



The Teesdale Worm

Magazine of the Darlington and Teesdale Circuit

Issue 29 - January / February issue

Well, the celebrations are over, presents have been given, received, returned to get the right size or colour, or simply placed in the sock drawer. All of our New Year resolutions are made and broken.

There is a deflation to be felt all around as we look forward to our next festival.

But is this the way it should be? 100 miles per hour for a month, then back to a reasonable 30mph, then back up to break-neck speed for Lent and Easter.

I suppose we may need the contrasts of activity and stillness in order to make life interesting. The highs of the celebrations, the contemplations of the build up, the stillness and simplicity of the 'ordinary time'.

But is this the "Life in all its fullness" (John 10:10) about which Jesus spoke? Or simply the frenetic activity of the Christian on earth?

Living the prayerful, Bible based, Christ centred life in the power of the Holy Spirit gives us all a firm foundation on which to stand and build this life, a life full of thanksgiving, of joy of love and of peace.

In the stillness and simplicity of life, whether we are, as the Covenant Service says 'laid aside', or simply finding rest alone, there is something very Christ-like in our acceptance of where we are at any particular time.

So, as we seek His presence in the mundane and ordinary, the quiet and peaceful, or even in the calm before the storm, let us cherish that life in all its fullness, a life centred on Jesus in the power of His Spirit, that He may build us up for the next step of the journey.



Grace and Peace
Graham

Darlington
Methodist
District



The **Methodist** Church 

The President and Vice President are presenting

Hidden Treasures

@Elm Ridge Methodist Church
9 March 2024; 10 – 3:30pm

This event is open to all forms of leadership teams in a Circuit, church or a project.

Please register your leadership team to take part!

Holocaust Memorial Day 2024



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST

*Learning from genocide -
for a better future*

Fragility of Freedom

'That is when the trouble started for the Jews. Our freedom was severely restricted by a series of anti-Jewish decrees.'

Anne Frank, diary entry, Saturday 20 June, 1942 – reflecting back on May 1940 when the Germans arrived in the Netherlands

Reflective Service 11am 27th January 2024
Barnard Castle Methodist Church



Deadline for items for the January/February issue is: **26th February 2024**

Please send to admin@dandtcircuit.org.uk or

Circuit Office, c/o Elm Ridge Methodist Church, Carmel Road South, Darlington. DL3 8DJ

Thank you!

The Pathway to Christmas 2023

Our journey through advent to Christmas Day has been busy but particularly special this year:



Christmas Toy Service

As in previous years, we held a Christmas Toy Service to support our friends in the Salvation Army in the Tees Valley as they bring a touch of Christmas morning joy and excitement to children in some of the neediest households.

And this year, the response has been more generous than ever with a magnificent selection of toys, games and gifts. Thank you to everyone who contributed in any way!

School Christmas Concert

Once again we were delighted to welcome pupils and staff from Middleton Primary School for their Key Stage 2 Christmas Concert.

More than 50 pupils filled our church with carols, songs, poems and readings as they took us through the traditional Christmas story, cheered on (sometimes literally) by an enthusiastic audience of parents, grand-parents, aunts, uncles and supporters.

It was a lovely occasion and we're really looking forward to the school's return visit at Easter.



Welcome return for Village Christmas

The return of the Village Christmas Celebration proved a huge success with more than 150 people enjoying a varied programme of carols, songs and readings celebrating the Christmas story and the festive season.

As well as our own team there were contributions from The Women's Institute; The Rainbows; Middleton Primary School; The Altogether Choir; Middleton Lunch Club; Middleton Nursery; our new Parish Nurse, Gladys Mugambi on behalf of UTASS; and Chat & Play making it a truly community-wide event.

And, of course, the ever reliable Middleton & Teesdale Silver Band were on hand to play for the singing and to entertain us as we enjoyed the tea, coffee and mince pies which followed.

The collection went to Action For Children's Christmas Appeal. Thank you to everyone who contributed in any way.



