evening we had a lovely cooked meal in Latitude’s staff’s marquee with my new family friends followed by the group going to the main music arena for the evening. The experience of being at the arena (I was seated in terraced seating) and seeing the huge amount of people in one place was amazing , they stretched as wide as our Norfolk skies. Seeing the huge amount of people brought to my mind the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness and where crowds gathered at other venues seated on the ground to listen to music or literature reminded me of Jesus preaching to those who would listen.

On Sunday morning we had a Communion service before our shifts in the Marquee on a rota basis, Festival Pastors supported activities. There is a selection of activities for visitors to choose from, including prayer, glitter blessings, face painting, hand massages and some live art creation. There is a prayer space and a safe place for visitors.

Festival Pastors role was to help provide a positive reassuring presence, engaging with people, listening, offering support where needed, and a first aid service. Each day Pastors gave out “lost and found” bands to parents for their children and helped to write the telephone numbers on the bands. There are three entry gates to Latitude and many attendees come for the day, weekend or whole four days. During one of my two hours shifts with my co-worker we wrote 300 telephone numbers on the wristbands between us.

I would like to thank all those who prayed for me during my time at Latitude . I have returned to Norwich refreshed and better equipped in being an ambassador bringing Christ to the people. Why did Christ send me? To give me the excellent opportunity to serve Him through mission, to be his ambassador and to meet up with other Christians of like mind across East Anglia. Thus, strengthening my faith, in true fellowship in working with brethren and sisters in Christ.



# Chaplaincy

There are chaplains for institutions – hospitals, prisons, the armed forces, schools, colleges, universities – usually on the staff and paid by the institutions. They are appointed to meet the spiritual and religious needs of people, and we know something of that ministry as two of our ministers, Revd Matthew Olanrewaju and Revd Pauline Wrenn, have been chaplains in the RAF and NNUH respectively.

Industrial chaplaincy – now called work place chaplaincy – is given by people who are available in workplaces for people to talk to – often about spiritual, moral or religious issues.

Nowadays, chaplaincy is available at conferences, festivals and music events and is given by people of faith voluntarily. Zing Eagling writes (page 15) in this issue a lovely, lively, reassuring account of her experience at the Latitude Festival earlier this year.

Lay people have been chaplains in a variety of areas. If you have been a lay chaplain for a retreat, at a school, sports club or something else, would you like to write about it for a future issue? Please get in touch if you have an experience of chaplaincy to share.



# Christmas Celebrations at Sprowston Methodist Church

Preparations for the season of Advent and Christmas are now well underway at Sprowston, with services and special events planned throughout December in celebration of our Saviour's coming to earth as a newborn baby.

On Advent Sunday (1st December) we are delighted to host the annual Advent Ecumenical Service for all the churches in Sprowston. This year's event will start at 4.00.p.m. and offers a time of fellowship, sharing in 'Ecumenical Carols in the Garden', using the wonderful space in Sprowston Community Garden in the grounds of the church. The garden, together with the newly developed 'Reflections of God's Garden', will be beautifully decorated and lit for Christmas, offering a festive feel and a welcoming space for all our local community to come and enjoy.

On Thursday, 5th December we will be welcoming around 60 youngsters and their staff from the Year 2 classes at Cecil Gowing School to church. This will be our tenth year of providing a fun filled day of activities for the school, exploring the Christmas story together and we are pleased that, this year, we will also be able to invite parents and siblings to join us for the afternoon session. Our theme for the day will be 'Angels bring Good News' and will involve games, video story clips, songs, drama, craft activities and much more!! Later in December (17th) a team from church will also be providing a similar morning of activities at Lodge Lane School for their youngsters. These days have been very well received by both schools and have now become a firm fixture for both schools and church alike. We are very grateful for the many willing folk, and the prayerful support of the whole church, that have enabled this valuable and rewarding area of work to continue to develop. Our more informal Christmas events continue on Saturday, 14th December with a 'Family Christmas Celebration' running from 4.00 – 6.00 p.m. This will offer a 'cafe-style' opportunity to gather for carols, crafts and a short reflective Christmas message, with festive refreshments served throughout the event. (Last year 'cheesy chips' were a great hit and so will be repeated once more!!) This is a real family-friendly event, when all ages can be encouraged to come together and relax, whilst sharing in the wonderful message of the Christmas story.

