

Courageous Conversations: Listening to and working with your communities

Stories from around Sheffield Methodist District

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



A Prayer for Courageous Conversations

The dictionary in my study describes courage as the choice and willingness to confront agony, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation. It sounds heroic, doesn't it? Yet one of my favourite authors, Brené Brown, invites us to look deeper by returning to the root of the word itself. Courage, she reminds us, comes from *cor*—the Latin word for heart. Courage, then, is not about being fearless or dramatically heroic, but about showing up, speaking honestly, and engaging the world with open hearts. It is the quiet, faithful courage of authenticity.

In this edition of our district magazine, we are invited to rediscover that heart-centred courage. We will be encouraged to listen attentively and to engage bravely with the communities where we live, work, and witness. As a district, we long to show up for our communities, our circuits, and our churches with a courageous and truthful love—one that seeks the flourishing of others.

As the Swiss writer Paul Tournier reminds us, "True love is shown in our being filled with ambition for others. It means wanting them to be brave, while having ourselves the courage to help them to be so, instead of making ourselves their accomplices in retreat."

I invite you to join me in the following prayer:

Loving God,

You call us not to be fearless, but to be faithful.

You invite us to live from the heart, to listen deeply, and to speak truth with love.

Give us the courage that comes from *cor*—
a courage shaped by compassion, rooted in honesty, and open to the work of your Spirit.

Where we are tempted to retreat, draw us forward.

Where we are uncertain, teach us to listen.

Where we feel afraid, remind us that we do not walk alone.

Fill us with a holy ambition for our communities, our circuits, and our churches—
a longing for their flourishing, their hope, and their bravery.

Give us the grace not to collude with fear or comfort,
but to encourage one another to step out in love and trust.

As we gather, as we listen, and as we go out into the places where we live, work, and witness,
may we show up with open hearts, ready to learn, ready to serve,
and ready to love as you love us.

We offer ourselves again to you,
and we ask for the courage to be your people in the world.
In the name of Christ, who calls us, sends us, and walks with us.

Amen.



WHAT IS THE DISTRICT GATHERING?

We hold two District Gatherings a year where everyone is invited to attend. We conduct the business of the Synod, explore a theme and offer learning opportunities as well as worshipping together, praying together and making any formal decisions required as a district.

WHAT IS A SYNOD?

The District Synod sets the policy for the District, serving as a link between the Conference and the Connexional Team on the one hand and the circuits and local churches on the other. It has oversight of all district affairs, formulating and promoting policies, through its various officers and committees to assist the mission of the Church, to give inspiration to the leaders in the circuits and to ensure the interrelation of all aspects of the Church's life throughout the district. The Synod may bring matters to the Conference.



CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,
Welcome to this spring edition of our District Magazine.

We are living in a time when suspicion can travel faster than truth. Narratives that divide, often loud, and rooted in fear, encourage us to see difference as danger, and neighbours as strangers. In such a climate, the call to have courageous conversations is not optional but essential.

But courage is not about volume or confrontation. It is about showing up, speaking honestly, and engaging the world with openness. And perhaps more than anything else, it begins not with speaking, but with listening.

During the Presidential visit, I had the privilege of joining a team from Tickhill Methodist Church in Doncaster as they served food to some of the most vulnerable in their community. What I witnessed was far more than an act of service. It was an expression of deep, attentive listening. People shared stories of suffering, rejection, and heartache, and they were met not with easy answers, but with compassion and care.

Courageous conversations are rarely easy. They don't always unfold as we imagine, but they ask us to stay present when it would be easier to step back.

Listening well is, in itself, a deeply countercultural act.

In a world shaped by quick opinions and reactive judgement, to pause and truly hear another person is to resist the narratives that divide us. Faith Rooted Community Organising places this at its very core: before action, before strategy, there is listening, patient, intentional, relational listening.

This kind of listening is not passive. It is active, attentive, and sometimes costly. It asks us to set aside our instinct to fix or persuade. It invites



us to make space for stories that may unsettle us, and to keep asking, who else should I listen to?

In times when rhetoric encourages us to fear those who are different, listening becomes an act of quiet defiance. It says: I will not reduce you to a headline. I will not accept a story about you without hearing your story from you.

Many of us feel uncomfortable talking about faith or difference. Even within the church, such conversations can feel challenging. Yet we are called into these spaces, not to win arguments, but to build relationships. Not to speak over others, but to stand alongside them. Not to impose solutions, but to discover, together, what is needed.

Across our district, we see glimpses of this in action: in everyday encounters that become moments of trust and care; in Anna Chaplaincy, where older people are listened to and valued; and in community cafés like Stocksbridge, where people gather not just for food, but for connection and belonging.

Again and again, the pattern is the same: listening leads to relationship; relationship leads to action; action opens the possibility of transformation.

Jesus' own ministry models this way of being, listening to those on the margins, walking alongside, hearing before speaking.

If courage is rooted in the heart, then courageous conversations are not about having all the answers. They are about showing up, honestly, vulnerably, and attentively.

And perhaps, in a time of suspicion, that is how trust begins to grow again: one conversation, one act of listening, one relationship at a time.

