York Methodists

Circuit Newsletter Winter 2026-27



Decorations from the holiday club Light Party at Villages Together

You can sign up for our weekly Circuit News email by going to http://eepurl.com/jjJIRM
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Advent greetings from Rev Elizabeth Cushion

As I have been in the circuit a long time, many of you will know that I love Christmas. So it is a privilege to write the opening letter of the circuit news for this quarter. In our worship, we often think of Advent as a journey. Over the next few weeks we reflect on the journey to Bethlehem taken by the nativity characters, with the challenges and blessings that involved. Then as we move beyond Christmas into Lent, we think of the journey of Jesus and walk with him to the cross.

As we do, we are also invited to reflect on our own journeys and those of our churches. Perhaps, like Mary and Joseph, it is a difficult path as we face questions and uncertainty. Maybe it is that of the shepherds as we wonder how God can use us. Maybe it is that of the wise men, going into the unknown or down a new route. Recently I find myself on another step of my journey as I prepare to move from this circuit and begin the next chapter of ministry.
But in all our journeys, God is there. At the heart of the Christmas message is Emmanuel, God with us. As you celebrate Advent and Christmas may you know afresh the joy that brings and come again to kneel in wonder by a manger.

With every blessing for Christmas and the New Year
Elizabeth.

Circuit Diary Dates

- Circuit Council, 9th December 2026, 7pm, Haxby & Wigginton
- Leaders of Worship and Preachers Meeting, 4th March, 7pm for 7.30, Heworth
- Circuit Council, 10th March 2027, 7pm, Haxby & Wigginton
- LWPM, 10th June, 7pm for 7.30, Bishopthorpe
- Circuit Council, 16th June 2027, 7pm, Haxby & Wigginton
- TBC Circuit Celebration 18th July 2027

Newsflash!

We are delighted to share that the Reverend Mark Hammond will be joining us in Circuit from September 2027 (subject to confirmation by the Methodist Conference). Mark comes to join us as Circuit Superintendent and will also be the minister in Elizabeth Cushion's current Mission Area. Mark comes to us from the West Harts and Borders Circuit. We are excited for what lies ahead for Mark, his wife Sally and son Joseph, and for us here in the Circuit. Please pray for them as they look forward to this move.

Welcome to our new Finance Manager!



Rachel Cooke, who joined our Circuit team in October as Finance Manager, introduces herself.

Having grown up in the Methodist Church (and manses after my mum was ordained as a minister), and moved house many times as child, I moved to York 23 years ago, and have firmly stayed put! After studying Maths and French at university, with the opportunity for a year in Nice, I joined the NHS Graduate Financial Management Training Scheme, qualified as an accountant, and never looked back.

The best part of my role as Head of Finance in a hospital and community setting, was the direct link to clinical services; working with medical and nursing colleagues, as well as operational, to provide safe and high quality patient care for the local population. I had the privilege of being involved in service developments across many different areas; from Theatres to Head & Neck, and Respiratory to Renal - learning all sorts about the services along the way, that I never anticipated I would need to know when I first started out!

After a varied and rewarding 25 years, I have hung up my NHS lanyard, and am excited about embracing my new chapter serving the Methodist circuit across York. As Circuit Finance Manager, I am responsible for the financial affairs of the circuit and supporting its churches; from paying invoices, to planning, budgeting and reporting.

I'm a proud mum of a teenage daughter, and enjoy jogging (the word running would be an exaggeration!), trips to the theatre, walks in the Lake District, and can never turn down tea and cake!

Hope

The Circuit Eco team say:

I love this photo of new growth in the Cairngorms national park after the summer fires.



Eco Task Force Newsletter: Embracing the new



I have long since accepted that I am ever so slightly hippy and weird. I embrace that totally. But even my family gave me funny looks when they asked me what I wanted for my birthday. I asked them to club together to get me a hot composter. As I sit here, the day after my birthday with Herman still in his box (of course it has to have a name), I am very excited about the weekend when I can sit and read through my composting book and set Herman up.





The way they work is that more insulation means more heat and that decomposition of the green waste breaks down 3 times as fast. So you get lovely rich compost in about 6 months rather than about 18 months. Having installed another 2 raised beds in my garden, I find I am going through a lot of compost. This is a way to work through all my garden waste a lot quicker and have my own little circular economy in my own little garden.