For those who prefer a more traditional carol service, we warmly invite you to join our 'Carols by Candlelight' service on Sunday 22nd December, starting at

6.00 p.m. This will include the reading of familiar lessons and singing of well-loved carols (hopefully including some of your favourites) and will be followed by an opportunity to share fellowship and a mince pie or two.

Our Christmas Eve Communion service, on Tuesday 24th December at 11.30 p.m. will be led by Revd Sharon Willimott - an opportunity to focus on and welcome the coming King in the stillness of the night when all the busy-ness is done. We are grateful to Sharon for all her support, encouragement and ministerial guidance whilst Revd Andy Burrows remains unwell.

Our thanks, too, to Martin Callam who has offered to lead our Christmas Day morning worship on Wednesday, 25th December commencing at 10.30 a.m. This will be a short family friendly service when all can join together to celebrate the Holy birth.

Our thoughts and prayers are especially with Revd Andy at this time, during his time of ill-health and also with Ruth, too. We trust that God will richly bless and strengthen them in the days ahead and grant them His peace during the coming season.

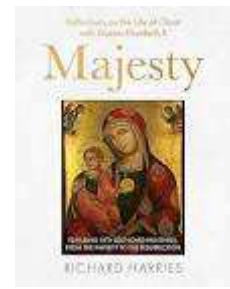
We warmly invite anyone interested to join us for any of our Advent and Christmas events at Sprowston Methodist Church and we take this opportunity to wish all the churches in the Norwich Circuit a very happy and blessed Christmastime.

Jane Lovett

Pastoral Secretary  
Sprowston Methodist Church



# A book for Christmas



by Ann Waterhouse

**MAJESTY: Reflections on the Life of Christ with Queen Elizabeth II, Featuring Fifty Best-loved Paintings, from the Nativity to the Resurrection**

I have to confess that as a child I would nosy into cupboards looking for Christmas presents ahead of the big day, but this year I have peeped at a Christmas present with permission in order to tell you all about a beautiful book 'Majesty'. It is a handsome publication and will be a perfect gift for many people this Christmas.

It seems to me that in recent years the strongest faith message at Christmas has often been from the Queen's Speech, and this book will be a lovely reminder of some of those messages. I am looking forwards to being given the book on Christmas Day.

As well as the selection from the Christmas Day Speeches, there are 50 iconic art works from across a thousand years, which show in chronological order the life of Christ, alongside appropriate Gospel Readings, and all are woven together by the expert commentary of former Bishop and academic, Richard Harries. It was written with deep respect a year after the Queen's 70th Jubilee and death.

Throughout her reign she was known as a woman of faith and as one person wrote, 'Her steadfast faithfulness was rooted in her Christian faith, the beating heart of her spiritual life and reign as monarch'.

It is a perfect gift for admirers of the Queen especially those who share her faith and admiration for the life of Jesus. As she said in her Christmas Speech 2014 'For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, is an inspiration and an anchor in my life. A role-model of reconciliation and forgiveness, he stretched out his hands in love, acceptance and healing.'

# The Holy Bible

On October 27th the Christian church observed the annual Bible Sunday - a “day set aside in the church calendar to celebrate the gift of God’s word”.

We don’t often get excited about the Bible but there was a real buzz around when the New English Bible (NT) was published in 1961, and the general public, not just church folk, were aware of it as it made the newspaper headlines on publication day. A rare moment.

In the booklet *A Catechism for the People called Methodists*, the Bible is described as “The record of God’s self revelation, supremely in Jesus Christ, and is a means through which he still reveals himself, by the Holy Spirit”

The Bible belongs to the whole Christian community, albeit in various interpretations, but it is not an easy read, it can be puzzling, but it is continually a source of inspiration and direction in our lives.

