

The Methodist



Norwich Circuit Magazine

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STAFF

Editor

Pauline Mann

Team Members

Trixie Dye

Joy Southam

Ann Waterhouse

Design

Pauline West

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Electronic copy to Pauline West
pauline.west8@gmail.com or 37
Tanager Close, Norwich, NR3 3QD.

The editor's address is Broadlands,
Mill Road, Surlingham, Norwich,
NR14 7AF; tel 01508 538442

Items in bold type should be read before the Circuit Meeting

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From the manse

The festive season has come and gone. Some of us have made resolutions for the new year which we might fulfil or break. Whatever resolutions we made, let them show the light of God in our various ministries as disciples of the Kingdom of God.

As I pick up from Rev Andy's last letter, which mentioned the four crucial evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, who witnessed Jesus' full ministry in this world. I am drawn to Luke 17: 20-21 where the Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God was coming. Jesus says to them "The Kingdom of God does not come in such a way as to be seen, no one will say look here it is or there it is because the Kingdom of God is within you"

Jesus was telling his disciples that; the Kingdom of God was within them hence the Lord's prayer thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. We might wonder what heaven is like, Heaven is the dwelling place of God called the "The Kingdom of God". God is Love hence His Kingdom is about, love, hope, peace, joy and forgiveness. Therefore, as disciples of Christ and ambassadors of the Kingdom let us bring that love, peace, hope and joy to this earth. In our various capacities as disciples of Christ we have a duty to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom. I pray that our discipleship reflects the true light of the Kingdom to others so that they may also feel God's grace, loving power and presence.

We live in a broken world full of loneliness, pain and suffering, let us therefore endeavour to share the Good News of the Kingdom with others through our actions, words and prayers. Prayer and paying attention to the Holy Spirit is key to our discipleship, hence Jesus commanded the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the coming of Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8). It is the Holy Spirit that empowered and enabled the disciples to perform miracles, heal the sick and preach repentance. Likewise, we need the Holy Spirit to empower and enable us to do the extraordinary to bring the Kingdom of God to others.

Let us therefore go ye therefore as commanded by Jesus Christ to preach, the word, bring healing to the sick, hope to the broken hearted, joy to the sorrowful and hope to the hopeless. Paul wrote in Romans 10:14 “And how can they believe without hearing about him and how can they hear without a preacher”. In our various capacities we are called to proclaim the Good News through our actions because we are called to serve.

Prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit are at the core of our discipleship. As prayerful disciples and ambassadors of the Kingdom we are called to hold hands with the lonely, suffering and oppressed; to assure them of God’s love. Our resolutions as Christians should resemble the Kingdom of God in this ailing world. Let us pray for peace in our own lives, families, churches, circuit and the church at large. As we pray let us remember all countries at war and in conflict for peace and reconciliation. Our faith, as disciples should shine through us and bring peace to others.

Prayer

Heavenly God make us your true ambassadors who continue to walk in trust and obedience of your Word. Open the doors of our hearts so that all may feel welcome and loved. AMEN

.SHALOM!

Revd Mary



AI Write for Rights campaign

by Frances Middleton

Thank you to all of you who sent a Christmas greeting of hope and light to an Amnesty prisoner, either Professor Fincanci or Dang Dihn Bach or may be someone else from the AI website. It makes a huge difference to people's lives. Here is news of some from previous years -

Rita Karasartova (in Kyrgyzstan, 2023) said “ I would like to express my huge, huge gratitude. Your timely actions, these letters, petitions, signatures and the huge number of letters that went to the court, that went to the prosecutor's office were very empowering to us all”

Rita was acquitted in June 2024

Aleksandra Skochilenko (in Russia, 2022) wrote “I want to say thank you to Amnesty International. It's hard to put my gratitude into words, because, to a large extent, I am here thanks to you”

Aleksandra was freed in a prisoner swap in August 2024

And now, we have our own news of a woman we sent a card to!!

‘We’ means Chapel Field Junior Church. I told the children about those in prison unjustly and how the AI Write for Rights campaign helps them. They were all amazed and angry about the situation in many countries, particularly, Ana da Silva Miguel (aka Neth Nahara on TikTok) in Angola. She was imprisoned for broadcasting a live video on TikTok criticising President Joao Lournco. Her six month sentence was increased to 2 years and she was denied her medication for 8 months, which impacted her health.

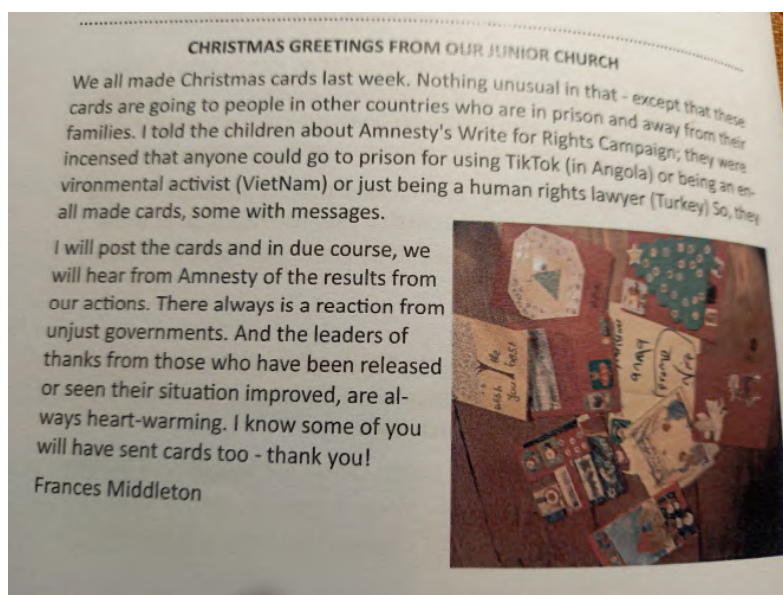
The children all made cards and Ana was sent several! I posted them all to the addresses Amnesty gave.

Then I had an email to say that Ana had been released on 1st January! It was such good news, to hear that she is now back with her two small children. I told our Junior Church, and they were very pleased. I hope I managed to explain how important their cards will have been, in the decision. It is hard for us adults to imagine what life is like under an unjust, or sometimes downright inhumane, regime, so for children it is even harder.....

We said a prayer of thanks and prayed for Ana and her family.