By
**Peter
Collins**
with
additions
by
**Debbie
& Ian**



Village Christmas continued

Chat & Play Christmas Party

The Chat & Play parent & toddler group participated in the Village Christmas & then had their Christmas Party at the beginning of the week before Christmas, with a special visit from Santa Claus.



Lego Church tells the story

Our Christmas Lego Church was another huge success. Popular with children of all ages(!) it produced these colourful and imaginative interpretations of the traditional Christmas story, which are now decorating the window ledges around the church.



Festive lunch is the biggest yet!

Almost 40 people turned up to enjoy our traditional Christmas Lunch this year - the biggest we've hosted so far!

Thanks go to MacFarlane Butchers for the luxury turkeys, and the Co-op for their generous gift card. Volunteers from the community helped serve the food while church members, hand picked for their "bake-off" skills, donated fabulous puddings.

Judith Tarn, who helped organise the lunch, said: "The atmosphere was fantastic and meals were plated up and driven to those unable to come due to health problems, so they didn't miss out either."

A wonderful memory for makers and eaters!



Christmas Eve makes Christingle special

More than 50 adults and children from across the community joined us for the popular "Christingle Service" led by our own Minister, the Rev Graham Cutler.

With an ample supply of oranges, ribbons, candles, sticks, sweets and raisins the church was soon aglow with that special light that comes from a rapt congregation holding up their completed Christingles. And the fact it took place on Christmas Eve itself made it extra special. Lovely!



Journey's End - Journey's Beginning!

The journey ended (or began?) on Christmas Day with smaller numbers attending Midnight Communion & Christmas Day All-Age Worship, both led by Rev John Howard. We celebrated the birth & welcomed the Christ child into our midst. A fitting end & a new beginning after a special journey!



Social event at Barnard Castle Methodist Church Saturday 20th January 6.00 p.m.

Numbers are required for this event. Signing sheet in the Café area.
Pie and Pea Supper with the main entertainment by the Barney Barber Shop Group
along with games and puzzles
Donation on the night. Transport can be arranged.

‘Life as a Refugee’

Saturday 20th January at Eggleston Village Hall

4pm (*optional*) - Tea & a biblical perspective

6pm - Welcome & Supper - Hot casseroles (inc vegan & gluten-free)

7pm - Short illustrated talk by Andrew Moody, who is a pastor working with refugees in Uganda

730pm - Live Music by local musicians

You are welcome to arrive at 4pm or 6pm. For more information & to RSVP to ensure there is sufficient food, please contact Fiona on 07711 710 216.

Contributions of stew or pudding welcome - please let us know by 13th Jan. Bring your own drinks. **Donations expected - all funds raised for refugees.**

NEW

Games and Activities Session Thursdays 10 – 12

Table tennis, Dominos, Painting, Knitting, music etc.
A new initiative and a chance to have fun with others or just sit and chat with a coffee!
Starting with the Table Tennis tables and craft activities we will see what transpires.....

Altogether Choir Weekly, Thursdays 7-8 p.m.

A good sing for all involved. Please contact Judith Tarn for further information.

Coffee Mornings at The Pathway

Fridays 10.15 – 11.45
A light hearted social event.

If you feel able to help on the rota please see Dorothy or Alan.

Friday Morning Group

Fridays 10.30 a.m.

Please contact Lorne Tallentire

Sunday Evening Online Fortnightly 7-8 p.m.

Contact Mary Howard
for the zoom link.

Reflections on 'Light and Dark' in the context of war in Israel/Gaza

'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.' (John 1 verse 5 New RSV.) In most churches this verse, from the prologue of John's Gospel, will be read during the Christmas period. Light and darkness features across the birth narrative. The shepherds are out in their fields in the darkness of night and suddenly with the angelic appearance the darkness is overcome (Luke 2 verses 8-14). The Maji (or Wise Men) are led to the birth of Jesus by a star shining in the sky. (Matthew 2 verse 1 and 9 & 10).

