

# *grapevine*

Spring 2025  
Issue Number 46

The **Methodist** Church   
EAST ANGLIA **DISTRICT**



## Moving Forward



## **As One Our Church**

***When good friends are drawn together,  
hearts are lifted up in song,  
there's a sense of true commitment,  
and a feeling you belong.***

***Honest love born out of friendship,  
lasts a lifetime we all know,  
stronger links which bind us closer,  
like a seed we watched it grow.***

***Our excited voices mingle,  
with perhaps a hug or two,  
and that timeless sound of laughter,  
swapping stories old and new.***

***When good friends are brought together,  
it's the best it's ever been,  
just recounting all the good times,  
everything you've done and seen.***

***And the silent cord that binds us,  
grows more tight with every word,  
intermingled with God's music,  
it's the best you ever heard.***

***Here we have a home so peaceful,  
we are one as friend to friend,  
but far better, that dear Angel,  
who is with us to the end.***

***When good friends are come together,  
underneath God's blessed sky,  
we all know there'll be a next time,  
even though we say goodbye.***

Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of *grapevine* ‘Moving Forward’.

In this issue we learn about the new facilities at St Andrew’s Methodist Church in Sheringham and the East Anglia Heritage Centre in Wighton and the difference they are making.

We hear how our churches in Bungay and Ely are embracing Eco church values and moving forward with Eco initiatives.

Cromer Methodist Church share the wonderful things happening with their Community Matters Café and we share a few photos from the President of Conference’s District visit.

Trinity Methodist Church in Lowestoft highlight the valuable work that they are doing with their outreach groups.

Three young people from our District share about their visit to 3Generate in 2024.

Our new Assistant Synod Secretary, Judith (Judy) Read, introduces herself to the District and Susan Eldridge shares an EDI update with us and gives an insight into MWiB.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition!

*Please remember this is your magazine. If there is something you would like included, we would love to hear from you.*

*The next issue is due in September 2025.*

**grapevine**

is available in large print and on CD (audio)

**If you would like to request a copy, please contact the District Office:**

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**The Editorial Team:**

Revd Helen Hollands, Susan Eldridge, Danielle Gravestock and Aileen Fox

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Pages 2 & 20— Danielle Gravestock



# Introduction

Revd Helen Hollands



*Dear Friends,*

When I first read some of the articles in this Grapevine I was staying with my parents in North Wales. I couldn't help reflecting that how we move forwards very much depends upon where we begin.

In the case of my father, he has limited mobility so that moving forwards just a few steps required herculean effort and takes him time. Our baby granddaughter Evie is just beginning to move independently and is absolutely delighted when she manages to roll quickly away. If you begin as a runner, you might be wondering about your personal best time, if you are a walker then the pace will be steadier.

How we move forward depends upon who we are, how old we are, and where we are starting from and that is obvious really. I think that it is true for our churches too. In the district I have already encountered many congregations that are moving forwards in spirituality, in tradition, in new ways of worship, in expressing different ideas and changing attitudes. There are youth clubs and coffee mornings, 'Messy Vintage' and 'Messy church', churches on the phone, on-line, gathering in person and simply praying at home. Some travel gently, others at a pace. The Holy Spirit moves

amongst us all as both a fire and a gentle dove, enfolding us, motivating us, inspiring us to continually find God in a new way, in our hearts and homes, in our circuits and churches. For some who are beginning a New Place for New People that can feel dramatic and exciting, for others who steadily keep the faith in the simplest of ways it may be more sedate, yet we journey together, all of us moving forwards. We can't go back but we do remember where we have been.

In the journey of Holy Week Jesus makes the unenviable journey to the cross, he sets his face towards Jerusalem and does not look back. The bleakness of that journey, towards the supper, the garden, the betrayal and the violence is devastating. During Holy Week we are encouraged to go there too, to remember, to recognise that the power games of the world are still at play and inhabit that sorrow. Then we move forwards, to the light of Sunday, the wonder of joy, hope, love and new life. We look to the new day but we do not forget where we have been.

