

# The Methodist



**Norwich Circuit Magazine**  
**June 2025 issue 117**

## STAFF

### Editor

Pauline Mann

### Team Members

Trixie Dye

Joy Southam

Ann Waterhouse

### Design

Pauline West

**Copy date for the September issue is  
2nd August**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

## CONTENTS

From the manse	3
News from the Circuit	4
Profile	6
VE-VJ Day	8
Exhibition of crosses	9
Tolpuddle martyrs	10
Summer reflection	12
Worship material for Pentecost	13
Pope Francis	14
Save the date - MWiB	15
Looking for summer	16
John Wesley's women	18
Book chat	20
Revd Andy & Ruth Burrows	21
Sybil Phoenix	22
Thanksgiving service for Keith Lilley	24
Memories of Keith	25
Other news	26
News from the churches	27

# From the manse

I hope we had time to reflect on our spiritual lives as we walked the wilderness with our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a journey that required commitment, devotion, sacrifice and self-denial. Lent is a time to prune all branches which do not bear fruits (John 15).

Our spiritual seasons align very well with our physical seasons. Trees and gardens are dull and brown in winter but spring brings life and beauty. The same with our spiritual journey, Lent brings sorrow, grief and suffering to the body of Christ but resurrection brings new life and new hope to the body of Christ.

As I am writing this letter we are in the middle of physical spring. Spring brings new life into our gardens and fields; a time when plants and trees spring back into life. New leaves on trees and budding flowers bringing life and beauty to our lives. Spring symbolises new beginnings. In Isaiah 43:18-19 God through prophet Isaiah promised His people new beginnings after exile.

After resurrection Jesus in John 20 19-31 breathed new life into his disciples. Encouraging them to go ye therefore and preach the good news. We are in the Spring of our Spiritual lives; the resurrection of Christ brought new life and new hope. We should therefore share this new life and new hope with those who feel hopeless and alienated.

Our mission as believers is to continue to preach the good news of Christ to a world that is fast-changing. Let us therefore thrive to keep up with the fast-changing world drawing it closer to the Kingdom of God. May we be encouraged by the Holy Spirit to do good all the time and transform our communities into hubs of love, care and sharing.

John Wesley encourages us to “Do all the good we can, by all the means we can, in all the ways we can, in all the places we can, to all the people we can, as long as ever we can”. Remember we can do everything through Christ who is in us. The early church was inspired by the Holy Spirit and resurrection of Christ, so should we.

As believers our lives should always be in the Spring and Summer mode for the world to see the goodness of Christ. We should strive to stand up

for Jesus as the soldiers of the cross. Let us continue to lift his royal banner so that it may not suffer loss.

I hope we will enjoy the physical summer with family and friends at the same time enjoying our spiritual summer in word, prayer and fellowship. May we continue to be ambassadors of Christ where ever we are.

God bless you all.

Shalom!

Rev Mary



## News from the circuit

### **Farewells:**

As Revd Andy and Ruth Burrows prepare to leave the Norwich Circuit, we send them our fond farewells and best wishes, praying for rich blessings, health and happiness as they start their new life in France. We hope and pray that Andy will feel fulfilled in retirement and that they will both discover new ventures for their skills and talents in pastures new. We offer them both our thanks for the work they have achieved in the Norwich Circuit over the previous five years.

The Circuit Review, which was initiated by Andy, has brought a reshaping to the Norwich Circuit. It has also created a significant KEY GROWTH FUND from the sale of redundant properties, which will support and finance many future missional projects, helping to create a new and vibrant Methodist presence serving God's church here in Norwich. At Sprowston, Ruth has established the Renew Wellbeing Cafes and the community garden, both extremely worthwhile

projects that are a blessing to many people.

### **Staffing:**

Revd Steve Cullis has expressed a wish to reduce his invitation period by one year, from 5 years to 4 years, as he moves closer to retirement, and this has been granted by the Circuit Meeting. This means Steve will complete his period of invitation in August 2028.

