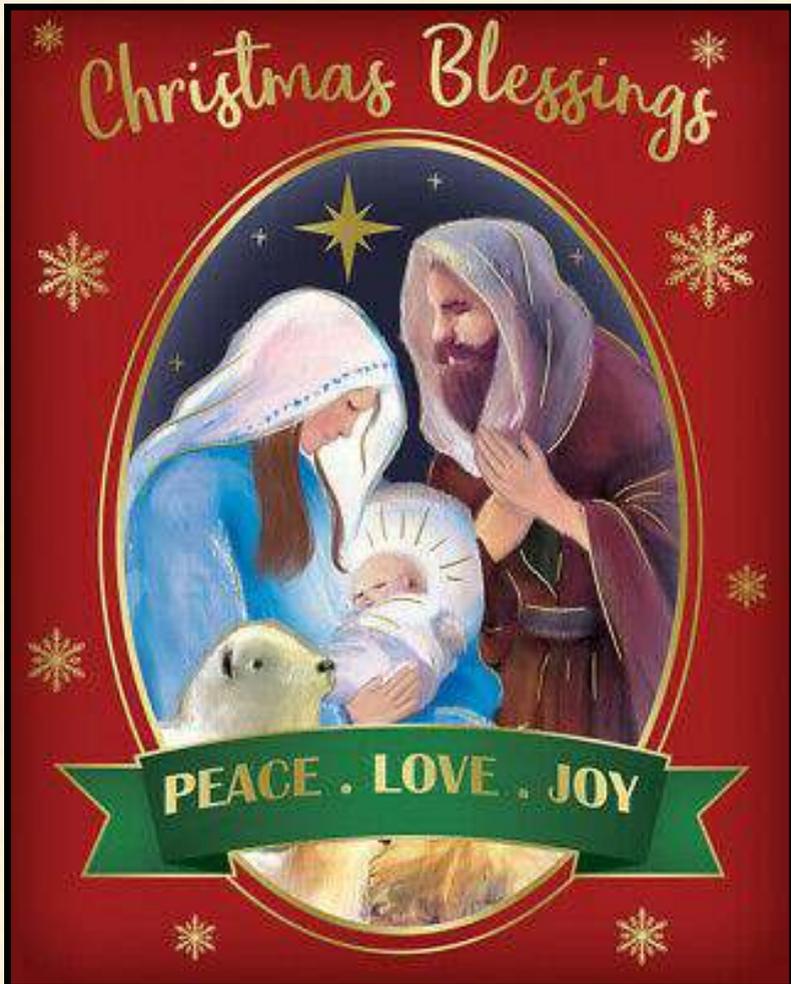


# MEMO

*Middlesbrough & Eston Methodist Outburst*

**DECEMBER 2020**  
**— FEBRUARY 2021**



# FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

One of the purposes of 'Memo' is to keep us in touch as a Circuit. Never before has this been so important as it is now. So I hope you will enjoy the content of this edition and if you have news you want to share to help us to keep in touch please send it to Elaine at the Circuit Office. Thank you very much to those who have contributed to this 'Memo'.

During the present period of restrictions, keeping in touch has for many relied on the technology, for example the Zoom platform and other types of meeting aids. We are grateful to all those people who have used the technology to provide us with Morning Prayers, online services and other opportunities to keep us hopefully inspired in our faith lives. I want to name one person who has done so much in keeping us in touch and that is David Everitt who manages the Circuit Website which of course isn't just viewed by people in our Circuit but has a very diverse group of viewers. This is also about extended outreach, as there may well be people who don't go to church but who use the website to access the various articles. I also enjoy providing my Thought For The Week and receive many supportive comments from people.

So as our churches have re opened it has been good to be together again for worship although it is a very different type of 'normal'

This 'Memo' spans many of our festivals; Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, and of course I am sure we will mention Easter right at the start of April. Festivals

which bring us more into focus with the important aspects of our faith, the chance to think about what we believe and to use these festivals as signposts into that belief.

So please use this 'Memo' to keep in touch with the Circuit and beyond and through the festivals, to keep in touch with our faith.

As always if you have articles for the next 'Memo' check the final date for submission.

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

*P.S. As we go to press another lockdown is in place, so we have ceased to meet in our churches. However lots of other worship is in place online and we will look forward to the day when we can again gather together in our churches to worship God.*

## **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 OBS**

**Or email to  
mbrocircuit@gmail.com  
by 1st January 2021**



# The Superintendent's Letter

Dear Friends,

How are we going to celebrate Christmas this year in the midst of Covid related restrictions?

One of my favourite Christmas stories is “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens. I’ve read it several times and watched various film versions (my favourite being ‘The Muppet Christmas Carol’). It is the tale of a wealthy money lender, Ebenezer Scrooge, being cured of his meanness by an encounter with three spirits - The ghosts of Christmas past, Christmas present and Christmas future. The ghosts confront Scrooge with his own selfishness and its consequences. He begins to realise that the poor are kept poor by his own meanness and that his own life is heading for lonely ruin. By the end of the book Scrooge finds redemption in personal generosity as he seeks to make amends for his past.

It has been said that the way we celebrate Christmas today is influenced more by Charles Dickens than by Jesus Christ. Certainly, Dickens’ book convinces us that Christmas is about giving presents, making merry and being close to our families as we look after each other. Retailers tap into this sentiment as they advertise a lifestyle of generosity and plenty, and so our High Streets fill with shoppers before Christmas and money is spent like water in search of perfect presents for a perfect Christmas.

Charles Dickens could not have known how commercial Christmas would become. His vision of Christmas celebration was not drawn from a consumer ideal, but from an older story. A story which is now celebrated in the Christian church all over the world. It is the story, glimpsed in nativity plays, of a young woman giving birth to a son in the poverty of a stable. It is a story of hardship, of people helping one another, of families and of celebrations in unlikely settings. As we read it we begin to see where Dickens found his Christmas hope.