Most clear of all is the witness of John the Baptist in his testimony about Jesus, quoting again from the prologue of John's Gospel *"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. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world."* (John 1 verses 7-8).

How do we view these images of light and dark in the context of the killings on October 7th and the subsequent slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza. Even more is the wider question of the multiple conflicts across the world of today, the ongoing threat of nuclear war and the climate crisis. We live in dark days. Where can we see the light of the Christ Child?

I recently came across a quote which I have not been able to source, but during recent months found helpful. It is "it is on the darkest nights that the stars shine brightest." This is of course very true. Living in the Pennine countryside I am able to admire the dark sky and appreciate the many stars because I am away from the lights of the city. Taking the theological ideas of light and darkness I can identify that it can be equally true of theological light and dark. In places of violence and where terrible deeds are being done, we often seem to find the most saintly of people. The darkness of evil is convicted by the star shining out in the person of the individual showing compassion and mercy in the face of tyranny. I saw this first for myself when I visited Rwanda less than ten years after the genocide. The scars of that most terrible war were still very evident all around, but the wonderful peace building efforts of many individual and organisations were inspiring. The quality of their loving amid poverty and loss shone out and I have never forgotten it.

Is that true also of the land we call Holy, today? My two periods of service as a human rights observer, my two years living there serving in the Jerusalem Liaison Office, my continuing relationship with that land makes me suggest, even amid the fog of war, that the light will be shining out. I have met so many people, Palestinian and Israeli, who despite the years of unjust occupation, of the abuse of power, of injustice and blatant discrimination, have exemplified a different way, bringing people together across the divide, despite the walls being erected. I have seen Jewish Israelis abused by the Israeli Army for their willingness to stand by Palestinians as they attempt to gather harvest from their own trees. Yet these Jewish Israelis have stood by and not abandoned their Palestinian brothers and sisters. I have seen Palestinians steadfast despite huge intimidation showing a calm dignity. I have no doubt that in Gaza this Christmas, this kind of light will be shining amid the darkness of the war.

The question is asked where is God in this slaughter? Where is the Christ Child born this Christmas? The light that shines amid the darkness cries out that he is under the rubble of the bombed out city streets of Gaza with the 7,000 Palestinians missing and believed to be under the rubble.

The dust and dirt of the conflict create a fog of war in which it is often difficult to see any light amidst the darkness, however, the tiny spark of the starlight that led the Maji to the birth, is lighting up the way for us today. The darkness of Hamas won't triumph in the end. The darkness of Israel's revenge won't be the end of the story, the darkness of ethnic cleansing won't be history's conclusion about the war. At present we cannot see it for there in the darkness there is very dark. However, a star will shine out, I do believe that, for that is what our faith is all about.

John Howard

Happy New Year from Cockerton

We had a busy time over the first few weeks of December with the start of Advent and the Cockerton Prize Silver Band Concert which was a joyful evening to set the start of the Christmas season. We had a fantastic Christmas lunch Club incorporating one of its members 80th Birthday and a good time was had by all.

We carolled at the Guild and fellowship and the Girl's Brigade held their annual Christingle which was a full house and magical.

Among all this we sadly had the absence of members of our congregation who had recently passed.. always sad but particularly poignant at Christmas. Memories shared and remembered for the joy they brought us, and so at the start of a New Year we felt that these words were appropriate Lighten your Spirit and blow away the cobwebs of the old year.

Time is such a precious gift..
Don't let it slip away.
Make the most of every moment,
Always seize the day.

When the world looks Gloomy
and the sun forgets to shine,
Keep busy and keep cheerful
Until things turn out fine.

When happiness up lifts your heart
And helps your Spirit climb
Then keep it safe and seize the day
And cherish precious time.