In Faith and Friendship
Vicky, Chair of District

What is Faith Rooted Community Organising (FRCO)?

By Mark North



WHAT IS FAITH ROOTED COMMUNITY ORGANISING (FRCO)?

Faith Rooted Community Organising is about how we engage with each other in the church and those within our communities. The practice is based on Community Organising but through the lens of our Christian faith and it's one of the ways the Methodist Church is used to be a justice seeking church.

Faith Rooted Community Organising Practises

The core of the practice is Connecting, Gathering, Acting and Reflecting.

- 1 CONNECTING** is about listening to people both in our churches and our community. Starting with one-to-one conversations within our church where we begin to develop an understanding together of the positives and the issues within the community from the church's perspective. After listening within the church, we go out to listen to our community. It is easier to start with friends and those we know locally. We listen to them and hear about their views of the community. After each conversation we ask the question "who else should we talk to?" This question helps us connect with other people.
- 2** The second practice is **GATHERING**. From the one-to-one conversations, we gather both the church and the community together to share the key issues to discern together the next steps. We look at who holds the power to see change and how we can get them to the table. In the gathering stage the group would look to who is going to lead and the support they will need. If no one is willing to lead or be involved, then we don't proceed into action. But go back into the listening and gathering. The aim of this stage is to have a group of willing people and a clear plan that can be put into action.
- 3** The third practice is **ACTION**. Once a plan has been agreed we act together. This may be in many ways from a local campaign to see road improvement, or it could be a litter pick with the community. It could be a campaign for justice. What is critical is that this is a collaboration between the community and the church.
- 4** The final practice is **REFLECTION** and **CELEBRATION**. After the action has taken place, we reflect on what impact this has had. We look to celebrate with the community what has been achieved and then start again with the listening activity.



NOT DOING FOR PEOPLE, WORKING WITH PEOPLE

A key principle in all Community Organising is that we don't do for people, we work alongside people. In the church we can be guilty of doing things for people. We have a good idea, then get some help from the church and get on and do the project, however Faith Rooted Community Organising asks us first to listen to those in our church and community, to discover together the issues, agree a plan, and together run a project or challenge an injustice.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POWER

Understanding power is a critical part of Faith Rooted Community Organising. We all have power; this power is different in different circumstances. Across the world there are those who seem to have little or no power. Yet as we have seen in history, even those with the smallest amount of power can make a massive impact, when they join their power together with others. Faith Rooted Community Organising asks us to reflect on the power we have and how we use it as individuals and churches. Who are the voices that we are not hearing in our meetings? How do we use our collective power to challenge the issue within the community?

NOT NEW TO THE CHURCH

These practices aren't necessarily new to the Methodist Church. When we look at the work of Jesus in the New Testament, we can see that Jesus used practices that are reflected in Faith Rooted Community Organising. Jesus listened to everyone, especially those on the edge of society. We see this in John 4 v4-42, the way Jesus spent time with the exiled woman at the well. He spent time listening and sharing with her. Jesus also built a community, and empowered leadership in the disciples. Together they challenge the people of power. Not all of Jesus' work was Community Organising, but we can see elements of Jesus's

life reflecting the practises. Our own history of Methodism also reflects Faith Rooted Community Organising practise, through Primitive Methodism. It was a people's movement. They gathered in societies, giving the community a sense of worth. Chapels were a place of education as well as worship. As we know this movement led to the creation of Trade Unions. Christian People with a sense of justice and action together. We can see that Faith Rooted Community Organising isn't new.

MEETING GOD IN THE COMMUNITY

When we are thinking about Faith Rooted Community Organising, we need to realise that we are not doing this for God, but rather that we are going to meet God in His mission. Isaiah 43 v19 says "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" When we are engaging with the community, we are not taking God with us, we are meeting God in our community. Gustavo Gutierrez in his book A Theology of Liberation puts it this way "We find the Lord in our encounters with others, especially the poor, marginated and exploited ones. An act of love towards them is an act of love towards God." When we meet people in the local library, pub, café to listen and share we meet with God who is already at work.

My hope from reading this article is that you understand what Faith Rooted Community Organising means, and have an understanding of the practises. A realisation that this isn't new and that it is about meeting God within our communities. Moreover, that you have been inspired to find out more and to implement the practise both within your life and your church.

Please contact me for a chat about how Faith Rooted Community Organising can become part of your churches mission frcol@sheffieldmethodist.org



The Book Room

Tucked inside Hathersage Methodist Church, a quiet revolution is taking place - one made not of noise, but of pages turning.

"The Book Room," a second-hand bookshop inspired by John Wesley's publishing house, has quickly become a beloved stop for locals and visitors wandering through this Peak District village.

Part of the church's wider open-door initiative, the space has welcomed more than 10,000 people in just eight months. That's around 42 curious wanderers a day stepping inside to explore Methodist history, pause for prayer, let children play, tackle a communal jigsaw, or browse the ever-changing shelves of pre-loved books.

