

MEMO

Middlesbrough & Eston Methodist Outburst

MARCH — MAY 2020



FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Thank you from the 'Memo' team, to those of you who have sent contributions for this issue. It is good to read of your activities in your churches and your points of view.

We always welcome more articles and it would be good to have even more diversity. Possibly you would like to comment on what you have read in 'Memo' Please think and pray about this, this publication is important throughout our Circuit and beyond. Some words in 'Memo' may just help someone with their faith journey, who knows how God uses these articles?

This is another busy quarter. It is good to see a number of Circuit services planned, it is so special when we all come together to worship. Hopefully lots of you will come along to those special worship events.

Also, this quarter contains the most important festival in our Christian year, Easter. We will be reminded again of Jesus going to the cross for us and rising to life to give us victory over death and the gift of eternal life. Do you believe this? Hopefully all our beliefs in this amazing true story will be inspired again at the glorious Easter time.

We will celebrate Mothering Sunday and not only think of mothers, but of the importance of our Mother church in our lives.

Along with the Specials are the

'ordinary' Sundays which can be extraordinary when we feel in our worship the movement of the Holy Spirit.

It is good to hear in 'Memo' some really inspiring testimonies from Celia and from Anne. Would you like to share something of your faith story, think how it may inspire others!

So 'Memo' is waiting for you!!! Any contributions please, to the Circuit Office. You will see the deadline date below.

God Bless;
Dave, Anne and Elaine
(Communications Team)

DEADLINE FOR NEXT EDITION OF MEMO

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

Or email to
mbrocircuit@gmail.com
by **1st April 2020**



The Superintendent's Letter

Dear Friends,

I'm writing this letter on a rather memorable day. The 31st January 2020 is Leaving Day - in the Prime Minister's inimitable words - the day we, 'Get Brexit Done.' You would have to have been living on another planet, not to have witnessed all that this entailed over the past three and a half years.

But when I say this is a memorable day - a Leaving Day - I'm not actually referring to the European Union, rather, I am thinking about the wonderful staff at Linthorpe Road Church and Resource Centre for whom today is the day they leave work following being made redundant - a sad day indeed.

You probably know that Linthorpe Road Church and Resource Centre is part of the City Centre Churches Register and as such should undergo a review every five years - we have been helped greatly by a Review Team set up by the District where various aspects of the life of the church and centre have been subject to scrutiny. This has been done with both professionalism and care.

Following the Circuit Meeting in March, the Review will be available for anyone to read, I commend it to you. Many challenges and opportunities have been identified as the Church and Resource Centre try to work out how God wants us to serve him in Mission and Ministry to the centre of Middlesbrough.

Financially, for various reasons, we are in a very fragile position and we could no longer go on employing two Administrators and two Caretakers, hence this sad and memorable day when they leave.

However, one of the phrases which has been said over and over again and with which the Team end the Review is, 'God has not finished with us.'

This speaks to us of fresh opportunities and challenges as we seek to serve in the town centre in what has become, over the last two decades, a very different place.

We are so fortunate to have the experience of Rev Charity who has made really good links with local businesses, politicians, community agencies and those doing similar Christian work. It is essential that the relationships she has forged with them and the exciting ones with the University are nurtured and strengthened.

I want you to know how passionately committed I am to the future of God's work in Middlesbrough - Not merely to survive but to thrive and to flourish!

It is so easy to get entrenched in all the responsibilities we have for our own church and community but as a Circuit Family, we need to be interested and involved in what is happening in the middle of our town, too. There are so many opportunities to share the practical, social and emotional life of those who need to know the Gospel of God's Love. Linthorpe Road Church and Resource Centre is going to continue to offer hospitality on a Sunday to all in inclusive

acts of Worship and in the Thursday lunch time service. We will celebrate the work that goes on from our premises with groups like Boro Angels, Millenium Meals and MAP Middlesbrough, as well as finding new ways to share God's Love to all in imaginative ways in the future.

There will be challenges, especially without our wonderful Sandra, Anita, Peter and Chris, but the legacy they leave is one of hope for the future.

Jesus said: 'I have come that they may have Life, Abundant Life.'

It is this life we believe we are called to offer in his name in our wonderful town.

With Sincere Love, *Sue*

JIM NEESAM

It is with sadness that I am writing this obituary about our dear friend Jim on behalf of Eston Grange and the Circuit. However I consider this a privilege and honour.

I personally have known Jim for nearly fifty years. Jim was quite a character, born in North Yorkshire he had many countryside tales to relate of village life before coming to this area to marry Kathleen, his late beloved wife. He was a member of the Wilton Male Voice Choir, loved singing both the old traditional and modern hymns; especially those of hymnwriter Rev. Fred Pratt Green, who Jim came to know as a young man. He loved football (dare I say Middlesbrough) and attending county and country cricket matches. Jim a property steward, was also a door steward always welcomed everyone with a smile, firm handshake and friendly words. He enjoyed over the years being involved with the 'Live at Home' dinners and special meals provided by Eston Grange. He could be seen donning his apron; for his domain was to be in the small kitchen in charge of the industrial dishwasher!!

Jim loved driving and many will be grateful for the lifts he provided in all weathers to Synod, Circuit Meetings and events.

Jim was a contributing member from its inception of our Thursday morning prayer meeting, arriving early, making sure that the room was warm and inviting, especially on cold mornings.

Due to the nature of his work in Eston Cemetery, Jim was well known by the clergy of all denominations in the Eston area.

Jim will be remembered as a devoted husband, father and grandfather. He was a committed Christian, a man of strong faith, eager to serve his maker, a true gentle man and will be greatly missed.