Due to the weight of Circuit administrative tasks, particularly from the property brief, the Circuit Meeting has voted to increase Martin Callam's working hours from 18 to 21 hours per week, back dated to Jan 1st 2025.

The Circuit Meeting agreed that we appoint a Safeguarding Administrator, to create a data base for safeguarding training and DBS data, etc. We are grateful to Liz Thetford for agreeing to take on this post in a voluntary capacity. Liz has already begun the process of gathering together data from churches around the Circuit and we are grateful to church safeguarding officers for assisting Liz in this task.

Following a successful grant application to the District Fund, and with additional support from the KEY GROWTH FUND and Bowthorpe Road Methodist Church, the Circuit Meeting approved that Bowthorpe Road could appoint a Lay Pastor to work alongside Stephen Lau during his 3-year Ministerial Training. We are pleased that Mr Kuan Fu Lim has been successfully appointed to this post and we warmly welcome him and his family, and pray that God will bless them as they seek to support the Bowthorpe Road church.

Pastor Stephen Lau and his wife, Tiffany, and son, Ted, will be moving to Costessey at the end of April. We wish them all every happiness and God's richest blessings in their new home.

Sue Skinner  
Senior Circuit Steward

# Profile

Reverend Helen Nice

by Joy Southam

Helen was born in Bolton, Lancashire and spent the first few years of her life in Farnworth where her father taught at the local grammar school. The family moved to Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire at Eastertime and Helen remembered how green it seemed compared with the industrial landscape she had known in Lancashire. Helen did well at school and attended the local grammar school there as did her younger sister. She studied sciences in the 6th Form and had a gap year working at an Agricultural research laboratory before taking up her place at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford.

Helen was brought up in a Quaker family; her father had been a conscientious objector during the war and had enjoyed the Friends Ambulance Unit; he became a teacher at a Quaker Boarding School where he met Helen's mother. Helen was accepted as a member of the Society in her late teens.

After completing her degree, Helen moved to York to continue her studies at that University. She met her future husband Nigel at a graduate student event and within a few months the couple got engaged. They were married in 1973 in the Quaker Meeting House. They lived in a Graduate student flat where they were a presence for younger students should they need help.

Helen and Nigel moved to Sheffield where he had obtained a job as Health service manager. Their son Jonathan was born here. A move to Nottingham followed as Nigel got a job there.

Helen didn't feel comfortable at the Quaker Meeting. She had got to know a number of local Methodists through playgroup and toddler group and when surgery prevented her driving for a while, she began to attend her local Methodist church. She quickly felt at home there as the church had a wide diversity of people. Through attending house groups, services etc, Helen felt the call to become a Local Preacher.

Once the children were of school age, Helen got a part time job at the local hospital in the Medical Records Department working evenings and nights. One night she spotted an advert for a part time nursing course for people with school age children. After a year, when her youngest daughter had started

school, Helen applied for the course. She completed the 4-year course and once qualified, she got a job working on a rehab ward for elderly people with a variety of orthopaedic and medical conditions.

After this she applied for and got a job at the local hospital in trauma orthopaedic outpatients. She enjoyed this role and got a lot of people plastered!

While doing all this, Helen was also doing her local preacher training. One day while sitting in church, looking at the pulpit, she felt she ought to be doing something like that, so she spoke to her minister who encouraged her to proceed and so she began her ministerial training through the East Midlands Ministerial Training Course. This was a four-year part-time course with Easter and Summer schools. Helen says it was a good course and being ecumenical, involved a broad spectrum of tutors and students.

Helen's first appointment was as a Minister in Local Appointment where she served as chaplain of Queenswood Methodist Home. Here she learned a lot from the residents which included a number of retired ministers and missionaries. A vacancy appeared for a chaplain at Nottingham's hospitals but this did not coincide with the Methodist year, so Helen spoke to her District Chair who said there was no reason why she shouldn't apply, but had she considered Circuit ministry. There was a desperate need for a minister in Southwell. Helen and Nigel visited this rural part of Nottinghamshire at the weekend. The people were lovely and the situation felt right so Helen accepted the appointment – her only one in Circuit ministry.