Open daily from 9am to 5pm, the church has become a gentle hub of hospitality. The Book Room operates on trust: every book costs £1, paid via an honesty box or card reader. More than 3,000 books have already found new homes, with every pound reinvested into the project. Visitors are also encouraged to donate their own books, keeping the shelves fresh and allowing the stories to live on.

Monthly themes guide the displays,

ranging from literary anniversaries, such as the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen, to topics reflecting the church's values, including Black History Month and environmental awareness.

Dave Fisher, Lead Volunteer for the Open Church Project, said the idea is rooted in Methodist tradition. "John Wesley established The Book Room because he believed reading supported spiritual growth and helped sustain the early Methodist movement. That principle still resonates and we wanted to revive it in a way that serves the community today.

"The church's central location makes it well-placed to welcome passers-by and with the high number of visitors to Hathersage, we wanted the church to be a place people felt able to step into.

"None of this would be possible without the support of hard-working volunteers and community support. A bookshop only works if people keep it alive, and The Book Room has become a shared effort for the whole community."

Dave added: "Books have a way of opening doors; all we've done is make sure one of them is unlocked."



"Books have a way of opening doors; all we've done is make sure one of them is unlocked."



COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS



Faith at Her Fingertips

A salon in Sheffield has become a place of both beauty and encouragement. At its centre is Hannah Caval, a talented nail technician and member of Greenhill Methodist Church, who has discovered an unexpected way to blend her profession with her passion for sharing the message of Jesus Christ.

Hannah's clients come for immaculate manicures, creative designs, and expert care, but many leave with something far more lasting. Between selecting nail polish and cuticle oil, Hannah listens. She listens to stories of stress, heartbreak, hope, and celebration and when the moment feels right, she gently offers words inspired by her faith.

Hannah explains: "I've been a nail technician for 14 years and many of my clients have been with me for all that time and they've become my friends. When people come for an appointment, they open up to me as it's their safe space and share their real and raw emotions and we have some deep and meaningful conversations. To speak of the love of Jesus just comes naturally to me and it's a privilege that people feel safe and secure to ask questions."

Her approach is gentle and intuitive. She doesn't set out to preach, sometimes

“In Hannah's hands, a manicure becomes more than a beauty treatment, it becomes a moment of connection, kindness, and quiet witness.”

she offers a comforting word, sometimes it's a reflection on hope or resilience and sometimes it's just simply being present

Alongside her salon work, Hannah is part of the leadership team at Greenhill Methodist Church and hopes to train as a Local Preacher. But she already sees her daily work as a form of ministry.

Hannah added: "Being a nail technician has allowed me to create lots of relationships and when people are curious about how I live my life I talk about my faith and if that impacts just one or two people then it's all worth it. We need to normalise talking about our faith and not keep it to ourselves. It's about sharing how we intentionally live our lives."

In Hannah's hands, a manicure becomes more than a beauty treatment, it becomes a moment of connection, kindness, and quiet witness.



More Churches Embrace Eco Church and Net-Zero Goals

The number of churches holding Eco Church awards across our district continues to grow. At the time of going to press we have 14 bronze and 6 silver churches. Eco Church has been adopted nationally as a Methodist partner because of the holistic and practical approach it takes to caring for creation. Over 700 Methodist churches have received an Eco Church award, so those in our district are in good company.

Our district Net Zero vision includes that by 2030 at least 18 of our churches will have received Silver Eco Church awards. Bronze awards can usually be gained

without significant cost. Reaching Silver often involves spending money upfront to reduce the amount of fossil fuels burnt to keep our premises warm and lit - such as improved insulation or secondary glazing. As a district we already pay half the cost of energy efficiency surveys, to help churches understand what changes will have most impact on their energy use. These have already benefited 20 of our churches.

From 2026 Sheffield Methodist District is now also offering Action for Hope grants of up to £10,000 to help churches make practical steps to reduce the carbon footprint

of their buildings. Look out for stories of how local churches are using these grants in future editions.

We will also be sharing hints and tips for little lifestyle changes that we can all take to better care for God's creation. For example, we print this magazine to include people who find reading information online less easily, but we take care to use recycled paper and make sure it can be recycled when no longer needed.





Celebrating 200 Years of Methodism in Bolsover

Bolsover Methodist Church in the Derbyshire Northeast Circuit has celebrated its 200th birthday with a week-long programme of events which saw hundreds of people visiting the church on Hill Top in the town.

As part of his tour of the district, The President of the Methodist Conference Revd Richard Andrew marked the occasion by leading worship on Sunday 29th March.

A special exhibition was displayed in the church from 23rd – 29th March and drew on hundreds of photographs from Bolsover Civic Society and Bolsover Library. The images reveal choirs in full voice, bustling bazaars, Sunday School anniversaries, and community gatherings that span generations. Though many of the chapels pictured have since been demolished, their stories live on in the memories of local people.