Iris Hesselden (Friendship Book) 2024

Submitted by Pam Martin

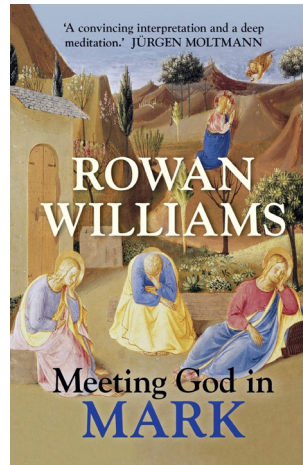
Barton

Your friends at Barton Chapel would like to express their thanks to all the people who have supported them during the last year.

So.... come along for a 'Cuppa and Cake' on Saturday, 27th January 10-12noon. Hopefully the weather will have improved by then - but the kettle will be on!

Joan Marwood

Circuit Book Club



The Circuit Book Club meets next at 7pm on 12th February in the Harroway Room at Elm Ridge.

During the coming months we will be spending a lot of time in the lectionary

reflecting on the Gospel of Mark.

To encourage us in our reflections we will be looking together at Rowan Williams short introduction to Mark, Meeting God in Mark (SPCK, 2014). The book is an accessible read which also introduces us to the excitement of the good news about Jesus.

Come and join us – we'd love to see you!

Richard Andrew



Submitted by Peter Collins

Boys Brigade celebrates it's 140th Anniversary

In October 1883 the Boys Brigade was conceived in Glasgow by Scottish businessman William Alexander Smith to combine drill and fun activities with Christian values. The BB quickly spread across the world and can now be found in over 70 countries.

When designing the Brigade's motto and crest, William Smith referred directly to Hebrews 6:19 and reading this from the Bible is, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast"

Unfortunately, there is only one BB Company left in the Darlington & District Battalion, the 2nd Darlington, who meet at The Well Methodist Church on Friday evenings and take part in Church Parades at Harrowgate Hill. We are accredited to Harrowgate Hill for our parade services.

We currently have 25 boys and 8 officers in the Company and earlier this year we presented a Queens Badge. This is the highest award in the BB and only the 12th presented in our 65-year history.

To celebrate the 140th Anniversary the Anchor (5-7) and Junior (8-10) boys made the number 140 out of Lego and were thrilled that they were able to display this at the Harvest Festival and Parade service at Harrowgate Hill on 1st October.

Some of you in the Circuit may remember that in 2011 the officers of the 2nd Darlington walked the full length of the Teesdale Way (100 miles in 4 days), the churches at Barnard Castle, Winston and Elm Ridge supported this trek with refreshments along the route. Over £5,000 was raised for clean water projects in Africa.

*Ken Watson
Captain
2nd Darlington Company the Boys Brigade*



News from The Hill

Like so many other churches in the Circuit, at Harrowgate Hill we were blessed with many acts of worship over the Christmas holidays. Sue Sleightholme led a really interactive Carol Service on 10th December with a strong turnout of all the Uniformed Organisations affiliated to our church. (Our next Parade Service takes place on Mothering Sunday, 10th March). Rev Brian Hutton conducted a baptism on Sunday 17th December when Rose White and Benjamin Moore were welcomed into the church family. Rev Brian then conducted a Christmas Eve communion service and Christmas Day morning service. We welcomed friends from Haughton Methodist Church that came along to both. Rev Brian puts such a lot of thoughtful preparation into all his services, and we are so grateful for his ministry.

Some of our members were privileged to attend one of the Circuit New Year's Eve services at Elm Ridge led by Rev Yemi Jaiyesimi. He is another inspirational witness to God's goodness, grace and mercy. We look forward to welcoming Yemi on Sunday 14th January.

Now that the Christmas celebrations are behind us, we are back in business for another year. Our many groups that meet here have started up once more. You may be amazed to hear how many there are: we have a pre-school group that meet each day during the week, a weekly dancing class, Northern Voices rehearsals, U3A Handbell Ringers, Gamblers Anonymous, our popular craft classes and ladies group that meet on alternative Thursday evenings and a small Banner Group. The 9th Darlington Scouts have their headquarters at our church offering Squirrels, Beavers, Cub Scouts, Scouts and Explorer groups. Girls and Boys Brigades from The Well Methodist Church are also affiliated to us.