So, never underestimate what a small gesture like a card or an email can achieve, at home or far away.....

Thank you again.



**‘Save the Date’
October 4th and 5th 2025**

Drayton and Horsford Methodist Church will be celebrating their Joint Church Anniversary over the first weekend of October 2025 with the focus on, and thanksgiving for 200 years of Local Preachers coming to ‘Preach the Word’ in both villages, even before the churches were built.

All our current Local Preachers will be invited to lend a cross that belongs to them and say why it is significant to them and their calling to preach. Their crosses will be on exhibition in the church from 10am to 4pm on Saturday, 4th October, then on Sunday, 5th October from 2pm to 4pm. David Ingham has been invited to lead worship on that Sunday, representing our Circuit Local Preachers, past and present.

More details in the following editions of The Methodist, watch this space.....

St Martins

by Kate Daynes

St Martins is a well-known homelessness charity that has been working in Norwich since 1972. The charity was granted the ancient honour of ‘Freedom of the City’ in 2022 in the year of its 50th anniversary and holds a special place in the hearts of local people. Every December an army of volunteers take to the streets to collect donations for the work of the charity. In December 2024 £27,545 was collected which will provide more accommodation and support for people experiencing homelessness.

St Martins Chief Executive Dr Jan Sheldon “In previous years we were pleased to see that Norwich bucked the trend and the number of people sleeping rough on our city’s streets was reducing, thanks to the hard work of St Martins and our local partners. This is no longer the case, and it is devastating for those who find themselves with no other option but to sleep rough.”



Being on the streets means that someone is seventeen times more likely to suffer from violence and abuse; the average life expectancy of a man on the streets is 47, for a woman it is 43, compared to the general life expectancy which is 81. Being on the streets makes its mark on people; many suffer poor mental and physical health, and some will take to substances to blot out the pain.

This is why it is so important that the outreach team (Pathways) get to people before

their rough sleeping habits become entrenched. The provision of specialist support out on the streets can make the difference between life and death. St Martins' specialist accommodation projects then pick up the baton and provide accommodation and support to enable people to start their recovery journey.

At any one time St Martins' 200 dedicated team members support over 300 people. The charity offers a range of services which are individualised and person-focused. Jan said, "A one-size fits all approach to homelessness doesn't work. Every person experiences different issues, which might include relationship breakdown, previous trauma, domestic abuse, debt, unemployment, addiction to substances and poor mental and physical health. Each person's experience is different, so the support offered varies from person to person. Some people use our services for a short time, while others will live in our accommodation and receive support from St Martins for the rest of their lives."

During 2025 the charity has committed to work in partnership with Flagship Housing to build 12 new one-bedroom flats over two sites at Netherwood Green in Norwich. St Martins has received some government funding and a generous donation from Hopstead but there is still a gap to fill, which is the focus of their fundraising efforts. Given the national housing crisis, move on accommodation is hard to find for the people supported by St Martins. Twelve new units will help to ease some of the pressure and move people through St Martins' services more quickly.



Like all charities, St Martins has been hit hard by the 2024 Autumn budget. The increase in National Insurance will mean that the 2025/26 budget will be harder than ever to balance. Difficult decisions will need to be taken to ensure St Martins continues to provide the much-needed support to some of the most vulnerable people in Norwich.

St Martins CEO Dr Jan Sheldon said, “Having the support of local people makes such a difference to us here at St Martins. Quite simply, we could not do our work without their support. It means a great deal to us and the people who use our services.”

How to help St Martins

Make a donation. This can be done online at www.stmartinshousing.org.uk/donate or by calling 01603 667706. Cheques can be made to ‘St Martins Housing Trust’ and posted to St Martins House, 120 Thorpe Road, Norwich NR1 1RT

Keen gardener or baker? St Martins Fest is a summer fundraising event set for the Eaton Park in Norwich on Saturday 21st June. Donations of plants and cakes are welcome. If you can help please contact fundraising@stmartinshousing.org.uk or call 01603 667706.

Volunteer In December If you can spare an hour of your time in December to collect donations in Norwich city Centre please get in touch on fundraising@stmartinshousing.org.uk or call 01603 667706.

Pictures:

- * St Martins CEO Dr Jan Sheldon
- * St Martins House
- * The December Street collection
- * A cooking course for the people supported by St Martins



Profile

Kai Chiu Liu

by Joy Southam

Kai Chiu was born in Hong Kong when it was still under British Rule.

He came to England in 1977 to study at a Benedictine boarding School at Westgate-on-Sea, Kent. He started with O levels and continued with A-levels during his first four years in Britain. He had always felt intimidated in the English lessons at home, in Hong Kong, when asked to read out loud, but at the boarding school he soon found his voice and was happy to speak in classes. The school's strict routine suited him – uniform was worn until 8pm, on trips into town and on Sundays. All the time he was at the school, he attended the masses regularly.

With his family still in Hong Kong, Kai Chiu went home at least once a year. There were lots of overseas students among his peers and he is still in touch with his two best friends from the school. His education from Kindergarten to Sixth Form was all in Catholic schools although his parents attended the Chinese Church in Hong Kong having moved there from China whilst young. His paternal grandmother was also Christian.

Kai Chiu studied at Essex University completing his first degree in Biological Chemistry. He did a second degree, Toxicology and experimental pathology, in a college which is now part of Imperial College before going on to gain a PhD in experimental pathology.

Whilst in Colchester, he started travelling to London to the Chinese church on Sundays before getting his first job working in a laboratory in Suffolk, doing regulatory research.

Kai Chiu had known Florence as a young boy in Hong Kong and they met again at church in London and became a couple during his second year at Essex. She had also come to the UK in 1977. They were married in 1984 and moved to Suffolk in 1989. Their home was in a small village where the people seemed friendly although not used to people who weren't Europeans!

The couple moved to Norwich in 1996, the year after their son started school. They had looked at schools in Norwich, Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich but decided on Norwich even though it meant a daily commute to the laboratory in

Suffolk, although he is now able to work from home for part of the week.

Their daughter was born in 1997 at a time when they were still going down to London for the Chinese Church. After two years their son said he didn't want to keep travelling, so they joined Holy Trinity Church in Norwich. Kai Chiu met a couple who introduced him to Friends International at UEA, a group which befriends international students. Kai Chiu was then asked if he would help at the Chinese Christian Fellowship through which he met Edmund Tsui. This encounter introduced Kai Chiu to the Chinese Church which met at Wroxham Road although he only attended if a student was to be baptised, normally he still attended Holy Trinity.

