

MEMO

Middlesbrough & Eston Methodist Outburst

SEPTEMBER —
NOVEMBER 2020



SEE PAGE 13

FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Well, what a summer we have had! It seems to have been one of extremes – very hot or cool temperatures, lots of sunshine or tremendous storms, into strict lockdown and now an easing out of it. It has created feelings from worry, concern and confusion to hope and communities coming closer together. We will be facing a new kind of ‘normal’ whatever that means, but it did bring to mind the book title Brave New World which I read many years ago. Not that our new world will be like Aldus Huxley’s dystopian novel but there could be a number of parallels to be drawn.

Along with a new Methodist year starting in September some of our churches will be opening in the near future. A lot of behind the scenes work will have taken place to make the buildings and the congregations safe. The experience of church will be different but the words, prayers and message will be the same. There will probably be music, but still no singing. I have to say that I have found reading the hymns has made me much more aware of the wonderful words rather than just enjoying singing a favourite tune.

We are glad to welcome Revd. David, our new Superintendent minister, and his family into the circuit and you can read his thoughts on the next page. There are articles about some lockdown experiences in the following pages along with words of encouragement and

things to ponder on.

If you have some experiences to share, or something you want to air, we would love to hear from you. Don’t worry if you can’t type, just send your words in and we will sort it.

Best wishes

Anne, on behalf of Elaine and Dave

DEADLINE FOR NEXT EDITION OF MEMO

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

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

HOT OFF THE PRESS

**Revd. David Godfrey has
changed his manse
telephone number.**

**It is now
01642 286053**



The Superintendent's Letter

Hello and greetings,

Let me begin by introducing myself. My name is David and at the time of writing (end of June) I am preparing to move to take up the post of Superintendent in the Middlesbrough and Eston Circuit. I grew up in Bedfordshire, trained at Queens College in Birmingham and have been in circuit ministry for twenty six years. I have served in: The Isle of Man (3 years), Hinkley in Leicestershire (8 years), York (10 years, with 7 as Superintendent of the old York North Circuit), and lately in the Thirsk and Northallerton Circuit as superintendent (5 years). I enjoy cricket, books, food (especially chilli), exploring remote places, walking, bread making, family time, cricket, rugby, golf, any sport involving a ball, and ... did I mention cricket?

I am married to Carolyn and we have two grown up children in their 20s, Ruth who is living in Tadcaster and due to be married when weddings become possible again, and Rachel who lives in St Ives (Cambs). In normal times they come to visit us quite regularly, but like many families, we have been separated from our children during lockdown and have missed them greatly. Carolyn has worked as the Regional Safeguarding Officer for the Darlington and Newcastle districts of the Methodist Church for the last five years. This is a role which will continue after we move.

We move at a very strange time in national life. At the time of writing (late June) non essential shops have been open for two weeks, the football season has kicked off again and we are still counting down to the first test match of the summer. The date when churches can reopen for Sunday worship has just been confirmed as 4th July, but I know that this will take careful planning and not all churches will be ready by that date. We will have to operate differently for some time to come, with social distancing rules and other restrictions still in place.

Churches are very different from shops, pubs, restaurants and other businesses in that we are social rather than transactional. We proclaim the love of God for all and offer a radical welcome to those in need, all of which is difficult when people have to keep their distance and remain in their bubbles. However, it is encouraging to see that many churches have adapted their practice in recent months with various forms of online worship, and pastoral care which has involved phone calls, Zoom meetings and food deliveries. The church has remained outward facing in lockdown and continues to evolve in its mission and service. I am confident that God is doing something new in all of this and I have no doubt that we will find a way through these difficult times and perhaps emerge stronger and more focused as a result. I hope I can be of help, as we seek the way forward together.

M&E Circuit has some great work going on with exciting mission projects and some wonderful people. Carolyn and I are both looking forward to being part of this work, making new friends and living with you in the months and years to come. I wish you every blessing.

Revd. David Godfrey

Nunthorpe Methodist Church

Circuit Welcome Service

for Revd. David Godfrey

On Sunday 6th September at 6.00pm

Led by

Chairman of District Revd. Richard Andrew

Due to restricted numbers by invitation only.

The Methodist Church 

A Prayer to say during the coronavirus pandemic

God of all hope we call on you today.

We pray for those who are living in fear:

Fear of illness, fear for loved ones, fear of other's reactions to them.

May your Spirit give us a sense of calmness and peace.

We pray for your church in this time of uncertainty.

For those people who are worried about attending worship.

For those needing to make decisions in order to care for other

For those who will feel more isolated by not being able to attend.

Grant us your wisdom.

Holy God, we remember that you have promised that

Nothing will separate us from your love – demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ.

Help us turn our eyes, hearts and minds to you.

Amen

CIRCUIT TREASURERS UPDATE

In these uncertain times, it has been a blessing to know that we have been able, to not only rely on our immediate family and friends but also people from the community. I am sure that most of you like myself received something through the door weeks ago that stated something like this, “My name isand should you need any food shopping, post delivering, prescriptions picking up etc. etc., then I am willing to help. Just give me a ring.....”

How wonderful that in this most distressing and for some, incredibly sad time there has been a revived community spirit. The Middlesbrough and Eston Methodist Circuit is also a community of loving, helping and concerned members and I for one am very proud to be part of it.

Over the past few weeks, I have been in touch with all of our individual Church Treasurers. Firstly and foremost, to make sure that they were safe and well but also to make sure that each Church is managing in a financial way.

I needed to reassure myself that our Church Treasurers were not being placed under any extra strain and worry about how to pay their Church’s assessments and running costs in these constricting times.

That is, I believe one of the most important aspects of being the Circuit Treasurer, in the same way as the District Treasurer has spoken to me about our Circuit finances and asking the same questions, Are you coping, do you need any support?.