I don’t find studying the Bible easy - I am not a natural student and understanding the Bible can be hard work - but I have found, down the years, that being part of a study group can be the best way to make progress in understanding it. A few calls around the circuit have shown that many churches have a study group, usually monthly and of small membership, with additional opportunities in Advent and Lent. None of these are exclusive groups but would welcome new members. Some church members enjoy being part of a local group with Christians of a different hue.

Private devotional life. A church is made up of individuals, thankfully, and all have their own way of seeking and worshipping God privately. In two churches in this circuit, members can buy copies of ‘Fresh from the Word’, a substantial book from SPCK for daily use over 365 days. Another church makes available each quarter copies of ‘Our Daily Bread’ and also ‘Word for Today’ and the church makes regular donations for these to the publisher.

Available and used by many is the Methodist Prayer Handbook an annual publication with prayers for the Methodist work at home and overseas. But there in the centre fold is a 16 page pull out which contains a passage of scripture, a Psalm, and a hymn for each day of the year. There is a benefit from having a routine for daily private devotions without being rigid in the use of material

within that discipline. Booklets like Living Light, are easily available, and, in this electronic age, others turn to material easily found on their devices. Never have there been so many devotional aids available to help people have a rich private devotional life.

“Devotion to the teachings of the Scripture is absolutely essential for the task of keeping and renewing the Christian faith”. John Wesley

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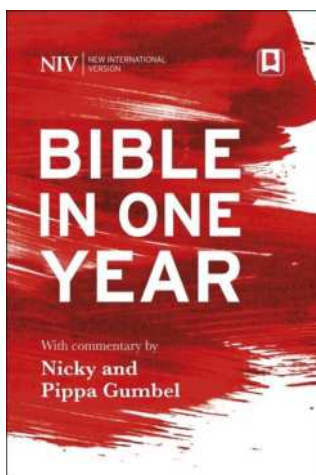
NINA COUGHLAN, Chapel Field Road,  
shares her experiences of private Bible Study.

A few years before the Lockdown in the UK, a friend introduced the name Nicky Gumbel to me. He was the head of the Holy Trinity Church Brompton in London. He pioneered the Alpha course, a course exploring the Christian faith. I followed him on Instagram and this is where I first heard of Bible in One Year. Nicky Gumbel is passionate in encouraging people who are reluctant or find reading the Bible tedious. Perhaps I am one of those people in the latter category. I downloaded the App on my iPad and as soon as I started it I was hooked. Like a child learning to walk or talk I got excited and determined to read every day. I even wrote the whole text daily for a good six months before I decided to buy the book. It was one of my best investments.

Bible in One Year is a fun way of reading the Bible. The reading is divided in three sections. Each day, first it starts with the Psalm or Proverb to act as a call to worship to God, Second, the reading from the New Testament which mostly directly points to Jesus. Then the last reading is the Old Testament, equally important because it reminds us to read the passages in Jesus’ perspective. The commentary given by the author is very helpful in understanding the message that it’s trying to tell the reader. He encourages us to look, read and apply them to our lives. He writes stories, testimonials by real people he has met or from books he has read and stories others have experienced. I find Bible in a Year uplifting, fun to read, practical. It takes me about half an hour to read and digest each day. There are some difficult reads but the authors tells us not to dwell on that but keep on reading daily, go back to that particular reading again. I make notes of any questions or doubts I have and find someone to help me understand better.

I cannot remember which book in the Bible all the passages are from but I do remember important passages that I can apply to improve and enhance my

spiritual life. I continue using Bible in One Year to inspire me, give me courage and move me on especially in my difficult moments and there are many.



Revd Mary Sachikonye  
shares her knowledge of Church Bible Study in Zimbabwe

Born and baptised in Zimbabwe has helped me to understand Methodism in the Zimbabwe context. Methodist in Zimbabwe still holds the values of Methodism including observing the Wesley week every May. The church values class meetings and bible study which are perceived to be at the core of their faith.