Living in a village was a new experience for Helen but it worked well for them both as it was easy to get into Nottingham from Southwell and Newark was close by where Nigel could get a train as by this time, he was manager of NHS Direct for the Eastern Region. He continued in this role until retiring when NHS Direct became 111. He had always wanted to be a National Trust guide and started at Belton House as soon as he had retired.

Helen enjoyed her one and only full time Circuit appointment with Southwell Minster on her doorstep as well as an Evangelical church and a Roman Catholic church. She also enjoyed looking after the village churches. Nigel also felt at home here and was brilliant at coffee mornings engaging with the people and enabling Helen to deal with any urgent issues that might crop up.

Helen sat down in 2016 and the couple moved to live in Aylsham to be closer to family, and enabling Nigel to steward at Blickling Hall. Sadly, he became ill and passed away at home [during Covid] where Helen had put her nursing

skills to work caring for him, knowing that if he went into hospital, she wouldn't be able to see him.

Having cleared the house, Helen rented a cottage in Kenninghall for 18 months while work was done on her next home. The Aylsham house was too big for one person and the large garden also meant that a move was necessary.

Wymondham had been a close second to Aylsham when they had been house hunting only losing out because Aylsham was close to Blickling but finding a suitable older property was difficult. It was her daughter in law who spotted the cottage in Damgate Street on the Estate Agent's website and a visit was swiftly arranged. Although a lot of work was needed on the former greengrocers, Helen fell in love with it and was prepared to wait while the work was done. She says that the folk at Wymondham Methodist have made her very welcome and she has now joined a local choral society to get to meet more people from outside the church.

Helen says that even when she wasn't going to church, she always felt there was a source of peace, love and hope that could get you through anything and enable you to do things you never felt possible. She strongly believes that Christian faith is compatible to Science – when you are looking down a microscope and seeing the intricacies of microscopic structures etc, it can be humbling.

## VE DAY - VJ DAY

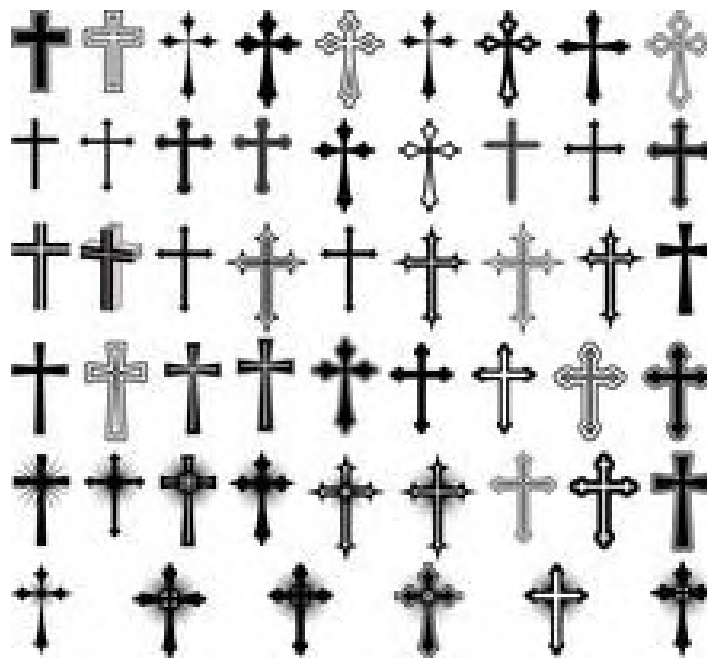
The nation has just marked the end of the War in Europe with due ceremony but, as we marked that 80th anniversary, we had to remember that Victory over Japan Day was still to come. Not everyone fully celebrated as the war was still going on in the Asia-Pacific region, which only came to an end after two atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Victory over Japan Day was three months later on 15th August although the formal surrender occurred on 2nd September, aboard the battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay.



# Exhibition of Crosses

at Drayton and Horsford Methodist Church the first weekend in October 2025,  
(Save the Date!)