Covid restrictions are likely to make our celebration of Christmas very difficult this year. But we can still unwrap that old, old story however limited our festivities may be. As we hear the story afresh, we find that the greatest gift of all has already been given. Jesus Christ is God’s gift to all people. It is in him that Christians find that life takes on new meaning and makes more sense. Even in our cynical world of poverty and pain, God’s love breaks through. May we hear that story afresh in our homes and churches this Christmas time.

I wish you all a joyful Christmas and a peaceful new year.

**Rev. David Godfrey.**



## IN MEMORY OF BARBARA BROWN

23.09.1939 – 04.09.2020

Barbara was born at home in Stockton just three weeks after the start of World War 2. Shortly after the war ended her family – her parents Albert and Dolly, and older sister Marjorie – moved to Middlesbrough in November 1945. There Barbara attended Linthorpe Primary/Junior Schools and then progressed to Hugh Bell School. She took eight subjects at GCE ‘O’ level and passed all of them and, later, three subjects at OA level.

In September 1957, she started at Kenton Lodge Training College in Newcastle, and qualified as a teacher. She started her career, teaching seniors, from September 1959 to 1961. In September 1961 she returned to her old Linthorpe Junior School and taught there for 30 years until taking early retirement in December 1991. There she was renowned for ‘the look’ she gave miscreant children sent to see Miss Brown.

Her sister Marjorie eventually became manager of Moorlands, the Methodist Guild Guest House/Hotel at Whitby, and the whole Brown family often went there to help out. Barbara had fond memories of getting to know regular guests and joining in the various activities. Barbara would help in the kitchen and also lead devotions, including services there during school holidays at Christmas and Easter.

In April 1964 Albert and Dolly moved to Grosmont but Barbara remained in Middlesbrough. She lived in various flats and houses, all of them in Linthorpe. Later her mother returned to live two doors away from her in Ventnor Road. In 1990 Marjorie retired and went to live with Barbara and both endured various health scares until Marjorie died. Barbara ended up looking after Marjorie but, even so, she called their nine years together an enjoyable time.

This gives an insight into Barbara’s attitude and character. She made light of various health issues which affected her over the years. She had life-long reduced mobility because of the need to wear a built-up shoe. As a young adult she suffered a bout of rheumatism which confined her to bed for three months. In 1979 she was diagnosed as insulin diabetic and later survived cancer. In her final years in Middlesbrough she had to give up driving and relied on others for transport, at times needing to be a wheelchair-user. Despite all these complaints she did not herself complain about these various matters and, indeed, was known to comment: *I’m awfully good for the state I’m in!*

It was her Church life and work for which Barbara is mainly known and remembered in our Methodist Circuit. When the family moved to Middlesbrough in 1945 they renewed the connection Dolly and her parents previously had with the nearby Avenue Methodist Church. Once Barbara herself became a church member she remained in that fellowship until it closed in August 2012. Her father Albert was a local preacher and Barbara followed in his footsteps. Somewhat intriguingly Barbara recorded that she conducted her first service in October 1959 at the village chapel in Carlton. More memorable, she said, was the fact she arrived there as a pillion passenger on a friend’s motor-bike! She became accredited in March 1963 marking the start of a further 53 years faithful service

in this capacity in the Middlesbrough Circuit, subsequently forming part of the combined Middlesbrough and Eston Circuit. Barbara did not pull her punches as a preacher and, when appropriate, would speak her mind. The writer has several times recounted his memory of Barbara, quite early in her preaching career, leading an evening service at Avenue when, at the start of her sermon, she said to the then thriving group of young people sitting together as far back in the gallery as possible: *Please put away your homework and listen to what I have to say.* And they did!

Barbara held various other positions over the years at Avenue. As Church Steward, as JMA Secretary and leading the Junior Guild among them. She was a loyal member of the Wesley Guild and one of her proudest times was to have the honour of serving as their National President for two years 1974-76. During that time she toured the country attending their meetings and rallies. After Avenue closed for worship she continued to attend monthly coffee mornings held there by former members and also joined other ladies for a monthly lunch club outing.

Eventually the time came when Barbara was having increasing difficulty fending for herself and her health was deteriorating further. The question was asked would she like to move to be near family members in Malvern – the family being her second cousin Ian Bowers, his wife, and daughter Rachel Bennett – where she could be cared for as she now required. She moved there in August 2016 and herself recorded her time there as being the happiest she had been since 1999. It was also noted that a jigsaw was a perpetual feature in her flat, as had been the case in Middlesbrough. Just a year ago, in September 2019, Barbara celebrated her 80th birthday with family and friends gathering for afternoon tea, first for those in Malvern, and then later at Saltburn for her northern friends. She was in fine fettle on that occasion (when the accompanying photo was taken) so it was a great shock just under a year later to hear that Barbara had died suddenly in the early hours of 4 September 2020. Barbara had contracted shingles but was recovering when she fell. After a period in hospital it was found she had actually broken her leg and she had an operation during which a metal support rod was fitted. Sadly, this operation caused a blood clot which resulted in her unexpected death.

Her funeral was held in Malvern and followed, on 8 October, by a memorial service at Teesside Crematorium. Because of the current Covid-19 pandemic restrictions attendance was limited and could be by invitation only. Some former Avenue members and some local preachers were able to be present. The service was conducted by Dan Bennett (Ian Bowers' son-in-law, and husband of Rachel) who is pastor of the Elim Source Church in Malvern. During the service a poem was read by Su Lyness (Barbara's god-daughter), Ron Mapplebeck spoke of his various personal memories of Barbara, and a tribute from Rev Sue Greenwood was read out. Afterwards, the family scattered Barbara's ashes in the crematorium Garden of Rest.

During the service Dan presented a Celebration of Barbara's life, much of it compiled from notes left by Barbara. I am grateful to Dan for sight of his notes which have greatly assisted my preparation of this obituary. Dan commented on the sadness resulting from Barbara's sudden death but said: *And yet for Barbara, with her strong faith she knew that it was a passing, from her earth-bound life to a heavenly and eternal life with Jesus.* He later closed the service by quoting two

verses from Paul's letters and epistles which provided two thoughts to summarise Barbara's life – resilience and generosity.