To quote Jim's favourite and meaningful passage from the bible Psalm 121

*"I lift up my eyes to the hills from where my help comes.
My help comes from the lord who made heaven and earth".*

Maureen Borley

My Christian Journey Part 3

When my 5 years of being a Church Steward was over I became a Communion Steward (this was tradition in our church). While in this role I went to a group at the manse. Rev Jan Tate was minister then. When we were asked what was the way forward. I said, 'mission'. The next week a leaflet came through my door about a Share Jesus Mission in Bath.



I decided that this was meant for me and applied to go. I thought I was a bit old to be sleeping on floors so opted for the hotel mission. We had to take a contribution for food and resources from your own church. You paid for your accommodation and also give a contribution towards the mission. After consulting the Church Council they decided they would support me if I raised the money myself. I did this by organising a coffee morning which was well supported.

Before I went someone from our church said, 'Are you going to be a local preacher'? My reply was that I would think about it while I was away. So off I went. We had been put in contact with people who lived nearby and would also be part of our team. I had a car so I went to Hartlepool to pick up a lady called Janet then drove on to a service station just beyond Derby to pick up another lady called Margaret. We drove to Bath where we met our team leader, Rev Keith Richardson and the rest of the team. We were anointed for our mission along with other teams and met Rob Frost and his message to us all was that to be on mission was to be at the centre of God's will. We found out we were to go to St Mark's in Cheltenham. So I drove there and we found our hotel. It was in a square of old three storey houses looking out onto a green area.



We had a meeting when all had arrived and the necessary admin was taken care of. The Minister of St Mark's John had just returned from sabbatical. We then found out what we had to do. The youth leader was Julian, a young man who worked for World Vision. Chris with his wife Anne from York, who had been on a number of missions before was to be pastor to the group and the rest would be given groups to attend and pastoral visiting later the next day. We also had to help with the holiday club and put on some drama during the week and the day before we left. Three others joined the team Marjory from Edinburgh, John from the South (later in the week) and Colin, who had just left a mission ship in Mauritius.



We were to take the service the following day. I was given the task of leading the prayer group that met before the service. Fortunately I had taken some books with me and thought I might read a meditation but when I went to sleep had no idea what I was going to do. I prayed that night for inspiration.

In the middle of the night I was woken as someone ran down the street shouting very loudly. I turned over and picked up a book opened a page and knew this was what I had to read. When I got there I was met by the minister's wife who led the group and she explained what normally happened. There were about 20 people I read the meditation and I started praying then everybody joined in.

I knew God had helped with this when the minister's wife said afterwards 'That was just right.'



During the week Margaret, Janet and I organised games for the holiday club with a lot of help from Keith. Marjory, gave a talk to the Woman's Group. We got dressed up as clowns but looked more like tramps as we used clothes that had been donated to the church. Anne made us up to look like clowns with her fantastic make-up. We spent the morning on the main road advertising the holiday club and waving to the children as they passed in cars, hiding behind lampposts and talking to people as they walked past.

During the week I went pastoral visiting with the Communion Steward from the church. One visit sticks in my mind. The man I was visiting with, told me not to say anything but to leave it to him. I was not sure what I was expecting but when the door opened the hairs on the back of my neck rose. It was the first time I had come face to face with evil. I did not know anything about the man but my companion said the church had been working with him and would not say anything else. The next day we had a free day so Janet, Margaret and I went to visit the house where Gustav Holst lived. It was quite close to where we were staying. On one evening each one of us had dinner with a member of the church. I went to a couple who worked at GCHQ. It was difficult to make conversation because their answers to some of my questions were 'Sorry we can't talk about that'.

After all the obstacles that the team had met before they got to Bath, everything just fell into place for us. I felt that during the week God was really with us and knew that when I got home I would speak to our minister about being a Local Preacher as God would provide.

I must mention that we had our moment of fame as the children wanted our autographs at the end of the week. I made some friends and I still keep in touch with Margaret who also became a Local Preacher. She is the Preacher's secretary in Matlock. When I came home I spoke to our minister and to Mike Harland who was our Superintendent Minister. Then the process began. Ruth and Irene had already started on their exams so I would be in a group with Barbara Brown (who wanted a refresher). Both of these groups were taken by Rev Jan Tate.

There is still more to come!
Celia Butler



Time for a Smile

How wrong you can be! On the way to nursery school, a doctor had left her stethoscope on the rear seat of the car and her little girl picked it up and began playing with it. "That's OK", thought the doctor, "this may be a sign that my daughter will want to follow in my footsteps and be a doctor one day." Then the child held the end piece to her mouth and said, "Welcome to McDonald's, may I take your order please?"

The Association of Church Editors

Circuit Easter offering Service 2020



This will be held at Grove Hill Methodist Church
on Sunday May 17th at 6 pm.

The service is prepared by Methodist Women in Britain on behalf of the World Mission Fund. In this act of worship, we shall dedicate our Easter Offering and hear stories of how the World Mission Fund supports God's mission in different parts of the world.

Everyone is invited to share in this service, men and women.

COLIN BENNISON

I have written before in 'Memo' of the wonderful dedication of our Church musicians as they serve us each week and enhance our worship. As a Preacher, I always feel leading worship is a partnership between me and the organist/pianist.

We, at Grove Hill, are so fortunate in having Colin as our organist. He is an excellent musician and so brings to life our hymns and the whole worship experience. In conversation some time ago with Colin, he was saying he has played the organ for over 70 years. Not all these years were at Grove Hill, although the majority of his time was here. He did play for a little while at West End and also in York whilst he was training to be a teacher.