Now that forest Church is up and running and I have a team to help me run everything in the background, it's time to return my sights to the Circuit Eco Group again. The need for us to move beyond fossil fuels is greater than ever. We need to understand how we can live more lightly on the earth. The Eco Church framework can help us do that. However, it can seem quite daunting. Trying to do it on our own, or with a couple of others within a church can seem like an uphill struggle. Which is why we need to come together with other people in other churches. Together we can break the Eco Church programme into more manageable chunks. Maybe they have a great climate Sunday service they can share with you, maybe you have done a great event that can easily be transferred elsewhere. Maybe you have an environmental policy that can be adapted by other churches. I can help co-ordinate it so we don't need to reinvent the wheel. Progress will be so much faster if we work together.

I like to think of the Eco Task Force as being like a hot composter…

Lorraine Jones, Eco Church and Forest Church Co-Ordinator

Sign up to the Forest/Eco Church Newsletter: lorraine.jones@methodistyouth.org.uk

Next Meet Up January 26th 7pm

Join the next online webinar in January by going to this link:
https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/methodist-church-eco-community-network-tickets-1113977198789?aff=erelpanelorg

Methodist Church Eco Community

A sustainable Advent Guide for Busy People

A couple of years ago we brought out a guide to having a more sustainable Christmas. It's as relevant as ever so get in touch with Lorraine and she will email you a copy.

There's still a chance to submit your favourite plant-based recipe!!

One of the things we need to do to be more eco friendly is to move towards a plant based diet. There is going to be lots of wrangling over the different uses of land in the coming years - do we build houses, do we grow food, do we grow more trees and leave some for nature to build our resilience..? An area the size of Scotland is taken up for rearing and growing food for livestock, across the UK. Farming veggies and beans takes a fraction of that land. The thing is, people think it's an all-or-nothing thing. You don't have to go full on vegan, but what about having one or two plant based meals a week? To encourage this, we want to put together a booklet of your favourite plant-based meals. Send them to Kae (kaeforestchurch@gmail.com), preferably with a picture and a little paragraph about why you like it. Here's my example.



'Marry Me' Butterbeans

This is my son, Harry's, favourite. Rumour has it that it's based on a recipe that when someone cooked it, their partner promptly asked them to marry them!
Made with coconut milk, a tin of tomatoes, a tin of butterbeans and a few other ingredients, it is absolutely delicious. Harry ("but I don't like beans mum") went back for another bowl full. Great with rice, pasta or a jacket potato.
I will include the full list of the ingredients and the step-by-step instructions in the booklet.
lorraine.jones@methodistyouth.org.uk



As we move through Autumn into Winter, there's something rather beautiful about the way nature approaches winter. Trees let go of their leaves, flowers disappear beneath the soil and the landscape becomes quieter. Life doesn't stop, but it changes its rhythm.

Winter invites us to notice things we might overlook at other times of year: the bare branches against the sky, the warmth of sunlight on a cold morning, birds gathering around a feeder, the first signs of new growth.

We've been reflecting a lot on the concept of 'Wintering', inspired by our book club's reading of *Wintering* by Katherine May. The book explores how we all experience winters in our lives: times when things feel difficult, when we need to retreat, rest or simply find a different way of being. It challenges us to see these periods not as something to fight against or rush through, but as a natural and necessary part of life. Nature has something to teach us here. We live in a world that often celebrates being busy, yet the natural world reminds us that rest has its own purpose. Beneath the seemingly dormant earth, life is quietly preparing for what comes next.

Lorraine, Kay and I had the privilege of attending the Methodist Pioneer training, Beginning a New Place for New People. During the weekend, we had the opportunity to slow down, connect with others and take time to explore more deeply the things God has put on each of our hearts. This reflective time was hugely valuable and we're planning on spending some of our 'Wintering', reflecting further to deepen our purpose.

