



Methodists On Mission: Exploring Discipleship and Scripture

Stories from around Sheffield Methodist District

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



SEPTEMBER 2026

A Prayer for Exploring Scripture

Storytelling God,

Teach us new ways of approaching the pages of Scripture.
Speak to us as ancient stories bring fresh insights to our current experience.

Awaken our curiosity as we encounter the people, places and stories within its pages.
Help us to engage authentically with the wisdom and life lessons we find there.

Show us how to dive deeply into these ancient texts:
to explore their original contexts,
to listen to the many voices that have interpreted them through the centuries,
and to discover what they might be saying to us today.

Give us new questions to ask
as we learn more about the lives, hopes and struggles of those who recorded these texts.
Open our hearts to receive new insights, new connections,
new ways of hearing your voice and discerning where you are leading us.

Slow us down as we seek to read and reflect prayerfully.
Write your word upon our hearts,
that it may take root within us and shape the way we live.

Help us to encounter Scripture at a deeper level
through art and poetry, through imagination and creativity,
through the stories and experiences of others,
through the news and events of our own time,
and through the joys and struggles of everyday life.

May Scripture not simply inform us,
but change us – restore, heal and transform us.
May it draw us closer to you,
deepen our discipleship,
and shape the way we see the world and one another.

And, having received your message,
show us how to share this story of love
in our words and our actions.

Amen.

Rev Julie Coates, Deputy District Chair

Chair's Message

Dear Friends, welcome to this autumn edition of our District Magazine.

I have shared with many of you that 2026 is the National Year of Reading. So, during a visit to the wonderful community bookshop at Eyam in the Peak Circuit, I was delighted to discover an interesting way of encouraging people to read something new or different. A selection of books wrapped in brown paper beneath a sign saying, 'Don't judge a book by its cover'!

Each parcel offered only a few clues: perhaps the genre, the period in which the story was set, or a brief description of what lay within. You were invited to choose a book without seeing its cover or knowing its title.

Of course, the way one person describes a book may not be the way another experiences it when they begin to read. The same is true of the Bible.

If we wrapped the Bible in brown paper, what might we write on the outside? Some might describe it as a record of history or a moral rulebook. Others might describe it as a collection of sacred stories, poetry, letters, laws and accounts of people's encounters with God. As Christians, we might describe it as the story of God's relationship with humanity, drawing us towards Jesus and

inviting us to follow him.

We might also describe it as a book that gives us language for joy and grief, hope and lament, healing and challenge, courage and transformation. It contains stories that comfort us and passages that disturb us, words that feel familiar and others with which we may need to wrestle.

At our Autumn District Gathering, we will explore Scripture through different lenses: exegetical, pastoral, missional, homiletical, prayerful, visual and imaginative. Each lens invites different questions and helps us notice something we might otherwise have missed. No single lens gives us the whole picture, but together they can deepen our understanding and help us listen more carefully to God and to one another.

The stories in this magazine reinforce this beautifully. Across our district, people are encountering God through creation and ecology, art and imaginative storytelling, music and Makaton, science and the wonder of the eclipse. Others are discovering what God is doing by listening to communities rather than assuming that the Church already knows what people need.

These different ways of engaging can help us discover more within Scripture,



hear it afresh and connect it more deeply with our lives.

To be a disciple is to be a learner. Part of that is recognising how we learn best and taking some responsibility for nurturing our faith. But discipleship also asks us to remain curious and willing to try unfamiliar ways of engaging. We may discover that God uses study, prayer, creativity, science, nature, music, experience and one another to open the Scriptures to us afresh.

So, as you read this magazine, I invite you to notice what speaks to you, and what challenges you. Perhaps look through a lens that feels less familiar. Return to a well-known bible passage with new questions. Listen to someone whose experience differs from your own.

We should never judge a book only by its cover. Neither should we assume that we have already discovered everything that Scripture, or God, has to reveal.

In Faith and Friendship
Vicky, Chair of District

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.





Fresh Eyes: Discovering New Ways to Read the Bible

We all know how to read the Bible, don't we?

Catrin Harland-Davies and Andrew Stobart explore a New Testament and an Old Testament passage looking through different lenses allowing us to explore the Bible's meaning in a deeper way.



REV DR CATRIN HARLAND-DAVIES

Catrin is the Director of Methodist Formation at The Queen's Foundation in Birmingham. This means that she oversees the training of Methodist student presbyters and deacons and leads an amazing team of Methodist tutors. She mainly teaches New Testament studies and gets particularly excited when presented with an interesting question of interpretation of the Greek (because it takes all sorts...). Prior to coming to Queen's, she was a chaplain at The University of Sheffield, and before that, in circuit ministry in Sussex. She is a fan of a countryside ramble or an afternoon watching cricket – or a rainy afternoon indoors with a good book!



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“This special identity should inspire us to see both ourselves and the contexts in which we live in a whole new light.”

of society, and as such is a practice that can awaken people to the joyful news of God's kingdom.

The story of Namaan's healing is worth deeper study for us today. How can our own boundary-crossing testimonies introduce people to our living and life-giving God?



REV DR ANDREW STOBART

Andrew is a presbyter in the Methodist Church, currently serving as Principal of Cliff College. Before being appointed as Principal, he was Academic Vice Principal, with responsibility for refreshing the College's degree curriculum and delivering new training courses for Local Lay Pastors and Local Preachers. He served as Superintendent of the Darlington Methodist Circuit and is passionate about equipping disciples to make disciples in local contexts, seeing the joyful news of Jesus transform our lives, communities and created world. He lives with his wife Rebekah and their two children in Northern Ireland, where he enjoys exploring the countryside and gaining skills in a variety of DIY projects.

