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Please note that Circuit Office staff are mostly working from home during the pandemic. Please email or call on mobile numbers rather than calling the office phone.

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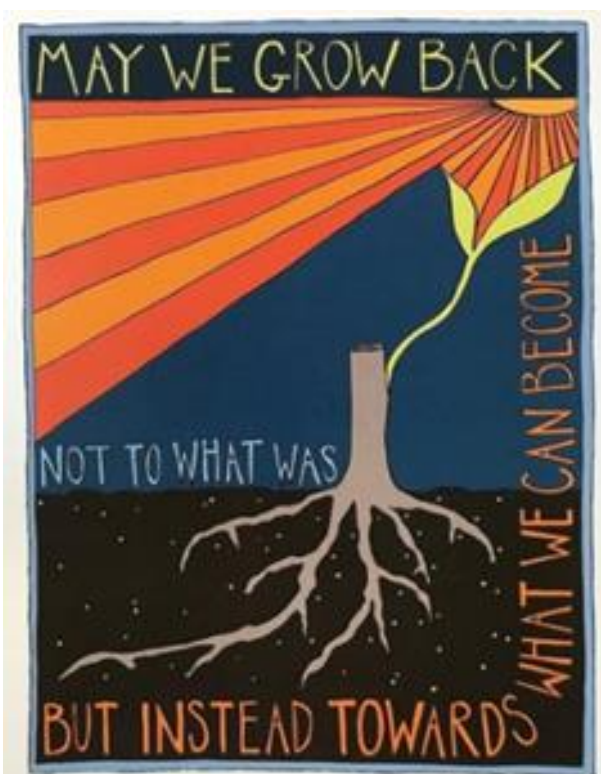
**Circuit Hub:** Melbourne Terrace Methodist Church, Cemetery Road, York YO10 5AF

[www.yorkmethodist.org.uk](http://www.yorkmethodist.org.uk)

Dear Friends

I'm writing this on Remembrance Sunday, which this year has epitomised both the need and our ability to adapt to the Covid-induced restrictions. It is hard that we are no longer able to hold 'in the flesh' services for the next few weeks, but I am grateful to those who worked so hard to make it possible in the first place, and I am sure that we will be able to continue to benefit from that at some point soon.

The response to the inclusion of Churches in Lockdown 2 has produced a variety of responses from Leaders – some of which have felt to me like inappropriate special pleadings. However I have been cheered by two pastoral responses from within our own denomination. From Leslie Newton, our District Chair, came thoughts based around the words of the disciples on unwittingly encountering Jesus on the road to Emmaus. They said "But we had hoped..." which perhaps mirrors our own feelings as another halt to a return to normality is imposed. And then from the President of Conference, Richard Teal, came words acknowledging the damage to the economy and to the lives of individuals caused by the lockdown, recognising that the impact may well fall again more severely on the vulnerable and the poor. He quotes one of our ministers who has described developing a 'sacrament of kindness' – something which we need to develop towards ourselves as well as to one another in these stressful times. Please can we continue to look out for and over one another in the coming weeks.



While Remembrance Sunday might be seen as merely looking backwards to what has been, it also looks forward to what hopefully might be. And as a Church we continue to explore how this experience of Covid-19 might act as a catalyst in God's re-shaping of us for both the present age and the years to come. I saw this picture and it summed up what I am sure is my prayer at this time. But I am just as sure that this is unlikely to be a prayer which is answered quickly, which means that alongside this praying we have a huge task in sustaining hope. As we are into the eighth month of restrictions it's understandable that we are weary, but the

truth is that with each passing day we are moving closer to the end.

There has been a lot of noise in the media about Christmas being cancelled – but of course it is not! It will be different, but the words of John’s gospel remain true – “the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never overcome it.” There are some ideas in this newsletter but we will ensure that details of all that is planned will be circulated once we have a bit more clarity on what will replace Lockdown 2.

Looking ahead, I am delighted that we have been matched with a potential new Superintendent Minister for September 2021, and hopefully this will lead to a positive announcement in the near future.

*With every blessing,*

*Keith*

## **A Ministry of Remembering**

November is a month for all kind of remembrance – Saints and Souls, gunpowder and poppies. But for all of those who have suffered the loss of loved ones in 2020, it has been particularly hard to find appropriate ways of marking that loss and celebrating their life. Within the Circuit, four of our Local Preachers (Wyn Lawrence, Dorothy Mercer, Jean Peacock and Sheila Wilson) have died since the pandemic began. As we move onward we will need to continue to develop a ministry of remembering, not just for them but for all those within our communities.