I am pleased to report that at Circuit level, yes, we are doing well. As a Circuit, we were blessed with the proceeds from the sale of Ormesby Church and Parkside Manse in December, which has increased the Circuit reserves and enabled me with permission from our Circuit Leadership Team to reassure our individual churches that financial help is available to those that need it.

To that end, I have already spoken to our Church Treasurers, and hopefully reassured them that they should not put themselves under any sort of mental worry or their churches under any financial strain over the near future. I know that some of our churches will need both financial and moral support from the circuit for quite a few months to come and that is what we are here for, the Circuit is here to support all our members in any way that it can, and not just financially.

I know that our Circuit is much more than just about finances, but that is obviously one of my priorities as Circuit Treasurer. I am sure, that many of you like myself, have been uplifted and reassured by feeling the presence of God through the loving care of church members and our Pastoral visitors. I hope and pray that as we move towards and look forward to the reopening of our church buildings in a few weeks’ time that this renewed, loving community spirit will continue to be our guide in the days and weeks to come.

Lesley Duffield
Circuit Treasurer

My Christian Journey Part 4

This part is going to be the last in this series so I need to squeeze 20 years in. I was accredited as a local preacher in 2000 at a service at Trinity Methodist Church (my home church) along with Ruth and Irene. Later Barbara Brown gave me a leaflet on a course being held in Guisborough on Christian counselling. So I decided to try it. I did not know at the time but this came in useful when I started volunteering with the Court and Foodbank.

In the meantime I became a pastoral visitor and took on the role of pastoral secretary temporarily. However I am still a pastoral visitor but Pat took over as pastoral secretary a couple of years later. I seemed to get all the old people on my list so the turnover is quite quick so it is not a good idea to be on my pastoral list. (only joking).

In 2006 I retired from teaching and as the Sunday school had ceased because of the lack of leaders I spoke to Rosemary and as she was keen to get it going again and decided to run an updated version calling it The Sunday Club. I got together a team of people (leaders and helpers). The first thing we did was decorate a designated room for young people. Then we held two coffee mornings. One of these at my house and one at Church to raise money for resources including a DVD player. We also painted the furniture in bright colours. We were really grateful as people donated some resources that we needed. We had so much support from the church. When we were ready to go we asked the children what they thought about it and they loved it. The children gave us so many insights into the familiar Bible stories. My favourite time was when we used cuddly toys to act out the Good Samaritan. It was a hoot.

At this time Linda was working with the asylum seekers and I went along on a Wednesday afternoon to Avenue. I was mainly talking to them and listening to their story. The majority were so grateful for the items they received. But I did not feel called to this work.

My mother became ill the following year and spent the last month of her life in Teesside hospice. I managed to visit her every day. The question that I kept getting asked was 'What do you think happens when you die'. This was not only by my mother but by some of the staff there too. It just so happened that my Faith and Worship project had been on 'Near Death Experiences'. Research into this was ongoing in a hospital. I had to say I did not know but was able to tell them about people who had had near death experiences. This gave hope to some of them.

The prayer group had folded owing to lack of numbers and one of the members asked me if I would restart it. This I did and by mutual consent decided to use the Methodist prayer Handbook along with prayers for people in our church and Circuit. People often asked us to pray for individuals. GOD DOES ANSWER PRAYER, which we found on a number of occasions. This prayer group continued until 2017 when we decided to call it a day as there were only two people left because of deaths and people going into homes.



I helped with Breakfast Club and some Holiday Clubs. When Hayley came she asked me to join the FLAME support group. I helped with Messy Church at Eston Grange until I was forced to give up driving because of my eyesight. Hayley left at about this time.

Later when Jane came as family worker she asked me to help with the Mother and Toddler group. This was fun and I helped until I had my knee replacement.

In the meantime I then decided I should do some volunteering outside of church. Then I saw an advert in the Gazette for volunteers with the witness service at the Crown Court. The head of English had asked if I wanted to do this when I retired as she had connections there. At the time I refused but as it had turned up at the right time I thought it was meant to be. I was interviewed and sent on a training course. I did quite a few courses to do with safeguarding and working with different types of vulnerable people. The witnesses were prosecution witnesses and came from many walks of life. We only looked after defence witnesses by special request.



In the Crown Court I met rape victims, abuse victims, homophobic victims, victims of fraud and the families of murder victims. Many had said that it was their faith that had got them through it all. Some witnesses had spent many years in prison and others were just innocent bystanders who had witnessed a crime. Some I had taught at one time or another. I also met police officers (one I had taught in Hartlepool), barristers, CPS staff and court officers. The volunteer's job was to calm the witnesses and to prepare them for what would happen when they went into court. Some of the scary times were when one witness came to court having had both legs chopped off with a machete. Then there was the time when the whole court was swarming with armed police. I must admit to saying a prayer myself on some occasions. I left when I was having problems with my knees. Vulnerable witnesses were brought in through the back door and I could not cope with the stairs.

I took on the role of Safeguarding Officer at Trinity because no-one else would do it when Bernard gave it up. This was supposed to be temporary but lasted a few years until Judith took it on.



I then went on to help with Foodbank on a rota system. We have a variety of people through our doors, some homeless, some that have just come out of prison, some on low incomes and some that can't manage on Universal Credit or are waiting for it. Many have mental health issues. Many are large families. Some of the clients want to talk about God. Some have asked to borrow Bibles. They come from all over Middlesbrough, We help where we can, sometimes

directing them to other agencies.

Now being over seventy I am trying not to take on too much but am still preaching, pastoral visiting and volunteering with Foodbank.

The Covid virus has meant seeing church in a different way. Listening to services on T.V. Watching services recorded at my old church (New Silksworth Methodist Church) on YouTube. I have managed to keep in touch with my pastoral group by telephone. It has forced me to update my computer and my computer skills. I cannot decide whether this is a good thing or a bad thing as I have torn my hair out in the process. That brings me to the present date and wonder what is in store next. THE END.