1 PETER 2: 4-10

The First Epistle of Peter is written to a group of churches struggling with what it means to be a Christian community in a world that at best doesn't understand it, and at worst is openly hostile towards it. We'll explore the resources that this passage offers, to foster a sense of identity – even 'nationhood' – that confers both privilege and responsibility.

The privilege comes from being a special, chosen, royal, holy group of people. It comes from belonging to God in a way that gives the strength and courage to face a hostile world. It comes from being invited to follow the life and example of Christ. This has the potential to transform suffering into honour and turn 'outsiders' into 'insiders'.

The responsibility, on the other hand, comes from the call to be both a temple and its priesthood, offering sacrifices. It comes from being the priestly community, tasked with being holy on behalf of a wider world, that often feels very unholy. It comes from being an 'expat' community of heaven's citizens, committed to both God's values and the world's wellbeing.

This special identity should inspire us to see both ourselves and the contexts in which we live in a whole new light. We'll notice the wider context of the letter, including some of its more controversial passages (addressed

to wives and enslaved people), but also including its call to non-retaliatory peace-making, to see how its writer suggested that those early Christian communities should behave, for their own safety and for the salvation of the societies in which they lived. We'll notice, too, the themes that the writer draws out of the Hebrew Bible – ideas of the nationhood of Israel, of exile, of holiness. How are these reimagined and used?

This is a passage that has been used by persecuted groups at points in history. It can be found in the fight against Apartheid in South Africa, segregation in the USA, and Nazi ideology in 1930s Germany. We will see why it might have that kind of liberating power. But we'll also take time to notice the dangers if it is used without care – the way its ideas have been used to support white supremacy, enslavement and supersessionism. How do we hold onto a sense of being special, without believing in our superiority?

Above all, we will explore whether this is a letter that offers a way of being missional, when Christians feel that they have become the eccentric outsiders. Can a lack of political power be a strength? And does being 'in exile' offer us a way of seeing ourselves as holy, priestly ambassadors for God's Kingdom – a way of life that opens our eyes and hearts to the wider world and empowers us to serve?

2 KINGS 5:1-15

Perhaps, like me, you remember the account of the healing of Naaman from Sunday School. I'm pretty sure that I've completed several colouring-in sheets and wordsearches based on this fascinating episode. It has all the elements of a classic story: danger, trust, anguish, hope, stubbornness and, after all, a happy ending. In fact, so memorable is the healing of Namaan that Jesus himself references it when he is at his home synagogue in Nazareth.

The story is told in just one chapter of 2 Kings. And yet, digging deeper into the passage, there are connections and implications that extend throughout the whole of the Bible, and invite us to think creatively about missional discipleship today.

First, there's the theme of testimony. It's interesting to note that in the middle of the long saga of Elisha, the famous prophet and man of God, it is in fact an unnamed, trafficked girl who is the signpost to salvation for Namaan. She tells what she knows and does so with an evangelistic invitation that awakens Namaan's curiosity and ultimately leads to his healing (v14) and his conversion (v15). The story continues with further conversations – Namaan speaks to his master, the king of Syria writes to the king of Israel, Elisha sends word to the king, and so on. But while these powerful men debate

and argue and become somewhat confused, the little girl's simple testimony remains the truthful, transformative starting point for hope.

Secondly, this is a story about God's character and power. In a world of contested authorities, there is more at stake here than merely the skin of the Syrian commander. The king of Israel's consternation when he hears the request for healing – 'Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?' (v7) – is in fact a profound question that goes to the heart of biblical faith in God. Death and resurrection are not just New Testament themes; they are found right here in the heart of the Old Testament story. God's ability to 'make alive' is proof that he is able to make and keep covenant promises with his people. There's no stopping a God like this – something that will become abundantly clear when the risen Jesus strides from the empty tomb centuries later!

And, thirdly, this is a story about welcome, belonging and care across boundaries. When Jesus referenced this story to the grumpy mob in Nazareth (Luke 4:27), it was in part to illustrate that God's care extends to all, no questions asked. In 2 Kings, the extension of care across boundaries is clearly transformative, but it's also immensely challenging for all involved. Radical care upsets the carefully constructed boundaries

Read these passages
then **explore**
with these
lenses.

1 Peter 2: 4-10
2 Kings 5:1-15

Pastoral Reading

How does this connect
with real life?

This approach pays attention to human experience, listening for themes of joy, grief, anxiety, hope and healing. It asks how the text speaks into the realities people are living through today.

Missional Reading

What might God be
inviting us to do?

This approach asks how Scripture calls us into action. It looks for opportunities to live, love and serve differently in response to what we have read.

Homiletical Reading

How might we share this
message today?

This approach considers how the passage can be communicated effectively in worship, preaching and everyday conversation, helping communities hear God's word afresh.

Visual and Imaginative Reading

What do I notice when I see this?

This approach engages creativity and imagination through images, symbolism and artistic reflection. It encourages participants to enter the story; notice details they might otherwise miss and respond with curiosity and wonder.

Try this for yourself, using a practice based on **Visio Divina** – a way of prayerfully engaging with an image.

Find a piece of artwork that relates to a particular biblical story. Take some time simply to look. Notice what catches your attention. Pay attention to what you feel and allow yourself to wonder. **What is stirred within you as you look at the image? What do you wonder about? Where do I find myself in this story?**

Prayerful Reading

What is God saying to me?

Drawing on traditions such as Lectio Divina, this slower and more contemplative approach invites participants to read attentively, listen deeply and allow space for prayer and personal transformation.