I decided we had to mark this occasion so we put together a Certificate which I was privileged to present to him on December 29th at the end of the service. I have known Colin for many years and as a lover of the organ I have always been in awe of his musicianship. However, as I said at the presentation, it is his ministry of music that has been so important. He interprets the hymns, his voluntaries will reflect the sermon or the prayers. He will play requests from members of the congregation and in so doing add something special to their Sunday.

He has played at so many funerals where his sensitive approach has helped the mourners. He has played at so many weddings and in his music helped to celebrate these wonderful services.

Colin once told me he could never stand up and preach or say very much, yet it is in his music that he preaches God's word in the way that he is inspired to do so.

So on behalf of Grove Hill and lots of other people and preachers, we say congratulations and thank you.

Dave Elliott

'Filling in the Spaces,' or 'How the Plan is made'

Some years ago when I became Local Preachers' Secretary, Martin Ramsden invited me and Martyn Laverick to join the Plan making team. I have to say it is one of the most enjoyable and special meetings I attend. This is for two reasons; one because worship is at the centre of our lives as Christians and having a small part in organising that worship is very special. Two, because the people in the team are a joy to work with; Rev Sue, Elaine and Martyn. For many people the Plan may not really be that important, for others it is essential. I am sure nobody in our Circuit looks at the Plan and says I'm not going today because a certain preacher is taking the service!!

I hope the Plan gives us all a chance to pray for the preacher at our church each Sunday and also to pray for our congregation as we meet to worship.

I thought it may be of interest to just share how we go about making the Plan. We made the Plan on Friday January 10th for the March to May Quarter. So we are usually working just under two months in advance. We usually begin by putting in the Ministers' planned dates, as they have special dates and services in the churches for which they have Pastoral Care. However they are now looking at preaching more around the Circuit than they had previously done, reminding us all they are Circuit Ministers. Obviously they are the only people able to take Communion Services so they have to be planned in too.

If there are requests from churches for preachers they wish to invite either from our Circuit or elsewhere then please let us know in advance of the Plan meeting. I will let churches know the dates of Plan meetings as soon as I have them and then you can let me know please of any 'specials'

Preachers also give Elaine their 'blocked dates' not everyone wants to preach two Sundays in succession, some ask for a gap between services. Other preachers ask for two or three services on one Sunday, so they are preaching less Sundays.

It can be a problem especially during holiday periods filling all the services. Some of us are very happy to preach as often as we are needed. We also have a very dedicated team of Worship Leaders at Trinity who take services in their own church, they have also led worship in other churches and they have been so very much appreciated.

On occasions we will ask people from outside the Circuit to come and help us out, regulars include Rev Bill Middlemiss and Ken Hudson.

We try not to place preachers more than once a Quarter in each church. Martyn has all this information so we know who has been where and when, and this does help. However there are times when we just have to put a preacher in a church where they have already preached in that Quarter or no preacher would be available.

Congregations are very understanding. One Vestry steward in one church which I won't name, but they meet 6.30pm on Sundays, in his prayer said thank you Lord that we have Dave *again.... I am not quite sure if there was a sigh following the prayer!!*

Once we have finished the Plan then tea and biscuits are served, and Elaine checks our work.

If all is well, she begins the most difficult task of putting the Plan together and sending out the draft and waiting for the inevitable email or phone call to say we have missed something or used a preacher on a Sunday they had blocked. However this is very rare and we do thank Elaine for the excellent job she does with the Plan.

As you may know we have twelve active Preachers and five Worship Leaders. So, when you receive your Plan, please think of the work and prayer that has gone into it.

Please also pray for the Preachers; Lay or Ordained, as we seek to fulfil our calling in this special ministry.

Dave Elliott

Workshop on Challenges in Pastoral Caring.

The weekend of Saturday 29th February and Sunday 1st March we are delighted to host a visit to our Circuit of Rev Dr Jonathan Pye currently Chair of the Bristol District of the Methodist Church and an Hon Research Fellow, Centre for Ethics in Medicine, University of Bristol. Previously the Rev Dr Pye was the last Principal of Wesley College of Theology Bristol and has lectured extensively in USA, UK, Australia and Canada, so we are particularly pleased he has agreed to lead a **Workshop for us: “Challenges in Pastoral Caring”** at Trinity Church Acklam.

It will be held at Trinity Methodist Church 1.00pm- 4.00pm on Saturday 29th, and people from other neighbouring Circuits have also been invited to come.

It is expected that there will be three 45 minute sessions:

1. **Why care?** What do we mean by “pastoral care” and how do we do it?
2. **All that lives must die:** Offering pastoral care in bereavement and loss.
3. **The greatest fear.** Pastoral care for those with mental illness, disability or dementia.

The sessions will be interactive and varied in content and resources, with opportunities for Q&A. Tea and Coffee will be available.

We warmly encourage pastoral visitors and all church members involved in “caring” in our congregations, so that’s you, to come to this event. It should be good.

Rev Dr Pye is also leading our worship on Sunday 1st March at a Circuit Service in Marton Methodist Church starting at 10.00am. We look forward to seeing you all there.

Ruth Lewis

Anne's story

Well, I didn't think I would ever find myself doing this. I'm more of a 'you won't catch me sharing a testimony' kind of person, or I was until about three months ago when I suddenly had this thought that if anyone asked, I could possibly, just possibly, manage it.

I come from a family of Methodists and did the three times to church on a Sunday and saying your piece at the Chapel Anniversary as a child thing. I still remember meetings at the Manse in the lead up to becoming a member in my teens. After moving to Liverpool for college and then Middlesbrough after getting married I didn't go to church much on a Sunday, unless I went 'back home' My husband always used to ask why I came back from those services with a smile on my face, and I don't think I ever really had a ready answer.