## **Staff and Stationing update**

We are delighted that having been successfully matched in the Stationing process, and having conducted the usual ‘visit’ via a number of Zoom calls, the Circuit Invitation Committee has recently offered them an invitation to become our Superintendent Minister from September 2021. This invitation has been accepted and we look forward to sharing more details in the coming weeks. Thanks to all those who have been involved in the process.

In September a profile was also submitted for a Probationer Presbyter to replace Revd Ruth Duck who will be retiring next summer. Our Circuit has been approved as suitable and we hope to find out in January if we have been allocated a probationer.

In September we were delighted to welcome Liz Spain and Alyson Christy to

our staff team as Local Pastors. Liz will be working with Haxby & Wigginton this year and Alyson will be working with Heworth. We hope to grow our team of Local Pastors over the next year or two to provide pastoral care and leadership in churches, sometimes alongside ordained ministers, and sometimes as the first port-of-call for a church rather than a minister.

For more on all our staff, see the Circuit website's Who's Who pages. There are also videos on our Circuit YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMZlI3vyksFEonZ-EQbbhuQ>) of a number of staff introducing themselves, and more are being added.

### Diary dates

26th November	Leaders of Worship & Preachers' Meeting via Zoom
2nd December	Circuit Council, 7.30pm via Zoom
23rd March	Circuit Council, Time/ Venue TBC
24th June	Circuit Council, Time/ Venue TBC
11th July	Circuit Celebration- provisional date

### Circuit News & Social Media

If you'd like to hear from the Circuit every week with news about worship and service sheets to use at home as well as other information about what is happening around the Circuit, please email [yorkcircuitoffice@gmail.com](mailto:yorkcircuitoffice@gmail.com) and ask to be put on the mailing list for the Circuit News. (Please note: if ever you do not receive the Circuit News please check your email's Spam or Junk folders as it may be sent there. It may help if you add [yorkcircuitoffice@gmail.com](mailto:yorkcircuitoffice@gmail.com) to your email contacts list.)

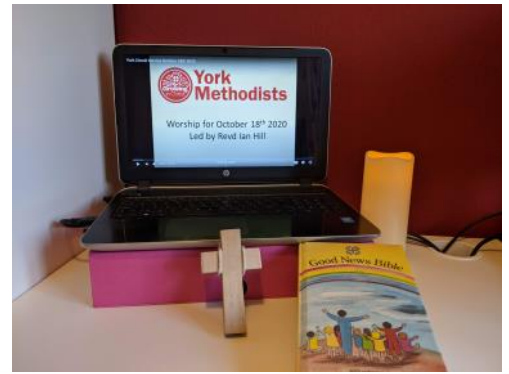
You can also go to our **website** <https://www.yorkmethodist.org.uk/> for information on online worship around the Circuit and other resources.

You can also subscribe to our **Circuit YouTube Channel** where we will be adding both streamed worship and news stories from around the Circuit <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMZlI3vyksFEonZ-EQbbhuQ>

If you're on **Facebook**, you can follow our Page <https://www.facebook.com/yorkmethodistcircuit/> for news and updates, and join our group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/267605153386046/> to share with others.

## Digital Church

Early in 2020, the Circuit had begun making plans to experiment with live-streaming services that were taking place in churches and making them available online or to those gathered in other church buildings. The Circuit Council had agreed that money should be set aside to experiment with this from the sale of the former Shipton Methodist Chapel.



Then came Covid-19 and lockdown. Instead of just an experiment, suddenly there was a need to go digital to create opportunities to worship while church buildings were closed. Many different ways of worshipping online suddenly started to flourish, from interactive Zoom discussions and YouTube streamed video to podcast-style reflections. Much has been learned over these months, not least the need to provide opportunities for fellowship with one another as well as for worship and learning. People joined our worship online who had never entered our buildings.

It became clear that the Circuit would need to think strategically about how best to use resources- both people and finances- to support and develop a diversity of worship and discipleship opportunities. One way it is hoped to achieve this is by equipping a room at the Circuit Hub as a 'zoom room' which can be used to hold 'hybrid' meetings, where some people are physically present and others join in from home or another venue. This will help reduce the time spend travelling and the environmental costs of driving to meetings. It also raises the possibility of inviting guest speakers or trainers from other parts of the country- or indeed other parts of the world- to take part without having to travel.

Rather than try to equip every church building with equipment to livestream or record worship (which would be a considerable cost), a set of equipment is being purchased that can be moved around different buildings as the need arises. This should enable the creation of good quality livestreamed worship, but also the ability to explore hybrid worship, where some of the worshippers are physically present and others can take part digitally from their homes or another building.