- 1. Lectio (Reading):** Prepare a quiet space and read a short passage of scripture slowly and aloud. Listen for a word or phrase that catches your attention or resonates with your current life situation.
- 2. Meditatio (Meditation):** Reread the passage silently. "Ruminate" on the word or phrase that stood out, allowing the Holy Spirit to connect it to your own memories, thoughts, and desires.
- 3. Oratio (Prayer):** Speak to God from the heart about what you have just read and reflected on. This can be a prayer of thanksgiving, petition, or a cry for help or transformation.
- 4. Contemplatio (Contemplation):** Rest in silent awareness of God's presence. Let go of your own words, thoughts, and plans, simply allowing God's word to soak into your soul and change your perspective.

Exegetical Reading

What did this mean when it
was first written?

This approach explores the historical, cultural and literary context of the passage. It seeks to understand what the original audience might have heard and helps us remain grounded in the text.

Eco-Corner: Small Changes, Big Connections at Clifton Methodist Church

Clifton Methodist Church in Rotherham is launching an Eco-Corner, designed to make planet care practical, welcoming and achievable. Running alongside the church's popular coffee mornings, Eco-Corner will offer simple seasonal activities that help local people take small steps towards an eco-friendlier way of living.

The idea has grown from Clifton Methodist Church's existing community life. The church already hosts a busy programme including a Community Café, youth activities, prayer and Bible study groups, Clifton pre-school and charity coffee mornings.

The church is working towards its Silver Eco Church Award, so members began looking for a way to build on what was already happening, without over-stretching volunteers or the building.

Each month, Eco-Corner will take over a corner of the church hall during coffee morning, inviting visitors to try hands-on activities linked to environmental care. Ideas include seed saving and swapping, reusable wax wraps, recycled candles, litter picking, bug hotels, natural handmade Christmas decorations and projects connected with national campaigns such as Plastic Free July, the Big Garden Birdwatch and the Big Butterfly Count.

A recent trial showed the potential of the project. As part of Plastic Free July, members of the church's Morsbag team (morsbags.org) brought sewing machines, fabric and information to a coffee morning, making and giving away reusable bags. Visitors were able to have a go themselves, and some took fabric and instructions home to continue the activity. The trial helped raise



awareness and reached people who might not normally become involved in church activities.

Rev Louise Makin, who is leading the project with Climate Champion Karen Dunn and members of the congregation said: "Many local people are concerned about climate change and care for the planet, but practical action can sometimes feel overwhelming. The Eco-Corner is intended to make those first steps feel possible. We also hope that conversations sparked by Eco-Corner will deepen relationships and encourage people to explore faith, creation and discipleship in accessible ways."

Wooden Blocks Help Build New Church Gathering in Stanwood

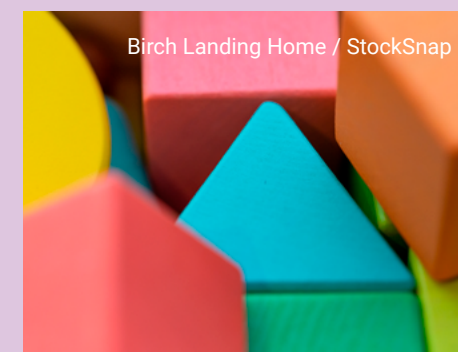
Stanwood Methodist Church in Sheffield is launching a new play-based community gathering designed to welcome local children, families and carers into a fun, safe and welcoming space.

Stanwood Community Building Blocks, will be run by volunteers from Stanwood Methodist Church and Christ Church Stannington and the hope is the monthly gathering will help families play together, share refreshments and build friendships while becoming more familiar with the

church as a place of care, faith and community.

The idea follows an initial community play gathering which showed that a simple, practical activity could bring people into the building and create good conversations.

Jane Wall, Community Family Worker at the church said: "The project responds to a local need for low-cost family activities, safe community spaces and opportunities to meet others without pressure. We will focus first on welcome, hospitality and



listening rather than a formal programme and as relationships grow, we hope there will be natural opportunities to offer prayer, invite families to other church activities and support anyone who wants to explore faith further."

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The district has given these projects a £500 New Beginnings grant to support their work and a further £250 will be available after the first year. To find out more and how to apply visit: sheffieldmethodist.org/what-we-do/finance-fundraising/new-beginnings.html



“Signing the Faith”

At Greenhill Methodist Church in Sheffield, worship has an inspiring addition with the use of Makaton - a communication programme that combines signs, symbols and speech. Introduced to make services more accessible, it is helping people of all ages and abilities engage more deeply with worship.

The church began using Makaton around two years ago after recognising the importance of making the Gospel accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities, learning difficulties and hearing loss.

“We want the Gospel to be accessible for everyone,” explains James Pettinger, who is involved with the children’s work at the church. “Makaton is supportive communication. It gives people another way to understand and connect with the message.”

The congregation primarily uses Makaton alongside its monthly worship

song. Learning the signs gradually over a few weeks helps both children and adults become familiar with the song’s meaning. “We use the same song each half-term, so everyone learns it together,” says James. “We learn the signs bit by bit until we know the whole song, and the more signs we learn, the quicker we pick them up.”

Unlike traditional action songs, Makaton signs carry specific meaning and are formally recognised across schools, care settings and residential homes. “This is a step on from just actions,” James adds. “We’re using signs that communicate meaning rather than simply movements.”

Although some members were initially unsure, the response has been overwhelmingly positive. “People were sceptical at first, but everyone has got on board with it, we use resources from the *Count Everyone In* project which have been really useful and allow us to learn Makaton



step by step.” James said.

By signing together, the congregation is demonstrating that faith, inclusion and community can be expressed in many meaningful ways.

People First in Toll Bar

A pioneering new Christian community is beginning to take shape in Toll Bar, Doncaster, with local people at its heart.