Wishing you a wonderful Easter season.

*Helen*

Revd Helen Hollands  
Chair of the East Anglia District



# A New Year, A New Look!

Jean Parton

On Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January, St Andrew's Methodist Church, Sheringham in the North Norfolk Circuit, threw open its doors to the community to celebrate and give thanks for



This new space will enable such events as the annual **Flower Festival (10<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> July this year)** to be more creative, provide for more varied acts of worship to take place and for community groups to have an

the new versatile and accessible worship space now available to the people of Sheringham.

accessible, safe and independent space from the rest of the premises.

All enjoyed seeing the displays of the groups who use the premises, listening to choirs, watching and joining in with folk dancing, table-tennis, indoor bowls, putting flowers into a floral arrangement and crafts. Visitors were also able to view information on the history of St Andrew's since its earliest days. All this washed down with gallons of tea and coffee served from the new kitchen area which once formed the choir stalls and vestry. The day concluded with a short time of worship led by the Minister at St Andrew's, Revd Diane Grice. Lively worship songs were led by Revd Deborah Humphries, her husband Colin on drums and Ellie Cant on piano.



Jean Parton  
Member of the Leadership Team  
at St Andrew's Methodist Church, Sheringham

# Moving Forward as an Eco Church

Teresa Ely

In January 2024, inspired by the District Initiative, we at Ely Methodist Church set out on our Eco Church Journey. Our aim was not primarily to get an award, but to encourage our members and the users of our Church premises to be more climate aware.

We set up a small Eco Church Group to guide us on this journey and were delighted to qualify for the A Rocha Eco Church Bronze award. In July 2024 we held a

celebration service attended by the Mayor and Mayoress of Ely. A talk on toilet twinning and a supper at that event raised enough money to twin four toilets in addition to the one the Brownies had already twinned; since then toilet twinning has been adopted as a Circuit project.

We began an eco tip in our monthly bulletin, try to put an eco slide on the

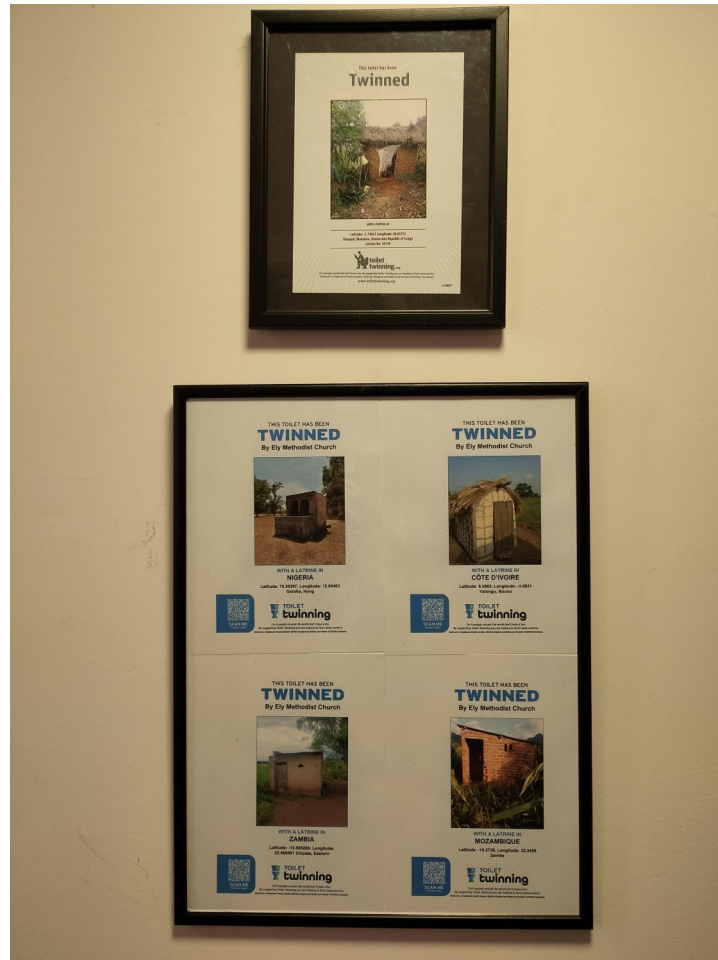
screen before worship, and encourage preachers to pray for the environment.