Celia Butler

A warm welcome from David's churches

If I may paraphrase scripture:

*To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven
A time to bid a fond farewell to a much loved minister but to hold on to the
memories
And a time to welcome a new minister and embrace the changes that will bring*

It is hard to think of circumstances more difficult to start a new ministry than in the middle of a global pandemic. A welcoming embrace is out of the question and social distancing even precludes a warm handshake. Initial communication will probably be through telephone calls or Zoom video conferences. But while this is a time of pandemic there will be a time beyond it when things will be different and we can welcome you both properly.

In the meantime David and Carolyn, we hope that you settle into the manse and into the circuit very quickly and that you soon feel at home with us. We look forward to your ministry.

John Hinton (on behalf of Marton Methodist Church)

On behalf of the stewards and church family I would like to welcome David and his family to Nunthorpe. We are living in very strange and challenging times which means we cannot treat him to a traditional warm Nunthorpe welcome. In recent months we have learned to worship at a distance, to pray at a distance, to help one another at a distance. It looks as if our welcome to David will be at a distance too, but it will be no less warm as we look forward to his ministry with us.

The church landscape is unfamiliar, we do not know when and how we will reopen our church. It may be a return to the old familiar ways or more likely it will be a challenge in the post Corvid 19 world . What we do know, what most of us have learned during the past few months, is the truth of John Wesley's last words "The best of all, God is with us". We know that David will have God with him and we have God with us as we welcome him and his family to Nunthorpe

Jillian Lambert (on behalf of Nunthorpe Methodist Church)

On Sunday, July 19th Sue did her grand tour of the Circuit and arrived at Stainton at 2pm. We all gathered, socially distanced of course, round about the Chapel. Now Sue has 'escaped to the country' and settled by the coast with the bracing North Sea air, we look forward to welcoming a new Superintendent to the Circuit and OUR minister, Rev, David Godfrey, who is coming to us from the Northallerton Circuit.

Unfortunately, because of these unprecedented times we find ourselves in, David will not be able to take a service at Stainton for some considerable time. As we are such a

small Chapel we cannot fulfil the risk assessment criteria which would allow us to use the building safely in September, when David will be taking up his position. Nevertheless, we warmly welcome David and his wife Carolyn (and family) to Stainton and look forward to the day when we will be opening our door to meet people once again for worship and fellowship and David will be able to be with us in our little Chapel.

Claire Tate (on behalf of Stainton Methodist Church)

Methodist Women in Britain

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



There are no new Network meetings planned in the Circuit for the foreseeable future. We will review the situation at a later date regarding the annual committee meeting. However, the Darlington District have provisionally arranged some events for later in 2020 and in 2021, all of which are dependent on what the situation will be with the Coronavirus in several months time.

There is an Advent Service planned for Friday 27/11/20 at Barnard Castle Methodist Church. This year's Darlington District Overnighter at Minsteracres had to be cancelled but a provisional date has been booked for 19th & 20th March 2021. Jan Sutch Pickard (who was booked for this year) is willing to lead this. As many of the events arranged to fund raise for "COCO", our District project for 2019/20, had to be cancelled, it has been agreed that this will remain the Project for 2020/21.

The new Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, inducted on 27/7/20, is Carolyn Lawrence who was the World Federation Area Vice-President and we are asked to remember her in our prayers throughout her term of office. The MWiB Forum have put together a year of prayer and allocated each District a month. The Darlington District has been given June 2021 to cover her in prayer.

The Easter Offering service for 2020 was postponed due to the Coronavirus and will now be held in the spring of 2021 using the 2020 Easter Offering material on the theme "Into All the World".

Love and Peace

Kath Smithies (Circuit Methodist Women in Britain Secretary)

Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events;
small minds discuss people. (Anon)

A newly married, young Methodist Presbyterian was given his first appointment in a small village in a rural circuit. When he and his wife went to see the house, they were shown round by the Church of England Vicar.

When they arrived home, they were so excited but suddenly realised they couldn't remember seeing the loo – so they wrote to the Vicar asking where the WC was.

This is the reply from the vicar.

Dear Paul,

The nearest WC is in another village about 3 miles up the dale and is only open on a Sunday afternoon and Wednesday morning. It's recently been renovated and now has padded seats which makes it more comfortable. The bus on Sunday arrives just before it opens but it is a pleasant walk along the footpath by the river. I have never visited yet but my wife has and she quite enjoyed the experience. Children were welcome and encouraged to go together and have a good sing. Hymn sheets are available on entry but if Rev. Mary is not there to help, there are some on the hook behind the oak door. God Bless, Sid

PS There's also another Chapel beside the Wesleyan Chapel further up Main Street.

The old jokes are the best!!

An old monk says to a new monk "That's a good habit you've got"

During "lockdown" we have not been allowed to use the Church premises for worship. I was used to going to church each Sunday and suddenly that routine (or habit) was no longer available. It was replaced by 9.00am worship on 'Jitsi' led by the Rev. Christopher followed by "coffee with Charity at 11.00am on Zoom". Very different, and I accept not for everybody, but for me it works.

The 9.00am service continues daily – Prayers, hymn (read of course), psalm, Bible reading and prayers of intercession and thanksgiving. So now a new routine (or habit?). Shower, breakfast, service, daily 2 mile walk and then the big decision of what to do next. Is it tidying the garden (again), doing a bit of woodwork in the garage, watching some old rugby internationals on TV, cleaning cupboards etc. After one week repeat, and then again repeat. After 2 or 3 weeks we would wake up and wonder what day it was. When phoning a friend and chatting he said he felt the same but on Sundays (if he remembered what day it was) he would put on his "Sunday best" (old habits die hard).