We here give thanks and gratitude for Barbara's great faith that she expressed and lived out in many ways during her life.

**Ron Mapplebeck**



## APPEAL

I am happy to report that covid-safe Avenue Clothing Service has re-opened. Service users come in by appointment only, and we have systems and controls in place. We are open for donations on Wednesdays 10am to 12 noon only. Donations can be brought to the side door, and volunteers will bring them from the

door into the building (we would ask donors not to come inside the building, please). We are still taking general clothing and household basics. However we have slightly altered our focus, and for the first time are looking for food/toiletries too, as our service users have been finding it harder than ever to get hold of basics, as covid has altered prices, and made shopping very widely (in different shops for different things) more difficult.

### **We are looking in particular for:**

- new men's and women's socks
- new men's and women's underwear
- hats, gloves, scarves
- Warm, weatherproof coats/jackets



### **Store cupboard food basics,** in relatively small

(500ml/500g )packets for example rice, pasta, sugar, tea bags, coffee, tinned beef or chicken, tuna, tomatoes, pulses (not baked beans), chocolate.

**Toiletry basics** e.g. shower gel, deodorant, handwash, body lotion, shampoo, conditioner, individually wrapped toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, baby oil, baby toiletries, sanitary products.

**Ailsa Adamson**  
Project Manager

# Once in Royal David's City

## StF 214 H & P 114



This carol is certainly iconic. Since 1919, the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at the King's College Chapel Cambridge has begun its Christmas Eve service with an arrangement of "Once in Royal David's City" as the Processional hymn. There, the boy soloist does not know he will be the chosen one until minutes before the service commences, now broadcast to the nation. In Nunthorpe this carol always begins our Christmas Eve service as, in the darkness, a solo voice sings out the first verse, the choir with torches proceeding down the aisle joins in the second verse and the congregation joins in the last verses. And all the lights come on.

Written in 1848 by Cecil Frances Alexander, a vicar's wife as part of a series, including *All Things Bright and Beautiful* and *There is a Green Hill Far Away*, its main purpose was to teach small children the essentials of the Creed. Here they learn that Jesus was "born of the Virgin Mary". H&P has six verses but StF omits the somewhat speculative verses dealing with Jesus' "wondrous" childhood where all children are urged to be "mild, obedient good as he". I certainly became restive when at Christmas my own mother would glare pointedly at me as we sang those words! Mild? Obedient? Me? But I do like the other missing verse and think much is lost if we don't remind children and ourselves that He was "little, weak and helpless" which is the amazing mystery of the incarnation isn't it? "Tears and smiles like us he knew." Thus God *feels* our "sadness" and "gladness".

Whenever I sing it, I think of my grandmother, "Ma". Lottie, or Ma, first came to my father's home in 1911 when he was 2 years old. She was a petite 16 year old girl, a bit like Mary maybe, but brought in by their businessman father to look after his five children and their mother Nellie, who sadly, was ill and dying. After Nellie died, within the year, for respectability, Ma married their father. Years later she had her own sons. Lottie was a lovely gentle person and my father did not like stories with evil stepmothers because as he said, that was not his experience. I can still see myself being bathed by Ma when she babysat us, deliberately teaching us the words. She would sing a line and we would repeat it. We needed to know it she said.

The last verse is my favourite with its promise of seeing God in heaven, a complete contrast to the gloomy darkness of the "lowly cattle shed" in the first verse. We shall see Jesus "on high" where children, the very ones who are singing, will be like "stars", sources of light, and they will be "crowned" as well! Dressed in white, symbols of purity and radiance they will "wait around". Nothing to do, just "be" in the presence of God. Just as the low notes which begin the tune *Irby* make a clear yet subdued start to this carol's impact on our ears, by the end the repetition of the two last lines and their higher notes, combined with the choir's rising descant, make this an exhilarating experience for our hearts. **An inspiring start to Christmas.**

**Ruth Lewis**

# A COVID CHRISTMAS

As I write this article on October 16<sup>th</sup> it is looking increasingly likely there could be another 'Lock down' or at least an increasing number of restrictions on our freedom. A few weeks ago the Prime Minister assured us that if we properly obeyed the rules then Christmas would be normal, but maybe he isn't saying that today.

## **I wonder what it will look like this year?**

Sue and I were discussing today whether or not we are allowed to have a tree in church? Or maybe our usual Advent candles, so much part of our tradition and a way of enhancing our worship at this special time of the year. I will seek advice on these matters!

## **Will we be able to sing by Christmas time?**

How sad if it is still banned and we have to listen behind our masks to the playing of Carols trying hard to resist the temptation to join in.

## **What about the Children's special Nativity services, will they be able to go ahead?**

Again we will seek advice and hope that there is a compromise.

## **Outside of our Church lives, what will Christmas look like?**

We certainly don't fancy lots of going round shops (not that I ever do, I am ashamed to say!!) of course for many the answer is on line shopping, to ensure there are still gifts for those we love at the Festive season.

## **What about sharing the big day, will we be able to have family and friends around for dinner or other parts of the season?**

If we can't do this, then for many it is going to be a very lonely time. If there are travel restrictions then again meeting up with family and friends who live away may be impossible.

So what a picture of doom and gloom I have painted, am I being too negative? Will things get better and so there may be more 'normality' I certainly hope so.

## **But will this affect our Christmas spirit?**

Well I hope not. We will still want to rejoice in what ever way we can at the wonderful news of the Incarnation the miracle of God loving us so much that he sent his son to be our Saviour. Even in restricted circumstances this joy can't be taken away from us. The way the humble shepherds heard the message of the Angels and travelled to Bethlehem reminds us that no matter how difficult our circumstances we can still hear the Angels, still in our minds travel to Bethlehem. Our lives, like those of the shepherds, can be inspired and changed by the sight of the Infant Jesus. Surely in the midst of our darkness that bright light will still shine.

We will celebrate on January 6<sup>th</sup> Epiphany, the arrival of the Kings with their gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, which remind us of who Jesus is. A King, the Son of God who would eventually suffer and die for you and for me.