At Drayton and Horsford Methodist Church we wanted to show our appreciation of Local Preachers; those who are led by the Holy Spirit to bring 'The Word' to our congregation. They forego worship in their own church and with their church family and they travel, often quite a distance in bad weather. Ultimately, they spend time studying, preparing and crafting acts of worship together so that we can all receive 'The Word' through the power of the Holy Spirit. By inviting each Local Preacher and Minister to lend us 'a cross' to display is our way of saying thank you to them for 'the faith' they share with us. We look forward to displaying these crosses along with archived Plans supplied by Norma Virgo.



This is not a fund-raising weekend; it is our Church Anniversary and a way to thank our Local Preachers whilst gaining a little insight into the faith they hold so dear that they come to share it with us. However, if anyone wishes to donate, there will be a plate to receive monetary gifts for the work of LWPT (The Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust is an ecumenical charity which seeks to provide resources, support and information to preachers.) Prior to 2003 this was known as LPMA.

On Saturday all day and on Sunday afternoon we will serve tea/coffee and cake, with soup available at Saturday lunch time. We look forward to welcoming you over the weekend. Better still join us for Sunday morning worship led by David Ingham.

Sat 4th Oct 10am to 4pm, Sun 5th Oct 10.30 Service, and 2 - 4pm. Parking is limited, and you can get blocked in, so we suggest parking in Bidewell Close, dropping off passengers at the church as necessary.

## Tolpuddle Martyrs

*In the last issue we had an article about George Loveless one of the martyrs. This ended with the information that sadly the little church had closed and was used as an agricultural store. Below is an account of Tolpuddle, now a museum, and the annual festival It is written by Revd Cecil King a friend of Ann Waterhouse and we thank him for this.*

Each year in July – 18th to 20th this year – is the Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival in south Dorset. The Festival honours the memory of six agricultural labourers from the village of Tolpuddle, led by George Loveless, a Wesleyan Methodist local preacher, who, in 1834, were arrested and tried for swearing a secret oath. The six had formed a friendly society to ask for higher pay from the landowner, who had cut their wages to near starvation level. An Act passed to outlaw plotting against the government in the war against France was used to convict the six men who had combined to work for better pay. They were transported to Australia, but mass protests in London secured their pardon, and they were returned after three years.

The memory of the six Tolpuddle martyrs is precious to the trade union movement and the Labour party – and to Methodists. Five of the six martyrs worshipped in the Wesleyan chapel they had taken part in building in 1818. Their campaign for a living wage was rooted in their Christian faith, and they are honoured in Tolpuddle Methodist chapel today, where there is an exhibition about them. Most years, the President of the Methodist Conference preaches at the service in that chapel on the Sunday evening at the end of the Festival; this year, Revd Richard Andrew will preach at that service.

If you go to Tolpuddle village, you can visit a museum devoted to the story of the martyrs as well as the Methodist chapel. Also, the old Wesleyan chapel (now Grade II listed) built in 1818 has been restored and is open for visitors each Thursday morning; entry is free.

The Methodist Church today aspires to be a justice seeking church building on John Wesley's campaign against slavery and the witness of the Tolpuddle martyrs and many Primitive Methodists for fair wages for farm labourers.



# A summer reflection

by Trixie Dye

At some time or another we all say “Where has time gone?”; It is summertime again, a time when we tend to take things easier, enjoy walks, trips to the sea. Maybe you have a holiday planned, or perhaps staying at home, enjoying the beauty that is all around us.

We can sit in our chairs, look out of the window, watch the birds feeding and bathing, see clouds as they pass by. How privileged we are to live in this beautiful county. It can be so easy to take things for granted that are on our doorstep. We can take walks in the woods, enjoy the beauty of the trees, experience the stillness.

God has given us Summertime to take time out, enjoy the company of family and friends. A little girl said she loved Grandmas, they have nothing to do all day, they go for nice long walks and have time to look for snails.

However you spend this Summer, take time to smell the roses, splash in puddles with your little ones, maybe look for snails.

Prayer.

Thank you Creator God, for Summer’s warmth and light, your gift.  
Help us to enjoy the promise of each day.