After some hard times I felt the need to go to church again and found Trinity. It was definitely a blessing and I have so much to be thankful for over the last twenty or so years. Life was ticking along nicely until a moment in 2013 when Martyn Ramsden asked if I would write something for the Daily Readings for Advent and Christmas Booklet.

Now I had been a worship leader for a number of years and was used to spending a goodly amount of time preparing words for services. The Advent article however only took about 15 minutes and this bothered me. If it had taken so short a time surely it couldn't be right. But it seemed it was, and that was the beginning of a feeling of greater awareness. An awareness of things not just happening, of realising that coincidences weren't really coincidences, and eventually understanding that I was much more tuned in to the presence of God in my thoughts, my reasoning and my life.

Being a little slow on the uptake as usual, it wasn't really until Charity asked us, in a sectional service, to draw a timeline and pinpoint a time when we had been aware of meeting with God, if that's the right term. That was a light-bulb moment – highlighting that that was the time, in 2013, when I realised it was God opening and waking me up.

God is still at it – making me aware of his presence. It can be in Unity café, working with and meeting other people, seeing Sharon interacting with people who just walk in off the street because it's a café in a church, and it will probably be alright to go in even though you are on your own, and also the natural way that prayer is a part of being there in the cafe and of how it can help.

It can be in the house group where we look at bible passages and share our thoughts, questions and understanding, or lack of it.

It can be at Feast of Fun when we manage to produce enough food to cater for all who come – on one day it was eighty-two children! Don't ask how we managed, we just got on with the job of sandwich making, fruit preparation and packet opening, and everyone, including the parents, had enough to eat.

It can be feeling 'that feeling' when passing through the church space, having a conversation, out walking or just sitting quietly and you know God IS with you.

It can be through singing, whether traditional hymns or songs of praise and listening to or reading bible passages when you suddenly really feel those words speaking to you.

So I think what I'm saying is it is never too late to realise that you can do things, that God will take time until he feels it is your time, a time to do the things you didn't think you could, would or should, even if, like me it is 50 years in the coming!

In the last MEMO I wrote about church not being just a building. As promised here is Godfrey Rust's poem. If you would like to read more explore www.wordsout.co.uk

Anne Smith

Church is a verb

Church mice,
church music
and church history
all try to tell us it's an adjective.

Others have chiselled
or boxed it into a noun—
a building or a social club.

But don't be fooled:
church is a verb.

It's something that we do.
It won't work in the singular.

*I can't church,
you can't church
he, she and it can't church.*

It only takes the plural: even God
can't church alone.

We church
(and *they* can do it too,
whatever we may think of what they do).

It works best in the present tense
and not with a prefix like un- or re-.

Don't say *Let's church again,*
like we did last summer.
It happens now, not then.

It's not a complicated verb.
It comes in simple sentences
like *How are you?*
and *Can I help?*
and *Let us pray.*

It's often passive, and just sits and listens.

It's a highly irregular verb
and won't do what it's told.

It turns up anywhere
with the most unlikely subjects.

It can be said
in any language
or in none.

We can't easily go
to look at church.

We only find the evidence
that church has happened somewhere.
Something broken has been mended.

Someone is alive.

Two are at one.

More is here now
than there was before.

In one case only,
this verb is transitive:

God churches us
and also churches through us.

When we ask Christ
to be among us
or make him known to someone
it's then that we are churching.

There will come a time
for church to get dressed up
ready for its marriage,
ready to settle down and become a noun,

but until then
church is the living Word
spoken in verbs.

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EASTER EVENTS AROUND THE CIRCUIT

(not on the Plan)



Eston Grange

Good Friday Meditation Sectional Service at 6.00pm

Marton

Friday 10th April - Good Friday Walk of Witness from Unicorn Centre lay-by at 9.15am to Stainton Methodist Church for the Good Friday Sectional Service at 10.00am

Normanby

Good Friday Sectional Service at 10.30am

Saturday 4th April - Easter Fair 10.00-12.00 noon Cake Stall, Book Stall Busy Fingers, Chocolate Egg tombola, raffle - admission £1 includes refreshments.

Nunthorpe

Friday 10th April - Good Friday Walk of Witness from Unicorn Centre lay-by at 9.15am to Stainton Methodist Church for the Good Friday Sectional Service at 10.00am

Friday 10th April - Church Walk weather permitting.

Stainton

Friday 10th April - Good Friday Walk of Witness from Unicorn Centre lay-by at 9.15am to Church for the Good Friday Sectional Service at 10.00am

Trinity

Reflective Services during Holy week - 6.00pm Monday to Thursday led by the Worship Leaders

Good Friday Service at 10.30am led by the Worship Leaders

Date For your Diary

**Sunday 19th July at 6.00pm
Nunthorpe**

Circuit Services

*Sunday 1st March
at Marton 10.00am
Led by Rev Jonathan Pye*

*8th April Ash Wednesday Service
at Normanby 9.30am
Led by Rev Christopher Wood-Archer*

*9th April Maundy Thursday Service
at Nunthorpe 7.30pm
Led by Rev Sue Greenwood*

*17th May Easter Offering Service
at Grove Hill 6.00pm (see page 7)*

*Sunday 24th May Songs of Praise Wesley Day
at Marton 6.00pm*



May Bank Holiday 2020 has for
**Victory in Europe Day
Anniversary.**

Normally the early May Bank Holiday falls on the first Monday of May. However this year to coincide with the 75th anniversary of VE Day, the Bank Holiday will now be on
Friday 8th May 2020

Methodist Women in Britain

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



Circuit Network Meetings

Friday March 20th 2pm Nunthorpe
Speaker Mrs Ruth Taylor
Bring/Buy Stall

April/May No Afternoon meetings

Circuit Network Evening Event

Wednesday May 20th 7pm at Eston Grange
Musical Entertainment from "The Middleton Singers" followed by a faith supper.
There will be a Chocolate Tombola and a collection for this year's District Project
(COCO - Comrades of Children Overseas).

