

Chocolat

In the book and film, *Chocolat*, written by Joanne Harris, the central character, Vianne Rocher, arrives in a French village and sets up a Chocolaterie, a chocolate shop situated across the square from the austere medieval-style church. Much to the dismay of the priest and the mayor, she arrives at the beginning of Lent, when they are urging their community to repent and to fast. Somehow this seems to bring out the worst in everyone and the cracks in relationships are starting to show.

In contrast, Vianne and her daughter set about their chocolatière's craft with great enthusiasm and love, cleaning and painting the little shop and creating delicacies never before seen in the village. One by one, Vianne welcomes the reluctant but curious villagers into her shop, gives them chocolate and hears their life's stories, their problems, their pain. And gradually, gently, as the story unfolds, she encourages them to make changes in their lives, to rebuild relationships or move on from broken ones. She welcomes those others reject and treats them with the same love and respect. And the more the church condemns her lack of restraint or respect for the church's teachings, the more people are drawn to her and to one another.

The grumpy grandmother gets to know her grandson and appreciate his talent for drawing, the elderly man after decades musters up the courage to date his childhood sweetheart. The young woman escapes from her violent, drunken husband and a little girl makes new friends. A married couple rekindle romance, travellers are met with a smile and music and dancing are heard on the edge of the village.

Isn't this what the God of love is about: the healing of relationships, the blossoming of love, the helping out of friends in need of a home, the welcoming of outcasts and foreigners, the quashing of prejudice and discrimination? Isn't this what a celebration of Valentine's Day should be about – our demonstrating God's love for each person that says very clearly, 'You are worth it!' - **Blessings Amanda**

Milner

A Note from the Superintendent Minister

This month brings with it a mix of emotions for us as a circuit.

We will be saying farewell to Pip Smith and Diane Gaskill from the circuit staff team as they begin their retirement. Both Pip and Diane have served the circuit with much care and diligence. Their faithfulness has been evident throughout the years they have been employed with many extra miles given from generous and loving hearts. For all that they have given to the life, mission, and ministry of the circuit, I want to say a sincere and heartfelt thank you. Both have been the support to many Ministers, and I am certain that all those Ministers who have served in the circuit would want to add their appreciation and thanks. Please do join with me in praying God's blessing upon them in their retirement.



We want to give thanks to God for the ministry of Pip and Diane, whose contribution to the circuit life included Diane serving in the role of Community Link Enabler and Pip serving through countless prayer days and videography. The list really does go on, all in addition to their administrator roles. On Saturday the 25th of February we will gather for act of worship at Bedale and District Methodist Church to recognise before God with thanksgiving all they have given through the years. Please see details for this afternoon sent out by Pip last month.

Alongside the farewell, I am delighted to welcome our newly appointed Circuit Administrator Charlotte Mander to the circuit staff team. Please do join with me in praying for Charlotte as she begins this role. I am confident that as Charlotte gets to know the Ripon and Lower Dales circuit family she will be met with a warm welcome.

In this time of change may we all know God our constant and the Peace of the Lord.

Kindest regards. – **Rev. Gareth**



A seed reflection by Revd. Gareth Baron

I am writing this having just been on an early morning dog walk. The days are seeing the sunrise earlier and hanging about for longer, but at this 6am its still dark. The freezing cold weather and the darkness calls for a hat and head torch, jumping into my wellies, I head out to meet the day. What a beautiful morning it was, the clear sky meant that the stars could be seen in all their glorious beauty and because of the frost that covered the ground, the light from my torch lit up a glistening path before me. I couldn't help but be filled with thankfulness for the privilege of being blessed with such an inspiring scene for my morning walk. My dog on the other hand, appreciated being able to explore every scent that caught her nose.

News weather reports and social media streams seem at the moment to be full of photos of sunrises in their captivating, magnificent splendour. With each sunrise taking us another step closer towards spring. Light in the darkness and light breaking to overcome the darkness witnessed in nature, act to remind us of how Jesus the light of the world shines in the darkness of our world and lives. Just as the star's standout illuminated, Jesus reveals to us beauty in the midst of dark times. Just as the sunrises, Jesus is risen and His light gives life, having overcome the power of sin and death.