Thank you Jesus, for Summer’s peace and stillness, your gift.  
Help us to rest in the beauty of each day.

Thank you gentle Spirit, for Summer’s colour and life, your gift.  
Help us to thrive in the hope of each day.

Holy Trinity, dynamic and loving, we thank you for your seasons and cycles, but especially for today in this season of Summer.

Jean Hudson

# Worship material for Pentecost

by Nigel Fox

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit... and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2 1-4a

Those words from Acts recording what happened at Pentecost are exciting and encouraging for today's Christians, as the same Holy Spirit is still active in the world. By reading the whole chapter we can listen in and be stirred by Peter's words as he spoke to the crowd in Jerusalem, to witness to our faith, in our words and by the way we live our lives

Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on me.  
Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me.  
Spirit of the Living God, Fall afresh on me.



**All of them were  
filled with  
the Holy Spirit!  
Acts 2.4**

# Pope Francis, 1936 - 2025

From the Methodist Church website:

The Methodist Church in Britain receives with deep sadness the news of the death of His Holiness Pope Francis, and gives thanks for his life and Christian witness.

As God receives Pope Francis into His arms of love, we pray that he may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Many Christians have visited RC churches to sign a Book of Condolences on the death of Pope Francis. In one local church there were various pieces of literature available including a small booklet on EVERYDAY EVANGELISING based on the practical writings and advice of Pope Francis.

"You and I are called to spread the Gospel in our everyday lives. Each and all the faithful are naturally evangelisers and they carry out this apostolate in the varied circumstances of their ordinary lives. Every follower of Christ has the capacity, privilege and duty of offering to everyone by deed and word the Church's joyful message. There is nothing more natural in the world for those who have received the light of Christ than to radiate that light for love of others.

The vocation of all the baptised to proclaim the joy of the Gospel wherever they are, is one of the most constant teachings of Pope Francis. This little 'handbook' is not a complete presentation of the Holy Father's teaching, but is an attempt to show how the Pope is urging all of us to rediscover our natural calling to spread the knowledge and love of Christ and his Church in and through our everyday lives.

The teaching of Pope Francis is encouraging and challenging, and can help us renew our zeal to evangelise as we consider the nature of our mission and the beauty of our message. The Holy Father also offers helpful guidance regarding how we can communicate Christ while facing the challenges of evangelisation with determination, serenity and faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.

A prayer adapted from Pope Francis's petition:

Help us to say our own 'yes'  
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,  
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.  
We pray for a new ardour born of the resurrection  
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life  
which triumphs over death.  
Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,  
that the gift of unfading beauty  
may reach every man and woman.



## **SAVE THE DATE**

**EAST ANGLIA DISTRICT  
MWIB AUTUMN DAY 2025 SATURDAY 25TH OCTOBER at  
ELY METHODIST**

**10.15 for 11am start – 3.30pm**

**Please join us for the Commissioning of our New President and welcome Revd Graham Thompson as our speaker**

**We always have a wonderful time and this is bound to be special**

**Various stalls including books, B & B and really good fellowship**

**Packed lunch please**

**Ely Methodist Church 13 – 15 Chapel Street, Ely, CB6 1A**

# Looking for the summer

by Kevin Parfitt

Well here we are at the end of April (at the time of writing) and summer seems to have arrived already with the thermometer steadily rising, yet it is still only mid spring. The swallows and house martins are back, twittering as they perch on the power lines taking a break from their feeding and nest building duties, with no rain at present water needs to be added to puddle areas to help them with their nest construction.

The house at Church Farm with its hip roof offers an ideal site for house martins to nest on but as with much of nature there has been a noticeable decline in the number of birds arriving each year, in the 1990's the most colonies of nests numbered thirty three, now we may see perhaps just a dozen or so families being reared.

The singer/songwriter from Middlesbrough Chris Rea wrote the song

'Looking for the Summer'

"Look deep into the April face,  
a change is already taking place  
Looking for the summer.  
The eyes take on a certain gaze,  
And leave behind the springtime days go looking for the summer."

