

Discovering Hidden Treasures

Stories from around Sheffield Methodist District

Barnsley, Derbyshire North East, Doncaster, Rotherham &
Dearne Valley, Sheffield, Trinity and Peak Circuits



A Prayer for the District Gathering

Sovereign God,
You have prepared many gifts for us
- hidden treasures –
and you long for us to discover each one.

In the busyness of our everyday lives, change our pace to match your own.

Open the eyes of our hearts,
that we may notice signs of your presence in the world.

Fill our hearts with wonder
as we are transformed by the signs of your presence in the world.

Touch our hearts with your love and compassion,
that we may become signs of your presence in the world.

We thank you for the life of our district, in all its diversity.
Thank you for opportunities to gather around you and share our stories.
From the testimonies of faith from past generations which still inspire us today
to the new beginnings that challenge us to reimagine the meaning of 'Church'.
From the partnerships that enable us to be active agents of your kin-dom
to the ways in which we learn from those whose experience sheds new light on our calling.

We pray for inclusive and welcoming ways of working together,
for Messy Vintage, Outdoor Church and Soup & Song,
Mystery Evenings, Prayer Spaces in Schools and Christians at Pride.
the Freedom Community Project, School Pastors and the Family Film Club,
finding new pathways to live out our faith and grow in discipleship
or rediscovering the old.

We pray for congregations whose mission in one particular place has come to an end,
whose building has closed, and who discern your guidance for the way ahead
as they move into a new season of discipleship - exploring faith on the margins.

Help us to learn to do what is right - to seek justice and defend the oppressed.

- Amen-

Deputy District Chair, Julie Coates.

CONFERENCE ROUND UP

At the end of June, two presbyters and three lay people from the Sheffield District travelled to Leeds for the annual Methodist Conference, held at New Dock Hall and the Royal Armouries.

The opening session began with the singing of Charles Wesley's hymn 'And are we yet alive?' Representatives of our partner churches in Britain and overseas were welcomed, and Revd Helen Cameron and Mrs Carolyn Godfrey were inducted as President and Vice President for 2024/5. Their theme is 'Praise and Protest', and the full text of their addresses is at methodist.org.uk.

Sunday's Conference Worship included the Reception into Full Connexion of 23 Presbyters and seven Deacons, with other Ministers being reinstated or transferred into the British Methodist Connexion, and ordination services took place later in the day, at venues around the region.

Conference business and debates included:

- The establishment of three new districts: The South West Peninsula District (currently Plymouth & Exeter and Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Districts), the North West England District (currently Manchester & Stockport, Bolton & Rochdale, Cumbria, Lancashire, and Liverpool Districts) from September 2024, and the West Midlands District (comprising the current Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury and Birmingham Districts) from September 2025.
- A discussion on the justice priority of poverty in the UK, taking up the daily Bible study theme of 'A Justice-Seeking Church'.
- Online mission and ministry, including online communion.
- The Church's complaints and discipline processes.
- Appointments to Connexional bodies, and ministerial stations for September 2024.
- The experiences of single people within the church.
- The 2024/5 budget, a revised Reserves Policy, and the Methodist Church's Pension Scheme.
- Celebrating the work achieved so far as part of the Church's God For All Strategy for Evangelism and Growth.
- 3Generate, including increasing awareness and concern about social injustice in Britain and internationally, and how the Church can support children and young people as they grow in faith.
- Memorials from Circuit Meetings and District Synods on topics including the theology of artificial intelligence, telling our story, heritage sites, the situation in Israel/Palestine, Conference venues, the mission partner programme, housing allowance for authorised ministers, ministerial stress, and mandatory training requirements.
- A video message from Daoud Nassar and his family at their farm, Tent of Nations, near Bethlehem in the Occupied West Bank; Conference affirmed its prayerful solidarity with the family.

Conference designated the Revd Richard Andrew to be President and Mr Matthew Forsyth to be Vice-President of the Conference 2025/6, and Conference closed with the singing of 'Captain of Israel's host'.

Jude Simms



CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to this autumn edition of the Sheffield District magazine in which, once again, you will find many inspiring stories about the extraordinary things that ordinary people from our churches and circuits are doing in the name of Christ in the communities that make up this district.

I'm delighted that, as I return to the life of the district, the focus of this magazine and this Autumn's District Gathering is "Hidden Treasures." It's a theme upon which the ex-Vice President, Deacon Kerry Scarlett and I were glad to encourage the Methodist people to focus during the last Connexional year, remembering God's promise to "give us the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places!"

It was my privilege to discover many "hidden treasures" across the Methodist Connexion and you can read more about that in the article on pages 10-12 of this magazine. But there are plenty of treasures to be found in this district too! The other pages of this publication provide evidence of that truth and pay tribute to the treasure hunting and treasure discovery that has been happening all around us!

There are stories here from every part of the district, reminding us that treasure is to be found on our streets, in our schools, in our care homes, in creation, in scripture, in our learning, in our worship, in our difference, in our creativity and perhaps most especially in our relationships with each other.