The church in Zimbabwe produces a booklet for bible study for the churches to follow throughout the year. The house groups meet on various days of the week for bible study at the same time encouraging the continuous practice of class meetings. Bible study and class meetings to the church are a reminder of the origins of Methodism. Bible study is an essential component of worship in the church therefore encourages participation for all.

According to the book there is a theme for every week, and the house groups will be exploring, learning and sharing the prescribed passages of the bible. By meeting in the house groups encourages members of the groups to bond and be one in Christ.

In Hebrews 10:25 & 39;... not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Paul encourages the church to meet and stir each other in the way of God by so doing there is evident growth in the church and in spirituality.

## The Right Reverend Timothy Dudley Smith

Bishop Timothy died this autumn aged 97. He had been suffragan bishop of Thetford.

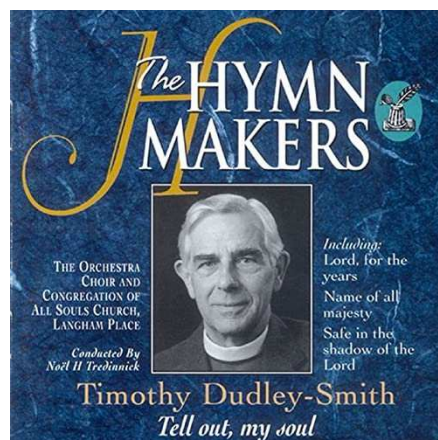
The bishop composed more than 450 hymns over more than 60 years. His most famous hymn is “Tell out my soul” (STF186). Written in 1961 it can be found in at least 220 contemporary hymn books. “Lord for the years” written in 1967 (STF470) was sung at the late queen’s golden jubilee.

Dudley Smith said that he could not sing in tune and could not keep in the right key! He said “Hymn writing has been a most enriching and entirely unexpected gift.”

Our church choir at Chapel Field Road has reason to be grateful to the bishop for his collaboration with William Llewellyn. Together they produced “One big family” a set of twenty songs for all age worship. Our choir has loved singing some of these accessible and tuneful pieces. “Jesus was riding on a donkey” is perfect for Palm Sunday and ideal for all age worship. Available from the Royal School of Church Music and the book comes with a CD. Do get a copy.

Elisabeth Traverse Chapel Field Road

NB Elisabeth used the Guardian’s obituary for some of the facts about the bishop.





# Mindonks

by Trixie Dye

Miniature Donkeys for Wellbeing Ltd was established in May 2017 and was incorporated as a company Limited by Guarantee with Social Aims (not for profit) in August 2017.

The founder, Sarah McPherson, is supported by a group of thirty volunteers.

The aim of the organisation is to provide therapeutic visits by miniature donkeys to people in the community who are isolated, vulnerable or in need of extra support.

Sarah saw the benefits that her Mum, who was living with vascular dementia, experienced interacting with her miniature donkeys. Sarah lost her Mum to dementia in 2017 and started Miniature Donkeys for Wellbeing the day after her mother's funeral. Since launching in May 2017 Miniature Donkeys for Wellbeing (also known as Mini Donks) has delivered over 1,000 visits to care homes, dementia units, autism groups, sheltered housing units, psychiatric hospitals, special schools and day groups for people with SEN.

MiniDonks operates across Norfolk, Suffolk, East Cambridgeshire and North Essex, and they have excellent feedback from groups where the donkeys, Pixie and Pippin, have visited.

Sarah charges for the visits but retains the option to reduce fees in cases where a home or organisation would struggle to pay.



Miniature Donkeys for Wellbeing and it's staff and volunteers have been recognised with the following awards:

South Norfolk Community Star Awards Volunteer of the Year Award  
2018 Sandra Merritt

South Norfolk Volunteer of the Year 2022 Linda White

Finalist in the Justgiving Award for Local Hero 2023 - Sarah McPherson

100 Inspiring Women in Norfolk 2019 — Sarah McPherson

UK Point of Light Award - Sarah McPherson.