This month we will be stepping into our Lenten journeys beginning on Ash Wednesday with the reminder of our mortality and from where we came. Accompanying this recognition is the promise and hope of new life we find in Jesus. Before we share in the Easter celebrations, we are

invited to reflect in the wilderness being ministered to by God, Holy Spirit. Our forty days and nights observing lent can lead us to our knees. Kneeling at the foot of the cross of Jesus on good Friday of holy week. During this period the days and weeks become filled with Lenten lunches, lent bible studies and additional acts of worship. People will engage at different points along the way, with the various traditions resonating with us differently, depending on our preferred expression of engagement.

In many ways, the ways in which we engage in the various Lenten activities is secondary to how we engage with Our living God who offers salvation to all people. Will we be led by the Holy Spirit as Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness? Will we remain dependent upon God, placing all our trust in God and be led by God, opposed to being led into temptation? Will we pursue Christian holiness in our outworking's and in our hearts? Will we allow Christ Jesus within t o shine out of us, that others might see the difference Jesus makes in our lives? Will we be open and welcome to God minister to us throughout lent, holy week and easter? I hope we will, and I hope that we will be able to speak about our experiences of encountering of our God of love. **Amen.**



Lent: a good time for some study and reflection

This month sees the beginning of Lent with Ash Wednesday. I'm putting on some reflective times for the Circuit over the next couple of months which anyone is welcome to join.

On Ash Wednesday, 22 February at 10.30am there will be a service to begin Lent at Allhallowgate. I think Gareth is also hoping to have one in the evening in the north of the Circuit - more details will follow about this.

In my section, but open to all, there will be two Lent courses:

On Wednesday afternoons, 1, 8, 22, 29 March and 5 April, we will be using the Diocese of Leeds course - Journeying with Jesus through Lent, what does it mean to be a disciple in the world today? Each session will begin at 2.30pm and will be held at St James Vicarage, Church Lane, Boroughbridge.

On Thursday evenings in Ripon, we will be looking at Stephen Cottrell's new book on the cross "God Forsaken" - each session will begin at 7.30pm. On 16 March we will be at Allhallowgate, on 23 March at Harrogate Road, on 30 March at Allhallowgate and on 6 April at Harrogate Road for a Maundy Thursday Communion.

I will be doing a Lent Quiet Day on Saturday 25 March from 10.30am to 3pm at St James and the Methodist Church in Grewelthorpe. More details will follow.

Then finally from Ash Wednesday, 22 February to Easter Sunday, 9 April, I'll be writing a daily reflection every night on my blog. The site is www.notbefore.blogspot.co.uk

I wish us all a holy and helpful Lent. – **Revd. Ian**

Love is...

Valentine's Day comes halfway through February. If I was being cynical, I could say it is an opportunity for flower growers and restaurateurs to charge a premium on their prices. On the other hand it is an opportunity for couples to celebrate their love for one another and recognise what it is they share, but sometimes take for granted in the busyness of life. But that is only one aspect of love. To add to the cartoon characters in a heart sharing a kiss (you remember those cartoons of the 70's Love is...?), I want to have someone with a bowl and towel. Love is also about serving and that applies to all of us whether part of a couple, a family, or on our own. The bowl and towel speaks to me of the costly love that Jesus showed, and which he calls us to demonstrate in our own lives.

There are many passages in the Bible about love. The obvious one which most of us know is St Paul's words on love in 1 Corinthians 13. Another one (1 John 4) reminds us that it is in what we do for our brother and sister that our love is seen. We love because God first loved us.

Love is ... God.

Love is ... costly.

Love is ... caring for my sister and brother.

A song comes to mind – The Magic Penny Song:

Love is like a magic penny

Hold it tight and you won't have any.

Lend it spend it and you'll have so many
They'll roll all over the floor.

Love is something if you give it away,
give it away, give it away.