On top of all that, our popular Saturday coffee mornings are held on the 1st and 3rd Saturday each month from 10-11:30am. Many people from the neighbourhood and other churches come to enjoy the fellowship, the stalls and good food. There's even birthday cake on the 3rd Saturday for those with birthdays during that month! All are most welcome.

Our church anniversary takes place on Sunday 4th February when Rev Huw Sperring is leading the

service. Huw was a minister with us from 1994 to 1998. The church opened for Christian worship on 7th February 1903! Keeping our church premises fresh, safe and welcoming is always a challenge even after 121 years!

We are looking forward to welcoming Rev Gavin Hume who has accepted an invitation to become the Minister with pastoral care for H Hill, Haughton, Hurworth and The Well from September 2024. Peter and Jennie Collins spoke very highly of Gavin whom they knew from their time in the Newcastle Circuit. Gavin's wife, Tracy will continue as a Methodist deacon in the Newcastle Circuit when they move to Darlington.

May we wish all the readers of The Teesdale Worm a Happy and peaceful year for 2024.

From Harrowgate Hill Church Stewards



Harrowgate Hill Methodist Church
Lowson Street Darlington DL3 0EY
(in the Bowman Street Annexe)

You are invited to support church funds by coming along to a

Cheer-Up Party

on Saturday 27th January 2024 at 2.00pm



With a Burn's Night Theme!

Enjoy a sing-a-long and entertainment by our own U3A Handbell Ringers Group followed by an Afternoon Tea.

Suggested Ticket Donation - £5.00

Please telephone 01325 264145 for more information

Our church anniversary takes place on Sunday 4th February when Rev Huw Sperring is leading the

News from The Well

Happy New Year to our friends across the Circuit! Life at The Well has been varied, busy and wonderful over the last couple of months. December was incredibly busy in the Hub. It was such a privilege to be with and serve people in the run-up to Christmas. We held a range of services and events over the Christmas period. The wind meant that our plan to hold Christmas Eve Carols in the Garden had to be changed as we moved inside to the ambience of the Sanctuary – but we were thrilled to welcome over 80 people from our local community in singing the Christmas story. Christmas morning was equally wonder-filled, joyful and diverse. Earlier in December, it was an honour to host our first memorial service giving people the opportunity to remember loved ones. Emma and Graham were also invited to share Christingle assemblies at Northwood and Reid Street schools. The last month has also seen the re-establishment of a more traditional monthly afternoon service for the Tuesday Lunch Club.

As we commence the New Year, a programme of building works is being planned, and it is hoped that the much-needed refurbishment of the kitchen as the first of these projects will be completed in the first half of the year. We remain deeply grateful for all the encouragement, time and support offered to us by people from the community, church and circuit in making everything that happens at The Well possible.

We are embarking on a new theme during 2024 of 'Following Jesus Together'. We will be using and adapting material from 'Practising the Way' by John Mark Comer and his team, which encourages us to be Jesus' apprentices by:

'Being with Jesus'

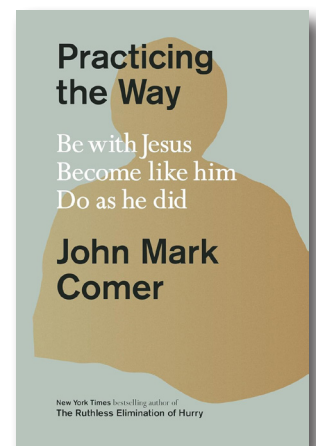
'Becoming more like Jesus'

'Doing what Jesus did'.