EARLY BEGINNINGS

The earliest Methodist gatherings took place above what is now Bolsover Travel, where local worshippers first met in the early 19th century. By 1826, the movement had grown enough to warrant its first purpose-built chapel on The Brek. Costing £245 including the land, the chapel stood on the route between Station Road and Castle Street. A surviving plaque from this original building remains a treasured link to the past. As part of the bicentenary celebrations, it is being carefully removed from the rear of Hill Top Church and reinstated in the Sykes Room by conservation builder Phil Turton, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

A GROWING MOVEMENT

Between 1850 and 1950, Methodism became

the dominant religious force in Bolsover. Chapels sprang up across the area in New Bolsover, Hillstown, and Shuttlewood, serving as much more than places of worship. They were vibrant centres of music, learning, fellowship, and social life. For thousands of families, chapel events shaped the rhythm of daily living.

BUILDING FOR A CHANGING TOWN

As Bolsover expanded, so too did its chapels. A stone chapel built on Hill Top in 1866, now the Assembly Hall, was soon outgrown as the town transformed into a thriving mining centre. In 1897, the present Hill Top Methodist Church opened at a cost of £3,500. Nicknamed "Sykes Cathedral," it was built in the front garden of Sherwood Lodge, home to Abel and Florence Sykes. Abel, a farmer, colliery shareholder, and magistrate, played a key role in shaping the town's development.

FAITH AND THE MINING COMMUNITY

Methodism's influence reached deep into the mining community. Emerson Bainbridge, a key figure in the Bolsover Colliery Company, encouraged miners to attend chapel, shaping the spiritual life of New Bolsover Model Village. The Primitive Methodists also left their mark, with chapels on Cotton Street and later Town End - buildings that served generations before their eventual merger with Hill Top.

As Bolsover reflects on 200 years of Methodist history, the celebrations serve as both a tribute and a reminder: faith, community, and perseverance have shaped this town before, and continues to do so today.



How Over £1 Million Is Transforming Community Life in Stocksbridge

Two churches in the Stocksbridge area of Sheffield are undergoing remarkable transformations, thanks to more than £1 million in combined grant funding. The Christian Centre situated in the heart of the Cedar Road estate and Brightholmlee Methodist Church, very different in age, style, and history but both have a shared mission to become vibrant, welcoming hubs that meet the needs of their local communities.

In the heart of a busy housing estate, the Christian Centre has become a cornerstone of daily life. Open seven days a week, it hosts an impressive range of activities: lunch clubs, a social café, coffee mornings, a youth club, a baby group, and Sunday morning worship.

The building is also home to Food Matters – The Stocksbridge Food Bank, providing vital support to families across the area, as well as the Bolsterstone Hand-bell Ringers.

Originally opened about 50 years ago, when the estate was built, the Christian Centre has undergone major modernisation enabled by substantial grant funding from the Sheffield Methodist Circuit and District and several other major funders. The redevelopment included the creation of a multi-use community hub and worship area, with a new kitchen, upgraded entrances, and a dedicated family play and learning space. It also created a new home for the food bank, with a community shop and a community coffee shop.

As part of his tour of the Sheffield District, the President of the Methodist Conference, Revd. Richard Andrew, visited the revitalised Centre. Whilst there he planted a commemorative tree as a symbolic gesture marking the Centre's renewed commitment to growth, connection, and long-term community service.

Food Matters celebrated its Civic Inauguration on Saturday 28th March. Dr Marie Tidball MP attended the celebration and delivered a keynote speech emphasising the crucial role the Centre plays in supporting residents, particularly through its partnership

with Food Matters, which remains an essential resource for many households.

A few miles away, Brightholmlee Methodist Church is preparing for its own major transformation. Built in 1807 by a friend of John Wesley, it is the oldest serving church in the Sheffield District and North Derbyshire. Though its congregation is small, its commitment to local service is unmistakable. Following a community meeting in which around 40 residents shared their needs and hopes for the building, the church responded with an ambitious vision for its future.

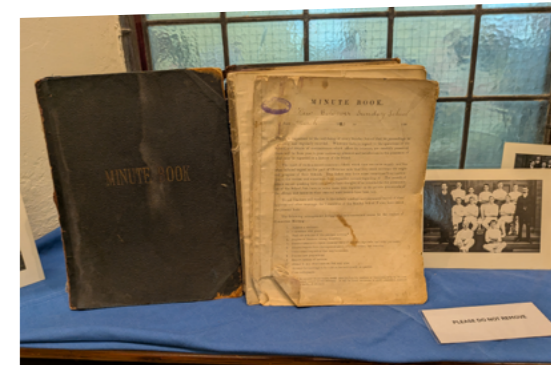
To make that vision possible, £526,000 in grant funding, along with an additional £20,000 from Sheffield Methodist District, has been secured to modernise the historic building. Among the most exciting developments is the creation of a village theatre inside the church, offering a new cultural and social space for the wider community.

Revd. Ian Lucraft, Minister in charge of both churches said: "Together, these two churches demonstrate what can be achieved when heritage, community spirit, and investment come together. Whether through meals, music, support services or future theatre performances, both buildings are playing a vital role in strengthening community life in Stocksbridge."

“Together, these two churches demonstrate what can be achieved when heritage, community spirit, and investment come together.”



“As Bolsover reflects on 200 years of Methodist history, the celebrations serve as both a tribute and a reminder: faith, community, and perseverance have shaped this town before, and continues to do so today.”