Our harvest service and lunch also had an environmental theme and was led by Stella Davis from Stowmarket. Our Christmas news sheet included an article on 'Why an Eco Church?'

We have made contact with the Eco Group at the Cathedral (a gold award winner) and now join in a litter pick on the first Saturday of the

month – and coffee and cake afterwards, a valuable time of friendship and ideas sharing.

We already used a green energy supplier, but scope for changing our system is limited by our building and finances. However whenever replacements are required for lighting the climate impact is considered. We have installed two water butts.





We already had a collection point for recycling Ink Cartridges. Two of our Eco Group members have been recycling blister packs and the collection point we set up at church was very well used by members and users of the premises. We are also encouraging members to use the recycling facility that has recently opened in our local Boots chemists. We had a seasonal collection for stamps.

Our next challenge is to find better ways of using our paved courtyard to benefit the community and those who use our premises.

Alongside this we were approached by the Coat of Hopes pilgrims (see [www.coatofhopes.uk](http://www.coatofhopes.uk)) to use our premises as a stopover in December;

this led to a service focusing on Hopes and Fears for the climate attended again by the Mayor and Mayoress and our local MP, Charlotte Cane. The coat stayed in our church over Christmas before going to Parliament for the Climate and Nature Bill second reading again meeting our MP. Several members of the church accompanied the Coat Pilgrims when it left for King's Lynn.

So where do we go now? Of course we would like our Silver Award, but that is not our key aim. We want to show that caring for our planet is not for someone else but something we can, and must, all do.

Teresa Ely  
Ely Methodist Church Eco Group



Litter pickers from Ely Methodist Church and the Cathedral enjoying a break in the Lady Chapel at Ely Cathedral.

# Moving Forward

Sally Reynolds

Over the last 13 months at Trinity in Lowestoft we have 'moved forward' with our outreach work, establishing two new groups.

Firstly, last year, we were approached by Revd Robert Soanes' Granddaughter, who was looking to run a 6 week course entitled 'Crafting for Wellbeing' as a project to be part of her degree course. We agreed to facilitate and support this and after advertising it in church and on social media we were pleased to have a small group of regulars join us each week. At the end of the 6 weeks the people who had joined the group were keen to carry it on.



We average about a dozen people each Tuesday morning both from within our congregation and from the wider local

community, some of whom have joined us at church services and other events too. The activities range from jigsaw making, sketching, card making, Christmas decorations, adult colouring books, puzzle books and a lot of just chatting, drinking tea and socialising. For a long while we have talked about the possibility of starting up a 'Parent/carer and baby/toddler group to reach out to young families in the neighbourhood. We have a successful Playgroup at Trinity but, like many settings, the need to attract new children to replace those who move on to school each year is very important, as funding to keep the setting viable depends on the number of children on the books. So a secondary outcome of this venture will hopefully lead to some new recruits for our playgroup.

We decided to take the plunge last month and set up such a group to run parallel to our 'Crafting for Wellbeing' on a Tuesday morning. The crafters meet in the small hall and the newly named 'Little Lambs' group meets in the lounge. We open up the two hatches in the kitchen which lies between the two rooms so we can keep both groups supplied with drinks and biscuits!



It's early days yet but we have been encouraged to have up to six families each session. Some of these are families who have older children already attending the Playgroup, some are families who heard about it via friends and families linked to Trinity and some saw it advertised on social media.

The playgroup staff and children support it by sharing some of their toys and equipment and where possible will bring a few children in for a short visit to play or do some singing. The long term aim is for it to be an informal, self supporting group but one that retains the feel of a group that is welcomed and nurtured by the church and of course it will be lovely if any families are encouraged to join us in church as well.