Whenever celebrations took place which needed catering for the International Fellowship, the Chinese church did the cooking, so Kai Chiu got to know some of their members. On Sundays, the Chinese congregation provided cars to ferry Chinese students from UEA to Wroxham Road, so the students got to know the people well.

Kai Chiu joined the Chinese Methodist Church when they took on the premises of Bowthorpe Road in 2015. The church started to think about the 2nd generation, and he started helping with the Fellowship group alongside Margaret Hardingham. He was sometimes asked to help with services. It was then suggested that he train as a Local Preacher and he was given a note to preach in 2017. He has now almost completed the course and will be accredited later this year.

The move to Bowthorpe Road coincided with his mother moving to Norwich, but she went back to Hong Kong after a few months. Kai Chiu visits Hong Kong sometimes but the city has changed a lot since he was growing up.

As a church steward, a local preacher in training and a full time job, Kai Chiu does not have much spare time but he enjoys choral singing and sings in one choir from September to November and two choirs from January to March. He enjoys choral singing especially Mozart's Requiem and also enjoys singing Handel's Messiah.

Florence is a gifted musician and used to play for several choirs but now just plays for one. She occasionally plays for services at Bowthorpe Road and will also play at other churches when Kai Chiu is preaching and there is no organist. She has also helped out in an emergency at Rosebery Road.

Kai Chiu has amazing language skills and is sometimes called upon to translate for services at Bowthorpe Road and also when Chinese preachers need an inter-

view as part of their Local Preacher Training. He is a real asset to the Circuit.

Book Chat

A NEW BOOK

Wild Bright Hope: Reflections on Faith - The Big Church Read Lent Book, written by Justin Welby, the recently retired Archbishop of Canterbury, has been ordered ahead of Lent and on paper it looks promising.

AN OLD BOOK TO RE-READ.

In Holy Week I plan to read again the beautiful little book 'Stations of the Cross. A devotional using the Revelations of Divine Love of Julian of Norwich.'

Each Station has one of the paintings designed for St Julian's Church in 1993 by Irene Ogden (d.2015) who taught at Norwich High School 1946-79, and another local, Sheila Upjohn, selected the words from Julian's Book and the Scriptures.

THE GOOD BOOK.

A Biblical Tutor at Queen's, Birmingham, has written, "Very often we read the Bible in bite-sized chunks. Instead of reading a few verses, why not read a whole story, a whole book, an entire letter, a complete Gospel?" Why not?

Some would argue that the best account of the Easter story is Luke's Gospel, whom Paul, referred as "the beloved physician" (Col.4:14) and, I'm informed, contains more verses of the Lent/Easter narrative than the other Gospels. Reading a whole Gospel allows the reader to get the flow and feel of the writer and narrative, and I think Luke is a perfect case in point. Added to which in December we moved into the year when the Gospel reading is from Luke's Gospel.

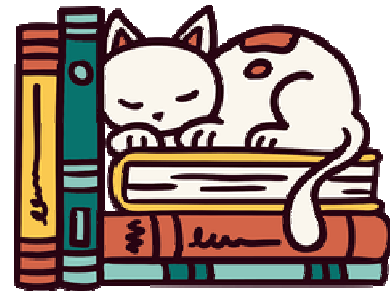
OLD METHODIST HYMN BOOKS

For new hymns to gain admission into hymn books old favourites have to move over and Hymns & Psalms (1983) and Singing the Faith (2011) deprived many Methodists of some of their favourite hymns, even as they welcomed the newcomers.

I understand from talking to organist/choirmaster friends that about 30 hymns relating to Christ's Passion through to Resurrection and Ascension in Hymns & Psalms, did not make it into our current hymn book, including, *Trotting trotting through Jerusalem*, *Children of Jerusalem*, *Beneath the cross of Jesus*, and *In the cross of Christ I glory*.

Why not as an Easter discipline and blessing, pick up a copy of the old MHB and Hymns & Psalms, and simply read and reflect on the hymns no longer in current usage.

Ann Waterhouse



The Knitted Bible Exhibition

Chapel Field Road Methodist Church has booked this exhibition to be in our church from Monday, 23rd June to Saturday, 19th July. It has been touring the country with some success for over a year now.

The exhibition tells various biblical stories in 38 knitted exhibits – like the one seen below. Each display has an explanatory text alongside it to explain the Bible story.

We believe this is an important opportunity to talk to those who use our premises and many others in the local community about the basis of our faith and what Christianity involves.

We are intending to take delivery of the exhibition on June 19th and set it up in the church building for a formal opening on Monday 23rd June. The exhibition will be open to the public from 11.00 to 16.00 each day, except Sunday. Our congregation will have to accommodate the exhibition in our midst for worship during that period. There will be refreshments served each day.

For this exhibition to be successful, we will be reliant on a variety of groups to help in various ways. Please give this some thought and offer your services, if you are available in the time period to help us. This will be advertised widely

to people, schools and community groups.

We will need at least 5 people volunteering to staff the exhibition for the period of its opening – to receive visitors, to serve refreshments, to explain the exhibits and to provide security to ensure they are not damaged or removed and to help cleaning up at the end of the day. We may need additional volunteers, when there are school or other groups booked to come. If you wish to volunteer to help, please contact the church on 01603 632535 (Mon, Wed, Fri mornings) or Margaret Snelling on 01603-613724 at other times.

You can also help us:

- if you have links with local schools, by letting us know who to contact and giving support to this as a visit for RE departments to arrange.
- if you want a community group to visit, by letting them know about this and giving the contact details below.
- by arranging for a group from your church to come at an appropriate time during the four weeks.

Please note that our parking is limited and so groups will need to make other arrangements.

Contacts

At Chapel Field Road – as above

Stephen Osborn (for bookings for groups)

01603 426189 or sdosborn5@outlook.com



Lent and Easter Customs



MOTHERING SUNDAY 30th March 2025.

The last community travellers from Norwich to the A1 at Newark pass through is Coddington, which has a claim to fame.

The ancient custom of Mothering Sunday, was, in the early 1900s, losing its appeal, when it was rescued and revived by the Rector's daughter Constance Penswick Smith. She campaigned for thirty years during the early years of the twentieth century and founded a Society to motivate the clergy to participate in special services, and to encourage the sending of cards and flowers to mothers.