The Art of Welcome: A Creative Project Bringing Communities Together

Across the district, a creative new initiative is taking shape – one that’s all about opening doors, sparking creativity and celebrating the warmth of community. *The Art of Welcome* invites people of every age and background to explore what welcome, belonging and inclusion look like through art. Whether it’s a painting, a photograph, a textile piece or a digital design, each contribution answers a simple but powerful question: **What does welcome mean to you?**

At its core, the project is about showing hospitality in a visual and heartfelt way. Churches often describe themselves as open, friendly spaces, but this project helps bring that message to life. “Art can express things we sometimes struggle to put into words,” District Chair Vicky Atkins said. “It has a way of showing people they matter.”

REACHING BEYOND THE CHURCH WALLS

One of the most exciting things about *The Art of Welcome* is that it isn’t just for church members. It’s for everyone. Local families, schools, youth groups, care homes, art clubs and individuals with no church connection at all are encouraged to get involved.

As communities continue to rediscover togetherness after several years of social disruption, and mounting fear in our communities, this project offers a gentle way to rebuild relationships. There’s no pressure, no expectations, just an invitation to be creative.

“You don’t have to know anything about church life to draw a picture or sketch an idea,” Revd. Atkins explained. “You just bring yourself and your imagination.”

This simple approach helps churches connect with their neighbourhoods in new ways. Instead of asking people to step over

a threshold, the project begins where people already feel comfortable, with creativity, colour and conversation.



“Art can express things we sometimes struggle to put into words, it has a way of showing people they matter.”

HOW THE PROJECT UNFOLDS

The Art of Welcome is being rolled out in three easy-to-join phases: Launch, Participation and Celebration.

1. Launch

To begin, the district is sharing posters, social media graphics and stories to help spread the word. A district-wide press release offers clear instructions on how to submit artwork – whether digitally or through a local church. Everything is designed to make joining in as simple and welcoming as possible.

2. Participation

This is where the fun really begins. Each week, new creative prompts appear on social media, encouraging people to think about themes like belonging, kindness, care and hospitality.

Churches can support the project in their own way – hosting relaxed art sessions, partnering with schools, inviting care home residents to take part, or offering intergenerational workshops where all ages create together. As stories and pictures from these sessions are shared online, they help inspire others and build a sense of shared excitement.

3. Celebration

Towards the end of the year, artwork will be

displayed in churches, community spaces and a digital gallery. These exhibitions will be opportunities to celebrate creativity, bring communities together and reflect on the many ways people understand and experience welcome.

MAKING INCLUSION VISIBLE

One of the loveliest outcomes of this project will be the colourful, welcoming displays created from the artwork. These could become “welcome walls,” refreshed entry areas or small gallery corners inside churches or community venues.

“People get a sense of a place within seconds,” Revd. Atkins said. “When they see art created by their neighbours, children, adults, newcomers, long-time residents, it sends a clear message that this is a space for everyone.”

These visual expressions of welcome help visitors feel at ease. They also remind congregations of the gift of hospitality and the beauty of inviting others to shape a shared space.

SUPPORTING LOCAL CHURCHES

Understanding that churches vary in size, time and available volunteers, the district is

offering practical help. Small grants of £500 are available to support materials, workshops and display costs, and a resource pack provides posters, social content and creative suggestions.

Churches might choose activities like collaborative murals, outdoor art-making sessions, digital displays or partnerships with schools and care homes. Everything is designed to be flexible so each community can participate in a way that feels manageable and meaningful.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS, ONE ARTWORK AT A TIME

Although the project is still in its early stages, interest is already growing. People are excited by the chance to be creative; to meet others and to make something that reflects the warmth they want their community to embody.

“The more people who join in, the richer the message becomes,” Revd. Atkins said. “If someone feels even a little more connected because they took part, we’ve achieved something special.”

To learn more, visit: sheffieldmethodist.org/theartofwelcome



Discipleship in Action: Reflections from the Youth President

By Genesis Padgett, Barnsley Circuit

In the Methodist Church, young people are not just the future of the Church — they are an essential part of its present. I am sure you have all heard this phrase before. One of the most visible ways this commitment is lived out is through the role of the Youth President. Each year, a young adult aged 18–23 is elected to represent, listen to, and amplify the voices of young Methodists across the Connexion.

This year, I have travelled across the country meeting young people, church leaders, and communities, discovering the many ways faith is lived out in our young people's lives.

One of my favourite memories from the year came during 3Generate in October, the Methodist Church's annual gathering for children and young people. I had met with so many young people who were all finding something that they enjoy in a weekend with faith and discipleship where they can feel like they belong and are heard by everyone. Events like this remind me why the role is so important — to ensure young people know they belong and that their ideas help shape the Church.

Another moment came while visiting a youth group near Oxford, it was the first time this group had met together and was created by a 14-year-old! Since 3Generate this amazing young lad had seen that there was something missing in his local community and saw that a lot of young people around him had never stepped foot into a church. So, he created a youth group based on worship and songs. I later reflected that the most important part of the Youth President's role is often not speaking, but just showing up, to encourage all young people that with the right mindset, they can do anything.