Going back to the 9.00am service a variety of people volunteered to read the Psalm and Bible reading – this I found good as different Bibles are used and this somehow enhances the readings for me. When Christopher asks if anyone has a "Singing the Faith" with them they get to read the hymn and put their own expression into the reading. I love singing (but can't! – that's why I sit at the front of the Church – so the only person I can upset is the person in the pulpit), but when reading rather than singing a hymn I suddenly realised how good some of those hymns are. Perhaps when we get back to "normal"

worship it may be an idea to read rather than sing one of the hymns. The prayers of intercession too were very different. We spend 2 or 3 minutes in silent prayer, then Rev. Christopher says one of his own prayers followed by prayers read by someone else from the Methodist Prayer Handbook. It is good to know that you are worshipping God with others, at the same time. I would at this point thank Christopher and all our friends for enabling this to take place.

One morning Jean was setting up Jitsi when the laptop decided it had had enough and started to “do its own thing”. By 9.15am we decided we had missed the service – our time of worship together, and it made the rest of the day different, a small thing perhaps but our routine had changed.

Anyway we spent the rest of the day as usual, walk, sidestepping by 2 metres all coming in the opposite direction.

Enough rambling – keep smiling, keep distancing, keep in contact with your friends and family.

God Bless,
Bill Reeve

PS I'm going to check my diary appointments for today - I had better ask Jean what day it is!!



Morning Has Broken **StF 136 H&P 635**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0TInLOJuUM>

September marks all change: a new Superintendent Minister, the beginning of a new Methodist year and also a new school year. Fifty years ago I started my new Grammar School in a bottle-green uniform with a shiny new leather satchel. The first thing the school gave me was a brand new blue hymn book: *Songs of Praise* the melody edition. This, I was told, had to last me the whole of my time at the school. I should take good care of it, “back” it [remember those days, backing books with wall-paper?] and make sure that every morning I had it with me for assembly, a fault mark if I forgot it!

I still have the hymn book and in good condition too. Over my seven years at the school I learnt and sang many hymns...five times a week... not to mention festivals, speech days. And one I want to bring to mind is number 30: *Morning Has Broken*. It was not in my Chapel hymn book so it is at school I first sang it; indeed it is often regarded as a simple hymn for children or young people but as is often the case it is deeper than one might at first suppose. It's been described as “a favourite hymn for a nominally secular society” and indeed used to be a popular choice for both weddings and funerals, especially a child's funeral, probably because it was well-known as it was sung at school.

The charming climbing melody is an old Gaelic air and Percy Dearmer, on hearing

it, commissioned the writer Eleanor Farjeon to compose new words to it for the 1931 enlarged edition of the new hymn book he had compiled. Dearmer believed we need to give thanks for each new day, something we who have been spared in this pandemic have appreciated. Of course the already well-known hymn became hit-parade famous in 1971 when Cat Stevens recorded it accompanied on piano by Rick Wakeman who had also composed the arrangement. And so now when we hear it or sing it in church we are reminded of our younger days, maybe happier times, or times full of hope.

Farjeon's words are a hymn of praise for God's Creation, which, in a literal interpretation of Genesis, assumes there was a "first morning" comparing each current new day, each dawn chorus and new rainfall to that very first one. Implicitly it sees Creation as a seven day event set in Eden; strong fundamentalist theology for a supposedly "nominally secular" and post-Darwin society! For us Christians the powerful reference to the "Word" at the end of verse 1, reminds us not only of Genesis 1 where "God spoke" but also of John's gospel chapter 1, "In the beginning was the word" and of Jesus, the word who became flesh. And is the "wet garden... where his feet pass" alluding to Gen 3:8 where God is heard "walking" in the garden and/or is it the risen Lord who was thought to be the gardener by Mary?

Its oblique words might well have been particularly confusing to children of the 50s who will have sung it in school. Someone wrote: "The line '*Born of the one light, Eden saw play*' confused me. Anthony Eden was prime minister at the time and I hadn't a clue what it was about."

Thankfully "The Fall" is not part of this hymn, which would definitely be confusing to young children, instead, as beautiful poetry, it delights in newness and paradoxically in repetition. "First", "New", "Praise" and "Mine" are repeated making it easy to sing from memory which together with the vivid images of blackbird, wet grass and sunlight, set to the delightful melody explains its popularity.

Although, particularly as we get older, we love the old and familiar, new is good too. Who doesn't like new clothes? Sometimes we need new glasses to see things clearly! Cat Stevens chose a new name three times in his successful career ending up as Yusuf. In the 30s Percy Dearmer commissioned this new hymn, giving God thanks for each new morning as a new chance and a reminder of God's creating power expressed beautifully in the Genesis origin story. Let us too, give thanks for each new day granted to us, the new Methodist year and our new Methodist Superintendent Minister, David. Whatever the "new normal" for church worship and mission, let us trust in God's re-creation and renewing spirit in our lives, with hope.

Ruth Lewis

Coronavirus

For the first time in history, we can help save the human race by lying in front of the TV and doing nothing. Let's not mess this one up!

Trinity's Rainbow

We thought you might like to hear how a group of members at Trinity Methodist Church created a positive out of the Coronavirus negative.

Ours has been a busy and sociable lockdown. “How did this happen?” you may ask. Well It started at Kader W.I. with a red poppy and some knitting patterns kindly provided by our committee. I did some copies of the poppy pattern and knitted a sample poppy and took it along to our Ladies Circle at Trinity Methodist Church. I asked them if they would like to knit RED poppies and create a display on an empty board at the back of our church to celebrate V.E. day. They set to work with great enthusiasm and the number of poppies grew and grew.

Meanwhile Covid 19 intervened – now we decided to make a rainbow of appropriately coloured poppies - we made a large rainbow of between 200 – 300 poppies. We also made explanatory posters, beautifully framed by a supportive husband. (See front page)

The organisation of the project was ably executed by two ladies who collected the poppies and delivered them to a central point (they also knitted and contributed many poppies to our stash). Two other members made a professional job of printing and illustrating their work for display. No rules were broken, donations of poppies and printing were left on our drive or in the front porch. We enjoyed working together and had happy ‘newsy’ chats and still managed to stay two metres apart.