In a place where there is currently no church presence, the vision is to walk alongside residents, school families and community groups, listening carefully to their hopes and needs and discovering together what church might become.

The work has grown from the faithful ministry of the Circuit RE Team, led by Aimee Roddam, whose links with the local primary school have opened doors to children, parents, staff and wider families.

Conversations with residents, together with partnership through Toll Bar Area Residents Association, have shown a community that values friendship, being a good neighbour and opportunities to be together.

The pioneering role will begin with relationship-building at the heart of local

life. Rather than bringing a ready-made model of church to Toll Bar, Aimee will spend time listening, being present and earning trust among residents, school families and community partners. Her ministry will be one of noticing where God is already at work, encouraging people’s gifts and helping the community discover what a new expression of church could look like in their own place.

Aimee Roddam said: “Through seasonal events, simple gatherings and ongoing conversations, my aim is to create welcoming spaces where friendships can deepen, faith can be explored naturally, and local leadership can begin to emerge. The hope is that, over time, a worshipping and serving community will grow from the ground up, rooted in God’s love, shaped by Toll Bar’s people and sustained by the relationships we have already begun to nurture.”



Aimee was a guest on our podcast Faith, Hope and The Journey, scan the QR code to listen, or visit: sheffieldmethodist.org/podcast.html



Photo by iMattSmart / Unsplash



First Action for Hope Grant Awarded

Aston Methodist Church in the Rotherham has become the first church in the district to benefit from a new Action for Hope Grant, securing £3,000 to support eco-friendly improvements to its building.

The funding will help cover the cost of energy-efficient LED lighting and upgrading the church’s heating system. The improvements are designed to reduce energy consumption by making sure only the rooms in use are heated, helping the church lower both its carbon footprint and running costs.

Action for Hope Grants offer churches across the district the opportunity to apply for up to £10,000 to fund projects that support the Methodist Church’s commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions. Grants can cover up to 75 per cent of a project’s costs, with churches able to submit multiple applications over time to access the full funding.

To qualify, churches must already have achieved a Bronze Eco Church Award, demonstrating their commitment to the environment. The district is aiming to see at least 18 justice-seeking, flourishing churches achieve Silver Eco Church status by 2030.

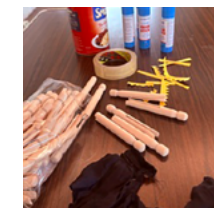
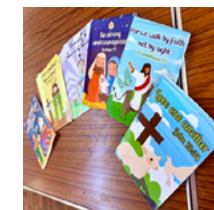
Karen Dunn, Circuit Climate Justice Worker, welcomed the award, saying: “We are passionate about caring for God’s creation and becoming more sustainable. This grant is another step towards

achieving a Silver Eco Church Award in the circuit and we hope that more churches will follow.”

Neil Harland, District Mission Enabler, said: “The grant marks an important milestone for Aston Methodist Church and highlights our growing commitment to reducing the carbon footprint across the district. We would urge other churches to consider how the Action for Hope grants can benefit them.”



“We are passionate about caring for God’s creation and becoming more sustainable. This grant is another step towards achieving a Silver Eco Church Award in the circuit and we hope that more churches will follow.”



Family Church Offers a Fresh Way to Explore Faith

There’s a new Family Church starting to take shape in the Derbyshire North East Circuit, giving young families a relaxed, creative and welcoming place to explore faith together.

The idea for Family Church came about when more than 100 primary school aged children attended a three-day holiday club last year at Loundsley Green Church in Chesterfield. The Methodist and Anglican LEP also held two Christingle services in December to accommodate the large numbers attending with local uniformed groups.

These encouraging signs prompted the circuit to consider how they could create a dedicated space where families could explore faith together, free from some of the barriers that can exist in more traditional church settings.

Tom Surgay, Local Lay Pastor, explained: “The focus of Family Church is to get young families to engage with faith in an accessible and fun way in a safe and welcoming environment. We hope that in time this will provoke deeper conversations as we build relationships with the families who attend.”

Family church takes place twice a month with different themes such as “King for a Day” based on the story of Israel choosing Saul as King. Activities included a “Name the King” quiz, story bingo, crown-making, a coronation and banquet, plus a Jester School featuring juggling and plate spinning. Children designed their own coat of arms on canvas banners and decorated them with wooden pegs to create their own king or queen characters.



Churches Shine as Communities Gather for Eclipse Celebrations

People came together across the district to witness the eclipse, with churches using the rare celestial event as an opportunity to celebrate community, creativity and reflection.

Events in Barnsley, Chesterfield, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield brought together hundreds of people, many of them marking what may have felt like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. To help churches make the most of the occasion, the district offered £500 grants towards the cost of hosting community eclipse parties.

Parties took place at Hasland, Boston Castle Park, Dinnington, Hemsworth, Inkersall, Handsworth Woodhouse, Cantley, Victoria Stafford Road, Manor Church Community Project, Brigholmelee, Thorne and Emmanuel Methodist Church.

There was plenty to keep all ages busy. Children and adults made colourful suncatchers and clay models, joined in games and quizzes, shared food and sampled sunrise-themed mocktails. At Dinnington, a local musician added to the atmosphere, while every event offered solar eclipse safety glasses so people could enjoy the spectacle safely. Alongside the fun, visitors were invited to reflect on themes of wonder, creation and light, with gentle prompts linking the eclipse to hope and belonging.

Rev Lyn Gregg, from Emmanuel Methodist Church, said: "We got more visitors on our Sun Day than on a Sunday."

One visitor to Emmanuel commented online: "Wow! So glad we went to Emmanuel

Methodist Church tonight. What a great family event, and glasses provided too. Absolutely marvellous to see. I didn't see it in 1999 and won't be here in 2090, so thanks for tonight."