National Lottery Local Legend Award 2019

In the past Sarah and her mini donkeys have made guest appearances at churches during Easter and Christmas, but they have no church engagements around Christmas this year, as they are concentrating on the wellbeing side of things, which of course, is why she started the work in the first case. She said anyone can keep track of what they are doing by using her website.

[www.minidonks.org.uk](http://www.minidonks.org.uk)



# Amnesty International 2024

## Amnesty International Write for Rights Campaign 2024

Send a message !

Change a life!

In a world where our basic human rights are increasingly under pressure, there couldn't be a more important time to act together to call out injustice and send messages of solidarity around the world. And Christmas is the season of hope, peace and good will to all.

If you doubt the effect you can have (you and thousands of others) Rita Karasartova was featured last Christmas. She writes to Amnesty - "I would like to express my great gratitude....The huge number of letters that went to the court (in Uzbekistan) were very empowering to us all...Of course, the acquittal was totally unexpected....I thank you all" There are many like this on their website. Heart warming!

So here are a few details of two people whose lives you could change this Christmas.

1) Professor Sebnem Korur Fincanci - head of the Turkish Medical Association, she faces more than 7 years in prison after being targeted because of her human rights work. Send a message (in English or Turkish) of support and solidarity, such as "I stand with you, Professor. Defending human rights should never be a crime. Thank you for all your amazing work; we are in full support of you"

Professor Sebnem Korur Fincanci  
Turk Tabliperi Birligi  
GMK Bulvari  
Sht. Danis Tunaligil Sk. No: 2/17-2  
06570 Maltepe/Ankara  
Turkiye

Amnesty International say please no religious Christmas cards to the Professor, as this may compromise her in Turkey. Please include your name and address

if you wish.

2) Dang Dinh Bach - a prominent environmental lawyer in Viet Nam, he was sentenced to 5 years in prison for "tax evasion", a charge that is widely seen as retaliation for his activism. He faces harsh prison conditions and has undertaken hunger strikes in protest against his treatment. His family say his health has deteriorated due to bad conditions and harassment from prison officers.

Send a message (in English or Vietnamese) of support, such as - "Thank you for your efforts to make our planet safer and more liveable. We support you and your family. Be encouraged!"

Dang Dinh Bach  
C/o Write for Rights  
Amnesty International  
International Secretariat  
Peter Benenson House  
London WC1X 0DW

Again, Amnesty say no religious cards as this might be compromising Bach.

Thank you for bringing hope and peace of mind to a despairing prisoner.

Happy Christmas  
Frances Middleton



# Other news

Please remember in your prayers the Super Revd Andy and Ruth, and the Circuit and its staff during his enforced time off work.

## **THE COVENANT SERVICE**

An elderly friend Sister Olive has an Anglican friend, who for the past six years had also been a regular attender at Olive's Methodist Church.

Why did that happen? It was all because someone had given her a copy of the Methodist Covenant Service which she had read and was captured by the spirit of that special service. She was not the first person from another denomination to value this special challenging bit of Methodism tradition and worship. Check the plan for the Covenant service at your church. Don't miss it!

## **NEWS FROM OTHER PUBLICATIONS:**

THE METHODIST RECORDER on October 25th carried many interesting articles including these four.

The front page headlined Plea for peace on anniversary of the Hamas attack and carried a message from the President and Vice-President.

It was encouraging to read the report the 3Generate the Methodist Children and Youth assembly in Birmingham, a vibrant weekend of fun and worship with more than 2,000 children and youth leaders attending.

There was a report of Chapel Field Road being awarded the Church of Sanctuary award by the City of Sanctuary movement which will be formally presented in February.

And on the back page Revd Dr Jane Leach writes movingly of Wesley College, Cambridge, relocating at the end of the academic year to new premises in central Cambridge after 100 years on Jesus Lane. A big move for her as it has been her home for half her life: as a student, a member of staff and from 2011 its Principal. We thank God for the men and women who have been equipped for ministry in that place.

GRAPEVINE District newsletter.