Our intention is to develop discipleship through nine disciplines or practices that shape a Rule of Life that reflects A Methodist Way of Life – sabbath, prayer, fasting, service, solitude, scripture, community, generosity and witness. This will be the focus of our Sunday gatherings and emerging small groups. Please can we ask you to pray for and with us as we embark on this adventure? You would also be very welcome to join in as we discover, learn and grow together.

Bulk Order: Practicing the Way — John Mark Comer

Praying God's richest blessing for everyone in 2024,



*Graham and Emma
on behalf of everyone at The Well*



It is a pleasure to update the Circuit, once again, on some of the work of Darlington Area Churches Youth Ministry.

ASSEMBLIES

December is always a busy time for assemblies. This was our 15th year providing an extended 45-minute Christmas assembly for Hummersknott Academy. This year's theme was 'Hope'. The assembly was our usual blend of ice-breaker games, staff participation, reflections, inspiring video clips and a thoughtful Christian message - and sometimes even a 'festive shout'. The assemblies are delivered to each year group, starting with Year 7's on Monday, finishing with Year 11's on the Friday.

Martin writes... ***On Christmas Eve, I found myself needing to go to the Co-op in Cockerton, as I pulled up in the car park a group of around eight young teenage lads were just hanging around. As I got out the car and walked towards the alley to the shop one of the lads went 'Hey! It's the assembly man', so as I went past, I said hello and we had a brief conversation about the assembly, and I went on my way. As I walked off one of the lads shouted 'I love your assemblies'!***

In Hummersknott we run assemblies for Harvest Festival, Christmas, Fair-trade and Easter. Under the Listening Post project, we run assemblies/workshops on Well-Being and Mental Health in Carmel, Hurworth and Longfield. Orla, our Chaplain in Polam Hall School helps with assemblies (Readings) in both the Primary and Secondary schools, throughout the academic year.

CLUB 7-UP / INSPIRE / 6th FORM DROP-IN

As DACYM we are involved in a number of lunchtime and after-school activities. For example, in Longfield between September – October half-term we run a '7-UP Club' for students who have just started secondary school and maybe need an after-school activity that helps them settle into secondary school. It is a mix of games and activities with a short life-skills refecton.

After October half-term the club morphs into 'INSPIRE' where pupils, with support of DACYM and the RE Department deliver presentations on a wide variety of topics including 'Is Heavy Metal Music Satanic', 'Animal Testing & Animal Rights' and 'The Ethics of Video Games'. For the students involved it is enabling them to stand up in front of their peers and present facts and opinions - and we all learn something new along the way.

We also help facilitate the 'Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form Drop-In', which ran successfully for many years at Bondgate Methodist Church. Following the closure of Bondgate, the Drop-In was taken on by Holy Trinity Church, and is run in more of a café format. There is a committed core group of students who enjoy attending every Monday lunchtime.

THE LISTENING POST

We are at the initial stages of putting together a Level 2 Active Listening Course for anyone who may be interested in becoming a Listener for The Listening Post (our community and school-based listening and mentoring service). If this is something you might be interested in, please do contact us, for an initial conversation.

Being a Listener is a highlight of my week. – Volunteer Listener @ Haughton Academy

Darlington Area Churches Youth Ministry
DACYM Office, c/o Elm Ridge Methodist Church, Carmel Road South, Darlington, DL3 8DJ
MartinStand@dacym.co.uk 07717336183

Armed Forces Local Preacher Scheme



Joe Navoka has become the first member of the armed forces to be admitted to the office of Local Preacher in the Methodist Church having participated in the new Armed Forces Local Preacher Scheme. He was admitted at a service that took place at Castle Methodist Church, Colchester in December. The new scheme recognises the realities of life in the armed forces that may be a barrier to becoming a local preacher within the Methodist Church. Joe was admitted alongside Sally Crafer from the local circuit who had followed the more traditional pathway to become a local preacher.

Joe is serving in the Army as a Company Quarter Master Sergeant in 16(VHR) Military Intelligence Company based in Colchester, part of the 16 Air Assault Brigade Headquarters.