Circuit Easter Offering Service

This will be held at Grove Hill on Sunday evening **May 17th at 6pm** and is an open service for **everyone** in the Circuit to attend. The service will include the Dedication of the Easter Offering. Please come and give it your support.

MWiB Darlington District Event

Friday/Saturday March 20th / 21st
Minsteracres Overnighter. Advance booking only.

Tuesday April 7th. Easter Day of Reflection at Stokesley Methodist Church.
Coffee from 10am for 10.30 am start. Please bring a packed lunch, drinks provided.

Advance notice

Spring Event on **Wednesday June 10th** at Bishop Auckland Methodist Church.
Service at 2pm. Afternoon Tea to follow.

All ladies in the Church are welcome at all these events.

Kath Smithies

Circuit Methodist Women in Britain (Network) Secretary

Advent Hampers at Trinity

I saw an article on Facebook which detailed a project where instead of opening an Advent calendar window each day, you could donate an item to a worthy cause instead. After a discussion at church council, we agreed to prepare hampers of treats during Advent and give them to needy people in our community.



Items such as biscuits, tins, chocolates, sweets, spray deodorants, colouring books and pencils, fluffy socks for adults and children, Christmas pudding, tea, coffee, hot chocolate etc. were included.

Some people made individual hampers, some brought items to church each week and others donated money. We completed sixteen hampers in total.

On the Sunday before Christmas we gathered the hampers together. There were large ones and small ones in boxes, baskets and bags, suitable for individuals, couples and families. John Hinton was preaching that morning and we dedicated them and the people who would receive them

Our community worker, Sharon, gave a lot of thought matching up each hamper with those she knew were in need, making sure each one went to the right place and she received many thanks from those people receiving the hampers.

Bernard Nixon (Trinity Church)

Singing the Faith Workshop

Each Sunday Jean and I go to Trinity Church, I sit at the front, under the pulpit and Jean goes in the choir as ever since I have known her (over 60 years) she has sung. I love singing but can't, so when I sing, the only person who suffers is the person leading worship and he or she has to stay where they are – they can't walk out.

On Saturday 25th January we went to church at the usual time, about 9 am – not because we thought it was Sunday, but to a “Singing the Faith Workshop, organized by Charity, Anne and Geoff. After coffee and bacon butties we sat around the piano while Geoff led us through some chosen hymns. As a person who thought the music edition had pictures of tadpoles on lines, I found his explanation joyful, helpful and very easy to follow. Some of the words of these new hymns or songs are awesome, and have inspired and moved me. Please have a look; 547, 421, 139, 349,431 and 469.

It is a pity so few enjoyed the experience but it was very special, particularly when Charity told us of Dawn's progress.

I would like to thank Anne, Charity and Geoff for organizing a wonderful morning of music, praise and fellowship. I am looking forward to the next one.

Bill Reeve

1960'S MEMORIES OF MIDDLESBROUGH CIRCUIT

My first foray into the Middlesbrough Circuit was back in the 1960's.

I had been to a Local Preacher's weekend at Brockley Hall, Saltburn where there were many Preachers and Ministers from the surrounding areas. One of these was in need of a Preacher at Trinity Methodist and asked if I were free that Sunday. I was but I had no idea where Trinity Church was. He asked me if I knew where the Cambridge Hotel was, saying that it was opposite there, and I could get a bus from South Bank which would take me there!

Well, fancy directing me, a young local preacher, by means of a Pub!! I agreed to do it, and the next Saturday went as he had instructed me, found the church, and the caretaker's address, who showed me round the church. It was the first Methodist Church I had seen which had a central aisle and two side aisles! So I was all set to preach there. I can't recall when it was nor what I preached.

I don't remember how it happened but once again I was approached to preach in the Middlesbrough Circuit. This time it was at Linthorpe Road, and it was a double! It was something like a Sisterhood weekend. and I do recall that one of the sermons was on Mary, the mother of Jesus. It must have been late August for after the Evening Service the ladies gave me a lovely bouquet of flowers, huge round chrysanthus as I recall, Yellow and red, which I passed on to my Grandmother as it was her birthday on 1st September. and I lived with her anyway!

I must have preached at Park Wesley another time as I remember being offered a lift home by one of the Youth Club and also an older member of the church. As I had already accepted the first offer, I declined the second one. In those days I wore a hat, and had on a suit with a pencil line skirt (the ladies will know what I mean) The sort of skirt and hat you do not wear if you have to climb into a car with no doors, and no roof! It was the worst car I have ever been in - I had to hold onto my hat, and struggle to get in and out of the car.

My next adventure was at Park Wesley also, again I had been asked to step in by one of the Middlesbrough Ministers, whom I met at Brockely Hall, this time though at a Youth Weekend. It was in October 1964 - and it was a memorable occasion for me. I had just got engaged and my future husband came with me to the church. Again I can't recall the sermon, but I did make a mistake during it. I had meant to say 'life' but the word came out as 'wife' and I was mortified and didn't dare look up at the balcony where the Youth Club were sitting. Afterwards I mentioned my mistake to some of them, who hadn't notice the slip, they were following the line of thought and heard 'life'

I moved away from both Circuits when I married and by the time I came back, Middlesbrough and South Bank and Eston had merged.

Celia Shires



Today hymns are based on last week's trend in petrol prices....

Cheers

The restaurant where I took my two sons for a meal was crowded with fans watching a sporting event on TV. The harried waitress took our order, but more than half an hour passed with no sign of her return. I was trying to keep my children from becoming restless when suddenly shouts of victory came from the bar. "Hey," commented my 11-year-old, "it sounds as if someone just got his food."