Love is something if you give it away,
you end up having more.

Malvina Reynolds

Or ask me when you see me and I'll sing it to you, complete
with actions! May you know God's love day by day. – **God
bless, Amanda Milner**



Kathy's Corner

“Love is the air”, is a song to be sung this month as we celebrate St Valentine's Day.

I'm not expecting any Valentine cards – can't remember when Malcolm last thought of sending me one! But I do still have all the ones he sent from our teenage years and early marriage – stored with our love letters. Did you ever send love letters? It's not something young people think of doing these days. My daughter found it highly amusing when I let it slip that her dad and I had written to each other every Monday evening for the first 2 years he was an Apprentice electrician. Based at Stockton or Whitley Bay during the week, we only saw each other Friday evening until Sunday night. That's a long time to be parted when you're young and in love! Happy memories of being 16-18 years old.

We've had lots of happy memories shared during January, as my sister stayed with us. We visited lots of childhood haunts, as well as seeing relatives, and making new memories as Anne played with her 3 great-nieces and nephew – two of whom she hadn't met yet. The little ones were keen to make her acquaintance over 4 hectic days of meals out, Soft Play activities and trip to Saltburn on New Year's Day. I've never been to Saltburn, but my brother-in-law was born there, so Anne was keen to show off her husband's hometown. It was lovely, sunny but cold, so the fish and chip lunch was welcome. The highlight for Bethany and Leo was the tramway lift. The wonderful gentleman on door duty said they could bring the lift down for us, so they got to pull the levers!

It was really good to spend time with my sister, our final day being our tribute to mum. We returned to Hampsthwaite and

it's café to enjoy her favourite meal and drink there. We then went to look at her old bungalow, where she'd spent 22 happy years, timing it right, as the new tenant was out in the garden. He was really pleased to meet us and show us what he'd been doing to the garden. And we had to laugh when it turned out he's a Methodist – and a Local Preacher. Mum would have loved that!

Sadly, my sister is now back in Australia, and we've no idea when she'll return, but love can travel in a variety of ways to keep us close, especially with the wonders of technology.

Thank you, Lord, for loving us, and teaching us how to love one another in many varied ways. Amen. - **Kathy Lowrie**



Vic's Monthly Musings

I am sure that you have all heard of Leonardo da Vinci. He was a famous, very gifted classical painter of the 15th century. I cannot fully vouch for the truth of this story about him, but it does come from good authority, also I hope you will agree that it is food for reflection.

Leonardo da Vinci

It is said that before Leonardo started on his well-known picture of "The Last Supper", he had a nasty quarrel with a fellow artist. Leonardo felt so bitter about his rival that he decided to paint his face in the picture of Judas Iscariot. In that way he felt that he could take revenge on the man. By picturing him as the betrayer of Jesus, he would make his face the object of scorn to all who viewed the painting. The face of Judas was one of the first that Leonardo completed and so everyone could recognise it as the face of the painter with whom he had quarrelled.



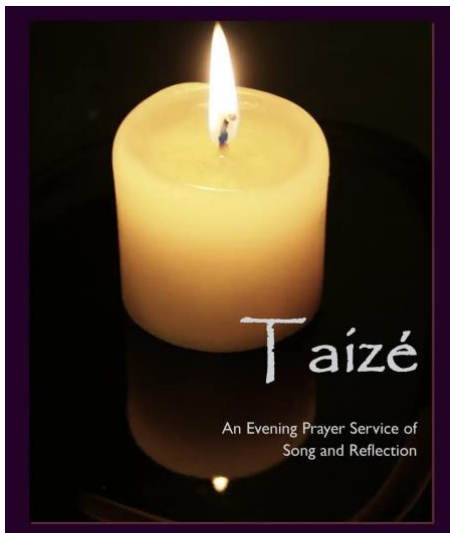
When Leonardo began to paint the face of Jesus he had to make several attempts and still could not make any progress. Something always seemed to hinder or spoil his best efforts. According to the story, he finally came to the conclusion that the frustration he was experiencing was due to his continued hatred of his rival; so, at last, Leonardo painted out the face of Judas and began again on the face of Jesus. This time it was with the success that has won his masterpiece much critical acclaim over the centuries.