In giving these gifts, not only will we share gifts this year, no



matter what may happen, but we also will continue to share with all who need them, the gifts of love and care and compassion, the gift of our prayers.

So maybe all will be well at Christmas, but whatever happens no amount of Government restrictions can take away our faith, our belief in a God who loves us all the way through the year, and bids us to love one another.

**Happy Christmas!!**

**Dave Elliott**

## **A prayer during**



Lord, as I put on my mask, let it be a filter  
For my words to pass through as well as my  
breathing.

Let through only words which are helpful breathings of love  
and stop those things in my speech that will be harmful to  
others.

Protect me also, O Lord, from the harmful things others may say  
to me.

Help me to realise that we may be a carrier of bitterness,  
thoughtlessness, judgement and prejudice without realising,  
and that some people are more word-vulnerable than others.  
Give me grace to love those who cannot, or will not filter to  
protect others,

and special grace to them, because they go through the world  
unprotected.

Help me to be prepared to adapt and be brave and transparent  
so that all may have chance to hear.

Lord, be a mask to my mouth  
And pin our ears forward for listening.

**Amen**

**Association of Church Editors**

# *News from the Circuit Meeting 16.9.20 on Zoom*

**Re-opening of Churches** - A lot of the meeting was given to sharing information as to how our churches were re-opening/planning to re-open following the long lockdown due to COVID. It was recognised that this has been a particularly difficult time for some of our churches and congregations and our Churches were approaching the task of re-opening cautiously, but the feedback from churches that had already opened was that it was working well.

Trinity were in the fortunate position of being able to hold outdoor services which they did in the summer before moving inside in early September. They have also managed to open some of their other activities including the opening of the café and all seems to be going well

**Local Preachers** – (report distributed in advance of meeting). Dave Elliott noted that people who don't normally attend church may be looking at online worship and so this will continue through to the end of February 2021.

**Young Sunday** - is the new discipleship and worship group in the Circuit for young people of secondary school age. This evolved from a group called Last Sunday which had been happening at Nunthorpe for about a year. Rev Charity visited the group to lead a session and from that it was noted that there may be other young people in the Circuit who would like to be involved in the group. The first session was held in Trinity garden on 31st August and 7 young people attended with picnics and ideas. The session led by Rev Charity and assisted by Anne Smith and Kay Braithwaite was on journeys. The group had discussion, ate, played games, chatted and prayed together. Going forward the group will meet fortnightly at 5.00pm on a Sunday alternating between Zoom and face to face meetings.

**LRRC** – After some difficult times the LRRC, going forward, looks much more positive. The 2 shops are close to being rented out by a husband and wife, she to open a tearoom and he to run an upmarket Chinese fruit and veg shop. MAP have been running 1:1 sessions in the café and Millennium Meals have continued to use the premises during lockdown. Boro Angels are considering re-starting and AA are interested in using the centre. Also, Junction 42 (working with ex-offenders), running a Christian workshop around food are hoping to begin work using the café. There are also 2 new members on the board, Rev David Godfrey and Christopher Kelly from the Salvation Army. A really promising position for the LRRC.

**TFFC** – Although there was no Feast of Fun Sharon was still able to provide and distribute food packs to help families who would normally access this activity

**Matters from District and Conference** – God in Love Unites Us (from the Relationships review) is deferred to 2021.

The most significant thing to come out of Connexion is 'The Methodist Way of Life' –it is hoped that as a Circuit we can embrace and use this material as time goes on.

An amendment to 'Model Trusts' which would allow other congregations who meet on Methodist premises to have licences for more than a year. As churches will need to vote on this, information will be forwarded in due course to Church Councils.

# NORMANBY METHODIST WIVES CLUB

The Wives Club started in 1980 as “Young Wives” and have met every Monday evening apart from the summer break. But now after 60 years the ten remaining members have reluctantly decided to disband due to their increasing ages, walking difficulties and the fact that they do not feel safe turning out on dark evenings.



Mrs. Cynthia Womack was one of the founder members of the “Young Wives” and has served for the full 60 years as one of the leaders, and pianist, and has acted as President when this position has been vacant and we do thank her for this remarkable achievement. Our embroidered tablecloth show names of ladies who have long since passed away, some who have left due to health issues or other reasons and the remaining few.

We are thankful for all the happy memories of times past when we had a concert party, many outings and trips to the theatre etc, and would like to thank all the people who have come to speak, demonstrate their creative talents, entertain us or lead us in devotional worship over the years. So as we feel sadness at the closure of our Monday evening meetings we look forward to still being involved in other activities of Normanby Methodist Church.



**1960's Concert Party**

Our annual anniversary Sunday would have been on 15th November. We will be present at that service and the preacher, Rev. Charity Hamilton will mention the Wives Club and the reason why we have reached our decision, and we will **“PRAISE HIM FOR ALL THAT IS PAST, AND TRUST HIM FOR ALL THAT’S TO COME.”**

**Beryl Haggath** (Secretary)



**Cynthia Womack &  
Beryl Haggath**

# How do we shape our story of faith now?

## MEMC Online Advent Course 2020

Come along and eavesdrop on Revd Christopher & Revd Charity in conversation about how we might give words to our story of faith now, in light of the effects of covid-19 on the Church. We'll be using the Apostles creed as the basis for the conversation – an expression of the story of faith of the Church for centuries, is it still a helpful way to frame our story of faith? We will end each session with a short act of night prayer.