He began his faith journey as a young man in Fiji. He was raised in a Methodist household and joined the British Army from Fiji in 2000. "I saw it as a fantastic opportunity to explore the world," explains Joe. "Coming to the UK as a 'military migrant' gave me the opportunity to write my own story by embracing the secular lifestyle that western society provided. However, I quickly realised that my calling was undeniable and that God had not allowed me to travel too far from the humble roots of my family's faith.

"Our calling as Methodists is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ by living out its discipleship in worship and mission. I decided that I wanted to do this through becoming a local preacher. Even though it was difficult to juggle employment, family, ministry, and studies, the Armed Forces Local Preacher Scheme provided me with a wonderful opportunity to answer my call as a disciple of Christ while still serving as a soldier.

"My faith has been well received by the Army. In the military, we are exposed to experiences and emotions that you don't often find in civilian life. Soldiers are more spiritual than many people realise. Faith has played an important role in keeping my co-workers morally and ethically grounded when faced with some extremely challenging situations."

The Armed Forces Local Preacher Scheme is coordinated by the East Solent and Downs Circuit in Hampshire. They maintain a section for the military local preacher applications as part of the plan for all students.

Joe's tutor for the course was RN Commander Mark Barton, a Methodist local preacher himself who also sits on the Methodist Forces Board. He explained how military life can make becoming accredited difficult for those in the military. This is because service personnel frequently move location and many of the places and churches they attend are not in circuits, as no circuit looks after the ships at sea or those serving in bases abroad. Therefore, the practical parts of the course can be difficult to arrange. This new pathway allows the assessed services that all local preachers must undertake to be in garrison chapels and other military locations with the student able to undertake the elements in different places.

"The course uses all the same elements as the regular local preacher course with all the same materials and assignments. The circuit receives the relevant reports and the allocated tutor works with the student to ensure they have a mentor as they move around different garrisons, bases and ships.

"It has been a huge privilege to work with Joe and go on this journey together," says Mark. "We come from very different backgrounds and worship styles, not least with Joe being Army and myself Navy but this has led to many great discussions."

Revd Chris Preece is Superintendent Minister in the Colchester Methodist Circuit who supported Joe, “It is always a huge privilege to accompany people through their training to be a local preacher. For Joe, the Colchester Circuit facilitated the interviews and trial services as requested by East Solent and Downs Circuit, this has brought an important localised context to the armed forces scheme and a chance to involve him in the life of our circuit. We hope we can work with more candidates from the military community in the future.

“There are a number of pathways to becoming a local preacher in the Methodist Church and at the admission service, alongside Joe, we also welcomed Sally who had followed the more traditional local pathway.”

Sally Crafer describes herself as a “cradle born Methodist.” She felt that God was nudging her further and to share her gifts. “The Worship and Local Preacher Course is challenging and the assignments were soul searching and encouraged creativity,” commented Sally. “I had already made the commitment to serve God with faithfulness when I exercised my call to be a local preacher. The service was a moment to celebrate but it only represents a stage along my journey of learning as a disciple of Christ.”

Joe hopes that other members of the armed forces will follow him to become local preachers, “I am honoured and humbled to be a trailblazer in answering my call. This is an accomplishment that I hope will inspire others who are called to both a life in the military and to a life of Christian service.”

(Taken from www.methodist.org.uk)

How we respond to God's call

After a perilous journey, running away from God, Jonah finally does as God has asked of him and goes to Nineveh to deliver God's call to repent. Surprisingly (to Jonah), the people do repent and God forgives them.

How do we respond when God calls us to do something hard or outside our comfort zone? Are we reluctant, making excuses, or are we prepared to give it a go or try a bit harder?

Follow our Facebook page to find out what is going on
around the Circuit.