The tradition she re-established continues to be observed.

EASTER AND EGG ROLLING.

On Easter Sunday St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, holds a special Egg Rolling event. Following the kindling of the Easter Fire at 6am and the dawn service which begins in darkness, the congregation makes its way into the road outside and competes to roll hard-boiled eggs along it, dodging the early traffic all the while. The rolled eggs are both symbols of new life and of the rolled stone at the Tomb.

THE EASTER PACE EGG PLAY, is in the tradition of the medieval mystery plays and was once performed all over the country, its name pace is derived from Latin pascha ('Easter'). It was revived in Yorkshire, during the 1930s and Heptonstall Pace Egg Play, is one of only a few still performing today and is a traditional Mumming Play performed on Good Fridays, attracting hundreds of visitors to the village.

Another area tradition is decoratively dyeing eggs to be boiled and eaten throughout the Easter weekend.

CARLIN SUNDAY used to be the alternative name for Passion Sunday in Cumberland, and across parts of the North of England, when traditionally carlin peas were eaten. The tradition seems to go back to the 17th century when it is said that during the siege of Newcastle in 1644, the people were on the verge of starvation when a boat arrived in port carrying a cargo of carlins (pigeon peas), which saved the people.

In 2025 it falls on Sunday, 6th April.

EASTER ORANGES.

MORPETH EASTER MONDAY 21st April 2025

In a ceremony dating back over 250 years, the Mayor and other Town Council officials distribute oranges to the children of Morpeth every Easter Monday. The origins of the custom are a little hazy, but as oranges were then a great luxury, that may be the reason they were chosen. After the Dole many of them are rolled down a hill alongside Easter eggs, and often Easter themed sports run alongside the Dole.

An Easter Thought

by Nigel Fox

The resurrection of Jesus is the glorious climax of all four gospels, though each one offers its own emphasis. John's presentation features the atoning death of Jesus being completed as a priestly function, though such details do not resonate so readily in 2025.

One feature that supports this is the folded face-cloth (John 20:6-7), as detailed in 'Thine be the glory' v.3. Some have suggested a meaning that reflects our use of table napkins as per western etiquette – which is so far-fetched, and incorrect. Instead, I believe it should be seen in connection with Leviticus 16:23, where the High Priest, having completed the atoning tasks in the Holy of Holies, returns to the Holy Place and removes the linen garments that were put on specifically for the Most Holy Place. John is telling us about the holiness of Jesus's death and that, having been wrapped in linen for a Most Holy duty, the resurrection spells the completion of His total atoning ministry.

This priestly emphasis is supported by Jesus's need to dissuade Mary from holding onto Him, because He has "not yet returned to the Father" (John 20:17), and He still needs to present Himself absolutely spotless.

The same priestly emphasis is also set out at Jesus's 'baptism' (as we call it), which is much more akin to a priesting ceremony linked to the promise of baptising believers in Holy Spirit. While all four gospels link this ceremony to the promise of the Spirit, John unpacks it further in chapters 14 to 16 and with the specific bequest in chapter 20:22. The same emphasis is also reflected in the need to cleanse the Temple, which sets the scene quite early on with Jesus's declaration of, "Destroy this shrine and I will raise it again in three

days” (ch.2:19).

Perhaps these thoughts will add a fresh dimension to new life!

Meditation

When we ponder the empty tomb, we could be drawn in to an eerie coldness, where the hard stone walls echo a silent lifelessness amid the dark domain of death. But the stone is rolled away and it is now empty of death. The mysterious face cloth remains there, deliberately folded, as a sign to bear lasting testimony to a wonderful ministry, now so gloriously complete. Once sealed in to keep a dead body secure, the tomb is now open and empty for all to see and its wonder to behold. It is forever a Most Holy Place, a shrine from which the light of an utterly indestructible LIFE shines forth.

Prayer

Loving Lord, as I ponder the mysteries of this season of resurrection, help me to not only see deeper truths but to receive them wholeheartedly and live in the light of them each day, through Jesus, our risen Saviour. Amen.



New Pop-up Shop

Please support this new venture badly needed since the demise of Revelation last autumn.



Norwich Citadel
34-36 St Giles Street,
Norwich NR2 1LL

Green Pastures Christian Pop-up Shop



www.greenpasturesdereham.org.uk

Thursday 27th February
Thursday 27th March
Thursday 24th April
from 10am- 2pm

Books, Bibles, Gifts and Cards
Card or cash payment accepted.

If you would like anything specific brought please
contact us on 01362 697953 or
shop@greenpasturesdereham.org.uk

The Reverend A I

On the 13th January I sat down to write a piece for this issue of The Methodist about what has happened to the closed Methodist churches in the U.K. At this time the Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer was giving a speech about turning Britain into an Artificial Intelligence superpower. I had spent several hours researching my article and typing then deleting several lines of thoughts and frankly I was getting a bit of the old writer's block.

I have always been fascinated by the art of writing and those who write as a career. When my wife, Caroline, takes me to work on a Friday evening I have always switched the radio on to: A Point of View, a BBC radio 4 programme which is a leading author's view on a contemporary subject. Personally I love the pompous and verbose utterings of Will Self on this programme whilst Caroline really doesn't. Suffering from the aforementioned writer's block, procrastinating and also being mischievous, I asked A.I to write some words about closed Methodist churches in the style of Will Self. I sent these idioms to annoy Caroline, which it certainly did. Here are just a few of the lines which I received:

The Methodist chapels, those austere, once-pulsating hearts of Victorian piety, now stand like skeletal fingers accusing the indifferent heavens. The very stones seem to weep, their lament a mournful dirge for a community that has vanished, leaving behind only echoes of fervent belief and the hollow shell of a once-vibrant faith. These abandoned chapels are not merely buildings; they are epitaphs, monuments to a bygone era, a testament to the fickle nature of human devotion. They stand as a stark reminder of the transience of all things, a poignant metaphor for the fading embers of a once-burning faith.

Stirring thoughts, you can almost hear his dulcet tones, were it not for the fact it wasn't him.

These words took my mobile phone merely seconds to compose, whilst I had dithered and pontificated on the original project for hours. This got me thinking if the future really is A.I then would the sermons of the future (or maybe even now) be written by a computer and would this be an issue? My personal answers to these questions are, possibly and yes it would be.