Making the most of the opportunities for digital worship will mean needing to equip and encourage people in using the technology. To help with this the Circuit has employed two new employees. Neil Craig will be working with people around the Circuit to develop a strategy for digital engagement with church.

Hannah Carter-Brown will be working to create high quality material to be used in worship, training & outreach and on social media. We also hope to ensure people who are not currently able to engage online are not left out, with more resources that can be circulated in other ways including written service material and prayer resources, and help to get online if they wish.

Going forward online worship (and other activities) will continue to be part of the mix of worship and activities the Circuit and churches offer. Hopefully there will even be ways to increase the reach of existing activities— for example, livestreaming organ music on dark evenings when many would not feel able to leave home; streaming a service from one church to another; contemporary worship available online to complement traditional styles of worship. In future the Circuit may consist of fewer places where there is physical worship every week, but where overall there are more, and more diverse, opportunities to worship. Some of the barriers between churches are already starting to erode as two or more churches join together for online worship and create new connections. Working together can achieve more and reach more people with the good news— both online and off.

*Visit our YouTube channel for a video of Keith Albans and Andy Lindley discussing plans for developing digital church.*

*You can find introductions from Neil and Hannah on the 'Who's Who' pages of the Circuit website.*

## **Pioneering and Circuit 16**

About two years ago, Revd Andy Lindley invited a group of people from around the Circuit to start meeting to share ideas about the future of the church and discuss ideas for ways to engage with our communities. As part of Andy's role as the District's lead on pioneering, this 'pioneer nursery' group has been helpful for people who want to do something new, something different, whether within their home churches or in a new context. The group has helped people grow and think through ideas, giving permission to try new things and explore, and to be encouraged by hearing about others.

The group has also led to a new project being known at present as 'Circuit 16'. It was recognised that most of our current churches are quite similar to one another, and that this limits the people we can reach. To grow the church we need to find ways to branch out beyond that community. There are individuals





or small groups in many churches who feel called to do things that their own local church feels unable to support because it doesn't match who they currently are.

To better support the work of such people the District pioneer team have proposed creating a new Circuit which can provide oversight and support for projects that fall outside our 'normal' church boundaries.

People feeling this call to explore mission and ministry beyond the boundaries of their home church will be nurtured and mentored through small group 'grass roots communities' who will meet together (perhaps a mix of face-to-face and online meetings) and pray and study together and hold one another accountable, following a simple rule of life. From this it is hoped that mission will emerge, bringing people together to plant 'Kairos communities' and experiment with different ways of being church. The loose structure will allow for a diversity of mission to grow, where people can find many different ways of encountering Jesus. For some these communities will be their main experience of church— for others they may keep one foot in their 'home' church community and one in the new.

To do this will take courage and faith— we are called, like Peter, to get out of our 'safe' boat and we will probably feel like we are sinking some of the time— but we can also trust that we will be raised up and supported by God.

*Visit our YouTube channel for a video of Andy Lindley talking about the pioneer project. You can also find a presentation on this on the Yorkshire North & East District YouTube channel.*

## **Update on Carecent**

Many of you will have seen from Carecent's Harvest appeal newsletter that things have been a bit different at Carecent since March last year. Instead of breakfast, Carecent have been providing packed lunches for those in need— including people who were temporarily housed by the Council in hotels during lockdown and those still without a home of their own. This is still continuing and Carecent are now also able to provide hot drinks from the steps at Central Methodist Church.

If you would like to donate to Carecent, the greatest need at present is for money to allow them to buy items for packed lunches. Donations can either be



sent by cheque or by BACS payment directly to their bank account:

Carecent  
Sort Code: 09-01-53  
Acc No: 38413286

You can find more details, including a list of current donation needs, on the Carecent website <https://www.carecent.org.uk>

You may also be aware that Nicky Gladstone, who has headed Carecent for some years, will be moving on in the next few months as she completes her training for ordained ministry in the Church of England. Recruitment is taking place to find a new Project Leader and we look forward to more news soon.

## **Trinity - Ceasing to Worship**

At the December 2020 Circuit Council Meeting, Trinity Methodist Church will formally ask York Circuit for permission to Cease Worship, following a decision at Trinity Church Council in August.

This sad decision followed much consideration, soul-searching and prayer. Although recent years have seen membership numbers decrease, we felt we still had a purpose in Christian witness and mission in our area. We took on a building 'Sharing Agreement' with another church and continued outreach, especially work with 'Big Issue in the North'.