But please remember that "one person's trash is another person's treasure!" So, what may be treasure in one context, may not be so in others! The treasure in your community and in those around you, may look very different from the treasure that has been discovered by others! So, keep your eyes peeled! There will be treasure for you to discover that God has hidden for you and not from you!

As you read these stories, I hope you, like me, will be excited by what God is doing, but more than that, I hope you will also grow in your awareness of how each one of us is a valued treasure to God, whatever our life experience, whatever our past achievements or mistakes! All of us are unique individuals, created and loved by God. So, it's worth spending time with and getting to know those around you – you never know what treasure you might discover!

It is my prayer that your experience of the District Gathering and/or your reading of these amazing stories, will inspire us all to continue looking for, digging for, noticing and discovering the many and varied treasures that God longs for us to discover as we share our journeys and as we join in the mission that God has called us to share.

Gill Newton, District Chair



School Pastors in Chesterfield

Yvonne Birchmore has been a Pastor in Chesterfield for more than a decade. Yvonne began as a Street Pastor before becoming a Schools Pastor. For her it's a humbling experience and she feels this is her God given calling. She explains:

"School Pastors is an initiative of Ascension Trust, founded by Rev Les Isaac, alongside Rail Pastors, Street Pastors and Response Pastors.

"Our team is based in Parkside, a Secondary school on the fringe of an area of considerable deprivation in the town. That said, it's an area where there is a good sense of community and where a lot of time and energy has been, and is, given by Christians and various community organisations.

"It has been my privilege over many years, to have been involved in various ways in our community in this area, helping with holiday schemes for all ages and in the schools as a teacher, then as a volunteer in the Infant school.

"When I felt it right to take off my Street Pastor cap, after ten years of pounding the streets of Chesterfield on a Saturday night from 10pm until 4am, it seemed that being a School Pastor was the next logical step (with much better hours, I might add!).

"Parkside has a brilliant staff team and was recently rated as "good" by Ofsted, with "outstanding" within reach! We have been welcomed warmly by the staff and we value their encouragement and aim to work alongside them as part of the school team, supporting them as we are able.

"We are all Christians and part of local churches, who agree with the core values of the School Pastors movement. Training is given, with safeguarding of course, a priority. We look at society and youth culture, listening and communication skills and conflict management. Commitment to working as a team is vital.

"We are there to support, encourage and care, and to build bridges and friendships, often with very vulnerable young people. We have time to listen and talk through issues and any anxiety a student may have. As independent adults and not school staff, students may find it easier to open up about school, home or family worries and know that we will support and listen. We aim to add value. Often students request to see a Pastor and school staff accommodate that as much as possible, but obviously school work has to be done so often we try to meet them in their flexible lunchtimes.

"There are now around 400 Pastors in 40 colleges and schools around the country, mostly working with Year 7 upwards.

"We may be asked to be involved at break, lunchtimes or after school, running after school clubs, making sure students get home safely, as well as simply "hanging out" with students at various times. As those who have, or are,

working in school or college will be all too aware, these are challenging times for staff and their students. Pressure of time and the opportunity to support their young people well, is their constant concern. We live in a troubling world for young people, parents and those who teach and support, with the added issue of social media causing anxiety and confusion in various ways.

"At Parkside we have had the opportunity to help students improve their reading, spending time with them in the library, introducing them to a variety of books and aiming to instil a greater love of reading and learning. At times we have been asked to be an extra support in a classroom, where perhaps one or two students have been disruptive.

"So, to be able, and called, to be God's hands and feet in these days is such an amazing privilege. To have the opportunity at times to share God's love, care and hope is a blessing. To be able to say, "We will pray for you" after a troubled anxious young person has shared a concern or opened up about how they are feeling, often with tears, is always humbling. I thank God for every Pastor, and the opportunity and freedom we have to do this. It's an amazing opportunity and a joy.

"By the way we need more, of any age!"



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Vintage Messy Church

Messy Church is usually associated with children, but Whiston Methodist Church in the Rotherham and Dearne Valley Circuit is proving that adults can have just as much fun at Messy Church as the children.

Rev. Jenny Parks explains: "A few years ago a group of us began a Messy Church for children. This ran successfully for a while until most of the children had out of school activities to attend. We moved the timing to school holiday times but unfortunately this was not as successful as we had hoped and so we reluctantly decided to cease.

"The adult helpers shared how they had missed the fellowship and rapport of meeting together and joining in with the children's crafts.

"We are all children at heart, so we decided to form a Messy Church for adults. What to call

ourselves? We took the title Vintage Messy Church.

"The timing of the group follows on from the community coffee morning, drinks are available. We meet every four to six weeks. Usually there are ten to twelve of us.

"When it is a Christian festival we follow that theme otherwise we leave the theme to the one who is leading it. After a prayer and Bible reading we engage in a particular craft.

"We are fortunate to have a gifted and imaginative craft person amongst us. Some weeks before we meet we give her the theme and she does the rest providing materials ready to assemble. From the photograph you can probably work out some of the themes over the previous months.

"During June we followed the Bible Month theme of Genesis. We thought about the genealogies in Genesis and then the genealogy of Jesus. We then shared our own genealogy. We put together our own family tree and decorated heart shaped 'leaves' with

the names of our families.