One of the delights of church for me is hearing a rousing sermon but to appeal to my heart, it has to have the crucial human element. I wrote in a previous edition of how John Fenn's sermons way back when I first attended Chapel Field Road in 2012 left me wanting to come back and hear more. I love hearing the anecdotes and stories from our Ministers which pepper their sermons. Today it is the Reverend Matthew's tales of his time in the Royal Air Force or The Reverend Mary's stories from Zimbabwe (hallelujah!). I have never been a member of the Armed Forces nor have I ever visited Africa but these stories are brought to life and sitting in church I am transported to these places. Their sermons bring a contemporary slant on the message and enhance my understanding of the word.

As an experiment, I went onto load into an A.I programme details of the current passage we are looking at in our bible study, Luke Chapter 17, verses 11-19 and asked for a sermon. What I received left me numb because at the very end of the text was a prayer, which I will not repeat here. It was a decent enough prayer in its language but nonetheless the words of a non human. It did not come from the soul, it had no real meaning and frankly it was worthless. Let us all hope that our future ministers have the human touch.

Rob Green

Chapel Field Road



VE Day 2025

by Ann Waterhouse

The 80th Anniversary of VE Day will be celebrated on 8th May with the lighting of Beacons and Lamp Lights of Peace, and, where possible, parties throughout the day in every sort of venue, and all manner of locations.

There will be local Celebrations including Church services and do enjoy the Bells Ringing.

VE DAY 1945

The enduring image of VE Day appears to be the film footage of celebrations in London, but enquiries among my friends who like me were young then reveal that they have no memories of the day whatever.

On 7th May 1945 the formal act of military surrender was signed, a Public Holiday declared for the following day and crowds gathered in Whitehall to hear the Prime Minister Winston Churchill speak and outside Buckingham Palace to see the King and the Royal Family appear on the balcony. Later the Princesses slipped away with their Father's blessing. Forty years later the Queen recalled it was one of the most memorable nights of her life 'and the only time the Queen has ever gone incognito among her subjects'.

Recently the local paper gave us a reminder of what had happened in Norwich. After a quiet start, 'Church bells rang and the crowds on Gentleman's Walk and outside City Hall began to celebrate with dancing and drinking. The Castle, the Guildhall, City Hall and other civic buildings were bathed in light and searchlights moved from Duke Street to the Cathedral with the V for Victory sign flashed into the sky time and again into the small hours. Over a matter of hours, houses were transformed with pictures of the King, Queen and Churchill, flags, bunting and banners."

Church services were held on the following Sunday with the emphasis on thanksgiving rather than celebration, mindful of those mourning the loss of family and friends, and of course the war in the Far East was still going on. Norwich Cathedral was packed and the service was relayed to an overflow in The Close, followed by a victory parade led by around 5,000 British and American troops and five bands.

The final big celebrations were after VJ Day, three months later

News from the Norwich Circuit

Since last writing, the Norwich Circuit is pleased to confirm the acceptance of Revd Tom Osborne as our next Superintendent Minister. Thank you to all church communities who graciously welcomed and offered hospitality to Tom and his wife, Lorna, on their visit to Norwich back in November. They both expressed their warm appreciation.

We look forward to warmly welcoming Tom and Lorna, when they join us in September, 2025. As well as being our Superintendent Minister, Tom will have pastoral charge of Sprowston, Bowthorpe Road, Drayton and Horsford and Old Buckenham Methodist Churches. Tom and Lorna are currently in the Tendring Circuit and we pray for their remaining time there and for a smooth transition as they prepare to move to Norwich.

Please also, continue to hold Andy and Ruth in your prayers at this time, as they prepare to move into retirement later this year.

In the meantime, we are grateful to Revd Mary Sachikonye for her leadership of the Circuit. Mary led a Church Stewards' meeting on Saturday, 11th January, where she outlined how the Circuit can best prepare for the start of Tom's invitation period. The church stewards were asked to take a series of questions back to their church councils, asking, 'What has changed since the Circuit Review process started?' The answers to this question will give the Circuit Leadership Team a clearer picture of where mission and growth are occurring around the Circuit, thus ensuring that our Key Growth Fund can be properly targeted to have maximum impact. The parameters for grants from this fund are currently in preparation, following receipt of thoughts from individuals and churches.

Policies are already in place for the Circuit's IT Fund and Eco Fund and churches are encouraged to submit applications for grants to upgrade their IT systems and/or to outline schemes to reduce their church's carbon footprint.

The Circuit has been successful in purchasing a new manse for Pastor Stephen Lau in Costessey. We are grateful to John Brittain, our Manses' Secretary, for overseeing the necessary redecoration and refurbishment work, in preparation for Stephen, Tiffany and Ted's move, later in the spring.

Regarding other Circuit properties, Spixworth church building was sold in De-

cember 2024, for £290,000, and Forncett St. Peter should soon be marketed for sale, following the securing of burial ground boundaries. Colindeep Lane manse is being prepared with the necessary documentation in order to be marketed as a letting property. We are grateful to Martin Callam for all his diligent work on the various property briefs.



Sue Skinner
Senior Circuit Steward

Local Preachers' news

I am aware that it has been a while since I have submitted a report for The Methodist, so here is a quick update.

We have, of course, welcomed Roy Hollands to our fellowship of preachers and he is now on the preaching plan and gradually making himself known around the churches in our circuit. Please continue to warmly welcome Roy.

At the time of writing we have three local preachers on trial. They are at slightly different stages of their courses and we can look forward to some accreditation services over the next year. Please pray for Kai Chiu, Livian and Zing, at home and in your intercessory prayers during Sunday worship.

With all our Local Preachers, in training, heading towards the end of their time on trial the question to ask now is, 'Are you being called to become a Worship Leader or Local Preacher?' Please talk to your minister, another Local Preacher or give me a call on 01603 811413 to find out more.

Action: For your prayers and discernment, are you or is somebody you know being called to become a Worship Leader or Local Preacher?

Liz Thetford
Local Preachers Secretary

Signs of hope, looking toward spring, from darkness to light

by Kevin Parfitt

In his book 'At Home' (A short history of private life) Bill Bryson writes about a previous occupant of the Norfolk Rectory that was the focus of Mr Bryson's publication.