The incident can be thought to be a parable of the Christian experience. As long as our life painting is coloured with the hues of hatred and anger, our hearts are not attuned to the love of Jesus, so we cannot visualise Him or bring Him into our lives.

Jesus said, “If you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you”
(Matthew Ch 6. v 14)



Join us for an evening Taize service



Allhallowgate Methodist Church, Ripon

Sunday 5 February 2023, 6.30pm.

If you would like to come and sing through the chants first, join us at 5.30pm

Note from the Editor

If you don't see anything in this issue of the Newsletter from your Church it probably means your Church doesn't have a "Roving Reporter", so if this is something you would be interested in, I would love to hear from you, my contact details can be found on the back page. The deadline for March's Edition is Friday 17th February 2023. Thank You – **Amanda Milner (Editor)**

Transfiguration

Transfiguration’ - a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state:

Jesus Christ Our Lord and Saviour was and is the Son of God. He was transfigured in front of eye witnesses Peter, James and John. For those three men the division between heaven and earth was removed. They were in a liminal space. How they knew the people conversing with Jesus were Moses and Elijah I don't know but they were privileged to that information. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." How amazing and encouraging that Moses and Elijah were able to talk to Jesus about what was to happen the following week!

Jesus said later, "But about the resurrection of the dead— have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

It was the 25th anniversary of the Hillsborough tragedy. At the time I had two churches in Liverpool one of which was in Anfield. For several years, because one church was in Anfield, it was my privilege to be one of the three clergy taking the Hillsborough Service at Liverpool Football Club. The other two clergy were Kelvin Bolton (Anglican) and Stephen Mahoney (Roman Catholic).

Margaret Aspinall is an amazingly warm and ferociously strong lady. She fought for years with the Bishop of Liverpool to clear the slur on the reputation of the Liverpool people and the lies that had been cast on the reputations of supporters. Margaret put her own grief at one side for others.

The milestone anniversary day came, and a record number were expected, the BBC television cameras were there recording the event. Three robed clergy stood with their backs to the hallowed turf. Next to us was a choir from the Lighthouse Church in Anfield. We faced the dignitaries, Margaret Aspinall, the Bishop of Liverpool, the Mayor of Liverpool, Kenny Dalglish (king Kenny), the Liverpool Team and Junior Team, representatives of Everton. Next to Margaret was Gerry Marsden (singer song writer Gerry and the Pacemakers). He died in 2021 but was such a friendly person with a warm smile. He produced a single of the Hammerstein classic 'You'll never walk alone.' This became a tradition at Liverpool.

The service started; the stadium contained between 25-30,000 people. The order of service said, 'The Congregation will now sing.....' It still makes me smile with joy. A congregation of that size, celebrating and remembering the lives lost, comforting the families present and worshipping God. It was a Transfiguration, a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state. They weren't at the match. They were in their church, celebrating and worshipping.

What they felt was something special a connection with something other worldly and the atmosphere was spiritual. All felt it was good to be there. Perhaps some present may not have been to church since the little one was baptised at one of the three churches we represented. But that day for a short space of time they were uplifted and worshiped the true King, Jesus Christ. The Stadium that loomed over the terraced houses in Anfield echoed not with the match but with worship. Ordinary people like Peter, James and John, reached out in grief, in joy, to the incomprehensible, but just happy to be there. Our God is the God of the living not of the

dead in this world and the Kingdom in all its fullness. –
Deacon David Smith



News from our “Roving Reporters” from around the Circuit

Snape - We have had a quiet January after the busy December.

We are back having our Sunshine Corner, fortnightly after school club. We started with snacks and games and lots of fun, and our next few sessions will be on a different biblical theme, which we will make a display about.

The Under 5's weekly group is increasing in numbers and it's good to see the preschool children having fun.