"Vintage Messy Church has provided an opportunity for sharing the Bible together, fellowship and using our God given creative abilities."



Creative Christmas

Rev. Mark Carrick explains how Central Methodist Church in Chesterfield used a 'Murder Mystery' style event to explain the Advent story.

He said: "The idea came about in response to a self-posed question 'how do we offer the story of our faith in a relevant, engaging, and immersive way?'

"For many of us, the Christmas story is a well-trodden path, whether we attend church or not. Stories of stars, mangers, shepherds, and gift-bearing visitors from the East are recalled in carols, films, and books. How do we, in church, avoid becoming acclimatised to such well known events? And how do those outside the church see it as more than just a story that's rolled out each year? The challenge was to tell the story in a way that was both missional and inspiring for us all.

"The idea was to offer something that made the story personal. But how do you offer an immersive experience with events that took place over 2,000 years ago? Using the 'Murder Mystery' idea of inviting people to eat together and solve a mystery unfolding before them was perhaps one way. Initially, it was 'who

stole the manger?', but we decided on a play on words, hence 'Myrrh, the Mystery'.

"The event was based on offering a buffet tea for around 80 guests. Seated in squads of five, guests were invited to assist the Bethlehem Police in solving the mystery of the missing Myrrh. A big thanks to the creative talents of Chris Warren in the writing and construction of the event, and Abigail Carrick in designing unique, bespoke artwork.

"The event worked by sending a steady stream of information, supposedly from detectives in the field. Each squad got the same rolling flow of clues and police interviews. They were displayed on a big screen and delivered on slips of paper, so that a record of all the data can be kept, sorted, puzzled over, and re-arranged.

"As the scenario unfolds, each group in effect reconstructs and re-imagines the story of the Nativity in Bethlehem, as told by Luke and Matthew. Using a map and eyewitness reports, we hope people will be 'transported' into the story. But in our version the myrrh goes missing. Who has taken it? Why was it stolen? What will happen next? Lots of happy talk, and a satisfying solution – it's all part of the game! Of course, we can then explain why the myrrh was so important, who the baby was, why was he born in a stable, and what was the

significance of the star or the Eastern visitors. It all comes together so those who have been in the mystery can see the Nativity story from a fresh perspective. We hope people who aren't used to coming to church will hear for themselves the real mystery of God coming to earth!"



Family Film Nights

South Anston Methodist Church has been hosting Family Film Nights for just over a year, and in that time have welcomed over 100 people into the church who haven't been before.

The congregation have been encouraged to think about mission and outreach – particularly with young families with no prior contact – and a love of Disney from Deacon Emily seemed just the thing to spark an idea! They now host a monthly film showing with crafts relevant to the particular film's theme, a colouring competition which is very popular, and they serve either pizzas or hot-dogs along with popcorn (of course!), juice and hot drinks for adults.

Deacon Emily said: "It's been really great to see relationships building between the team of volunteers and both adults and children. I'm thrilled whenever I visit Anston Hillcrest Primary School as the children recognise me from Film Club with a wave and a beaming smile. We have also held our first Messy Church Taster session thanks to a District New Beginnings Grant to see if families will make the next step with us.

"Our advice to anyone seeking to do similar is to make sure the practicalities like getting the relevant film licence to show films in your building is in place, publicise well via schools, toddler groups and uniformed organisations, and get a Facebook page up and running to keep people up to date on events. Asking the children to choose which films they'd like to see next is also a good way of involving them and giving ownership."



“It’s been really great to see relationships building between the team of volunteers and both adults and children.”

How to... Use Heritage for Mission

Within The Grove Methodist Church's mission document is the line: 'Developing our Methodist heritage to serve God in the present day'. Here are some ways in which this church is trying to do that in Retford:

- Asking church members to share their stories from the past – making audio recordings and posting them on the church website.
- Gathering memorabilia from the past and designing a timeline to be put in the building describing the history of the church through the lens of faith and pointing to the way ahead.
- Preparing a time capsule now to store memories for the future.
- Many of the rooms in the church are named after other local churches that have closed – putting a framed notice in each room explaining the name and commemorating the story and witness of that former congregation.

Your church doesn't have to meet in an old building to have a heritage – all churches have a story of faith to share within their community. Here are some key questions to ask ...

- What is our story and why is it significant?
- What impact has our church had in the local area?
- How do we want to tell this story?
- Who do we want to share it with?
- What do we want people who visit the church/hear our story to take away with them?
- What do we want our legacy to be?
- How do we enable people to engage with the Gospel story through our testimony?
- How do we encourage people to take the next steps in their own faith journey?
- How will sharing these stories help church members to grow in their faith?

Engagement with these questions is opening up new (and old) ways of sharing faith, worshipping, offering hospitality, and supporting local education, tourism and family history research.



Outdoor Church Supports Neurodiversity

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“We are a community that aspires to be inclusive, tolerant, flexible, low pressure, fun, reflective and growing in God's love. We recognise that we are all children of God - whatever our story - and that adults can learn from children.”

