

Herald

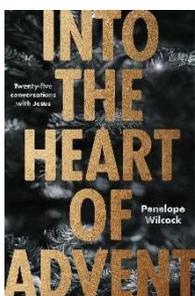
Ripon And Lower Dales Circuit Newsletter

Welcome to this month's issue of the Herald. Our vision is to provide a helpful place for connecting with some of what God is doing across the Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit. To give voice to those experiencing the love of God in their daily walk of faith. To celebrate and share the good news of God's kingdom.

'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.' [Isaiah 9:2]



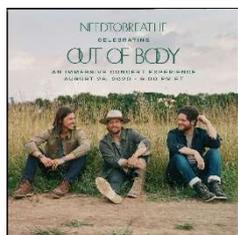
Book review in 100 words



If you are looking for a fresh and inspirational read this advent, then you might consider jumping 'Into the Heart of Advent: Twenty-Five conversations with Jesus' written by Penelope Wilcock. This is the Archbishop of York's Advent book recommendation for 2020 and it is easy to see why from start to finish. A very accessible, relatable book that does exactly what it says on the cover. An author after my own heart, magnifying the value of imagination and leading the reader through twenty-five honest and illuminating chapters which get to the heart of advent. An easy read by means of conversational style of writing with a plethora of insightful, thought provoking sparks lightening Adventide.



Worship Album Highlight 'Needtobreathe – Out of Body' review written by Clare Nelson



Who knew Christian Music could be this exciting? This is rollercoaster of high energy, foot tapping Southern Rock. It brims with great melodies and thought-provoking lyrics blending gritty realism with hopeful spiritual imagery. Indeed, it's almost as though this latest album from Needtobreathe was written to support us through these recent troubled times. The songs remind us that we don't have to go through life's struggles alone, that Jesus is with us, and is the source of our hope. It's ok to cry out, to cling on to Jesus. He loves us beyond measure, even when we doubt and when we fall. Out of Body is an album that's fun, intimate, challenging *and* reassuring. Be warned though it is also very catchy!

One example is "Who Am I?" <https://youtu.be/looyo58xC3QA>

Could you write a Worship Album Highlight Review? - Please email Graham at gpentelow@gmail.com

NEW Circuit Phone Prayer & Reflection

Call: 01765 530700 Calls are charged at a local rate.

The Prayer & Reflection will be updated weekly with a new prayer & reflection recorded by local preachers, worship leaders and Methodist Ministers from within the Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit.



Do you remember Advent calendars with pictures behind the doors? It would be naive to think that the advent calendars with pictures behind the doors was any less of a commercial enterprise than the multitude on offer today. Talk to a child about advent calendars that didn't have chocolate or a toy to behind the door and it's met with almost disbelief. Pictures which told the Nativity and fuelled imagination brought joy. Each day the story unfolded as the little door opened.

Truly, Advent is about expectant waiting and of prayerful preparation in readiness to celebrate the birth of God Son, born among us. It's a time of new beginnings, as the Church starts a new liturgical year and a renewed pilgrimage of worship launches. All this builds excitement as we recall through adoration and praise, God incarnate.

Advent calendars with pictures behind the doors can still be found today, but an alternative approach is the reverse Advent calendar. Rather than receiving a picture or chocolate you give something each day, maybe an item for Food Share/Foodbank or an act of kindness of some type. The reverse Advent calendar is also great for all ages and a great way to show love as well as bringing a little joy to others. And who knows, for those benefiting, it might just make Advent more rememberable.

II 4 Faded Rainbows

Glow, double, higher-order, tertiary and quaternary are all names used to identify rainbows. Well, I have another term to add into the mix, faded!

Over the past few months and more recently during lockdown I've noticed the rainbow which dawned in the windows back in March haven't made the same appearance this 'lockdown' time round. The rainbows that are still visible in the windows, the one's which have stuck it out now look faded. Of course, things fade with long exposure to the sun. Seeing these faded rainbows made me question what this might mean. Is the lack a newly painted, drawn, printed and colourful collage rainbows a reflection of a lack of hope? Was it just a lockdown craze, something to do to fill the day and simply put, now things are different? Perhaps the truth is that the rainbow symbolised different things to different people and perhaps the rainbows were destined to fade from the start. I mean, who has ever seen the same rainbow twice?

Scientifically speaking, rainbows are fascinating with the electromagnetic spectrum. From a purely experiential position, I would suggest rainbows hold a wow factor, no matter many seen. A rainbow does hold some mystery as an optical illusion and biblically speaking it is a sign. A beautiful colourful bow set as a sign of the covenant between God and every living creature on earth.

Personally, the joy I feel from seeing a rainbow is that very sense of witnessing something which generations for thousands of years have seen and yet it feels as new as I imagine for Noah.

The faded rainbows placed on display at the beginning of this pandemic pointed and urged people to hope. Hope that endures through the storm clouds and moreover, hope that doesn't depend on picture in a window but comes from God. Faded rainbows doesn't mean faded hope. I would suggest that hope as described in the book of Romans, does not disappoint.