Alison Padgett, also from Emmanuel, said the response had gone far beyond expectations: "We had around 150 people across the generations and it went far beyond what we imagined it could ever be!"

Local Pastor Sean Worsley from Doncaster said: "It was an amazing event. It was great to see so many people from the local community, and we had some good chats. Many thanks to all who helped to put it together."

Mike Scott from Cantley said 'This exceeded our expectations! It was amazing how many families we'd not seen before came to our party from our neighbourhood and were able to watch the eclipse. We had bought 150 pairs of Eclipse glasses and we needed them all. Everyone was very appreciative.'

A visitor to Cantley Methodist Church said "Absolutely brilliant! So good to see the church doing something like this."

Lisa Wigfield from M CCP said: "It was brilliant, we gave out 150 glasses and needed more. It was great to talk to people we hadn't met before."

For many who attended, the events offered a chance not only to watch the eclipse safely, but also to share in the sense of awe inspired by the spectacle in the sky. It was an opportunity for churches to strengthen local relationships, welcome new visitors and create spaces where people could reflect on themes of light, hope and community.



Visit our Eclipse gallery to see more photos from around the district: sheffieldmethodist.org/eclipse-2026.html



Eclipse Images by Nick Jackson





To Grow, to Witness, to Serve

By Rev Fran Johnson, Bakewell Methodist Church

To grow, to witness, to serve" is more than a strapline for us – it is the heartbeat of our church family and the prayer that shapes our life together.

We are seeing growth in many encouraging ways. Our weekly prayer meeting continues to flourish, and our shared Bible studies regularly welcome more than 30 people who are eager to listen, learn and hear from God. Alongside this spiritual growth, we are also praying and working for growth in numbers, so that more people may discover the love and hope found in Jesus.

Witness has been a joyful theme this year. We have loved creating new outreach events

for people who may be new to church, from our fabulous nativity party and family carols to a sugar-filled pancake celebration. In August, we launched our first Story Café – an inclusive morning exploring Bible stories through art and creativity.

Our creative displays have also welcomed hundreds of visitors on the "Journey to Bethlehem" and the "Journey to Jerusalem", offering thoughtful, imaginative ways to engage with the story of Jesus. A moving Remembrance display helped connect schoolchildren, the British Legion and the wider town community.

The comments in our visitor's book have

been a real encouragement, with people describing the church as welcoming, creative, inclusive and prayerfully put together. It is a joy to know that these displays are helping people reflect personally and meaningfully on faith.

Serving remains central to who we are. Through Open Door, local people come together for conversation, games and a free afternoon tea. Our pastoral teams offer care and support in many quiet but important ways, and Healing on the Streets continues each month in Bakewell town centre.

So, our prayer continues: "Dear God, help us to grow, to witness and to serve."



There's A Feeling in the Air

By Daphne Sidney, Worship Leader, The Grove

From the earliest conversations about whether Holy Habits was the right path for our church, I have found the journey inspirational.

It has stretched and challenged us, while drawing us together spiritually and practically as a church family. It has encouraged us to nurture one another within the church and helped that care overflow into welcome, hospitality and deeper relationships with our partners and wider community.

Church members have been leading services, sharing testimonies and prayer prompts, receiving bread and wine in different

ways and places, and enjoying early Sunday breakfasts together. We have reflected on bread-making as a picture of spiritual life, borrowed books from around the church, and celebrated William Tyndale's printing of the Bible through drama created by our local theatre group.

At Christmas, the habit of Gladness and Generosity opened opportunities to become more involved with our partners. Chocolates were delivered personally to each group, and Myrrh the Mystery brought the Christmas story into the community through companionship, pie and peas, and shared discovery.

Prayer then seemed to flow naturally. Requests from the Christmas tree were shared, and every group meeting on the premises was prayed for by someone. This involved me in a busy daily prayer life and opened immense opportunities to pray for an unknown child and family, Thursday lunch guests and helpers, and Messy Church.

The Prayer habit brought humbling and rewarding moments, including bread-making with Messy Church followed by a first communion. We are now preparing a reflective service, using artwork from the Methodist Church Modern Art Collection and resources from Ian Adams' Running over Rocks to explore fresh ways of engaging with the Bible.

One memory remains especially precious to me: children from Messy Church leading the Lord's Prayer by film during Sunday worship. It felt like a prayer answered and a sign of God at work among us.

Holy Habits has deepened our faith, strengthened our fellowship and helped us discover new ways to serve. There is a feeling in the air: a sense that God is still moving, shaping and calling us forward.



The Art of Welcome

Art of Welcome projects are taking shape around the district with several churches in Sheffield taking up the challenge to create a piece of artwork which answers the question – **What does welcome mean to you?**

The project launched in spring 2026 is 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.

Manor Church & Community Project (MCCP), Greenhill Methodist Church and Parson Cross Initiative (PXI) have begun work on their creative visions using district grants of £500 to support their activities.

PARSONS CROSS METHODISTS

Parson Cross Methodists are teaming up with a local artist, the Art for All group, PXI charity and other local community organisations to create a multilingual welcome sign. This will be incorporated into a new Garden of Welcome at Mount Tabor chapel, which is already known locally as a space where people feel welcomed "as they are".

District Chair Vicky Atkins said: "At a time when many of our communities feel increasingly divided, *The Art of Welcome* is a simple but powerful way of bringing people together. Through creativity, conversation and shared experiences, we can help build relationships, foster understanding and demonstrate the generous welcome of Christ.

"Whether you partner with a school, a community group, a uniformed organisation or simply your local neighbourhood, we'd love to see projects that reflect the unique character of your community. Every project, however small, has the potential to make a real difference.

