

# Circuit Newsletter

## Winter 2023-24



Please contact the Circuit Office if you would like to receive the weekly Circuit News email.

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## Advent – Which Direction?

Dear Friends,

Over the last few weeks some of us have been delving into Stephen Cottrell's Advent book entitled *Walking Backwards to Christmas*. It is a series of imaginative reflections from the perspective of different characters involved in the Christmas story. Instead of starting at the beginning, however, it approaches the narratives in reverse order, providing an alternative way of engaging with the characters and with the trajectory of the accounts. The opening chapter takes us towards the end of Luke's prologue and focuses on Anna, an 84-year-old widow, who encounters the infant Jesus when his parents bring him to the Jerusalem temple. As we move into the season of Advent once again this year, perhaps the story of Anna might provide us with a helpful point of entry.

Anna, along with Simeon, spends a lot of time in the temple precincts. She has been a widow for many years, having lost her husband after only seven years of marriage. She is described as someone who seeks to discern and articulate the truths of her own contemporary context – a prophet. She is devout and looks to the future with a sense of hope and purpose. The narrative comes from Luke 2:22-38.

Reflecting on Anna could take us in a number of different directions, but let's focus here on where she is and who she is – her location and her identity. Anna is deeply rooted in the history of Judaism. She spends a substantial amount of her time in the temple, at the most significant building connected with her faith and its history. She is also the daughter of Phanuel, a descendant of the ancient tribe of Asher, taking her family tree all the way back to the very early days of her people's existence. With all of this, then, comes a clear sense of **identity** and a strong sense of

**belonging**. Anna knows who she is and who she is connected to, both in terms of the past and where she has come from and in terms of where she is now, where she is at home, where she feels safe.

And yet...and yet this sense of identity and belonging is not simply about looking backwards, but anticipates a new future, a new opportunity embodied in the experience of encountering the infant Jesus. Here, Anna is saying, lies hope. Yes, there is vulnerability and challenge and the



### Circuit Diary Dates

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023**, 7pm, Circuit Council at Huntington.

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024**, 7pm, Safeguarding Foundation course (Online- please book via the Circuit office).

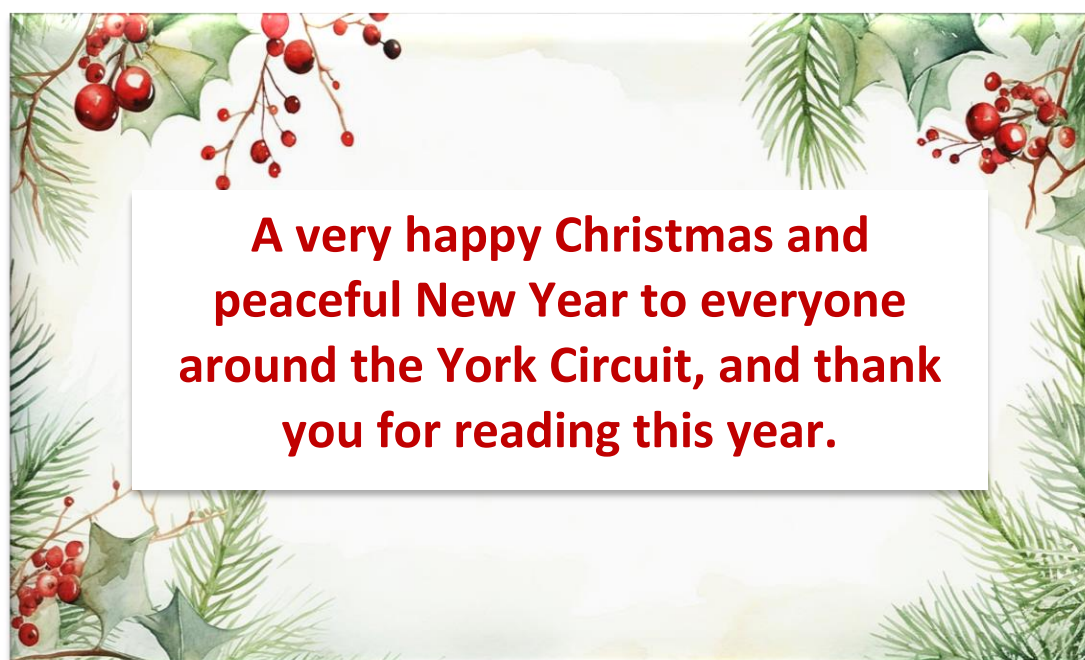
**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024**, 7pm, Circuit Council, venue TBC.