7.00pm

17th November/ 24th November  
1st December/ 8th December/ (15th December)





## **EVENTS AROUND THE CIRCUIT**

**(not shown on the Plan, please remember booking is essential.)**

### **ESTON GRANGE**

Thursday 24th December - Christmas Eve Service at 7.00pm led by Rev. Christopher Wood-Archer

Friday 25th December - Christmas Day Service at 9.30am led by Rev. Christopher Wood-Archer

### **GROVE HILL**

Friday 25th December - Christmas Day Service at 10.30am led by Rev. Christopher Wood-Archer

### **MARTON**

Friday 25th December - Christmas Day Service at 9.30am led by Rev. David Godfrey

### **NORMANBY**

Thursday 24th December - Christmas Eve Service at Eston Grange at 7.00pm

Friday 25th December - Christmas Day Service at 9.30am led by Rev. Christopher Wood-Archer

### **NUNTHORPE**

Friday 25th December - Christmas Day Service at 10.30am led by Rev. David Godfrey

### **TRINITY**

Friday 25th December - Christmas Day Service at 10.00am led by Rev. Charity Hamilton

# Al fresco Coffee Morning

In August and September Nunthorpe resurrected our Tuesday drop-in coffee morning. We met socially distanced on the grass outside church.

Initially in one large circle, but later in groups of six bringing our own chairs and coffee. When Covid became more prevalent we decided to stop for safety reasons and the weather was getting colder as well.



We hope to start our coffee mornings again soon, either inside or outside Covid permitting.

**Jillian Lambert**  
Nunthorpe Methodist Church



## Thank You to the

Who would have thought writing this article in October that we would be still facing more restrictions due to Covid-19.

Eston Grange has not yet as a church building opened it's doors for worship and fellowship, hopefully we will soon do so. However members and adherents are still very much part of this Circuit. I would like to convey my sincere thanks (I am sure I voice the thoughts of others) to Ministers, Local Preachers, Lay workers of the Circuit and beyond.

They have provided via online technology, telephone and written word; Sunday Sermons, Worship at Home and Thoughts for the Week.

I would also like to say a big **Thank You** to the Circuit Office Administrator and the Editorial Team for providing Memo and passing on relevant information.

The **GOOD NEWS** for those still isolated and vulnerable the decision has been made to continue the 'New Normal' enabling us to still feel supported and blessed by the kindness and generosity of Christian Love.

God Bless You All

**Maureen Borley.**  
Eston Grange Methodist Church



# Lent amidst Covid 19

February 17<sup>th</sup> sees the start of Lent, that period from Ash Wednesday running up to Easter, which is seen as a season of penitence, self-examination and fasting. Of course you know the backstory - Jesus went into the desert to fast and pray before beginning his work

for God; he was tempted several times by Satan, but was able to resist. Today our Lenten observances still reflect this.

Is Lent going to be different in 2021? Who knows what our situation will be by then, but it is perhaps good to be prepared. Lent is a time of giving things up and a test of our self-discipline. We may feel that we have already given up many things since March this year, more often than not because we have had little choice!

For some giving up food items/fasting will be difficult even though it is very popular at the moment be it for health or spiritual reasons. It is an excellent form of self-discipline, good for the waistline and adaptable - it may be that you could fast for one day each week for the season of Lent.

However through this Covid dominated year we have gained things as well, and for many of us that gain is time. A time which could be used for person contemplation and prayer; a time when we can connect, really connect, with God; a time when we talk to him like you would talk to your friends and family. Whether you are fearful or anxious talk to Him, talk to him out loud if it helps! Don't be afraid to hand it over to this constant presence in your life. Remember those great words from Joseph Medlicott Scriven

*What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief to bear  
In his arms he'll take and shield you, you will find a solace there*

Anne Smith

## Methodist Women in Britain

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



During the month of October the Darlington District have been raising money for the District Project "COCO Comrades of Children Overseas". This is to help build a new classroom for Mercy Primary School in Mbita, Kenya. **The amount collected to date is £166.00 from our Circuit, with more to come.**

**Kath Smithies** (Circuit Methodist Women in Britain Secretary)

## SERVICE IN THE GARDEN AT TRINITY

On Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> August, we (about 25 of us) met in the garden at Trinity Church for Open Air Worship. Rev. Charity led the service and it really made me think. The Bible reading is headed “Jesus walks on water” – a very recognised passage and one of my favourites. I think of the passage as being “Peter walks on water” and my thoughts changed from “if you want to walk on water you’ve got to get out of the boat” to “First you’ve got to get into the boat.” I always find it comforting to know that it is better to try and fail than not to try at all. I know that if I try and fail, Jesus will hold out his hand to help me.

I’ve always used this passage to remind myself (and occasionally others) that it’s no good sitting on your backside and doing nothing (other than complaining) you’ve got to make the effort and do something. But Charity said something that expanded this passage for me. She said “first of all you have to get into the boat”. For me this is the church. Are we in the boat? I think so, as we attend the service at church or attend at least one of the activities connected to the church. So we are in the boat, - just as the disciples were – there, sent by God.

But when the disciples saw Jesus, only one Peter, got out onto the water. Do we ever get out of the boat, get out of our comfort zone and take a risk?

Many of our Ministers and Local Preachers will tell you that they first resisted the call of Jesus to ‘come’ – but eventually they left the boat and I would guess that all of them when trying something new have failed at one time or another, but Jesus will have taken them in his arms, guided and supported them with love and compassion.

I did not want to go back to Trinity wearing a mask, with no hymns, sitting 2 m apart, leaving without having a joke, chat and a hug with my friends, but I did. I didn’t feel comfortable dressed in walking shoes, fleece and cagoul to our outdoor service. (I’m sure Jesus didn’t mind my mode of dress) but what a joy to share worship with the people who make Trinity what it is. Let’s get out of the boat, stay safe in God’s hands and let us all walk on water.

**Bill Reeve**

### ***Have Your Say in MEMO!!!***

MEMO is the forum through which our churches can tell us about what they are saying and doing. Especially how you have helped one another during this strange and difficult time.

PLEASE let us know what you have found successful, which will inspire others, don't be modest, this is about God working his purpose out through your efforts and that is worth telling us all.

**The Editorial Team**



## *Love in a bag*

I asked my nephew whether he bought his wife anything for Valentine's Day, and he said he had bought her a belt and a bag. When I commented that I am sure she would appreciate them, he agreed: "Yes, and hopefully the vacuum cleaner will work better now."

## *Sorry*

Our minister, an avid golfer, was once taking part in a local tournament. As he was preparing to tee off, the organiser of the tournament approached him and pointed to the dark, threatening storm clouds which were gathering. "Sir," the organiser said, "I trust you'll see to it that the weather won't turn bad on us." Our minister shook his head. "Sorry," he replied. "I'm in sales, not management!"