Some 2½ years ago, however, we were dealt a serious blow; the need became apparent for significant building repair work (around £130,000). We faced the challenge of raising this money with faith; considerable effort and personal sacrifice being involved in doing so. A £25,000 grant was offered by the National Churches Trust, but no other outside financial help was available. The COVID situation offered the opportunity for review, highlighting the loss of all fund-raising opportunities, the still large amount of money needed, and the ability to realistically sustain both fund-raising and mission.

This has brought us reluctantly to make the difficult decision to apply to Cease Worship. May I ask for your prayerful support for the people of Trinity as we explore what the future might hold for each of us.

*Peter Kitchin, Senior Church Steward*



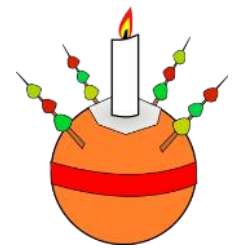
## Christmas events/ ideas

Christmas 2020 will be a Christmas like no other for the Church. Has your church wondered what you could do both to worship and to share the message of Christmas hope with your community? Even if you haven't been able to meet physically, there are still things you could do to encourage one another and your community.

**Start off by praying** individually or as a church about what you could do- or what God could do through you- this Christmas.

**Think about your church members- what will they be able to do?** Who can do what? For example, if many are housebound or shielding, it would be good to do something they can join in with from home (making something, writing cards) while if you have a number of more active members you could consider something outdoors. Do you have someone who is a champion knitter? Or someone who loves carpentry? Can you use their skills?

**Think about your community-** who lives there or works there, who passes through? What are their needs? For example, is your church building on a busy road where people will see window displays or an outdoor display? Are there elderly people who may be lonely at Christmas? Are there young families who might appreciate craft activity packs or a DIY Christingle?



**Check the guidance:** if you're not sure if what you want to do is allowed, talk to Lois or Angie or check the guidance at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus/official-guidance/> and <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/coronavirus-guidance-for-property/> Remember guidance may change before December so keep an eye on the news. You will need to do a risk assessment for activities in your building or grounds.

**Remember why we are doing this:** it's easy to get wrapped up in the busyness of Christmas, or to get cynical, but try to keep the focus on Christ. That's the point of Christmas, after all!

The Children, Youth & Families team have put together some resources and suggestions of ways your church could celebrate Christmas this year— contact Victoria, Amy, Heather or Lorraine for access to the pack.

Here are a selection of ideas:

**Christmas Trails:** Set up a series of displays and invite your community to follow the trail. You could work with other churches in your area (both other

Methodist churches and ecumenical friends) to put together an outdoor trail across several sites.

**Knitted Angels:** A few years ago Clifton Methodist decorated their community with knitted angels, and other churches have done similar things. You can find ideas and knitting, crochet and sewing patterns at [www.christmasangel.net/](http://www.christmasangel.net/)



**Online carol services:** For many churches carol services attract more visitors than any other service. We are also finding that our online services are attracting people who may not have been regular attenders in the past. Start thinking early how you can prepare for this.

**Adopt a neighbour:** Many people will be worried about being alone this Christmas, or about not being able to visit family. Ask members of your congregation to volunteer to 'adopt' a neighbour to check in with over Christmas (in accordance with whatever restrictions are in place at the time) or if they would like to be 'adopted'.

**Cards for your community:** You could deliver cards to local houses which include a message from the Church and details of where to find your services online, or of what you are doing locally.

**Share God's gifts:** Encourage church members to donate, if they are able, to local foodbanks to help those who will be struggling financially at Christmas. Other local and national charities often run Christmas schemes to donate presents to children who wouldn't otherwise get any, or to help those who are homeless. Keep an eye out in local media.

Despite the sadness many will understandably feel at not being able to do what we might usually do, let's make the most of this opportunity to share what Christmas means for our world.

## **Aroma Coffee Shop Update**

Aroma has been a Methodist Church community café and Fairtrade gift shop at the heart of Haxby & Wigginton for over 12 years, but 2020 has been an extraordinary year. We closed our doors at the start of the national lockdown on 23 March: uncertain when, or indeed if, we would be able to reopen. However, a government hospitality industry grant and employee furlough support have ensured we remain financially viable into 2021.

After careful planning, we reopened cautiously in September with a limited takeaway-only menu and reduced staffing. We've now resumed normal opening hours and some of our volunteers, integral to Aroma, have now returned. New volunteers are always welcome! Counter screens, socially-distanced seating and face masks felt strange at first but have become a part of daily life. The staff, led by Mel, have been fantastic in responding to ongoing challenges.