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024**, 7pm, Circuit Council, venue TBC.

very real possibility of loss. But there is also a glimpse of how meeting someone or something for the first time, or for the first time with new eyes, might just offer an opening for justice and peace, for understanding and compassion, for freedom. Anna may well be our starting point for walking backwards towards Christmas, but, much more significantly, might she also be a possible starting point for venturing forwards into new encounters and new relationships, into a world that might look a little bit different from the way it looks currently?

With my best wishes to you all for Advent and Christmas.

David Bidnell (Circuit Superintendent).



## Interview with Carecent project leader

Kiera Snaith, project leader at Carecent, was interviewed by Deacon Judith Stoddart at the Circuit Council meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> September.



**Judith:** Tell us a little about yourself.

**Kiera:** I came to York in 2014 and started volunteering with Carecent at that time, alongside my university course in counselling. Over the years I've worked in many other aspects of work with those who are experiencing homelessness in the city, including in hostels, with the Salvation Army, and alongside Probation. I've been employed as project leader at Carecent since October 2022.

**Judith:** Tell us about Carecent- what is it like day to day?

**Kiera:** It has become increasingly busy, especially due to the "Cost of Living" crisis. We have around 40-50 customers a day and maybe 60 regulars in total and then those who come

and go depending on what else they have going on for them. We're all like a dysfunctional family, I'm the mother that has 60 kids!

Carecent provides food, showers, laundry vouchers and sometimes do trips, such as when the Walking Group went to Sutton Bank. Judith runs a Choir and sometimes there are visits by hairdressers and podiatrists.

**Judith:** How many volunteers are there?

**Kiera:** We have 75-80 volunteers, who work as part of a team on a shift. You get to know the customers and have many conversations. We do not want people to just come and stand behind the counter, get out and listen to their stories, and find out about their lives. Some may say that there are perks to the job – nothing can beat a spam and cheese toastie!

**Judith:** What do you like about it?

**Kiera:** I have a lot of passion for the client group that Carecent supports - we have a lot of fun. It's great when you can build up a trusting relationship with some of the most complex individuals and actually help them through some of their problems. There are some great people and personalities- and the dogs are great too!

**Judith:** Looking to the future, what are your thoughts about reshaping the Executive?

**Kiera:** My expertise is in running Carecent on a day-to-day basis, supporting the volunteers and client group. So, I see the Executive as having different members with expertise on different aspects of governance to support us in the more strategic aspects of the work. This might be expertise on housing, safeguarding, or people with connections to those who might help, and most importantly, people who are as passionate of Carecent as I am!

**Judith:** What is your advice to those who might want to volunteer with Carecent?

**Kiera:** Just do it! It is so rewarding. We are not blind to the fact that Carecent is not for some people – but give it a try and you might surprise yourself. We have volunteers who have been with us for over 10 years, I think that says a lot about the service, as well as the customers who access our service. There is something that keeps people with us! If you are unsure about volunteering, get in touch with myself and we can have a chat before you agree to anything.

**Judith:** How do you see the future?

**Kiera:** I'd like to strengthen Carecent's contribution to the community, working with health services to address some clinical needs and looking at how we might address housing needs, as well as continue to offer the services that we already do.

If you'd like to find out more about Carecent you can visit their website

[www.carecent.org.uk/](http://www.carecent.org.uk/) or follow them on facebook [www.facebook.com/carecentyork/](https://www.facebook.com/carecentyork/)

If you're interested in volunteering with Carecent you can contact Kiera on

[admin@carecent.org.uk](mailto:admin@carecent.org.uk)

## Celebrating 10 Months of Heartwarming Community Service: Acomb Methodist Church's Tea To Go Project

Sharing Love, One Meal at a Time

In the heart of Acomb, a thriving community has been simmering over the past ten months at Acomb Methodist Church. The Tea To Go Project, now in its tenth month, has evolved into something truly remarkable, weaving a tapestry of connections among our regular customers who have not only formed a community but become an integral part of a heartwarming initiative.