The aconites and celandines which cheered up the gardens and banks on the village lanes and hedgerows with their bright yellow flowers have now given way to a proliferation of cow parsley with its umbrella like display of pure white flowers.

Pablo Picasso is reputed to have said "It is not what you look at that



matters, it is what you see”

There are many signs of the harbingers of summer, early sunrises with late sunsets culminating in those “lazy hazy days of summer”.

From time to time it is not just what we see but also what we hear as a prelude to summer, on one of the regular hay deliveries to the Loddon area it was early evening and there from over the marshes by the river Chet was that song of “cuckoo cuckoo” to announce that summer is just around the corner.

Summer suns are glowing over land and sea,  
Happy light is flowing bountiful and free.

Everything rejoices..... Thank God for the beauty of the seasons.



# John Wesley's women

Women have been closely involved from the earliest days of the Methodist movement. Twice as many women as men belonged to the Methodist societies, they headed many of the classes, visited the sick and those in prison and spoke about religion to their neighbours. They led prayer meetings, gave testimonies and exhorted fellow congregational members.

When visiting Norwich in 1761, John Wesley met the bands after the service. These were small groups which gathered together to pray and to advance their spirituality. He wrote in his journal, 'While a poor woman was speaking a few artless words out of the fulness of her heart, a fire kindled and ran, as a flame among the stubble, through the hearts of almost all that heard; so when God is pleased to work, it matters not how weak or mean the instrument'.

Women were not allowed to preach in Methodist services. John Wesley upheld his firm attachment to the Church of England. He accepted its practices and so followed its restrictions on women's public speaking. Yet, in urging people to use their God-given talents to the utmost, he slowly moved to a point where he accepted that some women had an extraordinary call to exercise their ministry in preaching. He was convinced that no one should be prohibited from doing God's work if urged to do so by their conscience. He remembered how his mother had conducted services and addressed the local people when her husband was absent from the parish.

Wesley judged each case on its merits, but as a result of his support of several women in their preaching, the number of women preachers quickly increased. He met them, wrote to them and encouraged them

in their work. Several were Norfolk women.

Women preachers were notably successful in their work. They attracted crowds to their services and secured very many converts.

Nevertheless, some of Wesley's colleagues were hostile to the idea of women preachers, but Wesley persisted in his support. He wrote to the young Richard Reece who was stationed in Norwich in 1788, declaring his support for Sarah Mallet from Loddon and saying that 'We give the right hand of fellowship' to her 'and have no objection to her being a preacher in our connexion so long as she preaches the Methodist doctrines and attends to our discipline'.

After John Wesley's death, the issue of women preachers became a bitter controversy. Harsh restrictions curbed their activities which remained in force in Wesleyan Methodism until Methodist Union in 1932. The Primitive Methodists, however, happily embraced the preaching of women, much to the benefit of their congregations.

Norma Virgoe





# Book chat

Stories in Glass: A Guide to Medieval Stained Glass in Norfolk  
Paul Harley David King

For many children growing up in Norfolk in the 40s/50s their introduction to art might well have been the stained glass windows of their parish church, especially those who attended church schools and made regular visits to their church.

Some of the highest-quality and best-preserved medieval stained glass in the country can be found in Norfolk, and this book opens up those windows for the benefit of both expert and newcomer to the subject.

David King has written the text, and he is the third and last generation of Norfolk's distinguished stained glass manufacturers, G. King and Son (Lead Glaziers) Ltd (1924-2002), a recognised authority on the subject, who writes from his in-depth practical experience and scholarship.

Photographer Paul Harley's expertise allows a close-up view that would be impossible without ladders and special lens. The book has 200 colour images, and a helpful map, a glossary and bibliography make this book a wonderful insight and guide into Norfolk Medieval Stained Glass.

\*\*\*\*\*

For those with a few spare moments and some curiosity about stained glass, why not pop in on what is considered by many as the most important collection of medieval stained glass in the county? It is in the heart of Norwich in St Peter Mancroft which is adjacent to The Forum and Norwich Market.