Similarly, to how I'd noticed faded rainbows, I am now noticing lights. Mainly Christmas lights, perhaps you have spotted these too whilst out and about on essential travel or daily exercise. Lights too speak of hope, a hope which shines in the darkness. A hope found in Jesus, a victorious, life giving hope which is the light of all people.

As I conclude this short pause for thought, I wonder what you might be noticing that speaks to you about hope, because the hope God gives is unextinguishable and I suggest, all around.

A poem (of sorts and rough around the edges) offered to raise a smile or maybe just pass the time.

Faded rainbows

It once stood bright, an expression of hope in the promise of God.
A child's handiwork mimicking God's own creative arc.
Art of heart, eye catching display amidst dismay,
Torrential downpour contradicting the glorious sunshine days.
A national marvel adopted from that which marked a new dawn.
Time moves on and here we go again



Faded rainbows, an expression no less of hope in the promise of God.
A different lockdown, seemingly busier and grasping ahead.
God is with us, for each God is present.
What time, what acknowledgement do people give, crying out 'God are you there?'
Days are no shorter, but the daylight subsides earlier with winter winds.
Time moves on and here with our God of hope we carry on.

I will not lose sight of the rainbow, nor lose hope even when lost from sight.
When it is hidden by darkness, I will search for the light.
A light which is God's own, heart catching and inspiring.
By Love spoken, the darkness broken by hope for all.
Hope in the promise of God fades not, discovered still within the soul.
Time moves on and yet beyond measure, here is to eternal love.



Let us continue to be people of prayer

Pray for all businesses that are experiencing great hardships due to the pandemic and restrictions. Remembering all those employed by corporate companies as well as the smaller independents and self-employed.

Pray for all those who are going through a bereavement, especially as we journey towards Christmas.



You have 4 new messages

#GodIsWithUs This is the theme of The Methodist Church's **Christmas Campaign** for **2020**. Local churches and individuals can all get involved. At the heart of the campaign is a desire to share through stories the good news that 'God Is With Us', drawing upon people's different experiences.

If you, a friend or a family member are online, then why not visit The Methodist Church website and search God is with us to find out more about this years Christmas Campaign and discover all the available resources. **Visit: www.methodist.org.uk**

If you inhabit social media, you can connect with the campaign via Facebook and Twitter. It would seem a good opportunity to bless others by liking and tweeting the good news stories. You might want to share your own experience. Also, a Worship at Home Christmas CD is available to pre-order from Methodist Publishing (free + P&P charges) It is also available as a digital download from the Methodist Website. Copies of the CD may be available via your local church and hopefully this will be advertised locally.



A note of encouragement from the Superintendent Minister

As we enter the season of Advent having spent another month in lockdown 2.0, many are left wondering what things might look like for December in the life of the church. Lots depends on which Tier an area is placed within to the appropriateness of reopening church buildings to hold acts of worship. If churches are within Tier 3 areas, then it would be wise to keep with the current position to help protect everyone. What we do know is that any church reopening their building for acts of worship must always continue with the same diligence of following the rules to ensure places remain COVID secure. We do have reason for giving thanks at the good news of a vaccine in the future. The practicalities of dispensing a vaccine to reach a large majority of the population will no doubt take time and thus patience is required.

Please do continue well with God, in loving and caring for one another. Let us continue in seeking new ways of loving our neighbours through serving the local communities. Finally, please continue in prayer for our local communities and let us be responsive to God leading us in ways which we can show love in action, in response to the growing needs that this pandemic has caused.

Grace and peace at this advent time. Revd. Gareth

Transforming & Growing Together: Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Meeting.

December sees the first Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Meeting. The change to fully include both local preachers and worship leaders together is a welcomed development. It reflects the great ways local preachers and worship leaders have been ministering together to produce Worship at home services and the Circuit's phone prayer and reflection. The faithfulness of the local preachers and worship leaders in their commitment to seek God through study and ongoing development is greatly valued. Earlier in the month Steve Laugher led an excellent session exploring the place of testimony in worship. It was an encouraging time and I think everyone left the evening wanting to share that encouragement.

Please do pray for our local preachers and worship leaders who have stepped out of comfort zones and continued faithfully to serve God in the circuit.

A message from Local Pastor, Catherine Clowes

Recently I attended a weeklong Local Pastor training course along with 13 other local pastors from our district. The course was run by Cliff College and teaching was delivered by Rev Ashley Cooper, Principal of Cliff College, Rev Leslie Newton, Chair of our District and Rev Martyn Atkins amongst others. Topics covered included leadership, governance, discipleship, pastoral care and wellbeing and the level of teaching provided was excellent. I was provided with lots of food for thought about how I can grow into this role and the ways in which I can begin to work with the congregations and communities I serve. I was left feeling enthused, encouraged, inspired, challenged and humbled to be called into such a role, as well as a bit tired after a such a full week of learning! I'm really looking forward to the second part of the course which is hoped will take place in March 2021 and will hopefully be in person. *God bless, Catherine*

Note from the editor – Thank you to all who have contributed to this month's issue of The Herald and thank you for reading. If you have an article, a book worth a 100-word review or good news story to share, please contact Revd. Gareth Baron on email: Gareth.baron@methodist.org.uk
I look forward to hearing from as many different people as possible as do the Herald readers.

'A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.' [Isaiah 11:1-2]