Married

I married an Irishman on St Patrick's Day."
"Oh, really?" "No, O'Reilly!"

British Summer Time starts on Sunday 29th March

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



Board Meeting

"There will be a meeting of the Board immediately after the service," announced the minister one Sunday morning. So after the service, the Church Board gathered at the back of the church. To their surprise, there was a stranger in their midst. "My friend," said the minister, "didn't you understand that this is a meeting of the Board?" "Yes indeed," said the visitor, "but after today's sermon, I'm just as bored as anyone else who has come along..."

Great expectations

At a baptism the young minister was full of enthusiasm. He held the baby in his arms and speculated aloud as to the child's possible future. "He may become a captain of industry, a great scientist, or a gifted teacher – someone on whom hundreds of young boys may model themselves." Then turning to the parents in a rather grand manner, he asked, "And so what name to you give to this child?" Timidly, the reply came: "Amanda Jane."

Crowd

The new minister, encouraged by the numbers in church for his first sermon, began: "I have never had the pleasure of preaching to such a dense crowd before."

Going going....

Auctioneer: Now what am I offered for this beautiful bust of Robert Browning?

Man in crowd: That isn't Browning – that's Shakespeare!

Auctioneer: Sorry – just goes to show how much I know about the Bible.

Were You There? StF 285



It seems to me there are two ways of choosing hymns for your funeral: either you pick hymns that reflect your life, maybe personal favourites or you choose hymns to send a message to the mourners. When my mother died and left us a large card with specific instructions for the funeral service printed in primary-school-teacher script, you could see it was the latter. She was sending us all a message particularly by requesting this hymn: *Were You There?* It wasn't in the hymn book, so she had not been accustomed to singing it regularly, unlike say a Charles Wesley hymn like *Love Divine*. But she had always liked the African-American Spirituals and of course this is a famous one, sung and recorded by many performers over the years. It was first printed in 1899 in *Old Plantation Hymns* a collection of hymns, traditionally composed and sung by these enslaved people in their social and religious gatherings before the middle of the 19th Century, passed on orally from generation to generation. Their oppressive masters did not allow them to learn to read or write but were happy for them to become Christians thinking it would keep them well behaved, yet hearing of Bible heroes like Moses and Daniel encouraged thoughts of Justice and Freedom from slavery. Often called "Sorrow Songs" Spirituals would sometimes carry messages about escape like the Israelites from Egypt *Let My People Go* is an obvious one. Other spirituals had coded messages where for example "heaven" also meant the Northern States or Canada, "Sweet Chariot" could also be the Underground Railway, "meeting at the River" Jordan could also mean the Ohio River which had to be crossed to get to states where slavery was abolished. And the slave owners were completely unaware. It was only after the Civil War in 1867 that these powerful songs of suffering, freedom and "redemption", in every sense of the word, were written down and notated. In 1871 The Fisk Jubilee Singers toured Europe raising money for Fisk, a new University educating black freedmen in Nashville Tennessee and sang Spirituals including *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, for Queen Victoria who expressed her pleasure in their performance.

In the typical call-and-response pattern of African American worship songs, *Were You There* paints a powerful picture of the Crucifixion through a series of simple calls, listing the brutality of the scene. The version in our hymn book is abridged; other verses refer to "pierced him in the side" "the sun refused to shine". It is a not literal question for obviously no singer nor listener was actually present at the Crucifixion, instead the questions' purpose is like the Lord's Supper, an act we carry out "in remembrance". These called questions are for us to re-member again the extent of Christ's suffering, and be moved, note the very personal pronoun "**my** Lord". Singing it we should be transported "there" and transformed, yet we should also remember the African-American slave experience. Their re-remembering of the cross allowed them to claim as theirs, the Christ who knew their suffering and stood in solidarity with their oppression. Black Christians believed that just knowing that Jesus went through an experience of suffering in a manner similar to theirs helped them trust that God was with them, even in suffering on lynching trees, just as God was present with Jesus in suffering on the cross. The spiritual linked the suffering of Christ to the suffering of the African-American community,

with its inherent promise of God's presence and resurrection power. Yet its appeal is even wider. It was a favourite of Mahatma Gandhi who said: "This song gets to the root of the experience of the entire human race under the spread of the healing wings of suffering". Gandhi was a big influence on Dr Martin Luther King's non-violent protest strategy and I vividly remember as a teenager watching on TV with my mother, King's great speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 and sharing with her tears at his violent death. He was one of her heroes, another reason for the song at her funeral.

The full emotional power of the song is however, dependent on the response: "Oh ... sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble" and how it is sung. First the idea of physically shaking has impact. It is repeated three times for added effect. Tremble is onomatopoeic the "r" suggesting a quiver as you say it. But critically, the first word "Oh" can be sung like a cry. Just look at how Anita Carter sings it with her sisters as backing to Johnny Cash in 1960: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wvmM6zoPGGI> It is a very moving version. Cash with his severe problems of drug and alcohol addiction, looks dreadful but certainly feels the words he sings. Later in his life June Carter and the suffering man on the cross made him whole again, a thought which is itself tremble-inducing. The way the sisters sing "tremble" is haunting too. Paul Robeson has another compelling version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThesECxYQf0>

It is hard for an unpractised congregation to do justice to any hymn, particularly in small funerals, particularly tricky hymns like *Were You There*. At my mother's funeral we took the risk unaware that because the husband of one of my mother's neighbours was in the Blaenavon Male Voice Choir, he had brought several choir members with him. Their electrifying singing, and distinct pauses after each "tremble" powered us through to the great resurrection affirmation of the last verse "Were you there... When God raised him from the dead? We trembled and the tiny church reverberated as we sang those words: we got the message my mother had left us in her choice of funeral hymn.