The first clergyman to occupy this rectory was the Revd Thomas J G. Marsham of whom there seems to be few if any distinctions, but his great-grandfather Robert Marsham, was the inventor of phenology, the keeping tract of seasonal changes - first buds on trees, on hearing the first cuckoo and so on and so forth So a few observations around and beyond Church Farm, Bergh Apton during January 2025.

January 6th, twelfth day when it is said that the daylight lengthens by a cockerels stride, a rather small amount but just enough to feel that the dark days are loosening their hold and lighter days are ahead.

January 8th, a frosty morning and there in the distance a woodpecker drumming on the trees to mark out his territory and to advertise his presence to any available mate.

The rooks seem to be calling a different tune, instead of "where shall we go today to search for food?" they seem to be saying "how high shall we build our nests, on which branches and who would like to be my neighbour?"



January 9th, today strong sunlight, and two hares playing chase just sizing each other up for a possible confrontation when march madness takes over.

January 10th, delivering hay bales in Loddon notice jackdaws investigating chimneys as potential nesting sites.

January 15th, a goldcrest seen having an argument with himself in a garden mirror, amazing to think that these birds at 5grams, are smaller than a wren at (7-12 grams). Those that are not resident in the UK migrate all the way from Scandinavia, such a feat of endurance for such a diminutive bird.

January 24th, a windy day, three squirrels throwing caution to the wind having great fun chasing each other through the trees. So much evidence of the new hope of another spring and the coming of the light to Lighten our darkness.

In a booklet called ‘The Prayer Tree’ written by an Australian journalist under the nom de plume of Leunig this prayer is offered

Dear God,

We celebrate spring’s returning and the rejuvenation of the natural world. Let us be moved by this vast and gentle insistence that goodness shall return, that warmth and life shall succeed. Help us to understand our place within this miracle. Let us see that as a bird now builds its nest, bravely, with bits and pieces, so we must build human faith. It is our simple duty; it is the highest art; it is our natural and vital role within the miracle of spring: the creation of faith.

Amen.



George Loveless 1797-1874

George Loveless 1797-1874 features on the 2025 Membership card
by Joy Southam

George Loveless was born in Tolpuddle, Dorset. From childhood he worked as a ploughman and by 1830 had also become a leader of his community and a Wesleyan preacher.

Agricultural labour was hard and poorly paid work in those days, so George became the spokesperson for his Dorchester peers with local farmers.

Initially the negotiations were successful as the farmers agreed to pay labourers ten shillings a week but in Tolpuddle they would only pay nine shillings, this was later reduced to seven shillings and there was the threat that a further cut to six shillings was likely.

In October 1833, George formed a Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers which although not illegal led to George and five co-leaders being charged with administering unlawful oaths.

All six men were found guilty and were sentenced to deportation for seven years in Australia. The six were George and James Loveless, their brother-in-law Thomas Standfield and his son Thomas, James Hammett and James Brine

He sailed from Portsmouth on May 25th 1833, arriving in Van Dieman's Land on 4th September. He worked on a settlement farm as a shepherd and stockman before being employed by a soldier.

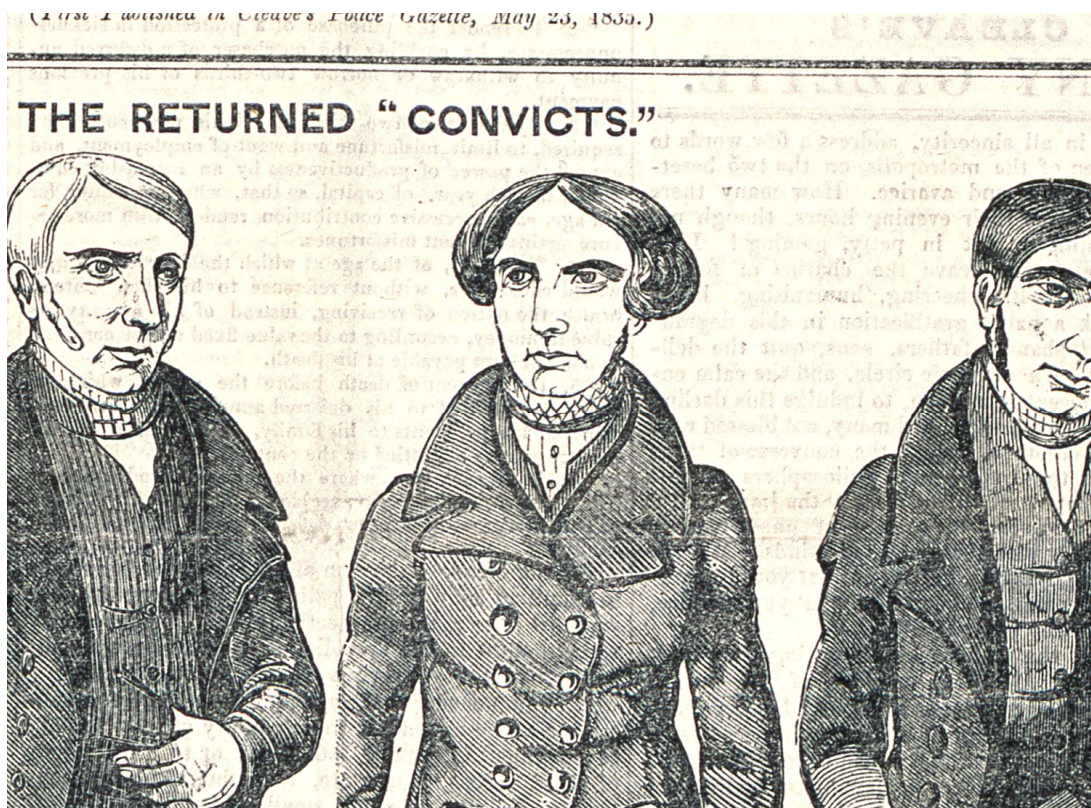
Less than a year after their deportation, people began to protest at the unfair treatment of the six men with a march in London by over 50,000 supporters and a petition with over 800,000 signatures. The protest was eventually heard and in March 1836 the Government gave all six men a full pardon with free passage back to England.

George did not return immediately as he had asked his wife to join him in the colony, but once he knew she would not do so, he left Australia and arrived home in June 1837. The Loveless and Standfield families then relocated to farms in Essex and continued to fight for workers rights, George himself as a

Chartist.