Next, we thought we should give everyone the opportunity to write down some personal thanks. Thus a third board was evolved. On it our church members or other grateful people can say their thanks to family, friends or strangers who have shown them kindness during the pandemic. Poetic instructions have been printed and a versatile lady has produced special cards on which we can write our thanks. We will display these on a pretend clothesline on our final board.

Our project is almost complete now, and we look forward to assembling all our united hard work to welcome our wonderful fellowship back to church.

This has truly been a joyful and uniting activity. We may be scattered and in isolation but hopefully we have created deeper friendships and developed a stronger faith in the unifying power of God.

Norma Arrowsmith





Remember, remember....

Remembrance Sunday is to be observed on 8th November this year. Introduced to commemorate those who died in the two world wars it is now a time to remember all those who have died in battle. The Royal British Legion is continually reviewing their events in the current situation but will publish full plans for Remembrance in early autumn. However this year will be about 'Remembering then and Reflecting on now' on the service and sacrifice of so many in our Covid 19 world.

I don't have first-hand knowledge of wartime, but I do know of the total change to everyone's lives. It is fascinating to hear about rationing, air raids, children being evacuated to safer parts of the country, women doing 'men's' work and people returning home but not talking about what they had been through. Sadly, I only know that my Dad was in Singapore with the RAF but have little recollection of what he did there. The RBL talks about the world that people knew during WW2 having been turned upside down, a parallel of our present situation. The emotions and challenges have echoes for many today with food shortages, empty shelves, family dislocation, separation and isolation on the negative side. However it has also been a time of pulling together, finding out about your neighbours, keeping a social distance when out walking, food parcel and meal deliveries, people making PPE items, scrubs and scrub bags, face masks etc.

Challenges faced by post war Britain have similarities with our Covid generation and RBL mention three areas applicable to both. The first is Rebuilding and the statistics are interesting. Between June 1945 and December 1946 4.2 million men and women were demobbed, 300,000 British veterans were described as having a physical or psychological disability on their return, there were an estimated 60 million refugees worldwide. The latest Covid statistics (July) show there have been 45,233 Covid associated deaths in the UK with 985 in Middlesbrough and now the area is no longer in the highest risk category. Today we do not need to rebuild buildings but perhaps we need to keep, grow and rebuild the community and national spirit.

Reuniting is the second aspect of Remembrance. There are still those in our societies who are not able to be with their loved ones, whether they are abroad awaiting permission to enter, in another part of the country or even locally. The last aspect is Reimagining. World War Two had an effect on all aspects of life – women married men from different nations, children were born into fatherless homes and government reforms were introduced that changed our living and health provision. In the months since lockdown we have done a lot of reimagining. More people are grocery shopping on line, we are, on the whole, becoming a cashless society, some of us are able to see and talk with others through social media via Zoom, Jitsi and the like, Church services are available live via Facebook and YouTube, or on the radio and TV, children have been home-schooled and we have had 'social bubbles'. The government has released

their plan for easing lockdown even further and there is hope that by the time you read this, life will be more settled

Whatever happens it is likely that there will be a new 'normal'. One where we continue to think about and are more aware of others around us, where we continue making new and appropriate ways of being Church and grow the trend of people going back to find out more about the power of prayer and the love and comfort of being in the presence of God. You may, like me, take this as time to think about our situation and the good that can come out of it. I have found great comfort in taking Revd Charity's advice of reading a Psalm a day. Considering how long ago they were written they fit very well into today's world. Give it a go, and if you have access to the internet and want to read more about Remembrance visit

www.britishlegion.org.uk

Anne Smith

UPDATE ON THE PLAN



At our Plan meeting which was on July 10th led by Revd. Sue, we were aware at that time, five churches in our Circuit were going to complete their risk assessments and by following the Methodist Church guidelines, look at the possibility of re-opening. We therefore only planned for those churches

Nunthorpe Methodist Church will host the Circuit Welcome Service for Revd. David Godfrey on Sunday 6th September, led by Revd. Richard Andrew. Due to number restrictions this will be by invitation, however the service will be recorded and available online later. After this service the property stewards will re-visit their risk assessment with any points of learning, and will report further to the Church Council Meeting who will determine if, and when Sunday Morning Worship will commence.

Trinity and Grove Hill Methodist Churches will hold their first service on Sunday 6th September.

It is essential that you pre-book to attend a service, as numbers are limited. Due to all churches not opening on 6th September, there may be members from other churches wishing to attend. Contact details for booking a service can be found on the reverse of the Plan.

As we go to print, Marton and Normanby Churches are working on their risk assessments and once completed, they need to be approved by their own Church Council Meetings.

As you can appreciate things are changing weekly, please look at the actual Plan enclosed as this will have the latest information prior to distribution.

God Bless
Dave Elliott

Parable: The Strength of a Seed



At this time of year we enjoy the fruits of our gardens, fields and hedgerows: vegetables ripen, crops are harvested, and berries begin to show bright among the leaves. Much of this growth started with a few seeds in spring: the miracle of life coming from small dead-looking things. There is a league table of long-lived seeds. The winners so far are from the narrow-leafed campion, buried by squirrels in the Siberian permafrost over 30,000 years ago. When those seeds finally germinated, they became healthy plants that flowered and produced seeds of their own.

The Bible contains many links between seeds and spiritual growth, and the Parable of the Sower is the most famous (in Matthew 13). A person may hear or experience something of God which has the potential to germinate into a life of following Him, resulting in the fruit of others coming to know God too. But things can happen that snatch that seed away, killing it before it has finished germinating, or choking its growth.