"We want to make our district a place where welcome is not just talked about but lived."

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Find out more and how to apply for £500, scan the QR code or visit: sheffieldmethodist.org/theartofwelcome

MANOR CHURCH & COMMUNITY PROJECT (MCCP)

MCCP is an ecumenical project – Methodist, URC and Anglican and are planning to create a mosaic for the outside of the Temple Park Centre to show that it's a welcoming space for all. The mosaic will be made up of individual pieces which will depict personal struggles and hope for the future. Creative sessions and workshops will be held so people can help create the mosaic.

GREENHILL METHODIST CHURCH

Greenhill Methodist Church are working with uniformed organisations and their community Munch Club to create a mural and freestanding gallery. There will be a series of workshops to help people explore more deeply how they can use art to express themselves.

VICTORIA STAFFORD ROAD

Victoria Stafford Road Methodist Church is creating a patchwork frieze to be displayed in an illuminated case outside the church as part of the project. Through conversations with local people, the church has identified a growing need to nurture connections between different groups within the community so have teamed up with a local graphic designer to create the artwork serving as a visible and lasting invitation to the wider community that all are welcome.

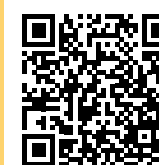




Photo by Ilona Frey / Pixabay

Mission and God's Planet

By Siggy Parratt-Halbert, The Learning Network

When we think of mission, or good discipleship, how often do we partner it with ecology? It matters that we connect these words with the other-than-human world around us. We can't separate Jesus' teachings from God's created world. Yet many people still don't see the link between living with a light footprint and what we are taught in the Bible. But it is there, for sure.

So, let's assume you believe me that being a Follower of The Way means caring for God's creation in equality (God didn't create a hierarchy), and encouraging others to live lightly too. How might this change how we see mission? How might it shape our own discipleship?

Working alongside people already caring for their local environment is a fantastic way to walk the missional walk. What if people could see Christ's love through us caring for the planet alongside them? Not tucked away in the church garden, but volunteering at a Wildlife Trust site, an animal sanctuary, or a local nature reserve. And, as a neat little aside, it helps your church on its Eco Church journey. How good is that?

And discipleship? Well...we rarely think we have something to learn from the natural world. But it is the willow that knows how to ease a headache, the foxglove that knows how to regulate a heartbeat, the yew that offers treatment for breast cancer. See how the information travels in one direction – other-than-humans sharing their knowledge, not the other way round. So how might we acknowledge that? Can we love them as our neighbour? I think we can. Fit a swift box to your house; join in with No Mow May; feed the hedgehogs. Each one is a tiny recognition of our being disciples by the earth God made.

Next Steps for FRCO in the Sheffield District

Faith Rooted Community Organising (FRCO) continues to grow across Sheffield District, with several opportunities in the coming months for churches and individuals to get involved.

Half-day training sessions will soon be available for those who want to explore how FRCO can be used in their own church context. These sessions will introduce key practices and help participants consider how listening, relationship-building and community action can shape church life.

Churches will also be invited to take part in a six-week Bible study course, helping groups read scripture through the lens of FRCO and connect faith with the needs, hopes and gifts of their communities.

As FRCO projects begin to emerge locally, the prayer is that others will be encouraged to discover how these practices can support their own mission.

Further learning opportunities include a three-day residential course at Cliff College, bookable through

the Methodist Church website, and a support group for those already using FRCO. This group will offer space to share good practice, learn together and build peer-to-peer encouragement.

ONE-TO-ONE CONVERSATIONS

The district would also like to hold one-to-one conversations with those already working with people affected by addiction, or those interested in doing so. We want to hear what is happening, recognise where God is already at work, and discern how best to support and strengthen this ministry.

If any of these opportunities interest you, or someone you know, please email: frcol@sheffieldmethodist.org.



Youth Groups Lead the Way for Eco District

We are taking bold steps toward becoming an official Eco-District, and its young people who are leading the way.

Circuits and churches are exploring new ways to care for creation, and we are calling on youth groups and Brigades to share the inspiring work they are already doing.

Many young people are ahead of the curve when it comes to environmental action. From creative recycling projects to community clean-ups, youth groups are often the ones showing what eco-discipleship looks like. We hope to celebrate these efforts and encourage even more collaboration between young people and their churches.

"We know our young people are passionate about the planet," says Vic Loveday District Youth and Families Coordinator. "We want to shine a light on their ideas, their energy, and their leadership."

Youth groups have been litter picking in Rotherham and have made a real difference where they live.

Vic said, "When young people take the lead, something powerful happens. Eco-projects become intergenerational, and that strengthens our communities as well as our commitment to caring for God's creation."

It is hoped that by sharing their stories, youth groups may discover new connections with adults in their congregations who share the same passion for sustainability. Joint activities, such as community gardening, upcycling workshops, or wildlife-friendly planting, can help build stronger relationships and deepen the church's collective environmental witness.

Vic added: "We believe that the creativity and enthusiasm of our young people will play a vital role in shaping a greener future. As the eco-district initiative grows, the voices and actions of our youth groups can inspire the wider Methodist community.

If your youth group is taking steps to help the environment, we want to hear from you. Send their photos, stories, and ideas to the district office. Together, we hope to celebrate every step, large or small, toward a more sustainable, hope-filled future.

Suggested activities youth groups can get involved with:

- Litter picks in local parks, church grounds, or neighbourhood streets
- Craft or maker sessions using recycled or repurposed materials
- Bird counts, or building bird feeders and insect hotels for church gardens
- Clothing exchanges to encourage reuse and reduce waste
- Sustainable cooking sessions, including vegetarian or low-waste recipes (we are particularly keen to hear from anyone with a great beetroot brownie recipe)

For more creative ways to connect faith with environmental action scan the QR code.