Moving forward our hope is to create a safe, encouraging space for individuals and families to thrive. We want to make 'church' a natural part of their lives

where they can be gently introduced to the Christian message of love and acceptance. These recent new areas of church life have encouraged us to plunge into the unknown and try new things and just see what

happens. They are not perfect and we are always open to guidance and advice but it has shown what can be achieved if we, after prayerful consideration, just adopt the 'build it and they will come' approach.

Sally Reynolds  
Steward at Trinity Methodist Church, Lowestoft



# EDI and MWiB—Moving Forward

Susan Eldridge



## ***EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion)***

We have revamped the EDI pages on the District website [District website - EDI](#). There is now a lot of information so please do have a look.

An EDI newsletter will be issued in May and this will include the results from our EDI Needs Survey (which have already been shared with members of Synod).

## ***MWiB (Methodist Women in Britain)***

From a personal point of view, I am going to become the MWiB East Anglia District President in the Autumn, hopefully supported by a lot of other people given the number of roles I juggle! MWiB's strapline is "For women, for justice, for Christ". Nationally it has just produced a new bookmark reminding people what the organisation does/provides:

- Financial support to enable study and equip projects run by and for women.
- Opportunities to meet others (and share fellowship).
- Resources for prayer and worship.

- Creativity and Craftivism.
- Campaigning for justice and equality at home and abroad.

You can find out more on [www.mwib.org.uk](http://www.mwib.org.uk) or on Facebook.

There are national events like the annual Conference held at Swanwick, Derbyshire and the annual World Federation Day. Locally we have a Spring and Autumn District Day. The Spring one is on Wednesday 14th May at Dereham Methodist Church. We have a speaker, worship and singing, bring and buy to raise funds for the Charity we are supporting and an opportunity to fellowship with friends old and new.

We have in the past held Conferences (including residential) at Belsey Bridge, Ditchingham (now sadly closed), a Creativity Day and Quiet Days. Our numbers fell as a result of the pandemic and if we can get these back up we hope to do some of these again. For our local events you do not have to be a Methodist or a woman to attend! We welcome all and it is not unusual to see a few men present, especially when we have a male speaker (as is planned for the Autumn).



We support a Charity which changes every two years or so. Currently it is PSP (Progressive Supranuclear Palsy), the horrible disease which Revd Heather Sorrell, a former East Anglia District MWiB President, is suffering from. Her husband, Peter, has trained as a fundraiser for the Charity and would be happy to visit groups/churches to tell you about it. I have also written a bit about it (based on what Peter told us when he came to our Autumn 2024 District Day) for our Spring Newsletter which will be circulated electronically in May, with some paper copies available at Spring District Day.

Nationally, MWiB is divided into regions

and we are represented by Rita Rowe of the Lincolnshire District who tries to attend our events when she can. I recently attended their Spring District Day at Holbeach Methodist Church.

There is so much more I could say but space does not allow. If you would like to know more about any of this, please contact me (in person, by phone or by email) or speak to our Secretary, Jacky Woor, or our Finance Officer, Olga Watkins, or our current President, Sue Groome. I would be happy to add you to my MWiB Newsletter electronic distribution list.

Susan Eldridge

District EDI Officer and East Anglia District  
MWiB President Elect



Holbeach Methodist Church

# Community Matters Café

Christine Goodman

We, at the Community Matters Café at Cromer Methodist Church, were blessed this year with a grant from the Mission and Ministries Committee to help with the cost of redecorating the hall, which houses the café, which was looking very tired and tatty.

We first opened the cafe in 2012, shortly after the now North Norfolk Trussell Foodbank opened on the church premises. It had become apparent to our then minister, Revd Sharon

Willimott, through her work in the foodbank, that there were people in the area who were struggling on their own and were socially isolated and for whom we could provide a warm and welcoming space with refreshments as a gift from the church.