The Tea To Go project, a beacon of hope and unity, transcends the boundaries of traditional church activities. It has extended its reach far beyond the pews, touching the lives of those facing poverty within the community. A team of volunteers from churches, schools and the local area, comes together every Thursday to create hot, home cooked takeaway meals for some of the most vulnerable people in our community. What sets this initiative apart is its ability to foster a sense of togetherness, bringing people from diverse backgrounds under one roof, sharing not only nourishing meals but stories, laughter, and a sense of belonging.

What's truly remarkable is the evolution of this project. Initially focused on aiding those in need, it has now become a platform for empowerment. We have volunteers who have joined us through the Social Prescribing Scheme; the opportunity for flexible volunteering is

combatting loneliness and isolation. Some of our cherished customers have transitioned from receiving support to actively participating as volunteers, embodying the spirit of giving back that this project has instilled.

The success of this initiative is a testament to the power of collaboration. Tea To Go stands as a proud partnership between Acomb Churches Together, Acomb Methodist Church and the Kairos Movement, uniting different segments of the community in a common goal: to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those facing hardships.

As Advent approaches, we invite everyone to join us in spreading the warmth and joy of this wonderful project. This Christmas, why not gift a meal to a

**Gift a meal to a family in need**

Gift cards on sale now for the Thursday Tea 2 Go Project

Just £10 will provide 4 hot, nutritious meals for a family in Acomb.

Or for £20, we can feed 8 people struggling with the cost of living crisis.

For more information on the project, scan here

ACT Acomb Churches Together Kairos Movement Acomb Methodist Church



family in need and purchase a gift card to support the Tea 2 Go project? Just £10 will provide 4 hot, nutritious meals for a family in Acomb. Or for £20 we can feed 8 people struggling with the cost of living crisis. Your contribution will not only bring comfort and nourishment but also uphold the spirit of compassion and community that defines our endeavour.

In closing, the Tea To Go project at Acomb Methodist Church is not just about tea – it's about building bridges, fostering empathy, and creating a community where everyone feels valued. Together, let's continue to cook up positivity, one

meal, and one act of kindness at a time. Thank you for being a part of this beautiful journey.

Join us in sharing the gift of love and support this Christmas! Your generosity fuels our mission to serve those in need. For more information,

visit [www.acombmethodistchurch.org.uk/groups/thursday-tea-to-go/](http://www.acombmethodistchurch.org.uk/groups/thursday-tea-to-go/)

To purchase a gift card, please email [tea2goacomb@gmail.com](mailto:tea2goacomb@gmail.com) or visit the Acomb Methodist Pop Up Cafe on Friday mornings.

Warm regards, Fran, Acomb Methodist Church

### **News from the Children, Youth & Families team**

The Children Youth and Families team continue to be busy with their usual ongoing work with One X and One Family, supporting local churches and running Safeguarding training, alongside specific events and initiatives. The year started with a memorable joint One X-One Family visit to Epworth, the home of the Wesleys, and we're got a Christmas ice skating trip planned in December.

#### **ONE X Exploring Membership**

A few of our young people in ONE X have expressed an interest in becoming members of the Methodist Church, so our theme this term is based around exploring membership. We have covered prayer, Methodism, belonging and lots of other subjects, all woven into our usual activities of baking, Lego, quizzes and a whole lot more.

#### **Viva La Revolution**

Lorraine has been supporting one of our young people in hosting a workshop about taking action for our planet at a District event at the end of November, organised by and for young people. She has found it a privilege to work with them, being a cheerleader for their ideas and encouraging them to make their voice heard.

## Pop up Prayer spaces

With a few others, Lorraine is looking at the possibility of setting up some simple prayer spaces into schools; with the potential to also go into other spaces too, like care homes. There would be a gazebo, with 3 or 4 prayer stations included all around a certain theme. The first one is aimed to be available after Christmas on the theme of love. The idea is that they are simple to set up, they are left for a few days and then taken off to a different space. They can be accessible to those of all faiths and none; providing a space in these busy and worrying times for people young and old to simply be.

## Open the Book

As well as ongoing support to Open the Book teams, Lorraine took some items along to the Joined Up conference at Manor School. There are new stories available to tell and Lorraine has been getting to grips with the new resources and wants to encourage teams to switch over to this new curriculum. She had some good conversations with various team leaders in the area and, along with Doris the Sheep, encouraged people to check out the new stories. If any team would like her to come along to show them the resources and help with things like risk assessments, she is more than happy to visit.