Or visit: ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk/resources/youth/



"When young people take the lead, something powerful happens."



For Such a Time as This: Equipping Churches for Mission

By Neil Harland, Mission Enabler

A year into the second phase of *For Such a Time as This*, our district strategy for resourcing mission continues to help churches become more inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking. While priorities evolve as we listen to God, learn from one another and respond to changing local contexts, the vision remains clear: supporting churches to share God's love in ways that are relevant, courageous and hopeful.

We are living through a period of significant social change. As the era of being "Christian by default" continues to fade, churches are encountering growing numbers of people who are spiritually curious, searching for meaning, or keen to work alongside churches for the good of their communities. Across the district, congregations are responding creatively to these opportunities.

NEW CHURCHES

New expressions of church continue to emerge in a variety of settings.

At Broomhill Methodist Centre in Sheffield, a pioneer chaplain has been appointed to connect with people using the centre's new climbing wall and imaginative play space. Doncaster Circuit has secured national funding to establish the first church in the village of Toll Bar, building on years of relationship development through schools work.

National funding has also enabled Metal Methodists to expand ministry among fans of heavy metal and alternative music. Meanwhile, Dinnington Methodist Church has launched a youth group, with some members attending 3Generate for the first time this autumn, while community events are helping the church build new relationships.

In Derbyshire North East Circuit, several years of pioneering work are bearing fruit through developments including a Sunday afternoon worship gathering and a "school church" after-school club. These initiatives demonstrate how churches can form and grow in creative ways when they begin with relationships and local needs.

“The vision remains clear: supporting churches to share God's love in ways that are relevant, courageous and hopeful.”

REVITALISING AND FLOURISHING CHURCHES

Alongside planting new communities of faith, the district has spent time learning from churches that are flourishing and accompanying others seeking renewal.

Revitalisation often requires churches to listen carefully, embrace experimentation and be willing to make changes. Over the coming year, this work will be strengthened through Faith Rooted Community Organising, which encourages churches to build relationships, listen deeply and work collaboratively for positive change.

A good example comes from High Green Methodist Church in Sheffield. In 2025, members sensed there was a need for a simple space where people could gather for friendship and conversation. Supported by a District New Beginnings Grant, they launched 3C's: Coffee, Cake and Companionship.

Expecting perhaps a dozen visitors, they instead welcomed 34 guests on the first day. Since then, relationships have continued to grow. Prayer cards are available, the chapel is open for personal prayer, and seasonal worship events create opportunities for people to explore faith naturally within a welcoming community.



ENDING WELL

Not every faithful step involves growth in existing forms. Some congregations have been discerning whether it is time to let go of current ways of being church in order to create new possibilities for mission.

Hatfield House Lane Methodist Church in Sheffield recognised that maintaining its ageing building had become unsustainable. By relocating to nearby Shiregreen URC, the congregation has been able to focus less on property concerns and more on discipleship, fellowship and outreach.

Before leaving their chapel, members carefully redistributed useful items to other churches, demonstrating thoughtful stewardship and enabling the site to be explored for future mission opportunities.

NET ZERO

More churches are also making creation care an integral part of their discipleship and witness.

To date, 22 churches have received Energy Efficiency Surveys through district support. Central Aston Methodist Church has become the first recipient of an Action for Hope grant to implement recommended energy-saving improvements.

Fifteen churches have now achieved Eco Church Bronze status and six have reached Silver. These milestones reflect a growing commitment to environmental responsibility as part of the Church's calling to seek justice and care for God's creation.



Clifton Methodist Church in Rotherham recently received a New Beginnings grant to establish an eco-corner within its coffee morning programme. By helping people make practical environmental changes, the church is creating opportunities for faith and action to grow together.