Ruth Lewis



Coffee Morning

Marton Methodist Church are holding their
Annual Charity Coffee Morning
On Saturday 28th March
10.30am to 12 noon.

The proceeds will go to "Oracle" which carries out research into head and neck cancer

All are welcome.

Just a catch up of what is happening at Trinity Family Friendly Centre.



Unity Café is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9.30 – 2pm. It is a place for meeting, as is any good café, and a place for listening and sharing. We offer tasty food at competitive prices with bacon sandwiches, paninis, and other light meal items proving very popular. We are always looking for more volunteers to help in preparing and serving food and drinks. If this isn't your forte but you are a good listener, enjoy chatting and can spare some time during opening hours please contact me.

We feel there is a need to reach out to families who are in difficult situations. There is adequate provision available at present with free meals, and more, for individuals in the area but much less supporting families. Unity Café fulfils this by providing a family friendly environment and a welcoming place for their needs.

Also in the café space there is a prayer time on Monday morning starting at 9.00 a.m. and Bible Study at 12 noon on Thursdays.

Internet and computer access is also available and it is hoped this can be used to help with job searches and applications.

TFFC continues to promote and support adult learning experiences through WEA (Adult Learning Within Reach) in the premises. This includes the Flower Arranging and Cake Making and Decorating classes which continue to be popular. Cooking with Families, a new class teaching how to use healthy foods to make a range of different, affordable, easy and tasty meals, has just started.

Little Shoots Toddlers meet on Friday morning. It is a vibrant friendly place to meet, chat and make friends. There is toast for the children and hot beverages for the adults on arrival, and healthy snack time and singalong to finish.

Sharon Sewell

The Way of the Cross

'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me.' (Luke 9: 23)



These words of Jesus are spoken at a turning point in the gospel. Jesus challenges the disciples about His identity and their commitment to Him: *'who do the crowds say I am?'* (18). It is at this point that He *'resolutely set out for Jerusalem'* (9:51). On our journey through Lent, as we look to events of Good Friday and Easter, what are our priorities as Jesus' disciples to be?

To deny ourselves: this means to saying *No* to ourselves and *Yes* to God, as we humbly submit our will to His. Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane ***‘not My will but Yours be done.’*** (Luke 22:42). It means putting Jesus first in everything: our work, family, ambitions, possessions, marriage, finance and future. We will not be guided by self-interest, but by allowing God to show us how to live in His way.

To take up our cross: this reminds us that the disciple is not immune from suffering, as we follow Jesus along the way of cross. Just as He carried His cross to Golgotha, we cannot avoid experiencing suffering in a fallen world. Every day we are to live in way that demonstrates to everyone that we have died to ourselves, our selfish ways and ambitions, and seek to live for God. It means breaking old selfish habits and ways of thinking, as we allow God to renew us by His Spirit.

In all of this we cannot lose, because like Jesus, it is only through death that we find God’s new life. ***‘He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.’***

The Parish Pump

You are not the only on the beach



On my mantelpiece I have two pebbles. Once they were common lumps of rock, but because I’m not a geologist I don’t know what type of rock they are, or during which period they were formed. But there they are! Instead of being worn away by natural erosion of weathering from wind and water, these two pebbles have been whirled and tumbled in a rotating drum, perhaps with some abrasive ingredients. Now they are diminished in size, their shape completely aligned with all the corners rounded off and all the sharp edges removed, until they have become more tactile, smooth and shiny and so, more attractive. Their ‘story’ is about the two people who gave them to me, the occasions and the reason they were given.

The first pebble is flat and a dark brown in colour, with striations of lighter brown running through it. It was given to me by Revd. Rosemary at a MAP training day session for volunteers of all nationalities. After several training exercises and experiences, at the Epilogue we were invited to select a pebble and hold it tightly in our hand. We were then told to take it with us as we left, remembering all the people we had met, the lessons we had learnt about and from each other. Also we were encouraged to hold it tightly whenever we came to any ‘hard places’ in our lives while remembering that the pebble had only become smoother because of the erosion or wearing down and the shaping it had undergone in the process. Though a new altered shape it had endured, and when held tightly it lost its coldness and became warmer to the touch and more comfortable and comforting. I wonder where all the people who attended the course are now, whether they retained their pebble and had taken the ‘message’ with them perhaps to the ends of the earth.

The second pebble is more elongated in shape, yellowish-grey in colour and it fits into the palm of one's hand in quite a different way. Assorted pebbles were given to the whole congregation by Revd Sue.

I am reminded of both these people and their message every time I dust the mantelpiece, feel the pebbles and hear the clink as they rattle against each other. How many of you were present at either of those meetings and do you still have your pebbles as a souvenir, a talisman or aide-memoirs. Write and tell us where yours are and how they have been of use to you and others

There is another pebble which is quite different because it doesn't come from a beach, not even an inland river or stream. It resides in the bathroom because it is rather drab, pock marked with dents and holes and fissures. But it has two distinct properties: it is extremely light, it floats, and it is practical and useful. This is because it came from Mt. Ruapehu, the highest mountain in the North Island of New Zealand (2798 metres high) I'd like to say that I had climbed to the summit to view the crater, but I was rather apprehensive as it was still smoking! There are many volcanic mountains in New Zealand, mostly dormant, but still capable of erupting. So, my pebble came from the slopes where it had been ejected when the volcano was active. Why have I kept it? Not just as a souvenir of happy memories of my 'Kiwi' family and friends but for its practicality. You see, it is a natural pumice stone and can be used as an abrasive to remove hard skin from my feet – acquired over the years with standing all day at work, sport and pounding the pavements to get to places.