Ann Waterhouse

# Revd Andy and Ruth Burrows

Revd Andy, Ruth, Theo, (Andy's son) their two dogs, Rusty (a Jack Russell) and Willow (a Chow Chow), arrived in the Norwich Circuit as Circuit Superintendent, from the Lincoln Circuit during August 2020 in the midst of the Covid pandemic. Not an ideal start to their ministry here with social restrictions making it difficult to meet people personally and get to know them properly, but none the less Andy threw himself into the circuit tasks which he could do from home/office. Later on with services and meetings restricted to zoom only it was a difficult though perhaps interesting period, but in the Spring of 2021 Covid restrictions began to ease and services could resume though with strict social distancing and face masks. (No after service socializing). Further easing of restrictions during 2021 meant life gradually returned to near pre pandemic normality allowing Andy and family to at last get to know their new circuit and friends properly

Andy arrived as an experienced minister as his earlier years were served in the Salvation Army before becoming a minister in the Methodist Church. As well as being the Superintendent for the Norwich Circuit, Andy took on the Superintendency of Haverhill for a year from Sept 23 – Aug 24 as it was in need of a minister as no one else could be found until Sept 24. It is now a thriving church going from strength to strength. During his time here Andy initiated The Circuit Review which is ongoing and will be passed on to our new superintendent for him to put on the final touches. Due to ill health Andy's ministry in the circuit was cut short and he is now looking forward to retirement with Ruth and Willow, (Theo is now at University studying to be a doctor and sadly Rusty has passed away), in their new home in France.

Ruth took on employment in the circuit and along with her love of gardening and crafts she kept herself well occupied. Ruth was instrumental in starting the Community Garden and the Wellbeing Café at Sprowston MC both of which are thriving and will be a legacy for the future. Ruth was also involved at Wymondham MC with their Open Door Café on Tuesday mornings as well as pastoral visiting in the circuit. Upon moving to France Ruth is planning on employment as a gardener and is getting herself equipped for the task.

We wish Andy, Ruth and Willow a happy and prosperous life in France, though they will be missed by us all.

David Read.

# Sybil Phoenix

Featured on the Membership Card

by Joy Southam

Sybil Phoenix was born in what would become modern-day Guyana. Her mother died when she was just nine years old, so with her father working away from home in the quarries, Sybil was left to the care of the local Georgetown Congregational Church. Here she learned of God's love and her faith was encouraged by her grandfather, a preacher, and by the extended church community.

It was music that comforted Sybil in those early years, and when two English missionaries heard her sing at the local YMCA, they offered her voice training in exchange for service to the Methodist Church

As a classically trained singer, Sybil gave her voice to the church and also her heart to the Lord, thus beginning a life of service. She went on to become a local preacher. In 1956, with her fiancé Joe Phoenix by her side, she left Guyana and travelled to Britain. Her cousin, who had advised her not to come to Britain, gave her a flat as he was emigrating to the USA. Like many of the Windrush Generation any optimism and hope she had on arrival, was soon crushed by the attitudes of the British who noticed the colour of her skin rather than her personality. She had encountered racism before but the exclusion that it brought in London was hard to cope with. Sybil did not let this prejudice stop her and having been called to serve in the Methodist Church in Shepherd's Bush by the minister who was aware of her Youth work in Guyana, started a youth club called Clubland for young people who were being marginalised because of their colour.

In 1962, Sybil and Joe moved to Lewisham and again she set up a youth group, although it didn't initially have a permanent home. Eventually an old Mission Hall was obtained, which needed a lot of work done on it before in 1972 the 'Moonshot' club opened. It was a place where young people could find support, education, and empowerment at a time when so many doors were closed to them. The Moonshot Centre was a symbol of possibility, a place that told Black youth: "You belong." The club catered not only for black British young people, but also for the whole community. Sybil was asked by the Local Authority to contribute to its youth service. She started a library of

black books and championed longer opening hours making the club available during the summer holidays and at weekends.

In 1972, Sybil became the first black woman to be awarded an MBE for her services to youth work.