Darlington and Teesdale Methodist Circuit

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100069981818167>

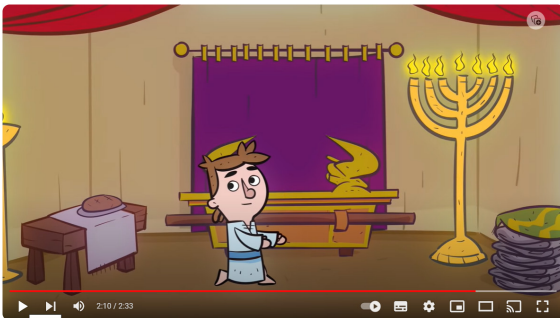
Following on from the Circuit Service last Sunday, 14th January led by Sue Sleightholme - 'Have you heard the call?'

Samuel's puzzlement arose because he expected God's word to be mediated to him from within his familiar culture, by his senior. Instead, it came in a mysteriously direct way as a discrete voice. Have you ever experienced a conviction that God was not speaking in the expected way, through someone you expected to channel the godly perspective, but otherwise?

I was dismayed when a Christian friend, contemplating my five-month-old grandchild, asserted that she was glad she had no grand-children as she looked at the world today's children are being born into. Her gloomy take on the world was understandable: climate disaster; wars and civil strife; and the cost of living crisis. But her words later moved me to push back. At least in thought.

Samuel received courage and eloquence. But maybe a more ordinary child, indeed maybe even an 'infant', a not-yet-speaking baby, can, silently, mediate the voice of God.

That little baby in the midst of a small, elderly congregation has served through this long glum winter as a focus of hope and joy. He makes people smile. He completely trusts the loving care surrounding him and responds joyfully to it. He models an important part of the meaning of the infant Jesus, the child in the manger, vulnerable, but trusting, loved and cared for, and containing huge as yet unseen potential for good. The smiling baby challenges me to assert that the answer to a suffering world is neither to ignore it, nor to despair, but to respond in small ways and have faith that the parent-God does provide loving care to us all, into the New Year and forever. And where these little ambassadors of hope are concerned, we need to cherish them, support them, encourage them and if necessary fight for them, so that they, seeking the Kingdom in their turn, can fulfil the potential for great good which God puts into every human child.



To make you think ...

If God is speaking to you (singular or plural) through one of the campaigns alluded to above, or through some perhaps unexpected person in your immediate community? What are you going to do about it?

(taken from www.rootsontheweb.com)



'May you take time to be kind; to yourself and to others. May you be freed from having to fulfil someone else's misplaced expectations of you, and may you not place unfair expectations on someone else. When you have to say or do something hard, may you do so gently.'

#niteblessing



HARROWGATE HILL METHODIST CHURCH
LOWSON STREET, DARLINGTON.
presents

AN AFTERNOON OF FASHION

Well known ladies High St brands up to 70% off
Famous Chain Stores
M&S . NEXT and many more.



We cater for all sizes and payment is by cash, debit or credit card.

Venue – HARROWGATE HILL METHODIST CHURCH,
LOWSON ST, DARLINGTON

Date – SATURDAY 9TH MARCH 2024

Time – 2PM - PROMPT START.

Ticket Price - £3 includes refreshments

Telephone for tickets – 01325 264145

All for Church Funds

Chance to win up to £50 worth of Clothes Vouchers.

Rev. Brian's Daily Devotions

Have you listened to one of Rev. Brian's Daily Devotions yet? You are missing out if not!

Would you like to have a listen?

Send me your email address or your mobile number to receive them by Whatsapp...
(admin@dandtcircuit.org.uk)

The devotions are sent to you Monday-Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) early enough
to have a good start to your day. They last 3-4 minutes - easy to listen to
whilst you are having your breakfast coffee!

DVD's available

Don't forget, if you are unable to attend church for any reason, the Circuit distributes DVD's of the Circuit Services which are shown on Facebook and YouTube every week so that you don't miss out. The DVD's contain the previous month's services and are available through the Circuit Office. Just let a Steward in your church know that you would like to be added to the distribution list and they will pass the message on to me. (There is no charge for these DVD's)

Lindy

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