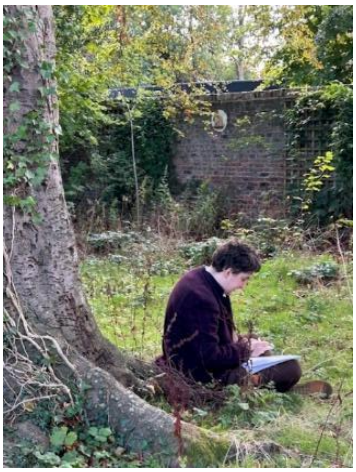
Of course, it's not all quiet reflection and we've been busy setting up a new look website, reactivating our social media and starting some new groups. Our first book club started this month, as did our first Eco Creatives. Both offer different ways to connect with nature, even if you can't get out of the house. You can find out more as you read on…

As we head towards Winter, I leave you with this blessing.

May you find rest when you need it,
Stillness when the world is busy,
Warmth in the cold places,
Hope in the waiting,
And the reassurance that even in winter,
Life is quietly preparing to begin again.

Christine

Forest Church on Tour Again!





In October Forest Church was on tour again as we went to host a session in the University Chaplaincy Garden and also with Poppleton Messy Church. Two very different sessions but both beautiful in their own right. It was great to share thoughts ideas with the students afterwards at the Uni and get to know them a little better. It was lovely that the chaplaincy house kittens also decided to take part too!

Messy Church was a lot of fun – with a theme of the Burning Bush and sacred spaces- using natural objects for activities. My absolute favourite moment, though, was after Christine and I had gone to tidy up and one of the families came back – apparently the 3 year old insisted they came back to 'say goodnight to the forest'. I love it – I often find that children just 'get it' in a way that us adults forget.

New Forest Church in Heworth



There were 18 people of all ages plus the leaders gathered on a fine Sunday afternoon in November. We gathered over a cuppa around the kiosk in Glen Gardens on East Parade in Heworth.



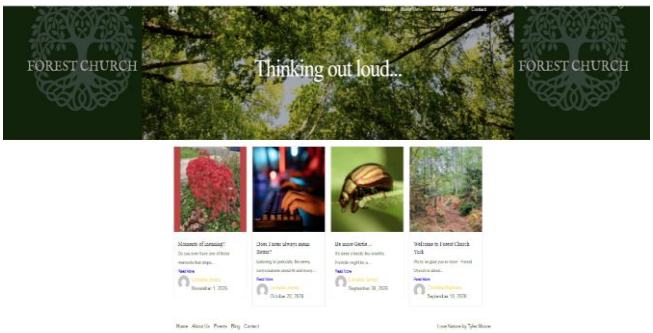
There were folks of all ages enjoying the winter sunshine as we introduced the theme of 'fruitfulness' in winter; the idea that slowing down might allow us to be more fruitful. We planted some daffodils in a pot, which reminded us that while things are seemingly quiet on the surface, a lot is happening underneath. The

bulbs also need a period of frost to kickstart their growth. There was also plenty of wandering and creating pictures, appreciating the changing light through the trees and using our senses to discover the herbs that were still there.

Everyone mucked in to help tidy away before we were locked in the gardens(!). We then wandered down to Heworth Methodist for a cuppa and a bit of cake and plenty of good conversation. It was a lovely moment; we can feel community forming and friendships being made already.... The next one is January 17th at 2.30pm.

Our New Look Website

You can find our new look website at www.forestchurchyork.com. Here you'll be able to see all our events, read about Forest Church and keep update with the blog. We'd love to hear your feedback!



Our New Groups!

Eco Creatives - Craft and Connect

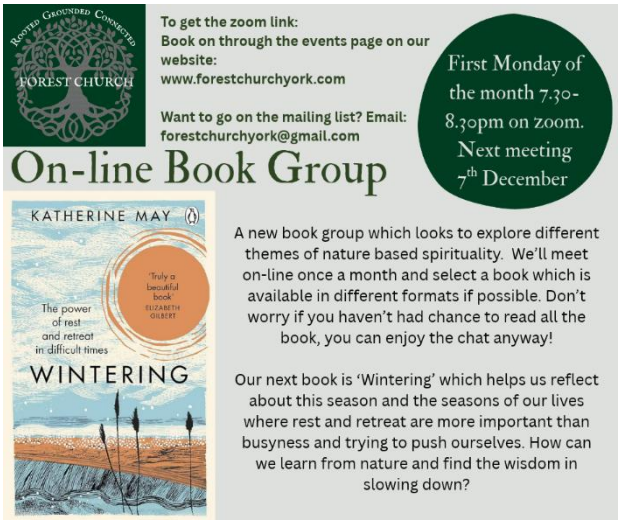


Given that we had a ready-made crafter in our midst, Christine and I decided to push ahead with trying out another exploration of Forest Church. We know lots of people love crafting and so we set up a nature based crafting session after our Forest Church at Haxby and Wiggington. It was a success! People came for the craft and then decided to join in with the session in the garden and really enjoyed it. There was a lot of chat and laughter and it very much felt like community was being created. Our theme had been the tree of life at Forest Church, so that's what we made.