What about the knowledge of God that gets trampled, churned too deep in the mire of life to receive the warmth and light it needs to develop into faith? Buried seeds don't always die, but they can lie dormant, remaining alive but inactive until the earth is turned over. The possibility of that moment of connecting with something divine, scrap of knowledge, or snatch of conversation resulting in a changed life may seem infinitesimally small, but it's not zero. The seed may be incredibly tough, just waiting for a chance to grow.

The Gospel narrative plays on the fact that it took a long time for the disciples to understand the full implications of Jesus' teaching: a germination process that took many of them three or more years. They could have been discouraged, but Jesus was not. I don't think it's too much of a stretch to draw out of the parable of the sower to include the observation that it can take a long time, sometimes decades, for people to work their way through the various barriers, sticking points, and phases of forgetfulness that may keep them from following through on their spiritual experience. When we finally receive – or are open to – the encouragement, challenge, or experience that helps our faith in Christ grow, we can experience the rich fruit of a transformed life.

The Parish Pump



Dear All,

my sincere and heartfelt thanks to everyone in the Circuit for the expressions of love; the letters, cards, gifts and very generous financial gifts I received on my retirement.

With Love and God Bless you all, Sue.



**I don't mean to sound ungrateful Fred,
but when I asked for something to
'represent farming in the community'...**

Cheers

*A church notice sheet was prepared in
great haste and it contained the
following announcement.
A proof reader would have helped!*

"There will be a special meeting of the
Church Council next Saturday morning.
We hope all members will be able to
attend. It will be gin with breakfast at
7.30am.

Keep your distance!

I never thought the comment, "I
wouldn't touch you with a six-foot
pole" would become national policy,

**British Summer Time
ends on
Sunday 25th October**

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



The Parish Pump

All in a name

I'm dyslexic, and recently attended an online Zoom conference about the disorder with a friend. The speakers asked us to share a personal experience with the group. I told them stress aggravates my condition, in which I reverse words and letters when I'm tense. When I finished speaking, my friend blurted out: "Now I know why you named your daughter Hannah!"

Crazy?

Our minister wanted the title of his next sermon to be posted ahead of time on the church website. He rang the church steward and said that the title was to be: 'Are Ministers Crazy?'

Not hearing this as a question, the steward dutifully posted: 'Our Minister's Crazy.'

The queue

While waiting in a socially distanced queue early one morning for the supermarket to open for us 'seniors', I was surprised to see a young man saunter along and try to cut in at the front of the queue. A furious old lady waved her cane at him, and he quickly backed away.

A moment later, the young man tried again. He managed to dodge the old lady, but then two old men started shouting at him. Again, the young man backed away.

But he wasn't giving up, and soon the young man approached the queue for the third time. By now, all of us pensioners were ready for him, an angry wall of opposition.

The young man stood there for a moment, and then shrugged his shoulders. "If you people won't let me unlock the door, none of you will ever get in to shop."



Our work during Lockdown.

I am the Community Outreach Worker at TTFC, and have been in post for 2 years. I have a desire to share our Father's heart with the lost, to share the gospel which brings salvation to those without Christ. When I heard the gospel for the first time in September 2008, the scales fell from eyes and I could see clearly for the first time. Jesus died on the cross for my sins and sickness, He paid the price for my redemption, giving me the assurance of everlasting life. In Him I live, in Him I have hope, In Him I am a new creation.

For 10 years as a new disciple, growing in my faith, hungry for the word of God, learning to be obedient to Him and mature in my walk with Him. I was thirsty, seeking how I could be filled with Holy Spirit, I was filled and He has been my comforter, guide and teacher, without Him we can do nothing. I was then led to Trinity Methodist Church, God clearly had His hand upon me, opening up the way. Matthew 25:35-40 says "The King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you since the world's foundation. Here's why:

*I was hungry and you fed me,
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,
I was homeless and you gave me a room,
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,
I was sick and you stopped to visit,
I was in prison and you came to me.'*

Matthew 25:35-40 is the vision in my heart as I complete my work for Trinity, this is what God has called us to do to extend the Kingdom of God until His return. Unity Café opened over a year ago and provides free food for families, individuals in crisis. We are open to the public and have a pay It Forward Scheme where people can pay for another person in need to have a meal.

When the lockdown happened, I was able to continue to serve the public, my husband Tom who is a Detective Sergeant, was off work for 10 weeks, he damaged his achilleas tendon playing football, so he was able to watch our two children aged 8 and 10 years due to closure of schools.

Using funding obtained from Teesside Philanthropic I was able to provide food parcels for those affected by Covid-19. I linked in with Citizens Advice Bureau who sent referrals from all over Middlesbrough. Delivering to those who were self-isolating due to help problems, those with symptoms and could not go shopping and also those effected financially. There were also people who had no family to call upon, which was saddening.

Our food parcels were extremely generous, supplying them with a weeks' worth of goods, nappies for those with babies and toiletries. Many of the individuals



rang CAB to say thanks for such a generous gift. Giving is a ministry and God has called us all into this ministry, blessing others is such a privilege and the more we give the more we receive Luke 6:38 explains this principle of giving: “Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full-pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back”.

This principle has been proven as we have gained more funding £10, 000 from Community Fund to continue this work of feeding those in food poverty. We also have second-hand clothes to give away to those in need, and we are looking forward to Feast Of Fun this Summer. We may have to do things a little differently for Feast Of Fun this year, as we are unable to have our 80 children plus parents in the church hall. I have some ideas to bring some happy memories to those who would struggle due to financial difficulty. Food parcels will be delivered, along with activity packs, picnic in the local parks and family trips out. Matthew 6:25-34 We should not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. (I encourage you to read the rest).

Jesus is explaining to us in this parable that He takes care of our every need, that we do not need to worry about anything. This is crucial as God’s children that we trust in Him during these uncertain times, that we continue to serve Him, in the good works we are called to do. As the Community Outreach Worker I have a compassion for those who are in poverty, and even more so for those in spiritual poverty, for our main calling is to: “Therefore go and make disciples of ALL nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age”. Matthew 28:19-20.