The Methodist Church is committed to **Justice, Dignity and Solidarity.**

We believe that all people are uniquely made in the image of God, and we aim to live this out in the Church and in our communities. This includes making sure we are inclusive.

Ingrid Fearnough from the Sheffield Circuit talks about how having an outdoor church is helping to support Neurodiversity.

“Some years ago, a few of us had children who found 'regular church' overwhelming and were tired of the Sunday morning stress. As a group we decided to try occasionally skipping regular church for a walk in the Peak District, informal sharing and journeying together. When COVID hit and church buildings closed we continued to meet, when the rules allowed, for what we started to call 'Outdoor Church'. When the church buildings re-opened we realised that we didn't want to go back to what we had before (at least, not all the time) and so started to add a bit of structure and accountability into what we were doing.

“We are a gathering that meets on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month – either at our base (a Bell Tent in the grounds of Cliff

College) or for a walk.

“We are a community that aspires to be inclusive, tolerant, flexible, low pressure, fun, reflective and growing in God's love. We recognise that we are all children of God – whatever our story – and that adults can learn from children.

“We have a simple liturgy (gathering, sharing, communion and sending) which the children help to lead.

“We have found that we have a large proportion of neurodiverse people in our gathering who find 'indoor church' too difficult as well as others who have previously attended traditional churches but have become uncomfortable there. For some who come, this group is their only church and for others it is something they attend alongside their 'regular' church.

“We now operate as a branch of Totley Rise Methodist Church in the Sheffield Circuit and they kindly help us with matters such as safeguarding, insurance, processing of money that is donated for the running of the group and general encouragement.”

Prayer Spaces in Doncaster Schools

Prayer spaces are offering a place of calm and quiet in the school day for anyone who needs it thanks to Aimee Roddam, R.E Team Coordinator in the Doncaster Circuit.

Aimee explains that it hasn't always been an easy road to implement the prayer spaces in school, however being patient and waiting for the right time has allowed schools and their students to benefit from them as part of their school schedules.

"I first heard of the project Prayer Spaces in Schools way back in 2016 when Joy Ventom and I attended a networking event for schools workers and there was a short presentation all about prayer spaces and how they can benefit students. That day Joy and I knew we had stumbled upon not just a treasure, but a Gold Mine!

"We felt the Doncaster schools could benefit so much from having a small quiet space in the school day where there are no pressures, obligations or assessments. A place to just breath and unload. We prayed on it and started to implement some prayer spaces around the transition sessions we did with year 6 students. It didn't seem to really be taking off though and prayer spaces got placed on the back burner.

"Fast forward a few years - Joy has moved on to ordained ministry, COVID has left its mark and schools work is just starting to build back up when the conflict between Ukraine and Russia began. A teacher at one of the schools R.E. Team Doncaster works into reached out and asked if there were any workshops I



could do around the conflict to help calm the anxiety the students were feeling - especially those from Eastern European countries whose families were in the midst of the conflict. Prayer spaces was the first thing that came to mind!

"The prayer space that I set up for the Ukraine/Russia conflict was so helpful to the young people that prayer spaces has now become a permanent fixture at the school and every Monday lunch time I'm there to be that place of calm and quiet in the school day for any that need it."

For more information and some examples of how to set up a prayer space please visit prayerspacesinschools.com



If You're Happy and You Know it Clap Your Hands

Little Stars Toddler Group from Staincross Chapel in Barnsley have been visiting a care home to enjoy games and action songs with the residents to promote "Intergenerational Links".

The idea for the visits came about when Linda Stammers, the Children and Families Lay Worker and Daphne Irwin, the Pastoral Care and Nurture Lay Worker got together to look at how their work could overlap and create stronger links with the community. Daphne was already a regular visitor at Deansgate Care Home where she offered a Messy Vintage session and hymn singing so following a conversation with the care home, they enthusiastically welcomed the toddlers and their grown-ups.

Linda said: "I was so pleased with the response from the Toddler Group when I asked if they would be willing to come with me to Deangate. The residents' faces were a picture when our group of 19 (toddlers and their carers) entered the room! They were so delighted and it put the youngsters at ease almost immediately. We soon settled down

to sing some of our favourite action songs. The interaction between young and old was fantastic.

"Since that first visit in early May we have made two more visits before we finished for the summer holidays. Each time the response of the children's carers and the residents has

been tremendous.

"If any other toddler group has a care home within walking distance of where they meet, I would recommend you contact the care home activity co-ordinator. There will be many who would welcome you with open arms."





Hidden Treasures

by Gill Newton, District Chair

When the Vice-President, Deacon Kerry Scarlett and I set out on our search for “hidden treasures” following the Methodist Conference of 2023, there was no treasure map with an “X” marking the spot! There were no clues to follow and there was no real sense of what we might find. But over the year, we have been wonderfully surprised by the treasure that has already been discovered by Methodist people, by the treasure that is being uncovered in our churches and communities and we look forward to more surprises as the treasure that is undoubtedly still hidden for us, some of it in plain sight, is found!