Next month our craft session will be using natural branches and wool to create a beautiful woven item. Weaving is a lovely reflective craft with lots of scope for creativity. We'd love for you to join us.

Online Book Club



For those who want to dig a little deeper into nature spirituality, we started an online book club. We were always keen to make sure it was available as an audiobook for those who prefer to enjoy a book that way. And we also want to make it online so those who can't get to the sessions can also get involved.

Our first book was Chasing Francis by Ian Morgan Crow and we had a lovely group who shared thoughts on the book as well as some of our different backgrounds and experiences. We would all recommend the book and are looking forward to the next one which is on the idea of 'Wintering'. Do join us if you can!



Forest Church @Rowntree Park

A new location for Forest Church! The woodland at Rowntree Park offers a great space for exploring nature. We start on December 13th by gathering around the campfire to reflect on the wintering of the season. We'll have time to relax in a hammock, or to take part in creative activities exploring the season. We'll have a quiet reflection as well as nature-based crafts, and a warm snack cooked over the fire.

Upcoming Events this Month

All of our events offer a warm welcome for everyone. Suitable of all ages and all faith or spiritual backgrounds. Or for those who are just looking for a place to find peace and a time to reflect. Please book at: www.forestchurchyork.com/Events

Forest Church at the Whole Life Community Garden, Haxby & Wiggington

Sunday 29th November, 4pm

There's something special about experiencing a garden in the twilight. Come dressed for the cold and with a lantern or torch, ready to enjoy a time by the fire with storytelling and s'mores. At around 5pm we'll go to the nearby Methodist church hall for jacket potatoes (alternatives available)



Craft and Connect

Sunday 29th November, 6pm

Our new Eco Creatives group meets after Forest Church each month at Haxby and Wiggington Methodist Church Hall. This month we'll be using beautiful winter branches to weave festive creations.



Online Book Club

Monday 7th December, 7.30 - 8.30pm

Join us online to talk about this month's book - Wintering by Katherine May. Lorraine will be leading discussion about the books themes, exploring what nature has to teach us about Wintering.



Forest Church at Rowntree Park

Sunday 13th December, 2.30-3.30pm

Relax and recharge around the campfire at Rowntree Park. We'll have hammocks, nature based crafting and prompts for reflecting on the wintering season.



Craft and Connect with a walk around the garden

Sunday 27th December, 2-4pm

Take some time out between Christmas and New Year to take a walk around the garden followed by some crafting. We'll have tea, coffee and cake at the ready!

News from the Children, Youth & Families team

Where did November go? Autumn has come and gone, and what a great few months it has been! It's been a season of new starts, new faces, new ideas and new opportunities to explore together. Whether it's children asking some of the most profound questions, young people getting to be a part of something much bigger, or young adults finding space to meet and discuss the Bible together, Autumn has given us a lot to celebrate!

But, as I write this, I'm looking out at the frozen windshield of my car and thinking about what the festive period is bringing this year. Often, we get so tied up with the extravagant parties and plans, finding the best presents for everyone, making sure to plan for the perfect Christmas day, but that's not what Advent and Christmas is all about. It's all about

looking forward to Jesus' arrival! This season brings opportunities to come together, share stories and laughter, get creative and find joy in the simple things. That's where we find the things that matter most: a warm welcome, a shared laugh, a moment of kindness, the chance to make memories with the people who really matter.

Winter invites us to embrace a slightly slower rhythm, making space for connection, creativity and community. As we journey through Advent towards Christmas, let's celebrate the new beginnings of autumn, enjoy the opportunities that winter brings, and remember that some of the most meaningful things we can offer young people are our time, our attention and a place to belong.