## Family Matters

Heather continues to develop the partnership with Family Matters, a Christian based organisation offering support to families and couples in the York area. They are currently looking for churches to promote and offer a space to host their courses and events. If this is something you may be interested in to engage with families and couples in your local community, or for your existing church groups, please contact Heather for a chat.

## Supporting local churches

The team continues to offer advice and support to existing church groups, as well as to help establish new initiatives. Heather has been supporting the team at Lidgett to set up the Circuit's first Lego Church is starting at Lidgett in November. It will provide an opportunity for families to gather after school to explore God's love, whilst sharing a snack, a bible story and getting creative with Lego! All families from across the Circuit are welcome to come along and join in. The first one is on November 21st from 3:45pm – 5pm, followed by a Christmas session on 12th December. For further information contact Heather. Amy continues to develop a bank of intergenerational resources for services and work with individual churches to develop their provision. Lorraine has also been arranging a paediatric first aid course for the new year. At this time of year, requests are

### Diary dates:

1<sup>st</sup> December: One X 5-7pm at the Hub  
8<sup>th</sup> December: One Family 4.30-6pm at the Hub  
16<sup>th</sup> December: Ice skating 4.45pm at York designer outlet.



coming in for things like Nativity Costumes, help with Christmas festivities and workshops Please get in touch if there's anything the team can support with.

## **Conferences**

The team went along to the Joined Up conference (a gathering held to inspire those working with young people), to hear new ideas and thoughts. There were many interesting and inspiring workshops; on new technology, on research into 'Gen Z', faith at home and many others. These were fascinating and the team came away with lots of ideas and insights. We were also proud to support Victoria giving her keynote speech too. It was incredibly helpful to encourage us to think about 'why' we do our work. All too often people are focused on the 'what' - programmes we run, clubs, activities etc- instead of why we are doing this work. Often we need to keep asking 'why' - and keep asking it, to really get to the heart of the issue. Let's work from this point outwards - from why through to how through to what - rather than the other way around. The work we do might look very different, or it might give us reassurance that we are on the right track, as worker and volunteers who work with young people.

We also went to the 'Beyond Church' conference in Birmingham. This gave the team some more insights into developing their work. For many reasons, traditional church doesn't work for many young people, though they are still spiritual and long for a sense of belonging and being seen, authenticity and being part of something bigger than themselves. Throughout the talks, the themes of relationship, hope and purpose came up frequently.

## **It's NOT JUST the parent/carer and toddler group!**

Ever since the days of belonging to a parent-toddler group with my own little ones (longer ago now than I'd care to admit!), I have appreciated the positive impact, these often overlooked groups, have for both families and the church. So, I was pleased to stumble across a link to an article (<https://notjustaparentandtoddler.group>) on a faith based Facebook page. However, my pleasure quickly turned to disappointment and frustration, as I realised the article was solely focussing on their benefits for preparing children for school! Having worked in primary education for over 15 years, I fully understand that they are very beneficial in terms of helping to prepare children for school. However, it is definitely not the only, or even the most important attribute -it is only scratching at the surface of their worth.

For those who are involved in such groups, it is often about building a supportive community of young families, who can share the ups and downs of life together. It's a place that is very much valued by those who attend: a space where stories are shared, relationships are built and God's love is shown week by week. Not only do the children learn to socialise and develop their skills, but their mum/dad/carer/grandparent gets the chance to talk to another adult, maybe for the first time that day. For many parents, suddenly finding themselves isolated from their work colleagues, maybe distanced from



family and friends without children, combined with sleep deprivation and reduced household income, can make parenting a daunting, lonely experience, so having the chance to chat to other grown-ups is greatly valued.

A welcoming, inclusive toddler group can be that space where they can come to meet other people in a similar situation, share the ups and downs of life and be 'real' with each other. I have seen various mums nervously come through the door, not knowing anyone in the room, but they are soon integrated into the group and after a few sessions are arranging to meet up at the park or for coffee. This is how numerous lifelong friendships have started! The intensely personal stories that have been poured out over a cup of coffee by people that have only known you a few weeks, but are looking for someone to share their burden, has taken me aback. This outpouring of human emotions and the opportunity to share Jesus with others is happening every week in our groups.