In discerning this theme for the last Connexional year, we recognised how important it was to be realistic about the challenges that we all face in life – in our families, in our communities, in the church and in the world. Life is tough for many people for all sorts of reasons now, and we could not ignore that context in which we seek to live out our faith and minister to others.

But that is never the whole story! Even whilst we are facing struggles and challenges, even when life is tough and hard, even when everything looks bleak and we are despairing, God is always still at work! So there will always be treasure to be found! We wanted to encourage everyone to keep searching and digging for that treasure; to increase our

hopefulness and our sense of what might still be possible!

We have not been disappointed! Travelling the Connexion and visiting the many and varied contexts in which the Methodist people are living, serving, worshipping and working has confirmed that we are indeed a “growing, inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking church!”

GROWING

For many years we have measured our growth, or otherwise, through membership, without ever really knowing how realistic those figures were! In recent times, we have seen those numbers contract, causing the growth of many things that we could do without – fear about the future, fretfulness about how much longer we can keep going, anxiety about the upkeep of buildings, perplexity about where to find all the necessary church and circuit officer holders and a genuine concern about the wellbeing of lay and ordained leaders.

But other things are growing too! As I have travelled the Connexion, I have observed a growth in willingness and imagination to use land and buildings in different and creative ways, a growth in different ways of “doing life” together that enable us to prayerfully support each other in our discipleship; a growth in serious contextual engagement

with the communities around us; a growth in willingness to worship in new and creative ways; a growth in commitment to respond to the climate crisis and a growth in New Places for New People being established.

INCLUSIVE

The challenge for our churches to be fully inclusive is vital, but huge, especially when we are not entirely familiar with other cultures or life experiences. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training has provided much needed help and support, but it can feel quite overwhelming when we recognise what still needs to change or how some people still feel excluded because of the way we currently conduct our life together.

But let’s remember that we are all a work in progress and although we still have some way to go, we have made changes and there are those who feel included now who would not have felt that way a few years ago.

On my travels I have been part of worship offered in more than one language and have noticed the voices of young people being more fully heard, bringing about changes and new initiatives. I have seen properties being adapted specifically to make provision for those living on the streets and of course, there are numerous examples of worship being offered online enabling many to participate

who could not be in our buildings at the time of our gatherings. We cannot afford to be complacent about any of this, but we are making progress!

EVANGELISTIC

We don't always agree about what we mean by describing ourselves as an evangelistic church! But I hope we can agree that it's about helping people to find meaning and purpose as they recognise how God's story interweaves with their story to bring about their flourishing; that it is about enabling people to fulfil their God-given potential; that it is about showing people that the love and mercy of Christ is for all; that they are treasured!

In recent times, we have invested heavily in the God For All strategy which encourages us to focus on New Places for New People and Church at the Margins and there are lots of exciting things happening across the Connexion under those banners. But we are engaging in evangelism in other positive and broader ways too. "Open The Book" is being used widely to share bible stories with schoolchildren; pop-up or mobile churches are on the move in some circuits/districts enabling engagement with people of all ages; Beach Pastors and Street Pastors are chatting with people whilst they are out and about; Methodist Way of Life resources are being

used by chaplains in the Armed Forces; the power of Godly Play is being used in schools, day care centres and retirement homes and we have countless chaplains doing wonderful work in hospitals and hospices, schools and universities, caravan parks, retail outlets, agricultural centres, prisons and elsewhere.

We are working hard to dispel the myth that the church is only interested in filling our pews and getting people to do jobs! We are investing our energies in being alongside people where they are and discovering the treasure they have to offer. We may not always see the fruit of all our endeavours, but we are helping to prepare the ground in people's lives for seeds of faith that may be planted by others later.

JUSTICE-SEEKING

There is a great deal about the world and the church that we would want to be different. It would sometimes be the easiest thing in the world to sit back, sigh at the view and then declare that there's very little we can do about it!

But, through last year's "Walking With Micah" Conference report, we have acknowledged that whilst there is more change needed than we can achieve alone, there are definitely things that are "ours to do" and as I have travelled across the Connexion I have been encouraged to see how so many

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So, the evidence suggests that despite the challenges we face, God is still active amongst us. Treasure is still being discovered by us! We are growing, we are becoming more inclusive, we are being evangelistic, and we are justice-seeking!”



DISCOVERING HIDDEN TREASURES 11



SHEFFIELD METHODIST DISTRICT

Methodist people are certainly playing their part.

I have seen projects providing second-hand school uniforms to families who could not otherwise afford to kit out their children, initiatives taking food being thrown away by supermarkets and giving it those in need, church members working in partnership with other local community organisations to stand against injustice, story-telling enabling this generation to appreciate just how much Methodism has been at the heart of transforming life for previous generations of the working classes, banners being made that reflect our hopes and dreams for justice and tell the story of projects we are already involved in as well as the Methodist Church's key role in the launch of the Let's End Poverty movement.

Add to that the countless Warm Spaces, Community Lunches and Foodbanks happening in our churches across the Connexion and we can see how, in so many ways we are responding to the injustices that many are suffering as well as being a church that speaks out against the unjust policies and practices that make these projects necessary.