*Please note: this was written before the November lockdown was announced.*

*Aroma is currently closed but please check their website*

*[www.aromaofhaxby.uk](http://www.aromaofhaxby.uk) for further news.*

*Rob Cooper*

## **Circuit Council Report**

The Circuit Council last met in person on 11th February 2020 at Holgate Methodist Church. It was due to meet in April but this was cancelled due to lockdown restrictions, and the members of Circuit Council were asked by email to approve the delegation of their powers to the Circuit Leadership Team until the Circuit Council was able to meet again. Since then guidance has been issued giving trustee bodies permission to use video conferencing software to carry out necessary business. On 17th September 2020 the Circuit Council duly met via Zoom.

The following items were approved by the Circuit Leadership Team acting on delegated authority from Circuit Council:

- Recruitment paperwork to allow the appointment of Local Pastors at Heworth and Haxby & Wigginton.
- Approval for a property project for Easingwold to replace rear windows.
- Reappointing BHP as the Circuit's auditors for 2019/20 financial year.
- Nick Dawson, John Middleton, Vic Paylor and Ruth Morrison were approved as signatories to the Cornerstone bank account, now the congregation has ceased worship and the building is to be sold. Negotiations relating to the proposed sale were also discussed.
- It was noted that Revd Keith Albans will be retiring in summer 2021. Revd Ruth Duck will also be retiring in summer 2021. Revd Ian Hill will reduce his appointment to two-thirds of full time at the same date.

A number of items were also voted on by email:

- The Circuit Council agreed to allow the Circuit Leadership Team to authorise

the assistance of financial help to those Churches that are experiencing financial difficulties due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

- The Circuit Council agreed that the Circuit Leadership Team approve the paperwork to recruit a Local Pastor for Heworth and section.
- The Circuit Council agreed to the appointment of the Circuit Invitation Committee comprised of all Ministers from the Circuit, all Circuit Stewards, the Circuit Council Secretary and Stephen Leah.
- The audited Circuit Accounts for 2018-19 were approved.
- Synod Representatives for 2020-21 were approved: Janet Bowling, Joyce Jinks, Nick Dawson, John Middleton, Rosamond Carter, Tim Duffy, Rosemary Freeborn, Sue Gill, Robin Jackson, Malcolm Parker, Ruth Watson.

On 17th September the Circuit Council:

- Approved the appointment of Robin Taylor as a Circuit Steward, and expressed thanks to Rosemary Freeborn, Sue Gill and Peter Metcalf as they step down as Circuit Stewards.
- Approved the appointment of a Digital Development Enabler and Creative Content Assistant to assist with 'being church' online.
- Affirmed Lydia Harrison in candidating for presbyteral ministry.
- Stationing: The Circuit Invitation Committee reported to the Council that following the reinvitation process Revd Rory Dalgliesh was reinvited for a period of 5 years (to 2026) and Revd Dr John Schofield for a further period of 4 years (to 2025). Applications have been submitted into the stationing process for a Superintendent to join the Circuit in September 2021 and also for a Presbyteral Probationer to work with Huntington, Strensall and Sheriff Hutton.
- The resourcing strategy as approved in February is being reviewed and an update will be brought to the December Circuit Council meeting.
- It was noted that Liz Spain has been appointed as Local Pastor at Haxby & Wigginton and Alyson Christy as Local Pastor at Heworth.
- It was agreed to release some money from the sale of Shipton Chapel to fund equipment to make it easier to livestream services, and to allow meetings to take place with some people participating online and some in a room.
- An update was given on negotiations between Central Methodist York and Central Hall Westminster, and Circuit Council voted to allow the Circuit Leadership Team to oversee the drawing up of a lease.

- A property project at Huby to improve their premises for community use was approved.
- Circuit Council approved the Leaders of Worship and Preachers' Meeting recommendation that Val Hicks be reinstated as a Local Preacher.
- A revised budget for 2021 was approved.
- Circuit Council agreed to re-delegate authority to the Circuit Leadership Team to make urgent decisions between Circuit Council meetings.
- The next meeting of the Circuit Council is due to be on 2nd December, via zoom. Future meeting dates are 23rd March 2021, 24th June 2021 and 15th September 2021.

### **Circuit Prayer Rota**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Church to pray for</b>
29th November	Hessay
6th December	Heworth
13th December	Holgate
20th December	Huby
27th December	Huntington
3rd January	Lidgett
10th January	New Earswick
17th January	Poppleton
24th January	Rufforth
31st January	Sheriff Hutton
7th February	Southlands
14th February	Stamford Bridge
21st February	Stillingfleet
28th February	Stillington