The Warm Hubs that are held weekly, one week in the schoolroom and the following week in the institute, are going well, and are well attended. Soup is made every week, and enjoyed and then a new programme of weekly events has been planned until the end of March. There are always board games, newspapers etc and a jigsaw etc each week too. We have been helped out greatly by grants to cover expenses, including the Methodist Church Warm Hub Grant. 2 of the organisers went on a zoom meeting with others to see how other Warm Hub ventures were going in the district and what they could learn from each other. Last week Tom came along who helped people out with internet questions, and this week there are armchair exercise. A wide range of activities are following including a film afternoon.

We hope to start a weekly bible study in February for a few weeks. More news on that next month.



Finghall - The road ahead - We welcome the New Year in Finghall with the hope that the roads we travel will be smooth for our journey in the Christian life following the examples and the way of Jesus. But we must always be aware of warning signs as we continue our journey through life in order to avoid the hazards we may meet along the road ahead and to give our best service of care to others.

For the Christmas period we roved across to stay with family in Chester and I have to say that the journey there was not the best as the weather was atrocious and motorway conditions and vision appalling. But we were aware of, and obeyed, the warning signs that these new smart motorways gave us as we travelled along, indicating where the dangers ahead might be. It was reassuring to know that someone was keeping us as safe as they could. That's the smartness of them.

Then again we could consider that these smart motorways with warning signs are not a new thing.

Some time back, three wise lads went on a long journey and when they had reached their destination and completed their purpose they set off back but they were warned not to return on the same route.

Mary and Joseph received a warning to travel to Egypt to be safe.

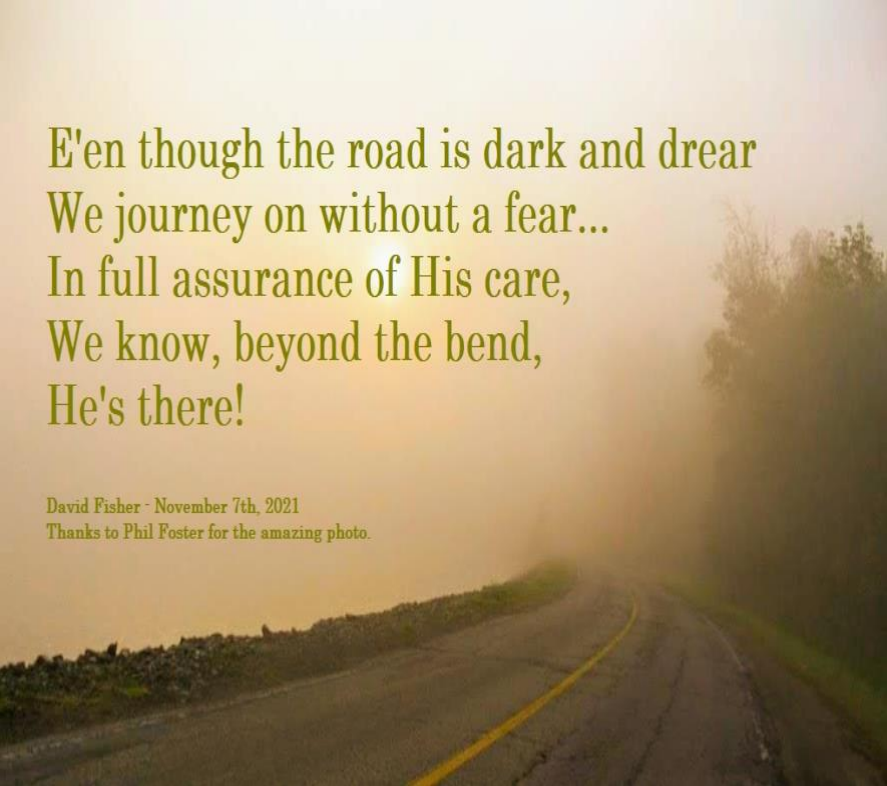
Lott and his family were told to leave their home and not to look back, and Noah was warned that his future journey would be by boat!

There are many more warnings throughout the Bible like these and they are as relevant today as they were then. Perhaps in a slightly different setting, but they are still there.