The Autumn issue has on its cover a lovely photograph showing Revd Helen Hollands, the new Chair of the East Anglia District, at the District Welcome Service in August 2024, alongside her husband Roy, District Property Secretary,

It looks as if the District went for a Buy One Get One Free offer. We are truly blessed and look forwards to getting to know them as they share life with Norwich circuit in the days ahead..

networknorfolk, This Christian community website gives an invaluable insight into the city's faith and community groups, and a recent mailing generously introduced Revd Helen Hollands to its readership. A photograph and over 600 words have allowed us to get to know her very quickly. Thank you for a very gracious article. If any reader has not seen it do look out for it.

# Recipies

## Wedding Cake

4lb Love

½ lb Buttered Youth

½ lb Good Looks

½ lb Sweet Temper

½ Wine glass Common Sense

½ lb Powdered Wits

½ lb Dry Humour

2 tablespoons Sweet Argument

½ lb Rippling Laughter

### Method

Put the flour of love, good looks, sweet temper into a well-furnished house. Beat the buttered youth to a cream, mix together with the blindness of faults, Self-forgetfulness, powdered wits, good humour into a sweet argument, then Add them all to love and our gently in rippling laughter and common sense. Work together until all is well and bake forever. Anon

Recipe for preserving children

1 Grass-grown field

1 Half dozen children (or more)

Several dogs (and puppies if available)

1 Brook

Pebbles

Method

Into field pour children and dogs, allowing them to mix well.

Pour brook over pebbles till slightly frothy.

When children are nicely brown, cool in a warm bath.

When dry, serve with milk and fresh-baked gingerbread.....Anon

Scripture Cake

1 cup Judges 5:25

2 cups Jeremiah 6:20

3 ½ cups 1 Kings 4:22

2 cups 1 Samuel 30:12

1 cup Genesis 43:11

1 cup Genesis 24:20

6 Isaiah 10:14

A pinch of Leviticus 2:13

1 tablespoon Exodus 16:31

Add to taste 1 Kings 10:2

Heed Solomon's advice for raising a son (Proverbs 23:14) and you will have a cake deserving of the Christmas season.

# News from the churches

## Bowthorpe

The seasons of angels, saints and all souls unfold together. On 29th September it was the start of the Michaelmas season, when we could give thanks for all our local reminders of the archangel Michael : St. Michael and All Angels Ruin, St. Michael's junior school and St Michael's Cottages. We could also lament for the closure of St. Michael's Workshop, while praying for God's guidance to open up a new use for the building.



On 31st October at Hallowe'en, the eve of all Saints Day, a Light Show was staged on the church patio, with colourful, moving lights circling on the walls of the ruin. Over 150 children and adults came along within the designated one hour, to dance to music and to collect 'goody bags' from the church kitchen. Inside the bags, were sweet-treats plus an Advent calendar making the connection with Jesus the Light of the World.

Two days later our annual Bereavement Service was held, when loved ones were remembered and candles were lit for them. Then came Remembrance Sunday, with Scouts, Cubs, Squirrels and Brownies packing the church for morning worship, bringing their colours and their parents with them.

Sally Simpson

## Chapel Field Road

For the fourth year running we are again supporting the Welcome Rucksack Project, a project of the Norwich Justice and Peace Group. The rucksacks, with supportive contents are given to Asylum Seekers, Refugee families and single females arriving in Norwich. The rucksacks are filled with essential items given by the congregation or bought from monetary gifts. They are presented at our Gift Service which is held on December 15th at 10.30am.



The Methodist



## **St Peter's Jessopp Road LEP**

Following the sad closure of Trinity United Reformed Church at the end of September, we have been pleased to welcome a number of their congregation to our Sunday worship. We pray that they will find us a welcoming church.

Our regular weekday activities continue to be opportunities for fellowship and companionship. Our Tuesday afternoon Crafty Quilters and Wednesday morning Coffee Stop are well supported and church-organised table tennis groups meet on Tuesday and Friday mornings. On the first Wednesday of each month we have a lunch followed by a study group led by Reverend Matthew.