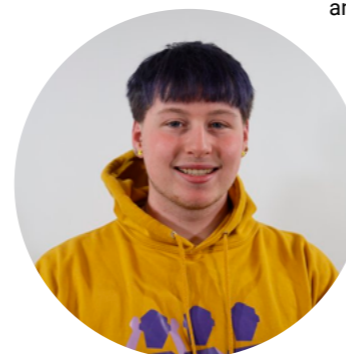
The Youth President spends the year travelling widely, visiting youth groups, leading worship, speaking at events, and sharing the experiences and hopes of children and young people with the wider Methodist Church. It is a role filled with new friendships, meaningful conversations, and opportunities to grow in faith and confidence.

Perhaps the most powerful part of the role is the reminder that young people are already leaders in the Church today.

As my year continues, it is time for the Youth President 2027-28 to start reflecting and praying about whether they can be a young leader in the church. If you are aged 18–23, by the 1st of August 2027 and passionate about faith, young people, and the life of the Church, this could be an incredible opportunity. The role offers the chance to travel, meet inspiring people, speak about issues that matter to young Methodists, and help shape the future of the Church.

You do not need to have all the answers. The Youth President is simply someone willing to listen, learn, and encourage others along the way.

If you or someone you know might be interested, now is the time to explore the opportunity and consider applying. The next year of amazing stories and events could be waiting for you!!



The Grove kick starts The Art of Welcome

By Revd. Julie Coates, Superintendent of the Trinity Circuit

At the start of 2025, The Grove decided to try something a little different for Advent. We picked up the *Searching for Home* course, a York-based resource from SPCK, which follows the Holy Family's journey as refugees in Egypt. Even though the booklet was created a few years back, it felt 'of the moment'. The stories it shared about people starting new lives in the UK, the prejudices they still face, and the work being done by those supporting asylum seekers and refugees all struck a chord with us. It tied in with the themes from our recent *Faith over Fear* weekend, which had already got us thinking about welcome, belonging, and the risks people take simply to find safety.

The course ran over four weeks, sparking lots of thoughtful conversations and one shared feeling: **"We want to help... we just don't know where to begin."**

So, rather than let that momentum fade, we arranged a follow-up session to gather what we knew, learn what we didn't, and see what was already happening locally. When we met again at the end of January, 15 people

turned up. Among them was someone already helping Ukrainian families practise conversational English, and another who'd worked with a conversation club for refugees in Doncaster. Their experiences opened our eyes to both the challenges and opportunities right here on our doorstep.

As we talked, we uncovered several local initiatives that many of us hadn't even heard about. There's a monthly *Stand Up to Racism* peace gathering in Retford Market Place; a creative scheme run through a local bookshop to help cover transport costs for those who need it; and training opportunities available for anyone wanting to support English-language learning. It quickly became clear that we weren't starting from scratch — we were joining a bigger, growing effort.

Through our conversations one theme appeared: **Real welcome starts with relationships. Before doing anything, we need to ask, "What's actually needed?"**

The answer to this appeared almost straight away. A local Ukrainian group reached out to tell us they were looking for old candles, tin cans, cardboard, and, most

importantly, a space where they could meet regularly to make wax heaters to send back home. Their request was practical, simple, and exactly the kind of thing we could help with. We offered them a room, and now they're using our building twice a week, turning discarded household items into something that has a real impact for people enduring extremely tough conditions.

Looking ahead, we're excited to join *The Art of Welcome* project. The Grove has a flexible building that's perfect for performances, exhibitions, and creative displays, and we already have strong links with local schools, arts groups, community organisations, and businesses. Many of these partners already run creative projects with young people, and as some may remember from a previous issue, we've worked with POPUK to explore social and spiritual themes with school pupils through music.

For us, *The Art of Welcome* feels like a natural next step - a way to show, through creativity, community, and shared space, that welcome isn't just something we talk about. It's something we do.





Anna Chaplaincy: Sharing Comfort in Life's Later Years

Doncaster Methodist Circuit is now offering Anna Chaplaincy, which is seeking to make sure that every older person has a chance to experience companionship, dignity and the love of Jesus Christ in their later years.

Roger Thirwell, Anna Chaplain in Doncaster explains: "Anna Chaplaincy takes its inspiration from Anna, the elderly widow described in St Luke's Gospel (Luke 2:36-37). After encountering the infant Jesus in the Temple, Anna devoted herself to speaking with those she met, offering wisdom, presence and spiritual companionship. This simple act of being alongside others lies at the heart of Anna Chaplaincy today.

"The word *chaplain* itself comes from the Latin for *cloak*, rooted in the story of St Martin of Tours. When St Martin encountered a beggar shivering in the rain, he tore his cloak in half to share it rather than hand it over entirely and leave himself vulnerable. From this image

grew the modern understanding of a chaplain as someone who walks with people through life's storms, offering warmth, support and spiritual care when it is most needed.