It is reassuring to know that the 'smartness' and love of God looks after all people wherever they are and whatever they may be doing. His warnings should not be ignored as we journey onward into the new year.

Regarding our journey to Chester, I have to say we came back another way, a bit longer but much easier and with less risk. Yesterday (15th January) the Friends of Finghall Christian Home Group met again at Oak Lea with Reverend Gareth looking at Gods Covenant and the words of Jeremiah. Dates for future meetings in February and March were fixed and we look forward to those and hopefully be joined by others in Christian fellowship.

Our thoughts at this time are for those who are struggling their way into this new year and that with help there will be opportunities for them to prosper. May we bless them with our prayers and service as they journey forward.



E'en though the road is dark and drear
We journey on without a fear...
In full assurance of His care,
We know, beyond the bend,
He's there!

David Fisher - November 7th, 2021

Thanks to Phil Foster for the amazing photo.

Bedale & District – Our monthly Sage & Team Leaders in January visited Leeming Bar Grange Care Home last month with a new initiative and received the following review.

“Today we were very lucky to have been visited by **Bedale Methodists** for their first 'Messy Vintage' workshop with us. Messy Vintage is a fabulous new initiative from **Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit** in which the church & volunteers host worship based craft workshops in the community.

The Residents became fully immersed in the experience from reading scripture, singing & creating a related craft together. We would like to say a big thank you to Catherine from the church & the volunteers for sharing your wonderfully meaningful innovation with us! We can't wait to see you again soon! ❤️ .



The Bible Study Fellowship, to which all are welcome, meets on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month in the hall at 7.30pm. Next meetings 7.30pm on 13th and 27th February when we will continue our study of the Acts of the Apostles.

Another feature of our weekly programme is our Wednesday evening prayer-time. At 7.00pm each Wednesday evening the church building is open for private prayer followed by a short act of worship at 7.20pm. This is also live-streamed to the Church Facebook Page and our Youtube Channel. “Bedale Methodists”



★ Only 11 weeks to go until **Flourish 23 - Rooted in Love** ★

Flourish is a Methodist weekend for all ages by **Yorkshire North and East Methodist District** designed to be missional and inspiring throughout; to engage and encourage everyone in their faith.

Join with friends at Scarborough Spa, 14th - 16th April, for the return of "Flourish" where we will be exploring the theme "ROOTED IN LOVE"

Find all the details here:

<https://www.yorkshirenemethodist.org/flourish23/>

Those of you at January's Circuit Meeting and hopefully your meeting representatives will have brought the information back to your churches. That the District is in the final few months of planning Flourish!! I hope like me you are feeling excited as it is going to be such a spirit filled weekend.

Since Christmas the District have seen ticket sales rapidly increase and as of the middle of January have sold 403 tickets.

The District is also starting to gather interest from people who might be happy to volunteer. There is still a lot of work to be done on this but if you or others you know might be happy to volunteer sometime during the weekend to Steward it would be great if you could get in contact with me; your Circuit Flourish Champion, and I will pass your contact details onto the District.

I look forward to celebrating Flourish with you all in April. –
Amanda Milner, Circuit Flourish Champion

“

*We came away excited,
encouraged and ready to
pass on our experiences*

”

“

*Blown away by this event
Feel I've been fed for
quite some time*

”

Reflection: Keep me moving on in my journey

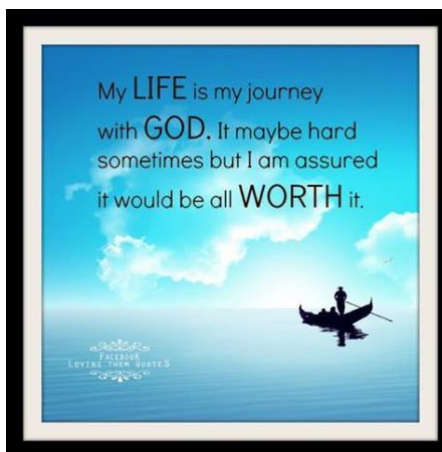
Reflective meditation and prayer on life as a journey, seeking God's guidance and companionship on the way

Life is a journey
from cradle to grave.
It may be short or long,
dramatic or boring,
packed full of incident or
empty even of meaning,
going round in circles,
or moving straight towards
a clear goal.