Seven years after his return, George, James and two of the other Martyrs emigrated to Canada and George took out a mortgage on a farm in Ontario. He later moved to a farm in Siloam where he died in March 1874. He was buried in Siloam cemetery alongside Thomas Stanfield, leaving behind his wife Elizabeth and five children. In Canada he had continued to be very much involved in local politics and in the local life of the Methodist Church.

The Loveless and Standfield families were Methodists and, when George was 21, had helped construct a small Methodist chapel in Tolpuddle. Once the families had moved to Essex, without their leadership, the chapel gradually became disused and was converted into a stable when a new chapel was built in 1862.



Bible Reading Notes

by Nigel Fox

I'm old enough to remember a time when Bible-reading Notes were popular. At least, we had a rep at church who would ensure that as many as possible, including all new folk, were encouraged to partake of them. I may be wrong but, with notable exceptions, they might be used less often these days as the practice seems less popular.

This corresponds to the headline results of a number of surveys of the Christian habit of regular Bible reading, as noted by the Bible Society and Bible Reading Research – who found that less than 16% read the Bible every day and 25% more than once per week (England and Wales, 1997). A more recent survey by Premier Christian News suggests those figures are now lower (9% and 13% respectively).

In the four Circuits (and four Districts) where I've served, practices have varied and so have the types of Notes – e.g. IBRA, Every Day With Jesus, Our Daily Bread etc. Some are more devotional in style and others more about life-application or textual interpretation. Some rely on a range of co-authors, in order to draw from a wider pool of knowledge, often featuring those with considerable expertise.

It all raises a basic question: 'what is the level of Bible-literacy these days?'

A concern for this is one reason why I've always tried to offer a Bible-based message that includes something by way of informative background plus a careful interpretation of the scripture as well as application.

That said, I need to be honest and confess... that I've not used Bible-reading notes for years. Instead, my regular habit has been to focus in on a passage, either as per the Lectionary or on one that has seemed important with a particular relevance to the times, and to dig deep into it with the aid of my Greek Testament and Analytical Concordance. For Old Testament passages I have resorted to various word studies and commentaries.

My starting point in this was near-ignorance and, whilst I'm no linguist (my background is in Design Engineering) I have always found this process a fasci-

nating one, especially when the focused digging leads to discovery of a gem of fresh understanding.

This enduring process still helps me get to grips with word meanings and context and the possible emphases that the writer perhaps intended – all so valuable for preaching with authenticity and integrity. I'm of the conviction that, unless a preacher can be reasonably sure of what the writer may have intended the early readers/listeners to understand, it is nigh impossible to convey a useful interpretation and apply it for today without reflecting one's own slant or preference.

All this leads me to say that Bible-reading is important for all of us. After all, scripture is the closest link we have with those first witnesses of the risen Jesus. NT Greek or biblical Hebrew may not be our forte, and so Bible-reading Notes can be so helpful. Resources are also available to us online these days, but care and wisdom is needed to avoid those from an unwholesome or non-Christian organisation.

The time-honoured devotional booklets, often found at several churches, still have their place in strengthening our discipleship.



Jimmy Carter



by Ann Waterhouse

JIMMY CARTER, President of the USA 1977-81, died in December, aged 100. He and his wife Rosalynn were active Baptists but always in connection with the Methodist church, because of Mrs. Carter's upbringing.

A Humanitarian, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002, the World Methodist Peace Prize, in 1985, and numerous other awards.

Habitat for Humanity is a Christian Charity which came into the spotlight again after Jimmy Carter's death in December. It had been quietly growing in Georgia during his ten years serving in high political office, and three years after leaving the White House Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter became volunteers with the charity. He was still actively involved at 95 and even after a fall needing 14 stitches he showed up the next day, to help build houses for the charity.

Habitat for Humanity in Buffalo, NY has for four decades been building hope and homes in the second largest city in New York State. Bob Waddell, a member of Central Park UMC, Buffalo, a retired teacher, spent about 25 years doing Habitat in Buffalo, one of those years as a site supervisor. His church, where Revd John Waterhouse spent a summer in 1991, had a group of volunteers who would work one Saturday a month for some years. They often worked with the prospective homeowners, since they had to accumulate 500 hrs of construction time, to qualify for home ownership. The houses were not given to the homeowners, but they received a no-interest mortgage to gain total ownership. Some houses were refurbished old houses, a few were new builds. Bob always found the work immensely satisfying 'since you got a visible reminder of the group's shared efforts to make such a positive difference to a family in need'.

And this is what Jimmy Carter did for decades - helped build houses for people who needed them.

Habitat for Humanity in Great Britain was established in 1995, and in 2023 200+ volunteers made life a lot better for over 200 individuals

Other news

JANE AUSTEN'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY. 1775-1817

This anniversary will be celebrated throughout 2025, leading up to her birthday on 16th December, and if your holiday travels go to the southwest this year you will probably coincide somewhere with an exhibition or celebration.

Born into a Clergy family with landed connections, she wrote brilliantly and wittily about her world, and her six novels, published anonymously, have rarely been out of print since. Her appearance on the current £10 note is a recognition of that unique talent.

Living in a clergy family, she was 13 and 16 when Charles and then John Wesley died and she would have been aware of the new vibrant denomination. as shown by a brief mention in Mansfield Park. '.... When I hear of you next, it may be as a celebrated preacher in some great society of Methodists, or as a missionary into foreign parts.'

INFLUENTIAL METHODIST WOMEN.

The June issue of The Methodist will see the first of a mini-series on some of the women who have made their special mark on Methodism. This series has been prompted by the realisation that Norwich Circuit is experiencing a remarkable phenomenon at the moment. The immediate Methodist Family Tree is as follows:

President - Revd Helen Cameron

Vice-President - Carolyn Godfrey

District Chair - Revd Helen Hollands

Acting Superintendent - Revd Mary Sachikonye, who also has pastoral care of some churches.

Let us thank God for the ministry of these women and prayerfully support them and their male colleagues as together they serve and bless the Methodist people, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

COMMONWEALTH DAY. 10TH MARCH.

Commonwealth Day is celebrated on the second Monday of March, and recog-

nises the unity and diversity of a remarkable family of nations, with a special service in Westminster Abbey at the heart of the celebrations.