**Where was the social distancing?**

## *Best to impress*

An older man, not in the best physical condition, went along to his local gym. Carefully dressed in his new exercise clothes, he approached a trainer in the gym. "I want to impress a beautiful young girl as soon as possible. Which machine should I use?" The trainer took one look at him and smiled: "I would highly recommend the ATM machine outside!"

## *Are politicians the oldest profession?*

A surgeon, an architect and a politician were arguing as to whose profession was the oldest. Said the surgeon: "Eve was made from Adam's rib, and that surely was a surgical operation."

"Maybe," admitted the architect, "but prior to that, order was created out of chaos, and that was an architectural job."

"But," the politician pointed out in triumph, "somebody had to have created the chaos first!"

## *Taking the biscuit*

As we were putting out biscuits for Father Christmas on Christmas Eve, one fell on the floor. When I picked it up and placed it back on the plate, my four-year-old was horrified. "You can't do that!"

"Don't worry," I assured him. "Father Christmas will never know." He shot me a suspicious look. "So, he knows if I've been bad or good, but he doesn't know the biscuit fell on the floor?"

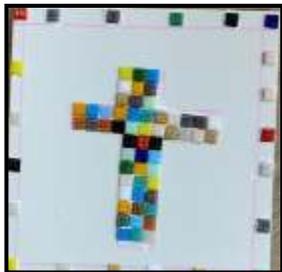
## *Weighed down*

After the Christmas and New Year festivities, the wife gingerly crept onto her bathroom scales to weigh herself. She pulled a sad face. Her husband asked: "What's the matter? Are you overweight?"

"Well, not if I was six inches taller."

## **The Parish Pump**

## Young Sunday: Circuit Youth



There are young people, one or two, here and there, dotted about in congregations, across the circuit. They could be at risk of becoming isolated on their journeys of faith. As part of thinking about how we enable the discipleship of the 'whole people of God' and how we welcome all people into the life of the Church, we began to think in a more focused way about our young people.

Nunthorpe Methodist Church, as part of its provision for children and young people ran something called 'Last Sunday' which was a space for children linked to the congregation to meet and explore faith once a month. A member of Nunthorpe Methodist Church, Janice Thomas was heavily involved in running 'Last Sunday'. Sadly Janice died in the summer, before she died Janice and I and others spent a great deal of time talking about developing 'Last Sunday' into a circuit wide provision for young people and their faith stories.



Young Sunday came into being in August 2020. Young Sunday is part of the circuit's provision for young people who are in secondary school. Any young person who is in secondary school and has any kind of link with a church in the circuit is welcome to become part of Young Sunday. We meet every two weeks, alternating between online gatherings via zoom, and in person gatherings in covid-19 secure environments.

Our theme for this quarter has been 'Being Me'. Our first Young Sunday gathering was in the garden at Trinity Methodist Church, and we looked at 'Being me on the journey' our reading was the road to Emmaus, our following meetings have covered 'Being me made in God's image' (where David Godfrey shared some of his story with us); 'Being me in a world of fake news' (where we had the editor of the Gazette with us); 'Being me finding my way'; 'Being me and diversity'; 'Being me in Middlesbrough' (with the mayor); 'Being me and my worth'.



Our sessions involve games, Bible reading, activities, prayers, and discussion. Sometimes we even have fire and marshmallows....! The key thing to each session is that it should enable and develop the young people's discipleship whether that be through learning ways to read and understand scripture, hearing other people's experiences of faith, trying out different

ways to pray, or just talking about God in ways that are natural and not 'put on', we

want our young people to feel confident to talk of God and the things of God in their lives and so we model that as well as encouraging it. We aren't just a youth group or a social group we are a discipleship group and there's something distinctive and special about that.

Kay Braithwaite, Anne Smith and I have been leading the sessions and we are looking for session helpers. If you are interested get in touch with us and we can supply you with a role description and start the safer recruitment processes. Please hold the young people and us in your prayers.

**Rev Charity Hamilton**



## Outreach arm of Trinity Methodist Church.

During this pandemic we have had to think of new ways to reach our community, finding ways to support them in a practical and spiritual way. There has been an increase in anxiety, this has caused a massive rise in alcohol/drug abuse. Many mothers have spoke directly to me, openly sharing that since the Covid 19 crisis they can't stop drinking alcohol due to stress. This goes on to have a devastating effect on the children in these families, who are witnessing domestic violence and mental health in their homes. Other families have come forward who are dealing with sons/daughters who are suicidal, who cannot cope under the pressures facing society at this devastating times. Families in deprived areas such as the community we serve are impacted by the crisis emotionally, financially and mentally.

During lockdown TFFC has been proactive in our response to the coronavirus epidemic, multi-agency connections were made with Citizens Advice Bureau and Safer Families, these agencies work with the most vulnerable families in Middlesbrough with whom a referral process was carried out. TFFC also have over 40 families who we support on a regular basis. TFFC were overjoyed to secure £10,000 in funding from the Covid 19 Community Fund to help support families/individuals in a practical way. TFFC provided generous food parcels, activities for children, and food stamps.

Unity Café opened when Middlesbrough was in Tier 2, the families supported during the recent months began coming to café regularly. Many were in fear, and several said that their anxiety was 'through the roof'. Others felt lonely and desperate after spending so much time in isolation, one lady said she felt 'peace' when she came to the café. A single mother asked to volunteer, she had lost her job and felt deflated, she said she had ***'lost her confidence, and felt the café was a safe place'***. Unity Café has a Bible Study every Thursday, one of the mothers invited Jesus into her life, she said she wanted a new life and had tried everything else so will try Jesus, she said she immediately felt at peace.