Here's to a season of warmth, wonder and plenty of reasons to celebrate!

ONE X



We've had loads of fun with our ONE X bunch this term! There's been crafts, games, making soup, singing and, of course, some great discussions! Our young people love exploring how their faith fits in with the world, and obviously that means we spend a lot of time talking about The Traitors and Strictly Come Dancing! We've also chatted about mental health this term, whilst decorating 'Happy Boxes', and started thinking about what a Methodist Way of Life might look like for them.



3Generate



This year, for the first time in a while, we took a group of 7 young people from the Circuit to the Methodist Youth gathering, 3Generate! The young people all had a fabulous time, they caught up with friends, old and new, got involved in worship, crafts, games, sports and activities, and just enjoyed the space to explore their faith with other young people!

They're already getting excited to go again next year!

Holiday Clubs



October half term saw Lorraine with the Stillington Open the Book Team and Villages Together to run a light party. This is the second one we have run and were very pleased that we had a dozen children. They all loved it and we had an enormous amount of fun doing crafts, playing games, having a story and singing. We are thinking about another one already in February half term.



Open the Book Training

As part of being part of an Open the Book team, we have to undertake 'core skills' refresher. This covers a bit of all sorts - safeguarding that is particularly relevant to going into schools, changes in best practice, copyrights, top tips and ideas etc. Since there were quite a few teams that needed the training, Lorraine organised a session in Huby. It was incredibly busy and people came from as far as Selby! It was also a chance to hear about the new holiday clubs that Open the Book have planned and to share ideas about how we might come together to do this.



Sailing to Bethlehem

Each year in Copmanthorpe, the Methodist church puts on a fabulous event alongside the Parish Councils Santa's Grotto. The upstairs room is transformed into a story-tellers paradise, where the story of the nativity is experienced by children and their families. Children are guided through various stations, told the story of the nativity and introduced to key people: Mary, Joseph, the angel, the innkeeper to name a few.

This year, we will be hosting around 120 children from the local primary school during the week before the event, as they come into the space to spend some extra time with these characters, ask questions about what happened, and wonder how they would have felt if they were part of the story, plus they'll go away with a special gift to remind them of what happened at that very first Christmas.

Turn Up and Take Part Nativity

Haxby and Wigginton have used their Open the Book Costumes for the Christmas Eve 'Turn Up and Take Part' Nativity, which is always (what Lorraine calls) beautiful chaos! We tell a narrated story, with pauses for Carols and to get 3 Mary's, 32 angels, a donkey and 10 shepherds to join in! Given that we have done this for a few years, we have built up a raft of scripts. Lorraine will be joining Holgate to help host their first one this year. She has also provided scripts and a PowerPoint to another couple of churches. Each PowerPoint comes with its sound effects and carols ready to go if needed.

Helping with Panto - oh no we're not!

Amy and Lorraine have been advising Haxby and Wigginton Methodist Church on their safeguarding and risk assessment as they work out how to manage the logistics for the new Community Panto. The stand out moment so far was at the first read through when the youngest member of the cast, at the grand old age of 7, declared "Well, it's a load of malarky isn't it?!". That's panto for you!!

Canva Training

In October, Lorraine and Amy put together an evening to help people learn how to use Canva, an online tool for creating great publicity and content for social media and websites. We'll be putting on another training night on Wednesday 6th January on Zoom for anyone wishing to learn how to use it and what they can use it for! Please get in touch with us for more information.

Contact the Children, Youth & Families team

Victoria Etherington 07473 065856
victoria@methodistyouth.org.uk

Amy Shephard 07708 559419
amy.shephard@methodistyouth.org.uk

Lorraine Jones 07850 631168
lorraine.jones@methodistyouth.org.uk

YAMPS

We now have all 3 of our Young Adult Missional Placement Scheme participants up and running. This scheme supports young adults (aged 18-30) in a project that they're interested in, helping to develop their sense of calling and vocation, and giving them the opportunity to build relationships with a church community. To find out more, or how to get involved (as a young adult or as a church) get in touch with the team!

Some of our YAMPS participants share what they are up to below.

Morgan Pont- University Chaplaincy

As someone who became a Christian while a student at the University of York, getting to work as part of the Chaplaincy team there has been a real privilege.