"Anna Chaplaincy, a ministry of the Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), brings this ethos to older people and their families. Many in later life face loneliness, increasing dependence, or the complexities of dementia. Others live independently but without close networks. Anna Chaplains offer non-judgemental, inter-denominational Christian care to people of all faiths – or none – ensuring no one navigates their twilight years alone.

"My own journey into Anna Chaplaincy began in Alton, Hampshire, home to founder Debbie Thrower and a thriving local team. But it was the loss of Brenda, a long-standing member of St Andrew's in the Doncaster Methodist Circuit, that truly prompted me to act. Her passing made me realise how little I

knew about her life beyond church – and how many others might be quietly facing similar isolation."

Revd. John Henry, Superintendent for Doncaster Circuit said: "Anna Chaplaincy is a much-needed form of pastoral and spiritual care and whilst Roger's ministry in circuit only began in September, it's already making a huge difference."



How a Church Rose from Struggle to Strength and Transformed Its Community

Over twenty years ago, Rawmarsh Methodist Church, in the Rotherham and Dearne Valley Circuit, faced a daunting challenge: an ageing, expensive building and a congregation unable to maintain it. Rather than give up, the church entered a series of courageous conversations that led to a bold solution. A new community charity was created, the entire building was leased to it, and The High Street Centre was born.

This partnership allowed the church to continue its mission without the burden of building upkeep, while the Centre secured funding to transform the space into a vibrant, welcoming hub. Church members still play a key role, making up one-third of the trustees and remaining fully involved in decision-making.

Today, the Centre hosts

a wide range of activities supporting older and isolated residents, including walking groups, arts and crafts, a Men's Group, and Spanish classes. With a weekly footfall of over 600, it has become a social prescribing hub and home to NHS diabetic eye screening and Talk Cancer groups. Community Connect, supporting adults with learning difficulties, runs the popular Tuesday Chit Chat Café. The Activate project provides groups for babies, toddlers, children, youth, and those with special needs.

For the church, the ongoing challenge continues to function visibly as a worshipping community. Regular worship, prayer, pastoral care, Bible study, and school's work remain central. Many members volunteer within the Centre, opening doors to conversations with people who might never otherwise encounter church life.

As one service user put it: **"The High Street Centre has changed my life and outlook. I hope it thrives for many more years to come."**



Honouring the Past and Building the Future at Silkstone Common Chapel

At Silkstone Common in Barnsley local villagers, and a small circuit team are proving that lasting change takes patience and persistence.

When the congregation ceased to worship in 2023, only a very small number of long-serving members remained to manage the building. They had carried this responsibility for many years, making sure that karate classes, baby groups, Good Companions, Sharing Skills, coffee mornings and the Old Silkstone Brass Band could continue to use the space. Yet it had become clear that this burden could not rest on so few indefinitely.

The church was brought into circuit trusteeship to look at all options for the building from closure and sale to missional opportunities.

The community rallied round at the prospect of losing the village's only community space and the building was successfully listed as a community asset, and open meetings were held with circuit and district representatives. Through these conversations, a small group of residents stepped forward, expressing a genuine desire to keep the building open.

The new management group created by residents have since organised seasonal events, improved the building's welcome and importantly, they have expressed a clear wish to work in partnership with Barnsley Circuit, honouring the building's heritage and involving the circuit in events around Christian festivals, potentially for a new expression of church to gradually emerge.

Lyn Gregg, Acting Superintendent, Barnsley Circuit said: "For the last three years members of the Northwest Church have worked tirelessly to keep Silkstone Common Chapel alive. It's a

much-needed building in the community and now local people are managing it, we can walk alongside them, and we can celebrate it as a community asset."

This journey has reaffirmed that community spaces can thrive in new ways when communities step up, and churches patiently walk alongside them.



"This journey has reaffirmed that community spaces can thrive in new ways when communities step up, and churches patiently walk alongside them."



Faith Rooted Community Organising Challenge

Simple ways to start using Faith rooted community organising in your church

REFLECTING

Once you have completed the action it is time to reflect and evaluate whether the action has had the impact on the issue. How do people now feel? During this time, it is important to celebrate what has happened and socialise together. This might be a meal, a BBQ or celebration event. It is a good time to share other activities that happen in the church.

Remember once you have completed the reflection, go back to the listening again and onwards through the practises.

CONNECTING

Begin with prayer, asking God to guide your conversations and journey. Listen actively, starting with members of the church community. Set a 30–60-minute timeframe and explain that the purpose is to hear their views about the church and the wider community. Stay fully present: silence your phone, use open-ended questions, and avoid interrupting or imposing your own agenda. Encourage people to share personal experiences. End on time and ask, “Who else should I speak with?” Afterwards, take time to make notes. Once you’ve listened to the church, continue by speaking with friends, family, and others in the community.

Collective Power

ACTING

Once an action is agreed and planned, it is time to act together. Ensure the action is genuinely collaborative, with the church and community working side by side rather than the church acting for others. Complete a risk assessment and put strong safeguarding practices in place. Set a date and carry out the activity, keeping it simple—quick, visible impact is helpful when beginning. Start with small, manageable actions and build toward larger ones as confidence grows. Practical early ideas include a litter pick or clearing an overgrown area, allowing everyone to participate and see immediate positive change.