Please can I ask for you to pray for the work at Trinity, that we will be fruitful, and through our outreach, many will come to know our Lord and Saviour. Please pray for the harvesters, for the harvest is plentiful, the labourers are few. Prayer is key for any work for furthering the Kingdom, as attacks will come, therefore we must be strong together in faith as one body.

Thank you to the amazing leadership team at Trinity who are fundamental to all the work done, I appreciate your support and commitment to Gods work.

Sharon Sewell

What am I?

A teacher gave her young class a lesson on Zoom. It was about the magnet, and what it does. The next day in a short test, she included this question: “My full name has six letters. The first one is M. I am strong and attractive. I pick up lots of things. What am I?”

When the answers were sent in, the teacher was astonished to find that more than half her students had answered the question with the word: “Mother.”

LOCKDOWN

That word will be written into the History books for many years to come.

I wonder how on earth we will ever get back to normal if we ever do!! As I write this, some aspects of our lives are opening up, shops, places to eat, Sports Centres Hairdressers, even churches. Yet today July 31st we hear that cases of the virus are on the increase and so there are lockdowns in certain areas of our country, and the closure of some areas that were due to open up. Not good news!! However, the whole business of opening up is stressful. As stewards at Grove Hill we have worked so hard, as I know friends in all our churches have done, to try and ensure safety and health for all who will use our buildings.

We listen to the news and there is talk of a second spike of the virus to come maybe in October. I try to understand what has happened without much success. Other contributors to this 'Memo' have also shared their experiences and reflections. In the Prayer Diary I find myself using the phrase 'in these difficult times' in the prayers.

I have been involved as a Governor in seeing school made ready for children to return in September to much needed normality. Although I am happy that my school has been conscientious in providing work during Lockdown, there is a real need for children to have the security of school life as normal as it can be, even though they have to live in their Bubbles and not mix outside of those prescribed groups.

I have been moved to write my 'Thoughts' and have been amazed how God has inspired me each week with the idea on which to build my narrative. I feel that the real sadness of this virus, has been that people have been split up. To think of elderly people dying alone in Care Homes, away from those they love, and the distress for their family at not being able to be there to hold their hand is heart breaking. For parents and grandparents to be separated from their children for so long is very difficult, no matter how old those children or grandchildren may be. For those suffering for example from cancer, their treatment has been delayed during the crisis. Operations needed to improve the quality of people's lives have been postponed leaving those people anxious. People looking after relatives, for example with dementia, have lost out on the support and respite care which usually helps them to get through their own difficult times.

I long for normality and feel that I have many questions to which I don't have answers. I have read some interesting documents from the Methodist Church on the theology of lockdown and about how we see our faith in the midst of all the suffering. Some of that theology has been useful, but a lot of it has little relevance to the ordinary person who may not be familiar with the Christian faith.

We do ask questions such as **why** has this happened? **why** have so many people all over the world suffered so much in so many ways? **why** is there seemingly no light at the end of the tunnel? **why** is God not answering the prayers of so many people far worse off than me?' I pray every day for those suffering and dying, those suffering the pain of bereavement, those losing their homes, their livelihood, and for all who are in the midst of turmoil. I pray too for the brave people on the front line caring

and being totally unselfish. We do hear some good news on the medical front, maybe a vaccine will be available later this year, a real answer to prayer.

So how do I make sense of all of this? The real answer is I don't really know. I can come up with lots of positives, how people have been so kind and caring in the midst of all the suffering. How our churches have found new ways of being church. How people have had time to spend with their families in lockdown, yes lots of positives. I have found comfort in a new routine, more time at home, more shared time with my wife.

But the reality is, what would I say to the person suffering the pain of this dreadful illness, or to someone who is seeing their loved one suffer and maybe to the person who has lost that loved one to the disease. If they say to me, 'Where is your God in the midst of all of this?' Do I come up with the stock phrases hoping they will bring comfort, well yes I guess I do. For me searching for answers is about a real faith in a God who does care even though I am still left asking 'why?'

Dave Elliott



Circuit Stewards

As you know, circuit stewards come and go at this time of year and this year two stewards are standing down.

Pat Barrett has been one of the Finance team on two occasions (she says there won't be a third!) She was involved in the complex business of setting up Linthorpe Road Resource Centre and all the financial 'stuff' that went with it. Her financial knowledge and understanding, along with the ability to explain it to others, has been invaluable.

Ruth Lewis is also leaving the leadership team. Ruth has an amazing knack of getting people involved and has put her energy, knowledge and skills into Learning and Development throughout the circuit. Setting up Grave Talk and Table Talk, arranging study sessions and unravelling the mysteries of GDPR, so keeping our personal data safe, have been just a few of her accomplishments. A big thank-you goes out to both for their dedication and care.

We are pleased to say that Neil Mapplebeck has joined the team. Neil brings a quietness and calmness both of which we need in these difficult and uncertain times

Julie O'Key
Senior Circuit Steward

Janice Thomas

Janice was one of the younger stewards at Nunthorpe; her youth and impact on our church family life, lead us to grieve what we have lost. Her family above all, grieve. They have lost a loving and devoted mother, wife, sister and aunt. We pray and feel for them but here we focus on Janice's contribution to our church family.

As a steward Janice worked quietly and often unnoticed behind the scenes to keep our church running smoothly. Except that, despite her quiet and reserved demeanour, Janice's impact **was** noticed. Even though ill for so long, she showed a spirited determination and spirit-inspired mission. A member of what Sue called the "power-house" of the church, Janice was involved weekly praying for individual members of our church family. Every one of us will have been prayed for at some time by Janice and the Prayer Group. She also created an attractive Prayer Corner in the Entrance, with pictures, inspirational booklets and slips on which people were encouraged to write their prayer requests. Moving it from a small noticeboard in a dark corner of the crush hall, Janice wanted it to be the first thing visitors would see when they came to church. This in itself was a message.