In today's society, where money is tight for so many families, the church toddler group is also a warm place to go, to escape the four walls of the house that doesn't cost the earth, unlike many other widely available private groups for young children and their carers. They can also act as a place for sharing information, or for signposting to other services. Many toddler groups also operate clothes banks, toy banks or book banks to cut down on the costs of buying new for struggling families, whilst also helping to minimise environmental impact.

Being involved in a parent/carer-toddler group is about living out faith. Whether or not the group has an overtly religious element, if it is open, welcoming and inclusive, it is meeting a human need, building relationships and sharing God's love in our communities. Surely this is 'doing' Church in practice!

Now, I can appreciate that not everyone gets excited about being surrounded by young children, so, if it's not your thing, please be thankful and encouraging to those who do serve in this valuable ministry. But, if you do enjoy seeing the joy and frustrations of little ones exploring the world, or want to come along side people and share their stories, and have a few hours a week to spare, then Heather would love to hear from you. There are several toddler groups in the Circuit who are currently a little short of volunteers, so she can put you in touch with a group who would appreciate your skills and enthusiasm. Or, if you're already involved in a parent toddler group and would like a chat, or your church is considering setting one up, please do get in touch, and she can give you further advice and support.

If you would like any further information or to chat with the team, please get in touch:

- Amy amy.shephard@methodistyouth.org.uk 07708 559419
- Heather heather.lewis@methodistyouth.org.uk 07923 527555
- Lorraine lorraine.jones@methodistyouth.org.uk 07850 631168
- Victoria victoria@methodistyouth.org.uk 07473 065856

## News from the Circuit Eco Task Force

### Good stuff is happening!

Building on from the last newsletter, when I talked about the importance of positive news, I am pleased to report back plenty more positive action taking place. It tends to be less headline grabbing, but it is definitely happening, so be encouraged. That is not to say we can rest on our laurels of course, but it does give us a boost to know that others, around the world, are taking plenty of action.



1. Did anyone watch the Earthshot Prize? There are some fantastic projects taking place already, covering different areas of action such as reviving oceans, waste free world, restoring nature etc. The money they win is used to scale up their projects, so the benefits are greater. [www.earthshotprize.org](http://www.earthshotprize.org)
2. Refugees in Amsterdam are helping big brands breathe new life into old clothes in their repair centre. The United Repair Centre are opening up another one closer to home in Leeds!
3. 'Fixing factories' may be coming to our high street to repair our electronics. 2 will be opening in London in the spring. We do have a repair café here in York – the last Saturday morning of the month in St Thomas's in the Groves.

### Allerton Park Visit

In September about 18 people from around the Circuit had a very interesting visit to Allerton Park. I think those who attended were all pleasantly surprised about what they did there. We had a presentation about the importance of preventing waste in the first place, but once it got to Allerton Park, they did what they could to use all of the waste in a sustainable way as possible. It's certainly not perfect, of course, but it's better than going to landfill. They also provide electricity to around 30,000 homes. Three big take aways that blew our minds;

1. The soft plastic that many of us have been collecting very conscientiously and taking to supermarkets does not currently have an outlet to be recycled, so will end up back at Allerton Park anyway. They recover plastic from the rubbish and send it to be re-used. So, just put the soft plastic in the black bin. A caveat would be that if you send items to a collection point where they raise money from it for a charity, by all means carry on!
2. I have also been taking the windows out of envelopes before putting them in the paper recycling. You don't need to bother! The first thing they do is soak the paper, so all of the plastic floats to the top where it is scooped out.
3. Pizza Boxes. These can be recycled if they don't have a load of cheese stuck to it. The grease on the card is not a problem. Refuse collectors don't think they can be recycled so often won't take them from the kerbside. Our guide recommended just tearing them up a bit and hiding them among the rest of the paper and card!

**Next Meeting: Tuesday January 23<sup>rd</sup> 7-9pm. Hope and Healing in a time of Climate Crisis, St Bedes Pastoral Centre, Blossom Street York.**

I was contacted by the new Director at St Bede's, keen to continue with their Environmental Ethos and work with others in York in this field. It seemed like an excellent opportunity to encourage us all to take a well-earned breath after all the work people are doing for their Eco Churches. It is important for us to find space to be strengthened and encouraged, but it may also provide some ideas for providing that space in our Churches for others to do the same. There are many changes ahead in the coming years in our society, some easy and some hard; providing those spaces to heal, process, find peace and discern where God is leading will be an important part of our role as Churches in our Communities.