GATHERING

Begin by gathering the team involved in listening and compile all issues or injustices shared in conversations, without forming plans or solutions. Pray over the information and ask God for guidance. Host a community meeting, inviting everyone you’ve spoken with. Set clear expectations, including time limits, respect, and sharing only from personal experience. If more than twelve attend, divide into smaller groups with facilitators. Present the gathered issues and identify one key concern, or up to three. In a second meeting, recap the agreed issues, brainstorm small achievable actions, and confirm who is willing to participate before planning next steps.





Faith Conversations: Beyond the Church Doors

By Siggy Parratt-Halbert

We all know how to hold a conversation, right? Especially when it's about the weather. Yes, we all know how to do that. But what about when we need to be a bit braver? I'm talking about faith conversations beyond the church door. I can hear those sharp intakes of breath from here! And I can imagine the eyerolling...

You see, here's the thing. God is very clear that we are to introduce others to the deep love we are blessed with, that comes from Him alone. We are not to keep it to ourselves. He doesn't say 'Here, you sit back and munch on your custard creams, I've got this. People will come to faith just with a twitch of my little finger.' I'm sure there are plenty of us out there who have said – either aloud or in our head – that we must trust in God, and if our churches are meant to grow, He will make it so. Well. Yes. He will. But the deal is that we must work with Him. We trust that God will make the seed that we plant will grow into faith. But it is we who must plant that seed.

It is a rare thing when church people talk about their faith with one another. So, it's not surprising that we don't

want to talk to folk outside the Church. And yet we must. Where would we have been if Jesus had balked at talking to the fishermen because He didn't know them? Or because they were different from him? When you look at your community, difficult lives lived without knowing the love that is available to them, doesn't your heart ache for their loss?

In the Methodist Church there is much to help us. Faith Rooted Community Organising (FRCO) is a good start, giving you everything you need to know to guide you into supporting the community beyond your doors.

There are three Positive Working Together courses, all of which help you to learn to listen and understand. This is not just about conflict management. It's about good communication, and frankly most of us aren't that good at it. You can find all three courses listed on the Methodist website.

Equipping yourself for equality: This includes cultural literacy, good communication and facilitation. All of this is particularly useful when working with groups of people or individuals whose background is different from yours. Facilitation is quite a skill; it's not just about Post-it notes.



“Where would we have been if Jesus had balked at talking to the fishermen because He didn't know them? Or because they were different from him? When you look at your community, difficult lives lived without knowing the love that is available to them, doesn't your heart ache for their loss?”

Unconscious Bias: we are very good at making unconscious judgements of others. It really helps if we are aware of our own embedded bias. And if you are reading this thinking 'Well...I'm not biased...' Take the training – you'll be surprised!

Boundaries: what are the ones you need to keep yourself happy and healthy? This course will help you to say 'no', and to set in place checks and balances so you're not answering emails after what most consider to be the working day.

There is a lot of stuff available through the Connexional Evangelism and Growth team, supported by the Learning Network. Everything they offer is designed to help you go beyond your church building.

Mission planning: if your church or circuit needs a hand working out what to do next, and could do with help planning your mission, focus and priority, get in touch.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Contact Siggy Parratt-Halbert, Learning Network Officer aligned to Sheffield District parratt-halberts@methodistchurch.org.uk or visit sheffieldmethodist.org

Thank You

Keynote Speaker

Mark North, Faith Rooted Community Organising Lead, Sheffield Methodist District

Market Place

Good Taste - goodtaste.org.uk

MHA - mha.org.uk

All We Can - allwecan.org.uk

SCCCC - Improving the lives of older people - scccc.co.uk

Hosts

Sheffield Circuit and Greenhill Methodist Church

And finally, thank you to everyone who shared stories from their own lives, those who contributed stories for the magazine, and who made the Spring District Gathering possible.




Please pass this magazine onto someone else to read, you can also find digital version by visiting sheffieldmethodist.org



GET SOCIAL

WITH SHEFFIELD METHODIST DISTRICT

FOLLOW US

-  @SheffieldMethodist
-  @SheffieldMethodist
-  @SheffieldMethodistDistrict



Sign up for our weekly newsletter by visiting: sheffieldmethodist.org



Try our new whatsapp channel to receive news from the district.



Mini Broomhill

creative play space



Join us for a fun-filled day at Mini Broomhill, where imagination thrives!

Join our friendly family sessions and activities that bring people together each week. Whether you come for the play, the coffee, or the company - you'll always find a warm welcome here.

 We are looking for volunteers to support the team at Mini Broomhill - if you are interested, please contact:
Manager Becca Gillespie
info@minibroomhill.org.uk



Opening times

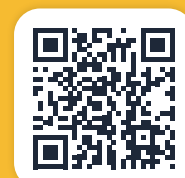
Monday, Tuesday & Friday:

10-12 and 12-2

B-Tots playgroup - Wednesday:

10.30-12

**Book
Now:**



**Broomhill Methodist Centre,
Fulwood Road, Sheffield.**



minibroomhill.org.uk