DIVERSIFIED INCOME

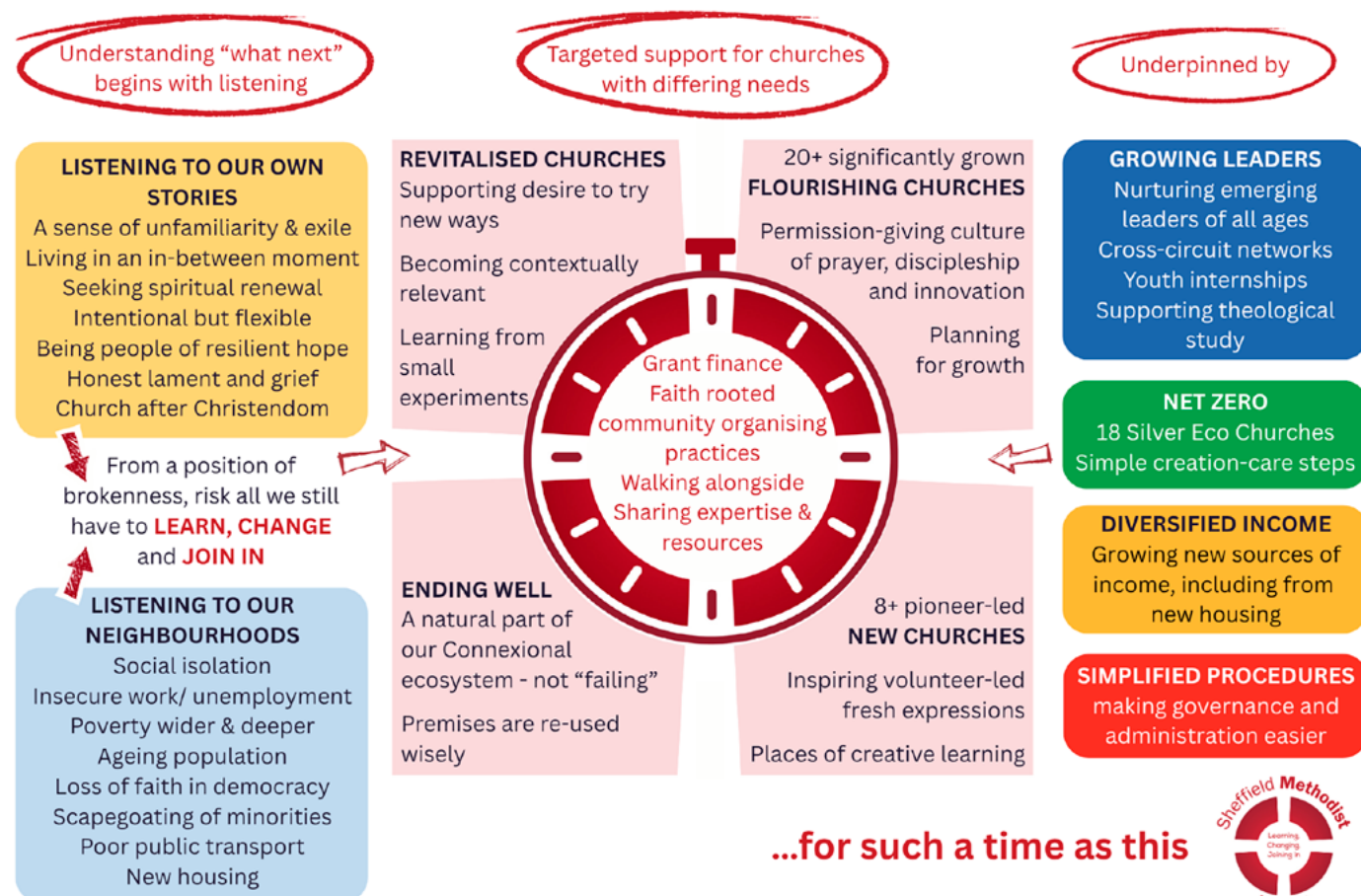
The district is also exploring how Methodist property assets can continue serving communities while supporting future mission.

Work is underway to repurpose surplus buildings and land into affordable housing and other community-focused projects while generating sustainable income for the long-term support of Methodist ministry. One promising scheme will see a semi-derelict building transformed into affordable homes in partnership with a community land trust.

These projects take time, but they reflect a commitment to using the resources entrusted to the Church in ways that benefit local communities and strengthen mission for future generations.

The stories from across the district point to a hopeful future. Through pioneering new communities, revitalising existing churches, caring for creation, stewarding buildings wisely and embracing change where necessary, congregations are discovering fresh opportunities to share God's love. In changing times, the call remains the same: to be growing, inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking churches, serving Christ and their communities for such a time as this.

Helping you be a growing, inclusive, evangelistic, justice seeking church...





Exploring Discipleship and Scripture

By Siggy Parratt-Halbert, The Learning Network

Back in the day, when Learning and Development Officers worked to a specialism, I was aligned to that of discipleship. Those designated specialisms are long gone now, but I wonder if discipleship is more pertinent now than it was then, given the times we live in.

Following Christ is a conscious decision; we ask Jesus to enter our lives, and for the Spirit to enter our being. Discipleship too, is a conscious thing. Being a Follower of The Way doesn't make us a disciple, we must choose. And once we choose that's it, disciples for life. For each person, what it means to be a disciple will be different, depending on who we are; where we are; our gifts; our life circumstances; the spiritual journey we are on; and how we understand the Bible.

Sheffield District's Autumn Gathering in September not only recognises this but acknowledges that the way in which we understand Scripture will affect what discipleship means for

each of us. But how much do we understand? We all have our own goggles through which we read the word of God and we all have our own sieve through which we sift and subsequently see the meaning. Often it's the spaces in between the words, or the tiny grain of a lightbulb moment that enlightens us. But how do we access this?

The Learning Network understands that our theological comprehension can sometimes be a bit...well...lacking in depth. Getting to grips with Jesus' teachings isn't as straightforward as we might think. If Peter, as the rock on which Jesus built his church, was foxed, then it surely follows that we probably don't get a lot of it either!

To this end, we have Bible Month. Resources and training are available in June, and there is four weeks' worth of material you can study on your own, in small groups or as a congregation. Materials remain available for the year; you can engage with them way beyond June. This year, we are taking a closer look at Philippians. There is a wonderful

smorgasbord of materials to suit every kind of learner: a free booklet which you can order or download; videos exploring the themes of Philippians; animations; conversations; a daily reading guide; a journalling kit for the crafty.... all of it helping us to understand what Paul was trying to get across to his audience.

And what happens after all of this? We become stronger disciples, better fitted for the mission Jesus has tasked us with.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

You can access this year's resources and previous Bible Month materials by scanning this QR code.



Or visit: methodist.org.uk/faith/the-bible/bible-month/



Thank You!

Keynote Speakers

Rev Dr Catrin Harland-Davies, Director of Methodist Formation at The Queen's Foundation.

Rev Dr Andrew Stobart, Principal at Cliff College

Workshop Leaders

Erica Dunnow, Rev Graham Edwards, Rev Dr Catrin Harland-Davies, Rev Dr Andrew Stobart, Rev Judith Jessop, Rev Julie Coates

Market Place

Good Taste - goodtaste.org.uk

Little L Crafts - thislitttle.co.uk

Cliff College - cliffcollege.ac.uk

Hosts

Rotherham and Dearne Valley Circuit and Broom Methodist Church

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

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



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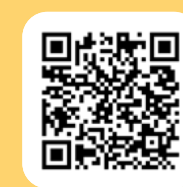
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