As a church we were struggling numerically and financially but felt that this was mission that we were being called to do and so far we have

continued to be able to fund it, which we see as confirmation that we are doing that which the Lord would have us do.

Over the years, things have evolved and we now offer shower and laundry facilities in addition to a meal, and the

foodbank finances a Citizen's Advice Advisor who comes to café one morning a week. We have links with the local council, and support workers regularly meet

with their clients in the café.

There are many heartwarming stories that could be told about people who have passed through the café. The man who unexpectedly found himself homeless and sleeping in his car, who cried when he was able to have a shower on the day before a hospital appointment. The young man from eastern Europe, released from prison without having his phone returned and





therefore unable to access his visa, who was given a phone by the rough sleeper's team at the council, a sim card from foodbank, and came to us for a voucher to load payment on to the phone, who came running down the road to show our deacon that he now had access to his visa. One of our regular customers whose heating system had broken down who was so grateful for a regular hot shower while the council and other charities helped him get his boiler mended. The young lad who would eat next to nothing when he first started coming to café, who after continual encouragement to just try things, now eats a full meal plus seconds (but not baked beans)!

The age range of our customers is very wide, from 15 days (at the time of writing) to over 90, but the interaction and support for each other is lovely to watch.

Our present minister, Revd Deborah Humphries, has introduced a few minutes (seconds!) of silence with a lighted candle just prior to our Monday lunch, to reflect on our friends who may be going through a sad or difficult time. This has prompted some queries on spiritual matters and a request for her to consider running an Alpha course. Watch this space!

No, of course things don't always run smoothly (!) and we are not able to solve everyone's problems. Sadly, some of our former regulars are now getting their food and warmth at His Majesty's pleasure, but for now we will trust in God and continue to provide a place for people to come where they will be accepted and fed, welcomed and warmed (and washed!!).

Christine Goodman  
Member of Cromer Methodist Church



# 3Generate 2024

Rosa, Martha and Iris Williams

3Generate is a weekend where young Methodists

can get together and discover more about God. On Friday 4th October, seven children from Cambridge churches (Castle Street, Histon and Chesterton) went in a minibus to Birmingham wearing matching red hoodies. On the journey there, we got to know each other a bit more and found out each other's favourite hymns and chocolate bars!

When we arrived at the NEC, we explored the site and ate some dinner. We went off in groups and did activities including karaoke, silent disco, mindful colouring and a talk on weird and wonderful Bible stories (did you know that unicorns are mentioned eight times in the Bible?). We went to bed in tents inside the building and some of us didn't get much sleep!



On Saturday, we tried soap-making, climbing, VR headsets, felting, computer games and making pedal-powered smoothies. We discovered many different ways to pray in an inflatable chapel and tried meditation with Bible stories in a yurt. We also had



some group time together back at our campsite with popcorn, grapes and cola-flavoured Jaffa cakes.



On Sunday, there were different types of service including heavy metal, Taize, gospel singing and forest worship. Then there was a big picnic worship with everyone and their packed lunches. We sang songs with the Moses Brothers band including Shine Jesus Shine and Shackles (Praise You).

We all had a really enjoyable time and would love to go again next year with an even bigger group. Speak to Isaac, Rosa, Matthias, Hattie, Martha, Ethan or Iris to find out more! Thank you to all the



adults – Jenny, Fiona, Gordon and Anna – for organising the trip, driving the minibus and looking after us while we were there.

*Rosa, Martha and Iris Williams  
Aged 12, 10 and 8*



## District News

### **An introduction to Judith (Judy) Read, District Assistant Synod Secretary...**

I am very honoured to have been appointed as the Assistant Synod Secretary, and with the support and encouragement of many people, hope I am beginning to get to grips with the role.

I was brought up in a Methodist family, my Mother was a children's club leader at Sprowston, Norwich, and my father was a youth fellowship leader and local preacher. When I was 6, my parents were blessed with twin boys and my life changed. On Sundays, when Dad was preaching, I would usually go with him so that Mum only had my brothers to look after and once I was a bit older he allowed me to lead the first part of the services for him, introducing hymns and reading prayers or lessons. During my teens Dad often took a group of us from the youth fellowship with him and we would all assist him in leading the worship and introducing "modern" Christian Songs not in the Methodist hymn book with guitar accompaniment!