Working with children and young people in CoGS and ToGS, Janice constantly sought to make it relevant to young people's use of media. Here, once again Janice showed leadership, pushing for the tired-looking small lounge to be redecorated and refurnished to become an attractive base for Young Sunday, a monthly group for young people in Y7 and above. Janice ensured young people were involved in picking the colour scheme, choosing the furniture and in setting up the room. Monthly events on a Sunday evening were planned with a variety of speakers, topics and lively activities bible and prayer based. Janice drove all this so we, as a church will work to continue this, her mission. Janice whole-heartedly supported the planning and execution of The Big Story, with its amazing innovative approach to telling the bible story through, craft, art, music and all sorts of activities!!!

After she resigned from her valuable and demanding work as a hospital dietician, Janice also took over the role of cleaner at Nunthorpe. My word! We were clean then! She called in often to clean, riding on her bike: she made sure there were bicycle racks put outside the side door! The place not only looked good but smelled good too. Janice created and put up all the signage which makes our church dementia-friendly and she tidied all the bookcases, notice boards.... constantly! All this while she visited London, alone, regularly for chemotherapy!

Forty to fifty of us clapped as the hearse arrived and stopped outside our church. We celebrated Janice on the lawn in bright sunshine, wearing, as she wanted, bright colours like the flowers in the tubs. It was "almost a party" and those leaving the numbers-restricted Crematorium service to the sound of *Walking on Sunshine* by Katrina and the Waves, were given raspberry-pink balloons to remember Janice, God's faithful servant.

Church Stewards Nunthorpe Methodist Church



Psalm 23—a psalm for the pandemic

There are few psalms as personal and real as Psalm 23. It records David's experience of God as his Shepherd going through dark times. In the midst of the effects of a global pandemic, this psalm speaks to the fears that can overwhelm us.

He Knows Me: 'The Lord is my shepherd...' Just as a good shepherd knows every sheep in his flock, so God know each one of us intimately.

He Provides for Me: 'He makes me lie down in green pastures...' Just as the shepherd knows the needs of his sheep, so God will provide what we need in our lives and circumstances.

He Guides Me: 'He guides me along the right paths...' Just as the shepherd leads the sheep to the best pastures, so God provides the best for us, as we listen and follow Him.

He Protects Me: 'Even though I walk through the darkest valley...' Just as the sheep have no need to fear danger when following the shepherd, so we live knowing God's presence and protection.

He Comforts Me: 'your rod and your staff, they comfort me.' As the shepherd's rod defends the sheep, and the staff enables him to control the sheep, so God comforts us through His Word and discipline.

The final verses of the psalm (v5-6) offer the security of knowing that our lives are in His hands, even through death, as He leads us to the home we've been looking for all our lives.

Some years ago, a great actor was asked to recite Psalm 23, but asked one of the other guests to do the same. His remarkable rendition was followed by the other man, an older Christian speaking from the heart. Afterwards the actor said: ***'The difference between us is that I know the psalm, but he knows the shepherd.'***

The Parish Pump

Essays

A second year student explaining to a first year student how to write essays: "When you take stuff from one writer, it's plagiarism, but when you take it from many writers, it's called research."

The Parish Pump

PRAYER DIARY

September 6th We pray today for all those churches cautiously opening again for worship and for those who will be leading the services. We pray for those church families unable to begin worship again for the time being. At the start of this new Methodist year we pray for all of our Circuit as we move forward in these difficult times that we might not lose sight of the faith we celebrate. Pray for Rev David Godfrey as he comes to us to be our Superintendent Minister, that he will be welcomed into our church families. Pray for Nunthorpe.

September 13th We pray today for children and teachers returning to school under very difficult conditions. Pray for Rev Christopher and Grove Hill

September 20th We pray today for students going off to University and those having to learn from home because of the present situation. Bless all who lecture and all who care for student welfare. Pray for Teesside University and for Rev Charity in her chaplaincy there. Pray for Linthorpe Road.

September 27th We pray for all those people known to us or connected to our churches, who are ill at this time. Pray for all who look after them. Pray for Rev Len Karn and for Marton.

October 4th We continue to pray for the World, for all who are suffering from the virus, for those who care for them and in so doing put themselves at risk. We pray for the scientists looking for effective vaccines and for an eventual cure. We pray for those who have lost loved ones to this illness. Help us to do all we can to serve others. Pray for Rev Mike Harland and for Stainton.

October 11th Pray for all who are involved in leading our churches on the Church Council and who attend the Circuit meeting and Synod. Pray for the

Circuit Leadership team and all who are involved in making difficult decisions at the present time, that they may be guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Pray for Normanby and for the Avenue Community Project team.

October 18th We pray for all who work with children and young people in our churches that those in their care may be excited and inspired by their time in their groups. Pray for Trinity and for the Trinity Family Friendly Centre and for Sharon Sewell

October 25th We pray for all who lead our worship, our ordained Ministers, our Local Preachers, and our Worship Leaders. Inspire and lead them in their ministry. Pray for Elaine and her work at the Circuit Office. Pray for Eston Grange.

November 1st On this All Saints Day we thank God for all who have lived such caring and at times, heroic lives in defending the faith. We pray for all who seek to be good in serving a God of love. Pray for Rev Lawrence Law and the Chinese Church

November 8th We pray for those who can sometimes feel as though they may need extra help and love to cope with living in a new town. Bless the work of MAP and Alisa Adamson

November 15th We pray today for those involved in caring for our Senior Citizens and for the work of 'Live at home' and for Deborah Keenan

November 22nd Pray today for all in Local and Central Government and for the important decisions they are having to make.

November 29th We remember all our District and the many different churches within the District. Pray for Richard Andrew the Chair of our District.