### **Carbon Reduction Projects with the new Combined Authority.**

As part of connecting with other Eco things going on in York, I sometimes get to go to the York Environment Forum, which represents many organisations and is a critical friend to the council. Recently we had Shaun Gibbons, the Head of Carbon Reduction at York Council checking in to update about the opportunity for carbon reduction with the upcoming combined authority. There are some exciting projects and research in the pipeline (excuse the oil metaphor); from restoring peatlands, LED street lighting replacement (65% of street lighting in York has now been replaced with LED), low carbon heating project, agricultural practices, onshore wind project, land use assessments, food storage and moving, to name but a few. If only half of this gets off the ground, it will be impressive and on the right track. More than anything, it was the attitude that I found really encouraging – the team were clearly all up for a challenge, raring to go and wanting to work with businesses, communities (and churches!) and certainly wanting to be at net zero many years ahead of national targets.

### **Jen Horne talks to us about Climate Justice**

In the October meeting of the Eco Circuit Group, Jen from Haxby talked to us about her Masters dissertation on Climate Justice. She talked to us about what people in York understand about the term, with some interesting differences between how those in our communities understand it, compared with people in faith communities understand it. It was fascinating research.

In general, religious participants favoured the idea of 'fairness' when thinking about climate justice; how those who are feeling the effects of climate change more keenly have done little to cause the problem. Though this was mentioned in the secular field, more emphasis was put on the idea that those who are more capable of taking action should do so; limiting some lifestyles so everyone can reach a lower threshold in order for everyone to have enough. Also, for secular people, they talked about climate change affecting their children



and grandchildren more specifically, whereas religious participants tended to talk about 'future generations'.

The second difference was that people with religious backgrounds tended to put the emphasis individual action, particularly regarding the importance of education and raising awareness. Secular participants focussed on structural change; that legislation and institutions should lead changes, making it easier for individuals to modify their lifestyle.

Another interesting point was about the language: what does the word 'justice' conjure up for you? In academic literature, justice is equated with social justice in this context, whereas many participants were imagining a harsher use of the word, as in 'criminal' justice.

For both religious and secular participants, the importance of 'norm entrepreneurs' for making progress toward climate justice was clear. Norm entrepreneurs are the particularly charismatic individuals or groups who can lead the way in lifestyle change. If *they* change, people will follow. Think along the lines of Greta Thunberg, David Attenborough and Chris Packham. For individuals as well as countries, no-one wants to be the one that goes first; whether it's the first to get solar panels on their street or the first to set strict climate targets.

For Eco Church Teams, there are some interesting learnings when it comes to encouraging our churches and communities to take action. What language should we use? Who are the norm entrepreneurs in our churches and communities?

I wonder what you understand by the term 'climate justice'? What actions do you think people should take – both as individuals and organisations? Answers on a postcard.

### **Prayer for COP28 from CAFOD**

Please pray for progress on the Conference of Parties held in Dubai:

God of blessings, the universe sings of your glory.

Deepen our gratitude for all you have made  
and awaken in us a renewed commitment  
to care for the earth and each other.

Inspire world leaders at COP28,  
with openness to listen to those most affected by climate change  
and with courage to act urgently and wisely,  
so that our common home may be healed and restored  
and all people, and generations to come, may delight in it.

Amen.

Lorraine Jones

[lorraine.jones@methodistyouth.org.uk](mailto:lorraine.jones@methodistyouth.org.uk) 07850 631168

## **An update from Bill Topping**

*Bill left the Circuit last summer to begin training as a Deacon at Queens in Birmingham.*

Dear Yorkies,

I have spent a wonderful first six weeks here at Queens. It's been remarkable how much I have learnt so far. Particular highlights, academic and otherwise, have included:

- The intensive Church history module
- learning about Ecofeminist Theology in my Global Theologies module
- the wonderful food I enjoy every lunchtime in the refectory
- the hustle and bustle of Birmingham (including proximity to Villa Park)
- engaging in the rhythm of life on campus including regular worship (I haven't had to preach yet)
- meeting the other folk with whom I share this journey. I am the youngest Methodist but there are some youthful Anglicans!
- being in an academic context and learning from some truly remarkable experts
- a fresh new audience for my jokes

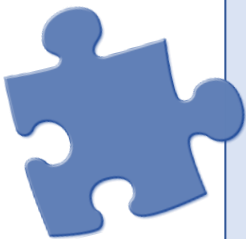
It has been very intense and rather exhausting – but a week off has helped me recover. Community life is of course very demanding but I am grateful for my little flat that affords me some solitude in order that I may be my best self when with others. I use two York bookmarks for my Diaconal prayer book so my families up in the York Circuit are thought of daily.

