

Herald

Ripon And Lower Dales Circuit Newsletter

Welcome to the first issue Herald, the circuit newsletter. It may seem strange to be launching this during a pandemic. However, strange things for strange times. It is envisioned that Herald will provide a helpful space for connecting with each other and God. Its purpose is to proclaim the Gospel and the love of God discovered in daily lives and communities across the Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit.

What is a Circuit? A potted overview of how we come together in The Methodist Church.

In 'The Methodist Church of Great Britain we hold that 'The Circuit is the primary unit in which Local Churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help. To put it another way, we are one in the Body of Christ, joining in with God in His mission and being there for one another.

The Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit is made up of 15 Local Churches. So Local Churches make a Circuit, and Circuits make a District. We are part of the Yorkshire North and East District which is cared for and led by Revd. Leslie Newton, the Chair of the District. We can find a great wealth of love and support from across the District. There is an abundance of opportunities to access training days; retreats; support and help. We have experienced the District gathering in an amazing way through Flourish, the District weekend which met in Scarborough last year. Presently many are joining in the District with 'Great 50 Days' focusing on three themes, Love; Pray; Give.

All together Local Churches, Circuits, Districts make up The Methodist Church in Great Britain, which is governed by The Conference. The Conference meets annually and in-between authorises Methodist Council to act on behalf of the Conference. Methodist Council keeps in constant review the life of the Methodist Church providing spiritual leadership to the Church as one of its many roles.

Each year a new President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference are appointed. These Presidential roles are equal, contrary to the titles. Both preside at the Conference and act as the representative embodiment of its authority, offering oversight and leadership of the Church in responding to God's Spirit and developing prophetic vision. This year we have seen Rev Barbara Glasson and Clive Marsh fulfil these roles with the Presidential theme of asking 'So What's the Story?'. You can access a wealth of information, transcripts of speeches and other useful links via the Methodist Conference website and The Methodist Church Website. I hope this potted overview has given you a greater sense of how we are all connexion together and the gifts we give to the wider Church.

Book review in 100 words...

'The Boy, the mole, the fox and the Horse' by Charlie Mackesy speaks beautifully from the heart out to meet other hearts with humanity. Its simplicity is an artform and makes it a pleasure to spend time with and being someone for whom images speak volumes, the artwork speaks of love.

I find it to be a moving and honest book that conveys something of wonder for reflecting. I could offer many quotes from it but offer just one for our present global situation when perhaps we feel confined. "One of our greatest freedoms is how we react to things".

Lockdown Lookout! This week we hear from Karen Emms.

During the time of lockdown, for the last 6 weeks or so, life has certainly been very different for many of us. One of the things that I have enjoyed has been the time to connect with other Christians online for daily prayer, Sunday worship, even just 5 minutes at 5 o'clock. Holy Week was especially memorable and I hope that in future, I will be able to make more time to pray and reflect on the amazing story of crucifixion and resurrection, as I did this year.

Listening to the news on the radio on Sunday morning I heard that 1 in 4 adults have watched or listened to a religious service since the Coronavirus began and 20% have started praying. Some of these say they have never been to church. We need to identify this spiritual need in our communities, amid uncertainty and despair, and offer our Good News to others.

VE Day 75: Home Across the country people have been putting up Union Jack bunting and flags to decorate their homes in celebration of the 75th anniversary of VE Day. Some neighbours organised themselves to share in celebrations with picnics and music. There is a programme of events being broadcast and wonder if you are planning to take part. It would be lovely to hear some of your stories of how you marked the day. You can email them to me at Gareth.baron@methodist.org.uk and I will include them in next week's issue of the Herald.



Christian Aid Week 10th – 16th May

There are different ways in which we can support and promote Christian Aid and the excellent mission work they do. If you visit their website you will find ways to make donations and be able to read stories about the work taking place to end poverty worldwide. You will find links for prayer and you can even send e-Envelopes to family and friends inviting others to support this worthy cause. We can all get behind this with our prayers and if you prefer to donate over the phone, the number to call is 0207 523 2267

THY KINGDOM COME Join the global wave of prayer calling all Christians to pray between Ascension Day 21st May and Pentecost 31st of May 2020.

Please be encouraged to visit the website or follow the link below <https://www.thykingdomcome.global/> Here you will find some useful resources such as a Prayer Journal as a digital download. If you receive a copy of the connexion magazine you should have received the Prayer Journal included. It is possible to order the Prayer Journal from Methodist publishing, see link below. <https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/features/thy-kingdom-come-2020>



As part of Thy Kingdom Come the Circuit Leadership Team invites everyone across the circuit to join in 'Time to pray day' on Wednesday the 28th of May. Prayer is a wonderful gift from God and if you can pray on this day as well, what a great thing to do together. We will pray throughout the day and if you are able to stop for prayer at 10am, we can know others are praying at this same time. Let us pray for the Mission and Ministry of the local churches across the circuit. Also, let us each pray for five people, connecting in with prayer taken from the Methodist Prayer Journal.

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for your love from which nothing can separate us, and which does not depend on our efforts. Please reveal this love in the lives of the five people I am praying for, Amen.

The Methodist Church have launched a free phone line for prayer and news for those not online. It is a great initiative to help resource and connect further people together at this challenging time.



Dial-a-Prayer

FREE phone lines for prayers and news from the Methodist Church

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514

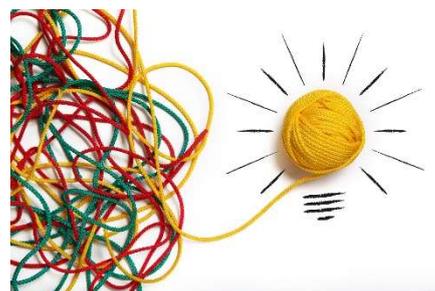
Listen to news: 0808 281 2478

Content is updated weekly on Thursday afternoon

PREACHING PLAN & Looking to the FUTURE

Many people are starting to ask the question, 'When will be out of lockdown and allowed to gather again for worship?'

Presently we continue to journey through uncertain times and therefore do not have answer to this question. This means that we will not be producing the preaching plan until it is required at which point the circuit is poised to jump into action.



Pause for thought – Escapism by Rev Gareth Baron

Over the past weeks whilst the world is in lockdown and weathering the storm of CORVID-19, it has been particularly interesting to see those means usually used for Escapism increase in use by many for the opposite. Suddenly the television and the internet have come into their own with connecting people. I fully grasp the value in escapism, everyone needs downtime to recharge batteries and regain perspective on life. For me, the analogy of being stood to close to a map comes to mind. You sometimes must take a step back to be able to see the full picture and navigate. Sometimes we need to catch our breath to continue and it is hardly surprising that when we feel overwhelmed by things we seek to escape.

In the book of Romans chapter eight we are assured that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Romans 8:39] For me, even when I feel the need for escapism, it is never from the love of God. On the contrary, often I feel the need to escape into the loving presence of God.

Many will have turned to God in this time and I pray that the whole world would seek to find God their refuge and strength. The truth is that escapism is only ever a temporary distraction from reality. I would suggest 'Is God our reality?' is the question we need to ask ourselves. I and others have used the phrase 'God is with us' frequently since this pandemic began. I still witness to that truth but want to frame it differently. God is with all people; God is with you. Yes, it does not fit on the poster quite as well and does say the same thing. Yet, I want to encourage us all to hear and know this personally, what is more, I encourage you to escape into in the sanctuary of God.

Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. – Psalm 34:8