Jesus seems to have been
very sure about his journey
and his destination.

He had the courage to keep moving ahead
even in the teeth of opposition.

Journeying God, I need some signposts,
for it is all too easy to get confused and lose my way.
I want your company,
for it is all too easy to feel alone and frightened.
Keep me moving on in my particular journey
– through Lent and beyond
– for the rest of my life.



Prayer Page

Jesus Christ, our wonderful Lord and Saviour,
who when tempted in the desert, resisted,
in the world, but not of the world:
we worship and adore you.

When tempted by bread, you chose the word of God.
When tempted to be spectacular, you chose humility.
When tempted by riches and power, you chose servanthood.
Lord Jesus Christ, we worship and adore you. **Amen.**

Lord, we are sorry when we are tempted by all that the world
has to offer us:

the temptation to be relevant and popular;
the temptation to be spectacular and successful;
the temptation for power and wealth and so many things.
We are sorry when we make the wrong decisions.
We are sorry for the temptations that lead to
addiction, corruption and ultimately hurt other people.
Forgive us, Lord.

We seek your wisdom and discernment
to make better choices, to be rooted in you.
We thank you that, in our weaknesses, we can be made
strong;
and that it is in weakness, in the desert times of our lives,
that amazing things can happen.
We ask in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Though tempted and though we make bad choices,
through the cross we are assured of healing and forgiveness.
In our weakness we are made strong.
We are forgiven and God gives us a blank canvas to start
again,
to create together something beautiful. **Amen.**

God of all, we turn to you today and ask for your help.
We pray for wisdom to make right choices and right decisions
in all things, to seek your truth and not be swayed by all that
the world offers.

Steer us, Lord, in the way we should go.

We pray for those who are easily led astray and end up in
situations and places that they struggle to get out of –
especially those influenced by status, money, power, drugs
and alcohol.

Steer us, Lord, in the way we should go.

We pray that world leaders will always seek justice, truth and
wisdom in their decision making, and treat everybody as an
equal, with fair opportunities for all.

Steer us, Lord, in the way we should go.

Amen.

Thank you, Lord, that it is never too late to turn around, never
too late to start again.

Thank you that you have pulled us out of darkness into
your marvellous light.

Thank you that though we are tempted, though we get things
wrong, by your grace we are healed and restored.

Thank you that we are precious to you, that we know whose
we are – we belong to you.

Thank you that your love for us is unconditional, we don't
have to prove anything.

And thank you that when we are tempted by the offerings of
this world,

you are there to pick us up, wipe off the dust and set us back
on the right path.

Thank you for the amazing love that you offer to each one of
us.

Amen.

Let us go forth with the love of God
surrounding us.
Let us go forth with the wisdom of God
guiding us.
Let us go forth with our trust in God
protecting us.

Amen.

Loving Lord, we want to use
our strong feelings to bring change;
our words to encourage;
our gifts to heal;
our eyes to see as you see;
our hands to give help.
Lord, we choose life, we choose you.

Amen.



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Prayer Commitment by the Circuit Meeting:

- Pray for Aid Agencies in Afghanistan.
- Pray for our current Circuit Stewards and that the Lord will call more to join the team that are visionary, practical, caring, supportive and mindful of our circuits' needs.
- Pray for the year ahead and the Circuits Christian faith life. Especially the aspects of discipleship we can aspire to be engaged in.

Newsletter

If you know someone who would like to receive a postal copy of this newsletter, please let Amanda Milner know on 01677 427909 or 07805 623464, email milnera68@gmail.com. OR the Circuit Office.

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Please Check out the Circuit Website for Prayer Space, plus poems and resources from The District:

riponlowerdalesmethodists.org.uk – yorkshiremethodist.org