Because I have been “raised” in the Catholic tradition within the Church of England, becoming part of the life of the Circuit came as a surprise. I have been very grateful for the support and welcome I have received, even down to people explaining to me what Anglicans call a vicarage, Methodists call a manse! It has helped me to broaden my perspective and to examine and put into context the particular way I am called to serve God and my own place within the Church. Part of my funding for this year was for training. I’ve been doing a course on the New Testament with Cliff College which is giving me more confidence with scripture. I’ve also recently qualified as a Mental Health First Aider, which ties into another one of my passions.

My weeks are generally very varied. Just in this last week, I visited another chaplaincy; planned and led midday prayer and soup for the students; organised and assisted at Holy Communion; attended the District Community of Practice meeting, and attended the Circuit service. This is among other time spent with students, and (naturally) a hearty dose of meetings and admin. I have particularly valued the opportunity to meet with a variety of dedicated and passionate people engaged in different forms of – particularly pastoral - ministry, lay and ordained, as I discern my own vocation. It’s often a lot of fun, and things can sometimes feel surreal – trying to herd cats out of a chapel comes to mind.

I also have a second job in the NHS, meaning that my working pattern can be very odd – the lack of structure has taken some adjusting to. But this, among other challenges, has helped me to understand more of how God sustains life. This for me has been a steady pattern of prayer and worship, the support of my friends, my time with the students, and a series of little moments of clarity in a life that can feel very busy: moments which strike at my own sense of vocation and when I have been able to help others. I am looking forward to continuing with my formation throughout this year.

Jennifer Moulds- Chaplaincy with older adults

Building on what I started last year with my 'One Graduate' project, the Young Adult Mission Placement means I can continue to support people in my community by offering pastoral care at coffee mornings, groups and particularly through home visits. Focussing on the small rural villages surrounding Hessay and its LEP with Rural Ainsty, the majority of those I support are older people, so I am excited to begin this placement as a newly trained 'Anna Chaplain'. I am particularly looking forward to access the workshops and national network which Anna Chaplaincy provides for its licenced chaplains. As I work mostly on my own, it is so helpful for me to meet others in similar roles. I am grateful for recent opportunities to network in the circuit and district (and beyond!), particularly at the latest 'Community of Practice' gathering for lay workers and at the 'ACE Conference' for local lay pastors. YAMPS has not only opened doors within the Methodist Church, but also provided

the base from which I can experience other contexts of spiritual care, including St Leonard's Hospice. I hope to explore more forms of chaplaincy over the coming year alongside further training. I am so grateful for all that the Young Adult Mission Placement is giving me, but also, and perhaps most importantly, for all that it is enabling me to give to others. It is a privilege to serve my community as an Anna Chaplain this year, and I am excited to see what God does next!

Chaplaincy Update

It has been a busy time in the chaplaincy!! Participation in the open days, move in days and welcome events offer amazing opportunities to support the students and their families as they start their journeys at York, and I am incredibly grateful that the University offer us these opportunities. We also had our own welcome events, with a pizza welcome night at Southlands, and welcome services followed by lunch at Heslington, Southlands and Heworth!



The Chaplaincy's of both York St John and the University of York are invited to be part of the Minster events, over 300 students attended the welcome night, and although the All Saints All Souls service was quieter it was reflective and meaningful for those who came along.

This term we visited Epworth Old Rectory – did you know they have a library there? I was very excited and grateful to Sue Tyson when she let us explore it…I feel a research day coming on!

Although at times challenging, chaplaincy is an exciting place to be, and I am full of joy and gratitude that this is where I get to minister.

Circuit Council Report September 2026

- Revd John Hayward informed the meeting that he would be standing down as superintendent in August 2026 due to ill health. As a result of this, it has been agreed that the profile currently in stationing (to replace Revd Elizabeth Cushion) would include the superintendent's role.

- Permission was given to cease worship at Acaster Malbis Methodist Church following their final Harvest service on 11th October 2026.
- We are in need of a replacement Circuit Treasurer, as Nick Dawson needs to step down. Enquiries are welcome from anyone interested.
- Work continues to revise the Circuit Constitution so it reflects where we are as a Circuit and enables us to work well.