The opportunities for young people at Sprowston Methodist Church at that time were amazing and I am eternally grateful to those people who gave of their time and energy to take on leadership roles and, along with my parents, nurtured me into faith in Christ. We attended the MAYC (Methodist Association of Youth Clubs) weekends in London with the district group and it was at one of these I started going out with one of the leaders of an Ipswich group, David, who has been my husband for 44 years, and is now a steward in the Norwich Circuit.



When we married I moved to Ipswich and attended Bramford Road Church, undertaking various roles at the church, including training as a worship leader. Following the deaths of my parents, at the suggestion of those twin boys, after prayerful consideration in 2021 David and I moved to Sprowston to the house I was born in and I transferred back to Sprowston Church where we had been married.

Career wise, I started off as a trainee manager in footwear retailing in Norwich but when we married I joined the civil service in Ipswich, leaving when our daughter, Sarah-Jane, was born. When Sarah-Jane started school I was offered a part time job as a care home administrator and then enjoyed over 35 years in that very interesting and varied role within 4 different care homes, finally retiring in August 2024.

I enjoy going to the theatre, reading,

knitting and singing. I used to sing with the Ipswich Gilbert and Sullivan Society who put on concerts for charity during the early months of the year and stage one of the Savoy Operettas each Autumn. I have performed in the chorus of many of the operettas, my only solo part was as Inez, the old lady who appears at the end of The Gondoliers.

This is not my first district role as I served as District WAY (World Affairs Youth) secretary in the early 1980's.

*Judith (Judy) Read*



# New facilities at the East Anglia Methodist Heritage Centre at Wighton

Sarah Friswell

Two years ago, an exciting new venture started in Wighton, Central Norfolk. The chapel, which sits in the heart of the village, had closed for worship and the Circuit generously agreed to loan it to the East Anglia Methodist Historical Society whose members had long wished for somewhere in which to tell the story of East Anglian Methodism and its people. The East Anglia Methodist Heritage Centre came into being in Spring 2023 and over the past two years it has welcomed over 700

visitors. It has quickly become a treasure trove of artefacts, ceramics, pictures, books and archives. But it is the conversations with visitors which show the importance of sharing our heritage.

Visitors fall into two categories. Firstly, Methodists from near and far. They spend a considerable amount of time studying the themed exhibits, finding something to which they can connect – be that a JMA badge, Sunday school

certificate, or finding the name of a minister they knew years ago. This sharing of faith stories is enriching for both the visitors and volunteers on duty.

Secondly, the people who just cautiously peep around the door and ask if they can come in: walkers, cyclists, holidaymakers who regularly visit the area but have never seen the doors open before. These encounters create great opportunities to tell the

story of the Methodist Church and its values. Sometimes the visitors know absolutely nothing about the church, other times, through conversation they start to talk about attending

Sunday school as a child or having a preacher in the family. These types of conversation, which often start with a prompt from an artefact, then lead to greater depth, with visitors wanting to know about the Christian faith from a Methodist perspective.





Building on these positive encounters, over the winter, fundraising started for the next phase of our development. Thanks to support from the District, grant-making bodies and the generosity of individuals, when the Heritage Centre opens for the 2025 season (with two special opening days at Easter, Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> and Monday 21<sup>st</sup> April, from 11 am to 3 pm), there will be a new accessible toilet available.

One of the great successes of the Heritage Centre has been the quantity of donations received including Victorian photos, orders of services, preaching plans, local preachers notes, chapel histories and audio/visual recordings of services. These are being catalogued so that visitors and researchers can find out more about a particular chapel. The space originally

designated for the library is already full so during spring 2025 this will be extended to allow more of this rich source of information to be shared.