So, the evidence suggests that despite the challenges we face, God is still active amongst us. Treasure is still being discovered by us! We are growing, we are becoming more inclusive, we are being evangelistic, and we are justice-seeking!



Henri Nouwen once wrote, "We must learn to live each day, each hour, yes, each minute as a new beginning, as an opportunity to make everything new. Imagine that we could live each moment as a moment pregnant with new life. Imagine that we could live each day as a day full of promises. Imagine that we could walk through the year always listening to a voice saying to us, "I have a gift for you and can't wait for you to see it!"

Those words seem to wonderfully capture what the Vice President and I have been encouraging the Methodist people to do during the last year. Let's all keep looking for

the treasure, the gifts that God has hidden for us and know his joy when we find it! Let's help each other turn away from focusing on what we don't have, what we don't have time for or what we as a church don't have, so that we look instead for the glimmers of hope and the treasure that is all around us and pursue that instead.

Remember, God has promised that he will give us "the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that we will know that it is the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls us by name."



Worship on the Streets

More than ten years ago Aaron Shah felt a calling from God to explore what musical worship could look like outside of a Church context, since then he's been leading Worship on the Streets.

Last year my wife Rachel and I moved from the North-East to the Peak District. For the last ten years, I have been leading Worship on the Streets, a ministry that seeks to make musical worship accessible to people outside of the church so they too can experience Jesus' love and power through the worship. The ministry began when I sensed God leading me to explore what musical worship could look like outside of the church context. During that time, I read Psalm 40:3 which says, "He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord." and I began to see that David had an understanding that there was a place for worship that was accessible to those without a faith, and even more so, that it could be a part of their journey to coming to know God for themselves.

"Since then, we have seen God use our worship outreach to share His love with people, help them understand God more clearly, and experience His peace and healing. Now that we have moved to the Peak District, I have loved leading our worship outreach in Sheffield city centre every week, where I have been partnering with friends from the House of Prayer Sheffield. Together, we have been honoured to see the Lord continue to use our worship times to touch people's hearts.

"At the beginning of this year, we also started running a monthly online "Worship on the Streets Hub" in partnership with other street worship ministries, where we seek to connect, train, and encourage people interested or involved in street worship around the UK."

For those interested in finding out more about Worship on the Streets, please email Aaron at info@worshiponthestreets.co.uk.



"That there was a place for worship that was accessible to those without a faith, and even more so, that it could be a part of their journey to coming to know God for themselves."



School of Discipleship

Growing out an increasing call for a deeper sense of what it means to follow Jesus Christ, the School of Discipleship is a 12-session course, authored by Ian White and had its first run through in spring to early summer 2024 hosted at Greenhill Methodist Church.

Twenty-eight students completed the four units including The Disciple, Disciples Together, Disciples on Mission and Disciples in Ministry, the course allowed for learning through teaching, group table talk and individual reflection using powerpoint, video, interactive

materials and resources developed by the students themselves. Each session lasted 90 minutes and after each unit of three sessions, the course paused for a week to allow students to reflect and do some of their own study.

To end the course an extra 13th celebration session allowed students to re-gather, bring food and drink and share testimony together – a really encouraging evening with tears and laughter mixed in with thankful prayer.

Comments from students

"I have been challenged and informed at every session. I have come away with a new

commitment to seek God more, as well as a deeper knowledge of what it means to be part of the Body of Christ. I just need to put it into practice now!"

"Having been given a fresh perspective on what it truly means to be a disciple of Christ it has made me re-examine my Christian life and my role as a disciple in the world."

"I thoroughly enjoyed all of the course. It was inspiring, informative and engaging."

If you are interested in further information, do contact Ian White on whitejian@aol.com



LOVE is Love



Christians have been attending PRIDE events in our district for several years and every year the events are getting bigger, more people are getting involved and our churches are able to offer safe places, prayer for anyone who wants it plus fun activities.

CHESTERFIELD PRIDE

Agnes Tranter, a member of Loundsley Green Church (LEP) explains:

"Central Methodist Church in Chesterfield attended their first PRIDE event in 2019 with the aim to show God's love to all regardless of their sexuality, gender or race.

"The Loundsley Green Prayer Shawl Ministry were asked to contribute something that people could take away with them - so they came up with the idea of knitting multicoloured sheep key rings.

"It was the first time that a church in Chesterfield had openly joined a PRIDE Festival and the conversations that followed were beyond what we expected. We were overwhelmingly welcomed and there were so many who came to chat, to pray and to write on the prayer wall.

"So many stories - there were both tears of joy and sadness as people shared their personal stories. We listened and prayed with them - those of faith and those of none, those searching, those angry with the church who had given up on the church accepting them for who they were. Those who had been so hurt that they no longer believed.

"Why are you here?" was one of the questions we were asked. Alongside the great joy of those who could not believe that we were present and mingling with those who were thought to be different and therefore not included in God's Kingdom.

"COVID prevented us from taking part again until a couple of years ago. By this time, Revd Tracey Harris, Minister at Loundsley Green Church (LEP) along with Rev Sarah Colver our Anglican Parish Vicar who shares the ministry of Loundsley Green had introduced a more inclusive gathering and this resulted in Christians at Pride. We now knit small love hearts.