Everything we do at TFFC is an overflow from the Fathers heart, we want others to know God loves them, and He cares about them. John 15:12 Jesus gave this commandment, love each other in the same way I have loved you. How do we show

this love? Its one thing to tell people we love them; it feels good when people tell us with words. But fundamentally as Christians words are not enough, we need to show our love, Titus 3:14 says our people must learn to do good, meeting the urgent needs, then they will not be unproductive. Fruits of righteousness, to glorify our Father in heaven. Everything we do is to His glory. TFFC are meeting this urgent need, we supplied lunches to children in the October half term, we have put smiles on children's faces, supplying activities and goodies. One family replied saying, *'thank you so much, you don't know how much this means to me. I have felt so alone and scared in this lockdown, and its just nice to know the church cares'.*



Our vision is based on Isaiah 58:10 which states feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. Being a light in this dark period means we have to step into the darkness, to lead people to safety, to lead them to the One who their can find refuge, who is our ever-present help in time of need. Not everyone can step out into the darkness, due to all different kinds of reasons, but can do the most important thing, they can pray. Prayer is key if we are to have victory, please pray that TFFC has the resources, volunteers needed to be the light in the darkness.

**Sharon Sewell**  
Project Co-ordinator

## A PEN PORTRAIT OF NUNTHORPE METHODIST CHURCH.

Writing a pen portrait of Nunthorpe Church in October 2020 is extraordinarily difficult. Do I describe the church I have known and loved for over forty years or do I paint a picture of the here and now of post Covid 19? I will try to do both.

It was a very active church making known the love of God to its members and the wider community in which it is placed.

Sunday morning worship was enhanced by the music group and the presence of our children- COGS (Children of God Squad), who left after the second hymn for their own session where they heard Bible stories, took part in craft activities and generally enjoyed being together. Fine mornings saw them playing in the wonderful Noah's Garden while the adults drank coffee and chatted.

Sunday evenings saw the meeting of young people in a group first called Last Sunday, later known as Young Sunday, ably led by the late and much missed Janice

Thomas.

During the week there was Play and Chat, oversubscribed, and Praise and Play for pre-school children and their carers. Film Club was run for 8 to 13 year olds.

For those a little older there was the Tuesday Coffee Drop In an opportunity to chat over a welcome cup of coffee and scone. The Nunthorpe Knitters joined this group as well as having a Knit and Natter on a Thursday evening.

Contact, Ladies' Fellowship, Luncheon Club and Table Talk were groups which met regularly.

Once a month we joined with residents of Nunthorpe Oaks Residential Home for a well attended evening service. Our record was 36 worshippers!

We have had special occasions in the calendar, like the Christmas Nativity- always a moving experience when the children treated us to the timeless story of the Nativity with a modern twist. This year we had The Big Story (see Memo June to August).

A very important group was the Prayer Group which met weekly to intercede for those in our church community in need of prayer and those who had posted prayer requests in the foyer.

I must mention Churches Together, Action for Children, MHA, MAP, JMA and the Food Bank.

The building was used by Brownies and Guides and other community groups.

### **THEN CAME COVID 19. THEN CAME LOCKDOWN. EVERYTHING STOPPED.**

But did it?

The building was closed but the central core of worship and showing God's love continued. The congregation couldn't attend worship, so worship was taken to the congregation. Online services were transmitted to those who could access them. Printed copies were delivered to those who could not. Hymn books were provided for those who requested them so they could read the words of the hymns. Very soon the service sheets were accompanied by useful information and news. Now a monthly newsletter from our minister is included.



A good communication network was set up and people contacted by phone or email. COGS were contacted and supplied with interesting and challenging material. Quizzes were developed, anything to make contact.

Socially distanced coffee mornings were held in the grounds of the church. Participants brought their own chairs ,coffee and scones. Sadly these have now had to be cancelled. We have a Zoom coffee and chat on Sunday after service - perhaps that's the next step for Tuesdays.

On September 6th the doors of the church were reopened to welcome our new minister and superintendent, the Rev David Godfrey. Since then morning worship has been conducted every week, subject to strict safety rules.

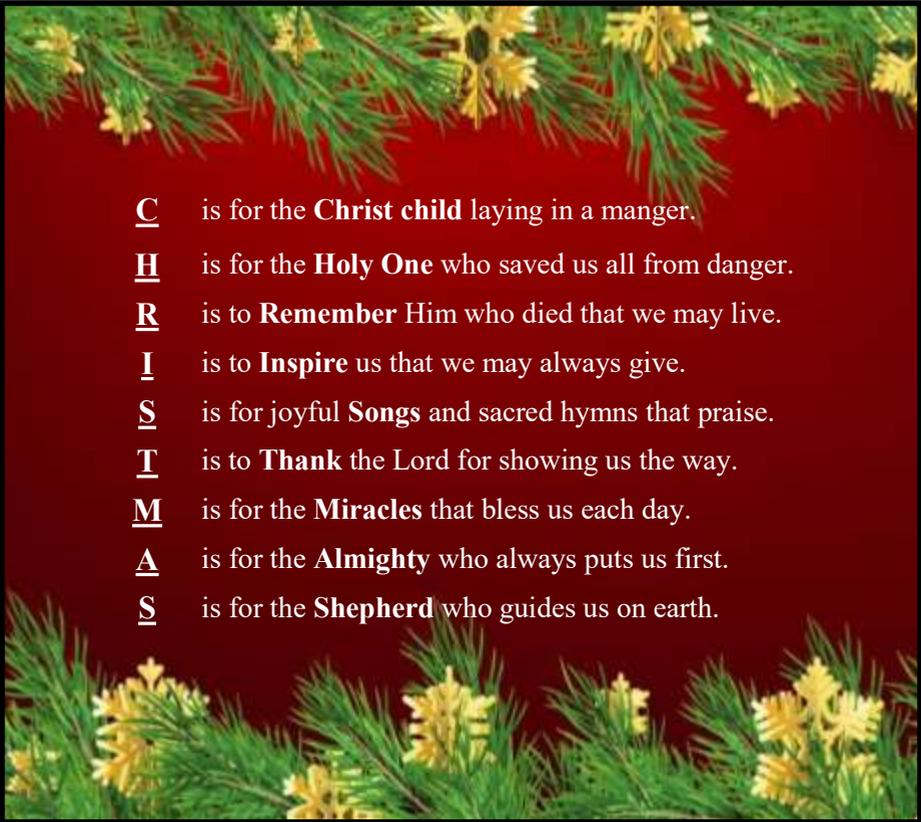
Jillian Lambert prepared a moving display of the lives of those who had died while the building was closed. This was in the porch and could safely be viewed from outside by anyone passing.