In 2022 the Queen's final Commonwealth Day Message wrote 'In these testing times, it is my hope that you can draw strength and inspiration from what we share, as we work together towards a healthy, sustainable and prosperous future for all..... Our family of nations continues to be a point of connection, cooperation and friendship.'

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY ON PAPER and ON LINE

(METHODIST RECORDER) 31st January. The headline reads 'Trump actions incompatible with Christian belief' says UMC. The American United Methodist Church's General Board has roundly denounced his attitude towards migrants as dehumanising and based on misinformation.

The article also contains quotes from the American-born minister at Wesley's Chapel London. Revd Canon Dr Jennifer Smith has launched a blistering attack on Donald Trump, and warns "**that it is an ill will blowing in the US right now** His abuse of power causes such concern... Even if I agreed with his policies 100%, I would be against using executive orders in this way... Fundamental to the US Constitutional system is a separation of powers, exactly to protect against tyranny,"

In the 24th January issue, the centre fold was concentrated on Holocaust Memorial Day (27th) and carried accounts of the Nazi concentration camps, a look at the genocide in Bosnia in 1995, and suggested action including how the day could be marked. There was also an extensive reading list, both fact and fiction.

(It has been hard for some to remember the victims and the horror of the Holocaust as they should be remembered with the media focusing on scenes of horror 2025 from Gaza.)

METHODIST NEWS ON LINE is the modern way of keeping up with Methodist news, and if you have the equipment, it is simple to go on line at methodist.org.uk and pick up a great selection of news items.

29th January carried a long account of Bowthorpe Road Chinese Church: Celebrating the Lunar New Year with Bowthorpe Road Methodist Church
Bowthorpe Road Methodist Church in Norwich is getting ready to celebrate the Lunar New Year with its local community, an occasion for the Chinese members to share their culture with Norvicians (people from Norfolk!). The church's journey to becoming a Chinese Methodist church is a remarkable story

of transformation.

“Our intention is not to keep it as just a Chinese church, we aim to bring together the local community.”“ Pastor Stephen Lau.

If you can access it there are nearly four hundred more words to read.

In late January *networknorfolk* reported that ‘for the first time in many years some Church leaders from Churches Together in Norfolk and Waveney went on a 5-day ecumenical pilgrimage to Rome.’

The purpose of the trip was to develop and strengthen relationships, as well enhance their understanding and appreciation of the different traditions that comprise NWCT.

Participants were the Bishop Graham Usher of Norwich and his Chaplain, Bishop Peter RC Bishop of East Anglia, Revd Lythan Nevard, moderator URC Eastern Synod, Liz Hoffbauer, of the Society of Friends, Revd David Mayne, Baptist Church regional team leader, and the County Ecumenical Officer, Dr Ian Watson

A sign of the times!

The Bishop of Norwich and his use of the social network X (Twitter) writes: “I’m leaving X on 31/1. Thank you for following. For 11 years I’ve tried to share my faith and ministry here, but I have grown more uncomfortable that X seeks to divide more than to build up, sink people rather than let them fly.”



News from the churches

Bowthorpe

Repairs and alterations to church premises have been a feature throughout the winter months. Faulty drains have been repaired. Long-standing leaks in the roof have finally stopped, with damaged ceilings repaired, and plans afoot to re-decorate.



The Friday Food Hub has been honoured by the Trussell Trust choosing to film its activities, which include a number of Advisors being present on a rotational basis: from Shelter/British Red Cross/Your Own Place/NCC/Citizens Advice/and local representatives. The whole downstairs area including kitchen are used. Supplies for the Food Bank are stored in 'The Prayer Room', a small space in one corner of the building. Since 1986 the Quakers 'gifted' the practice of designating a space that is always quiet and available for prayer and thinking. Hopefully a new space will be found. The aspect of prayer as service to the needy may be welcomed, without excluding prayer's deeper significance.

At January's church meeting we heard from one of our temporary members, Alice, now back in her home Central African Presbyterian church in Malawi. We will be supporting Alice's amazing work among children in the area.

A Lent course will take place on Tuesday evenings for six weeks beginning on March 11th

Sally Simpson

Drayton and Horsford

The combined Church Anniversary will be celebrated over the first weekend in October and details of this are elsewhere in the magazine. (see page 6) We hope you will join us at some point.

Having missed the last edition because of a weekly



calendar and going away, I bought a proper one this year and am getting in early with this report!

My first comment must be about the loss of Mervyn Ivany from our congregation. He was a loyal member for 40 years, taking on various roles and participating in all aspects of church life. Always cheerful, especially if Norwich City had won, and vocal in services when required, as preachers will remember. Phoning members as part of his pastoral care and always encouraging. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him and we thank Revd Sharon for arranging a Thanksgiving service, where we will be able to show him our appreciation for all his work for the glory of God and the visually impaired.

Our Children's Craft Group has covered various themes, in the autumn, Under the Sea and at Christmas, Bells, 'ring out the bells for Christ is born' our good news message. Our tree, cards and decorations to the local community and especially our carol service embodied this. Each person that joined us was given a bell to ring during the carols and the chair of our Parish Council described the service as 'quirky'! It was also very enjoyable.

Our Worship Team and especially Pauline, have been leading more services during Revd Andy's absence, which has been daunting but it has given us a chance to explore ideas that the congregation have been appreciative of. We wish Revd Andy and Ruth health and happiness in their final months with us before a well deserved retirement in France.

We will be starting our Coffee Mornings on the 4th Friday of the month from 10-12, which will mean that there is one every Friday in the village, at different venues, for folk to meet up and socialise.

Kim Pike.

Rosebery Road

The Crib Festival 2024 was a success and provisional dates have been set for this year. We are hoping to organise an afternoon tea somewhere in June for our members. We were sad to learn of the death of our friend and former minister Revd Norman Peck and continue to hold his family in our prayers.

Joy Southam



Diary Dates

Wednesday	19 March	2.15pm	MWiB Committee Chapel Field Road
Wednesday	14 May		MWiB Spring District Day Dereham
Sunday	25 May	3.30pm	Easter Offering Dedication Mile Cross



MWiB produced a series of Lent Reflections in 2024. These can be read on line or downloaded and printed off.

The above is the logo for the reflections so if you look on the MWiB site you will easily find them.

I expect there will be some more for 2025 but I haven't seen anything about them yet,