I am so grateful for the role you have all played in getting me to this point and each day I am become more sure we discerned my path together well.

I've been trying to stay active by playing football and running as much as possible, enjoying the canal routes - so far avoiding falling in.

I send you all my love and thank you for your continuing prayers and support.

Bill



### **What are we missing?**

Is there something going on in your church that you think the Circuit should know about? Why not write a few paragraphs or take some photos and send them to us for inclusion in the next newsletter? Please send stories and photos for the Spring newsletter to the Circuit Office by mid-February.



## Circuit Council Report September 2023

- The meeting joined the local preachers and worship leaders in affirming their calling, and remembering preachers in the Circuit who have died in the past year: Rev Joseph Rimmer, Rev Peter Doble and John Lancaster.
- Louisa Taylor spoke about her call to candidate for presbyteral ministry. Due to changes in the candidating process there is no longer a need for the Circuit to formally express support, but the meeting extended our good wishes to Louisa as she goes forward.
- Kiera Snaith, project leader at the Carecent, spoke to the meeting about her work running the breakfast centre and providing support to those who are homeless or otherwise in need. The service is very much needed and new volunteers are very welcome, especially those willing to serve as members of the executive that oversees the day to day running of Carecent. The meeting was reminded that Carecent is a Circuit project so the Circuit Council are the overall trustees.
- The Circuit Consultation is ongoing and a more detailed report will come to the December meeting, to which church treasurers will be invited alongside circuit council reps.
- Permission was given to sell Stamford Bridge chapel and to let out the empty manse in Easingwold.
- It was reported that Villages Together church council have decided to sell the chapel building in Stillington. The church will continue to worship on other sites. Circuit Council agreed to this decision.
- Safeguarding: there have been changes to the Model policies for churches, please see <https://www.yorkshirenemethodist.org/policies-guidance-and-forms/> for details. Details of training sessions are circulated in the weekly Circuit News or ask your church safeguarding officer.

### Circuit prayer rota

<b>3rd Dec</b>	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Huntington. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. Today is the first Sunday in Advent. As we prepare for the coming of Christ, what in our lives might we want to let go of, or to see changed, in our lives and our society?
<b>10th Dec</b>	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Thornton-le-Clay. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. As we continue journeying through Advent, we remember that Jesus's coming challenged people to change their minds. Do you find change easy or hard?
<b>17th Dec</b>	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Lidgett. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. Before Jesus came, John the Baptist pointed people to him, as a witness to the light. Have you been inspired by someone else's story of their walk with God? Could you tell someone else about your story?