Throughout this whole period the Prayer Group continued to pray for those in special need and for us all. We are grateful.

Now we are thinking about Advent and Christmas. How do we bear witness of that wonderful event, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, in a closed down world. Plans are being made which will we hope enable us to bear witness in a totally safe way.

Perhaps the most important thing I can say about Nunthorpe Church is that it is so much more than the building and the activities which take place there. It is a community of caring people who show their love of God in the love and care they show for one another.

### **Ann Gartside**



C is for the **Christ child** laying in a manger.  
H is for the **Holy One** who saved us all from danger.  
R is to **Remember** Him who died that we may live.  
I is to **Inspire** us that we may always give.  
S is for joyful **Songs** and sacred hymns that praise.  
T is to **Thank** the Lord for showing us the way.  
M is for the **Miracles** that bless us each day.  
A is for the **Almighty** who always puts us first.  
S is for the **Shepherd** who guides us on earth.



As we celebrate St Valentine's Day in February, the poignant question many people will be asking is, Where is love? Perhaps you remember these words from the beautiful song in Lionel Bart's musical, *Oliver*? The young street boy Oliver Twist sings plaintively of his longing to find '**someone who I can mean something to**'.

The need to find love is a fundamental requirement of human flourishing, and it is there within us all, young and old alike. But where do we find such love? The natural thing is to assume that it can be found in another person, the person of our dreams. Romantic love seems to offer the answer to our longing, but reality is often different. Once the shine has worn off a relationship, we see the other person as they really are – another fragile human being also searching for love. So, for many the search begins again, an endless looking for the elusive partner who will love us without condition.

Oliver comes near to answering his own question when he sings, '**Does it come from skies above?**' The only love that can satisfy the deep longing of the human heart does in fact come 'from above'. It comes from heaven, and it comes to us from God in the form of a person, Jesus Christ. He was the embodiment of the love of God, and through His life and death demonstrated the enormity of the love that God has for each of us. Here is a love like no other – reliable, sure, unchanging, healing, accepting.

Human love is a wonderful blessing, but divine love alone can meet our need. In God alone we find the perfect Someone, the one who we can mean something to.

### The Parish Pump

**CIRCUIT OFFICE**

The Office will be closed from 12.00 noon  
on Tuesday 22th December  
and re-open on Tuesday 5th  
January 2021  
at 9.30am

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY, SAFE**

# PRAYER DIARY

**December 6<sup>th</sup>** As we travel through Advent, we seek to understand the nature of our faith and how we deal with being the church of God here in this place and in these difficult times. We pray for Rev David and for Stainton.

**December 13<sup>th</sup>** We pray for all who are busy in the lead up to Christmas, those on the front line, taking the risks in this Pandemic, in the shops, the hospitals, the schools, the Care homes, everywhere people are with people, the risk is there. Pray today for Rev Christopher and for Grove Hill.

**December 20<sup>th</sup>** Pray today for all our church families as we do our best in these circumstances to celebrate the miracle of the Incarnation, God so loving us that he became one of us and gave us his Son Jesus to be our Saviour. Pray for Rev Charity, for Linthorpe Road and the University Chaplaincy.

**December 27<sup>th</sup>** On this last Sunday of the year, we look back on the terrible events and suffering caused by the Pandemic, but also, we can be thankful for the good this has brought out in so many people. We pray for God's blessing on a much better year to come. Pray today for Rev Len Karn and for Normanby

**January 3<sup>rd</sup>** As we journey into 2021, we pray that we may have continuing faith in a God who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Help us to have faith in God's continuing presence on our journeys. Pray for Sharon Sewell and the Trinity Family Friendly Centre and for Trinity church.

**January 10<sup>th</sup>** On this day we continue to pray for all who are ill at this time, those suffering from the Virus, but also the many people who have had operations cancelled and worry about their health. Be with the people who heal, and friends and family who look after those who are ill in their own homes and all staff in our hospitals. Pray for Rev Sarah Ramsden and her ministry at the Hospice.

**January 17<sup>th</sup>** Pray today for teachers and all who work in our schools and colleges in these difficult times. We pray too for those who are Governors in our schools and

colleges. We pray especially for the children and young people whose education continues to be disrupted by the Virus. Pray for Rev Mike Harland and for Nunthorpe.

**January 24<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for those who feel left out because of their race, or their disability, even their age. We pray that as Christians we may always be inclusive in sharing God's love with all who we are in contact with in our lives. Pray for Alisa Adamson and the Methodist Asylum Project.

**January 31<sup>st</sup>** We pray today for all who lead worship in these different times. We thank God for our church families, we think of those who provide worship online and those who enable this to happen. Pray for all our Preachers, Lay or Ordained. Pray for Elaine at the Circuit Office, and for David who looks after our Website to enable the message to be transmitted far and wide. Pray for Marton.

**February 7<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for all who hold positions of responsibility in our Communities and at National level for whom these times continue to be difficult as they seek to make the right decisions for all our sakes. Pray for the Avenue Community Project and for Eston Grange.

**February 14<sup>th</sup>** On this St Valentine's Day we pray for all who have someone special to love. We pray for families and for the people who come to our churches for their weddings. We also think of those going through hard times in their relationships that they may find a way back to being happy. Pray for Rev Lawrence Law and the Chinese Church.

**February 21<sup>st</sup>** We pray today for this time of Lent as we seek to understand more about Jesus and about our faith. We pray for Lent groups who will share together in their journey. Pray for all who hold positions of leadership within our churches that they may be guided by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**February 28<sup>th</sup>** We pray today for all the church families within the Darlington District and for the Chair of the District; Rev Richard Andrew.