Also new for 2025 is an exhibition about the work of Methodist Architect, Clifford Dann and, if you are musical, the chapel's American reed organ is being refurbished and will be playable.

The Heritage Centre makes a great destination for a group outing (especially combined with a visit to nearby Walsingham Chapel). For group visits please phone 07546 732092.

**Open Tuesdays and Fridays 11 am to 3 pm, Easter to Autumn.** Refreshments and ample parking (NR23 1PG) available. Free admission. Donations welcome.

Sarah Friswell  
Central Norfolk Circuit



## President of Conference District Visit

In January, we had a District visit from the President of Conference, Revd Helen Cameron. Helen's visit to East Anglia took her to Southwold Methodist Church to learn about valuable work taking place there with the foodbank which supports around 40 people a month, and to Upwell to hear all about the wonderful work of the Upwell Methodist Church, the rich history of Methodism in Upwell and learn about the New Places for New People project which aims to use the garden more.

Helen also preached at Choral Evensong at Ely Cathedral for the week of prayer for Christian Unity, as well as visited the Julian Shrine Norwich and All Hallows Guest House with Father Richard.

A lunch was hosted at Chapel Field Road Methodist Church for the final day of the visit with members from across the District, enjoying the chance to chat with Helen.







A heartfelt thank you to all who helped to host and plan the visit.



# Recycling at Emmanuel Church, Bungay

Graham Gibbs

As part of our Going Green Environmental Project which began in 2007, our congregation and friends around the Waveney Valley Ecumenical Partnership have been collecting up some of their rubbish which would normally go in the wheelie bins.

We collect various different commodities under the Terracycle scheme and either send them to Terracycle directly or take big bag fulls to other Terracycle collecting points. This includes plastic bread bags & all bakery plastics, cheese wrappers, crisp packets, coffee & tea packets, biscuit & cake wrappers, Pringle tubes and writing implements.

We also collect used printer cartridges, old bras for Bra Aid, old spectacles for Vision Aid and kitchen roll tubes, Pringle lids & plastic bottle tops to sell on Ebay for art & craft materials. Many schools, groups and individuals buy them for their



Emmanuel Church achieved their Gold Eco Church Award in 2022

projects including one customer who melts them down to make jewellery.

We were contacted by a company up in Coventry who make competitor medals out of

recycled plastic, asking if we had a load of surplus bottle tops that we could let them have. We ended up sending them over 11,000, three very large boxes full. In thanks for our support we have received a plaque made from recycled plastic.



The plaque says – “This plaque made with recycled plastic bottle tops donated to Team Recycle who make recycled medals for sports events around the world”.

We were pleased to support this project as it gives a very clear message to all the competitors, supporters etc... around the world that plastic is recyclable.

Graham Gibbs  
Going Green Co-ordinator



# Open Farm Sunday – 8 June 2025 – reconnect with your local food producers

Dig out your wellies & head for a Sunday afternoon outing to a farm.

Open Farm Sunday is an opportunity to discover the crucial work farmers do producing food, nurturing nature, and protecting the environment for future generations. Sign up to visit a local farm & have the opportunity to talk with farmers, hear their stories and discover how they are working for a more sustainable future whilst producing food you can trust.

Why not organise a visit & invite your eco-church/social justice group, toddler group families, warm space users, uniform groups, food pantry team...

For further details and to find a local Open Farm, please visit:-

<https://farmsunday.org>





# Contributions

**We hope you have been inspired by the articles  
in this edition of *grapevine*.**

**If you would like to make a contribution to  
the next edition, we would love to hear from you.**

**Please send any news items, letters and photographs,  
which you would like to share with others in the  
District to:**

**[office@eangliamethodist.org.uk](mailto:office@eangliamethodist.org.uk)**

***or post to 'grapevine'***

**District Office,  
Chapel Field Road Methodist Church  
Norwich, NR2 1SD**

**For further information, please contact  
the District Office on 01603 625765**

***Unfortunately we cannot guarantee  
inclusion of all contributions.***

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