"Grant funding from the Derbyshire North East Circuit meant we could buy a gazebo - a very welcome shelter in the wet and windy weather of last year! We decorated it with bunting and a prayer wall - we had a quiet area where we could pray with people - offering hospitality, cake & love hearts alongside information about the different churches that would extend a welcome and acceptance to

them and also those registered to conduct same sex marriages.

"PRIDE at Chesterfield is very much a family affair - it has a festival atmosphere with live music, fun fair rides, lots of different stalls representing various charities and emergency services.

"There is something for everyone and at the heart of it is LOVE.

WORKSOP PRIDE

Deacon Emily Hoe-Crook from Trinity Circuit explains:

"This years' PRIDE was bigger and better than ever, with thousands of people pouring into the streets, parading with 'Dottie' the Drag-on Bassetlaw PRIDE Sculpture, and celebrating love and diversity in all its fabulous rainbow colour.

"The Crossing Church were delighted to have a stall in the marketplace providing family activities and a prayer space for the second year running. We offered cupcake decorating (very popular!), a rainbow prayer wall, chalk pavement decorating and chance to talk with our volunteers about the significance of the day.

"One young man scribbled determinedly with a pavement chalk and gave us a kind smile as he left, having written "Take Me As I Am". A young boy asked one of our team if the cupcake decorating was only for girls as there was a group of girls enjoying the craft, and was told in no uncertain terms that it was for everyone, to which he beamed! The rainbow heart chalked on the ground asserting that "God Loves All" sums up this wonderful event. God was in the midst of everything, and spoke through the smiles, kindness and conversation.

"We distributed 150 rolls of personalised Love Heart sweets and all 3 trays of cupcakes soon disappeared, but it was the atmosphere and conversations which really made an impact, from the youngest to the oldest (many of our volunteers are 70+ which somehow holds even more significance to the feeling of inclusion and joy of the day).

"I also donned an inflatable unicorn costume which was definitely a talking point, and several people were surprised and moved to know that I'm in a same-sex marriage with Lisa - being present and welcoming at our stall was a real privilege, and we can't wait to return next year! The following day The Crossing had a meaningful PRIDE Celebration Service with such a positive and affirming atmosphere - we feel very blessed."



“

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Creation Care

By Siggy Parratt - Halbert

There is a lot of work going on behind the scenes concentrating on how we as individuals, and how our churches, can be a little more engaged in Creation Care. There is so much in the Bible that teaches us we must care for God's world on the premise that all things in it are of equal footing – that awful mistranslated word in Genesis 1:26, 'dominion', has much to answer for.

Yet how can we encourage one another to care for our environment when for so many of us it's about survival? Will our congregation see out the year as a worshipping community? Will the boiler get through another winter? Can we get away with patching the roof instead of replacing it? You know what I mean.

For me, it is very much about recreating connection with the outdoors, garnering the respect for it that we seem to have lost so many decades ago. If people have a relationship with something they are more

likely to want to care for it, nurture it. How do we do that, though? Perhaps we should look for the hidden treasures right outside our church door. Even in heavily urban places you will find signs of nature spreading her butterfly wings. Does your church have a garden or a churchyard that could be a home for the birds and little critters? If you have a carpark, can it be brightened with planters? And no, it really doesn't matter if they get stolen – they will still be doing their job, just elsewhere that's all. Are there trees in the street that could do with a bit of a water through the summer months? How sad it would look if they weren't there anymore, just for want of a little bit of care. They are so good at cooling our urban streets; they help reduce the particles that induce asthma in children; what a treasure they are. And it's not just about what they do for us, but the home and the food they provide for so many of God's creatures.

Perhaps we should follow in Wesley's footsteps and worship outside. How much deeper would our understanding of Jesus' teachings be, if we heard his words outside? If we accessed our God through that big Green Bible on the other side of our church door? And perhaps if we regained that connection and respect of all that surrounds us we might be more desirous of caring for it as much as God does. We just need to see the Hidden Treasures.

If that seems rather overwhelming when there are so many things crying out for our attention, there is plenty of advice through Action for Hope that will help your church take the tiniest baby steps towards becoming a greener church. It's a brilliant opportunity for mission too. And plenty of support for those who'd like to consider outdoor worship – less need for a roof, for starters! What was good for Wesley, is surely good enough for us too.