<b>24th Dec</b>	It's not long to go until Christmas! You may be excited and full of anticipation, or maybe you have mixed feelings. However you're feeling, try to make space to listen for God in the midst of both noise and silence this Christmas.
<b>25th Dec</b>	"O holy child of Bethlehem, Descend to us we pray... Be born in us today." It's Christmas day! What does it mean to you for Jesus to be 'born in us today'? Pray using the words of the carol 'O little town of Bethlehem', giving thanks for God coming to us in Christ.
<b>31st Dec</b>	Christmas God, we greet and meet you. Christmas Day is past but Christmas is not over. Out of the ordinary has come the most extraordinary. Out of the waiting has come the gift of life. Out of the unexpected has come glory, redemption and revelation. In others we have seen you and simply pray this day, that in us, others see you too. Amen. (From this year's Christmas resources <a href="https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/out-of-the-ordinary/">https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/out-of-the-ordinary/</a> )
<b>7th Jan</b>	Many churches have their Covenant service this week- a time to recommit ourselves to listening for and following God's word. Why not spend a couple of minutes asking God what God wants you to do this year?
<b>14th Jan</b>	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Poppleton. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. Poppleton is one of our Eco churches, working to become more energy efficient and reduce their impact on the environment. How is your church addressing these issues?
<b>21st Jan</b>	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Rufforth. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. At this time of year we think about Christian unity. Pray for other Christians in your community and around the world.
<b>28th Jan</b>	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Sheriff Hutton. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. Sheriff Hutton have been green pioneers in our Circuit, having installed solar panels several years ago. Energy efficiency has been a big issue over the last couple of years due to high energy prices. Pray for those struggling to heat their homes- are there ways you or your church can campaign on this issue?
<b>4th Feb</b>	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Southlands. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. The Planet Food cafe is based at Southlands, saving surplus food from being thrown away and turning it into meals for the pay-as-you-can cafe. Pray for this and similar projects that help address issues with our food supply chain, and think about what you might be able to do.
<b>11th Feb</b>	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Strensall. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. Last year Strensall were awarded their Bronze Eco Church award and are working towards Silver. Among other things they have made changes to their garden to encourage wildlife and insects. Are there changes you could make in your garden this year, like adding a small pond or patch of wildflowers?
<b>18th Feb</b>	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Villages Together. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. We pray for our churches in rural communities around the Circuit, especially in the villages that make up Villages Together- Alne, Huby, Stillington and Tholthorpe.
<b>25th Feb</b>	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is West Thorpe. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. West Thorpe welcome a variety of community groups into their building. Pray for your local community, and particularly for any groups who use your church building.

## Reflections

How do you use your skills and talents in worship and service to God and others?

### Song

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,”

So sings Mary in Luke 1 v46-47. Being a young woman who was known to be pregnant before she was married can't have been easy for her. Yet in these verses she catches a glimpse of something greater than her day-to-day life, worshipping God and proclaiming a vision of a different kind of world that would be brought about through God's action, a world where the lowly are lifted up and the hungry are full of good things. Later in Luke 1 Zechariah also bursts into praise when his son, John the Baptist, is born.



Do you find that singing helps you worship God? Whether it's in church or in the shower music can help us put our praise into words, or remind us of what we believe. If singing isn't something you find easy, maybe reading and praying the words of hymns or the Psalms could help you catch a glimpse of God's big vision for the world.

Give thanks for those who serve God through song!

### Care and support

“Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt.” Matthew 2 v14

When Jesus came into the world as a baby, God provided a family to provide and support him. As well as Mary, God chose, for Jesus's foster-father, a man who had practical skills to support his family, who was willing to listen and act.



Are you good at caring for others? Maybe for you that means caring for your family, or working in the health and care services. Or maybe that looks like visiting or meeting up for coffee, or sending texts or phone calls to offer support?

Or do you have practical skills you can use to serve your church and others- perhaps that could be as simple as changing a lightbulb or moving chairs, or perhaps negotiating energy contracts or overseeing projects.

Give thanks for those who serve God through caring and practical skills!



## Giving

“They saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.” Matthew 2 v11

Here the immediate response of the wise men is to open their treasures and give. They give to honour the child and to show their understanding that he is God.

If God is the most important thing in our lives, does our giving reflect that? The rising cost of living has made life hard for many in our country over the last year. Many of us will have worried about whether we will be able to afford things we may have taken for granted in the past. Maybe that’s caused us to feel we don’t have much to give. But God values whatever is given, small or big. The intention is more important than the amount.

“What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb. If I were a wise man, I would do my part. But what I can, I give him, Give my heart.”

*From ‘In the bleak midwinter,’ Christina Rossetti.*

Give thanks for those who serve God through giving!

## Hospitality

“All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.” Luke 19 v7

Throughout the gospels we find stories of Jesus being shown hospitality. People he met or healed often invited him home for a meal and an opportunity to hear more of his teachings.

Some people are gifted in making other people feel welcome, delighting in taking care of their needs and talking to them about their lives. It’s often an underrated gift. Several people in our Circuit have welcomed refugees into their homes in the last couple of years, and others are involved in showing hospitality to those in need via Carecent, foodbanks and warm spaces initiatives.

How do you show hospitality? Are there opportunities for you to welcome others into your home, where this is appropriate? Are there ways you can help make your church more hospitable?

Give thanks for those who serve God through offering hospitality!



# THIS CHRISTMAS

Discover God's extraordinary  
love to all people

Out  
of the  
Ordinary  
ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS 2023

The Methodist Church 