When I first visited the South Coast of England, I was astonished to find that their much-vaunted beaches were just a conglomeration of pebbles, crippling to walk on and uncomfortable to sit on! I had only known the golden, sandy beaches of the North East (and the completely unspoilt and natural 90 mile long sandy beach north of Auckland in New Zealand) But then I learnt that pebbles are the main ingredient of sand just not yet worn down and still a work in progress, of times of hardness and discomfort into something soft and friable, golden endless delight for children to play on. Stating the obvious? – I hope not.

Vera Pearson

PEN PORTRAIT OF LINTHORPE ROAD METHODIST CHURCH.

When I was asked to write this pen portrait for Linthorpe Road, I really didn't feel I was the right person for the job as I am not a life long member.

My journey to worship at Linthorpe Road has been the result of, as Lemony Snicket would say, a series of unfortunate events.

My introduction to Methodist worship was at the age of two years old when I was taken along with my elder siblings to Ayresome Street Chapel. For those who can't remember it was a small chapel at the corner of Ayresome Street and Ayresome Park road. During my time there memories are of Sunday School anniversaries, where, dressed in our best bib and tucker, we would all recite poems, sing hymns and

generally share a lovely day of praise. Starting with a street witness in the local area. I can still hear Doug Emms saying 'Dear friends we are from Ayresome Street Methodist Church and today is our Sunday School anniversary'.

Due to the powers that be, during my teen years, it was decreed that we should close and move to Park Methodist Church. At the same time West End Methodist church also closed its doors. The congregation also relocated to Park Methodist Church here the story of Park young people begins. With a combination of all three churches it is fair to say we had a wonderful group of young people, many of us are still friends today.

This is where for me the first links with Linthorpe Road begin. At that time there used to be a Circuit Eisteddfod held at that church which brought together the youth talents from around the Circuit in friendly competition. My abiding memory is one of the Winners' Concerts held on the final Saturday where twenty four of us Park young people sang 'All in the April evening' in four part harmony to a capacity crowd at Linthorpe Road. I have never been prouder!!

In the late 1980s Park closed down and some of the congregation moved to Linthorpe Road. Up until that time Linthorpe Road had been Eisteddfod competitions and the wonderful Christmas tableau presented in the door way. For many people that was their abiding memory of Christmas time.

The church itself has undergone massive changes since I began attending there. The biggest change being the re design of the whole building. At present the Worship area is used by three different groups of worshippers. We have our service at 11am followed by the Chinese congregation at 1pm and then later in the afternoon the Congolese group meet. From comments made by visitors and Preachers we seem to come across as a welcoming church. We have welcomed many Asylum seekers in the last twenty years.



As I write this we are looking forward to sharing in next week's service with the Chinese church as they celebrate their New Year. We also try to include the Chinese Church in some of our special services, such as Easter and Christmas.

As I have said I am not a life long member of the church. Many people will recall the very successful Girls Brigade and Boys Brigade, Youth Club, Choir and of course the Thursday lunch time services still so important in the life of this church. If you have other memories of this lovely church please send them to the Circuit Office, for inclusion in future editions of 'Memo'

As many of you know the church is undergoing another change, as we are to lose the services of the Resource Centre, and so even more challenging times ahead.

Let's see what happens next, as they say 'Watch this space!'

Lesley Walker

PRAYER DIARY

March 1st Pray today for all Christians worshipping in our community and for all who lead the different denominations. Pray for Rev Sue Greenwood and Stainton.

March 8th Pray for all our Preachers, lay or ordained and for the Preacher's meeting taking place on Wednesday. Pray for Rev Christopher Wood Archer and Grove Hill.

March 15th Pray this week for the Circuit meeting taking place on Tuesday and for all who serve on this meeting that they may be guided by the Holy Spirit in their deliberations and decisions. Pray for Rev Charity Hamilton and for Trinity and the Trinity Project. Pray for the Project Coordinator Sharon Sewell.

March 22nd Pray today for all mothers on this Mothering Sunday. Also pray for families especially those who are passing through difficult times. Pray for Rev Mike Harland and Nunthorpe.

March 29th Pray today for those who are ill at home or in hospital, or hospice. Pray for those who care for them, either within families or professionally. Pray for Rev Sarah Ramsden and for Marton.

April 5th Pray that during this Holy Week we may be blessed with a knowledge of Jesus suffering for us, giving us the gift of salvation at the cost of his life. Pray for Rev Len Karn and for Normanby

April 12th On this glorious Easter Day we celebrate the resurrection, Jesus victorious even over death and offering us the gift of Eternal life. Pray for all who will lead worship on this special

day.

April 19th Pray today for the work of MAP as they offer an inclusive love for all who need that care and help.

Pray for Ailsa Adamson and her team.

April 26th Pray for Elaine at the Circuit Office. and the work she does in supporting the ministry of the Circuit. Pray for Linthorpe Road.

May 3rd Pray for all who work with children and young people in our churches and those who teach in our schools. Pray for the church presence in Teesside University. Pray for Eston Grange

May 10th Pray today for Rev Laurence Law and the Chinese Church. Pray for all who worship in our churches who come from different cultures that they may continue to find a welcome.

May 17th Pray today for the Live at Home Project and for all who may be lonely and not coping, that the project and the love and care from our churches may bring them hope and comfort.

May 24th On this Aldersgate Sunday we remember our founder John Wesley having that great experience of Jesus. We pray we may find that sense of God's love in our lives and our hearts warmed as we accept Jesus as our personal Saviour. Pray for the Songs of Praise service today.

May 31st On this Pentecost Sunday we pray for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and our churches. Pray for Rev Richard Andrew and for the Darlington District.