We have recently held two fund raising events: a quiz for Tools with a Mission attended by over 40 people and raising £268 and a MacMillian Coffee Morning that raised over £480. And Crafty Quilters are holding a Coffee Morning and Craft Sale on 9th November in aid of Stepping Stones, a locally-based charity that supports adults with learning difficulties.

Looking forward to Christmas, we will be having weekly Wednesday lunches each followed by a study group. Our Gift and Carol Service is on 8th December, and the Coffee Stop Carol Service on 18th December.

Keir Hounsome

## **Mile Cross**

At Mile Cross we had a full breakfast morning before the regular Sunday service on the 27th October.

We will be having a Barn Dance evening in the Church on the 9th November at 7pm.

On the 14th December Phoenix Male Voice Choir will be singing their usual Christmas concert starting at 7.30 pm. Doors open at 7pm. You can pay at the door.

The Christmas Carol and Gift service will be on December 15th at the usual time of morn-



ing service which will be a local arrangement.

Regular events include home Bible study each Wednesday afternoon.

There is a Prayer meeting in Church vestry every 2nd Saturday of the month at 10-30 am.

Afternoon Fellowship on 1st Monday of month afternoon at 2-30 pm, unless bank holiday. Second Monday if Bank Holiday that month.

The December one will be a celebration of upcoming Christmas.

John Johnson

### **Rosebery Road**

Our Tree and Crib Festival this year is raising money for St Martins and will be open from 10.30am to 4pm on the 7th, 8th, 13th, 14th and 15th December. We will also be raising money for the church through the refreshments and the sale of craft items, books, pickles etc.

We look forward to welcoming friends from across the Circuit. We are hoping to welcome the children from Angel Road School and also possibly St Clements Primary School, to view the displays.

We are also looking forward to sharing fellowship at our Church party on February 8<sup>th</sup>.



Joy  
Southam

### **WYMONDHAM**

The Revd Steve Cullis is planning a Course for his churches which is designed to aid in developing habits and practices in daily life that help us to follow Jesus and listen to his voice above all the other voices that fill our lives and our world. If we do this well, it will change us for the good.

He writes “At present I am doing the course for myself, and I am finding it deeply helpful. I feel it’s the most valuable thing I can offer you as your Minister.”

He will use resources from an organisation called “Practicing the Way” and will be offering the same course twice per month in 2025. The first of 8 Sessions entitled ‘Following Jesus’; will be held on Monday 13th January at 2pm at Wymondham, and Tuesday 14th at 7pm at Hethersett. Seven more sessions will be held monthly thereafter - details are available.

Steve extends an invitation to friends around the circuit - Any one who wants to come will be made welcome and we’d enjoy having them with us.

Steve Cullis

Contact via [-stephen.cullis@methodist.org.uk](mailto:-stephen.cullis@methodist.org.uk)  
and 01953 609106



## Diary dates

Tuesday	4 March	7.30pm	Circuit Meeting Bowthorpe Rd
Wednesday	19 March	2.15pm	MWiB Committee Chapel Field Road
Wednesday	14 May		MWiB Spring District Day Dereham
Sunday	25 May	3.30pm	Easter Offering Dedication Rosebery Road

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# The Meaning Of Christmas

Far away in Bethlehem, a Baby Boy was born;  
Born with neither riches nor with fame,  
Yet Wise Men came from all around to  
bring to Him their gifts,  
And peace was felt by all who heard His name.

Angels watched Him as He slept,  
and gently rocked His bed;  
Their voices singing softly in His ear;  
His Mother and His Father both gave thanks to God above  
For the greatest gift of all, their Son, so dear

They knew His life upon this earth  
would not be filled with wealth,  
They also knew He would encounter strife;  
But most of all, they knew that He would be a loving Child,  
And teach the love of God throughout His life.

At Christmas, as we celebrate  
this Birth of Jesus Christ,  
Let's keep in mind the truth of Christmas Day;  
For it's not the Christmas wrappings,  
nor the gifts that lie within,  
But our gift of love to others in every way...