"Perhaps we should follow in Wesley's footsteps and worship outside. How much deeper would our understanding of Jesus' teachings be, if we heard his words outside? If we accessed our God through that big Green Bible on the other side of our church door? And perhaps if we regained that connection and respect of all that surrounds us we might be more desirous of caring for it as much as God does. **We just need to see the Hidden Treasures."**



Useful Links:

Action for Hope:
methodist.org.uk/action/climate/action-for-hope/

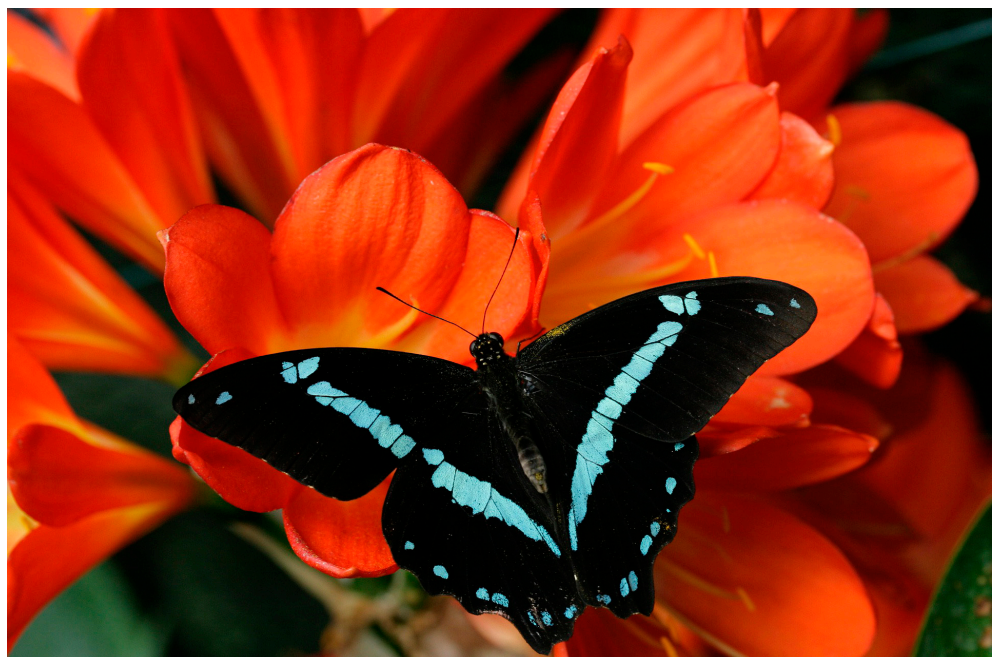
Support with going carbon neutral:
leeseh@methodistchurch.org.uk

Mission and Eco Baby Steps:
methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/net-zero-carbon/take-first-steps/

Support with green mission planning:
nashe@methodistchurch.ork.uk

The Green Christian:
greenchristian.org.uk/

Support with outdoor worship:
parratt-halberts@methodistchurch.org.uk





We pray daily



We will help people in our communities and beyond



We care for creation and all God's gift



worship

We worship with others regularly



notice

We notice God in Scripture and the world



care

We care for ourselves and those around us



learn

We learn more about our faith



open

We practise hospitality



share

We share our faith



challenge

We challenge injustice



tell

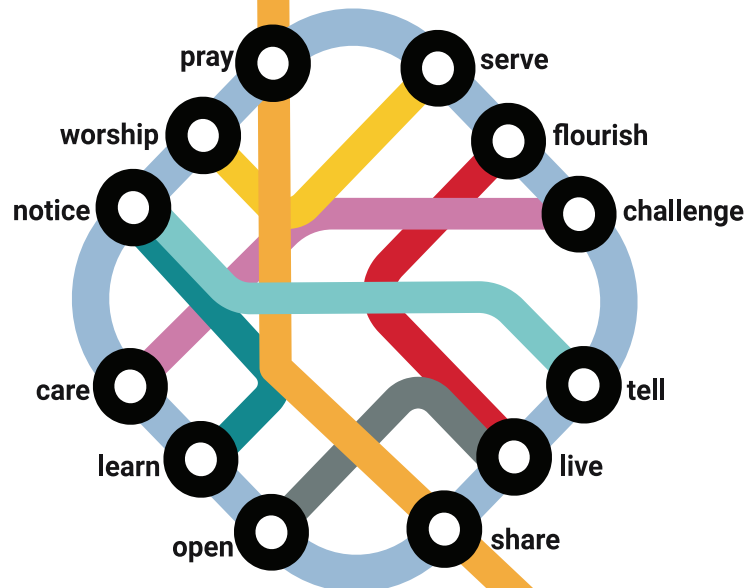
love of God



live

We live in a way that draws people to Jesus

A Methodist Way of Life



In response to God's gift of love, there are **twelve things** that we do individually and together to help us to worship God, serve others, be evangelistic, and learn and care together.

None of this makes God love you any more – but it may help you realise how deeply you are loved by God.

Thank You

Speed Sharers

Revd. Bob Heathcote – Partnering with North Notts College
Jo Webster – After we sold the building
Agnes Tranter – Christians at PRIDE
Vic Loveday – Faith at home for families
Deacon Emily Hoe-Crook – Family Film Club
Mark North – Freedom Community Project
Revd. Julie Coates – Heritage for Mission
Revd. Jenny Park – Messy Vintage
Chris Warren – Myrrh the Mystery
Kate Barclay & Ingrid Fearnough – Outdoors Church
Aimee Rodham - Prayer Space in Schools
Ian White - School of Discipleship
Yvonne Birchmore – School Pastors
Zelda Joynes – Soup & Song

Market Place

Cliff College
Urban Theology Union
Action for Children
Woollen Blessings
Crochet by Laura

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Messy Church • Youth Club for the Young at Heart

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