Property update

- The former manse at Vanbrugh Drive and the former chapel at Dunnington have now been sold.
- We are still exploring options for the sale of Stamford Bridge.
- The former Clifton church building is on the market and generating considerable interest. We have begun the process to sell the former chapel at Rufforth. The former chapel at Acaster Malbis is now being looked after by the Circuit as we prepare to make decisions about its' future.

Circuit prayer rota

3rd Jan	Our prayers this week follow the themes in the Advent Resource **Don't be afraid.** This week our theme is: **God has made a home among us** What does 'home' mean to you? God doesn't remain distant, but chooses to dwell amongst humans, not just visiting but staying with us. How could we become better at seeing where God is at work amongst us?
Epiphany 6th	Today is Epiphany, when we remember the visit of the magi (often translated as wise men). Our prayers follow the themes in the Advent Resource **Don't be afraid.** Today our theme is: **God leaves traces to guide us.** The magi come following signs, rather than certainty, and their coming disturbs some powerful people. How comfortable are you with faith that involves not knowing everything? Where have you noticed small signs or hints of direction recently? Focusing on the next step rather than the length of the journey can help us find the trust we need to move forward.
10th Jan	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is **Acomb**. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. One X, our Circuit youth group, meets on Friday evenings at the Circuit Hub. Pray for the young people and their leaders as they explore faith, friendship and fun together.
17th Jan	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is **Bishopthorpe**. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. This week we also remember the former members at **Acaster Malbis**, where the Methodist church closed in autumn 2026. Pray for the former members there as they settle into new church families, and find other ways to support one another.

24th Jan	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is **Copmanthorpe** Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. The week of prayer for Christian Unity runs from 18th to 25th January. Resources encourage us to find ways to let go of fear and trust God, our Good Shepherd. How might you join with others to create a hopeful narrative in your locality? You can find more prayer prompts and resources at: https://ctbi.org.uk/resources/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2027/
31st Jan	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is **Southlands**. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. Victoria is our young adult chaplain and works with university students, among others. Pray for students and young adults in our churches, that they may feel welcomed and able to contribute to church life in a way that suits them, and to explore a deeper understanding of God.
7th Feb	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. Next Sunday (14th Feb) will be Racial Justice Sunday. As it's easy to miss this with the start of Lent, maybe it's something you could pray about this week? https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/resources/seasons-and-themes/special-sundays/racial-justice-sunday/

Lent prayers for 14th, 21st, 28th Feb to follow- via our Events webpage
https://www.yorkmethodist.org.uk/events/events-around-circuit.html

Reflections

Our reflections are taken from on the Methodist Church's resources for Advent
https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/christmasresources/

Don't be afraid: Hope is hiding in plain sight



'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.' Mark 13 v28.

Jesus speaks of a world shaken by upheaval, where familiar signs seem to fail. He urges his followers not to panic, but to stay awake and alert. Like leaves beginning to grow on a tree, small signs point to what is coming. Don't be afraid: even in uncertainty, God's future is already drawing near.

What are you anxious or unsettled about? Can you see any signs of hope?



Don't be afraid: A new chapter is beginning

'The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.' Mark 1 v1.

Mark begins with a bold announcement: this is the beginning of good news. In the wilderness, John calls people to turn back to God and prepare the way. God's new start does not wait for perfect conditions, but begins in unlikely places. Don't be afraid: even here, something new is already beginning.

Are there times when your life feels stuck, or as if you're going nowhere? Are there any signs of something new?



Don't be afraid: God is nearer than we think

'There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.' John 1 v6-8.

John the Baptist points beyond himself to someone already among the people. Though unrecognised, God's presence is already at work in their midst. The challenge is not that God is absent, but that God's new work is as yet unnoticed. Don't be afraid: the one you are waiting for is closer than you realise.

What makes it hard to notice God's presence in our lives? Where might God already be at work around you?



Don't be afraid: God interrupts for good reasons

'[The angel] came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.'' Luke 1 v28-30.

An angel appears to Mary, interrupting her ordinary life with unexpected news. She is confused and uncertain, yet greeted with grace before anything is asked of her. God's calling comes not with control, but with promise and presence. Don't be afraid: even life's interruptions can open the way to new creation.

How do you respond when plans are disrupted? God's call can be unsettling- how do you react when that happens?