The success of Moonshot coincided with the rise of the National Front in Britain particularly in places like New Cross. Disaster struck in 1977, when the Moonshot Club was deliberately burned down by N F members. Sybil lived up to her surname declaring “My name is Phoenix, and so help me God, out of the ashes, I will rebuild Moonshot.”

This is exactly what she did and in 1981, Prince Charles attended the reopening of the Moonshot Centre, a state-of-the-art facility. The centre went on to become the centre for those mourning the deaths of 13 young people in the New Cross Fire and of those seeking justice with Sybil herself speaking out for the cause. By the early 1970s, Sybil had begun fostering children and over the years took in over 100 children giving them a warm, stable and loving home. For many she became the mother they never had, and for many the impact on their lives was immense.

In 1979, she founded the Marsha Phoenix Memorial Trust, a supported housing project for young women aged 16 to 21. Named in memory of her foster daughter Marsha, who had tragically died in a car accident in 1974, the Trust which can accommodate 27 people, became a sanctuary for vulnerable young women, giving them not just shelter but also the chance to rebuild their lives.

In 2008 she was awarded an OBE in recognition of her service to fostering, community service and racial equality. She has also been awarded the Medal of service from Guyana, the Freedom of the City of London and is an Honorary Freeman on the Borough of Lewisham.

Now in her 90s, Sybil, as we learn from the Prayer Handbook, will be remembered as the person who set up anti-racist training for clergy and for being a major contributor to challenging and changing the Church’s understanding of and approach to race relations.



## Thanksgiving Service for Keith Lilley

### March 28th 2025

The thanksgiving service was at Mile Cross where Keith had served his Christian ministry for many years. He had only recently received his 50 years certificate as a Local Preacher.

He was well known in the Circuit and in other Churches for his preaching but was restricted from how much he could preach due to his local ministry as a musician for services at Mile Cross. He was very expressive when he played the piano and was very passionate about his faith which was evident in his preaching and his playing of the hymns.

He often spoke about the work of Billy Graham and when he came to Carrow Road bringing many to faith in Jesus.

Keith also sang in a choir in Hellesdon and he was appreciated when he sung a solo in the Church with his lovely singing voice.

The appreciation of others to Keith was extremely evident at the thanksgiving service. The Church was full to the brim with all chairs filled and the vestibule full of people sitting and standing.

This is only a summary of Keith's life. I only knew him for 20 years at Mile Cross. I am sure others could give a more detailed picture than this.

His life was full of his passion for God and his family. Near the end he knew where he was going and was at peace in his heart and soul expecting to be with Jesus in glory.

John Johnson.  
Senior Steward

## Memories

In February this year, Keith Lilley passed away peacefully at home.

Keith's faith and therefore church, especially Mile Cross Methodist, have always been an integral part of his life. When growing up on the Mile Cross estate, his older sister, would bring him along to services in the pushchair.

With his servant heart, he gave to the life of this church in so many ways. First and foremost, with his gifting of music – bringing joy to so many with the skill-



ful and genuine way he played the piano and the organ. He would use this gift to bless others through his playing at services, but also sponsored plays to raise money for new hymn books for the church.

Keith served faithfully as he and his wife, Dot, reached out to the local community and invited children along to 'Junior Club' and summer clubs – bringing light to the lives of local families. He took young people to the Methodist Association of Youth Clubs weekends in London.

Keith also committed his time to preaching and sharing Jesus with others in many churches in the Methodist circuit. He began his preaching with the Mile Cross Youth group when he was a teenager.

Keith blessed others through his friendship and his generosity. During COVID restrictions, he continued to reach out to the congregation with written words of encouragement. He would get out on his bike and deliver the 'Messenger' and also deliver cakes and treats that Dot made each week.

Not only did Keith bless the life of Mile Cross Methodist, he also gave to Meadow Way Chapel, again through his preaching and musical ability. He supported the summer camps, families at Messy Church and reaching out to the local schools through the school visits and Open the Book Assemblies.

Keith was a respected teacher and Head teacher. He valued all of the children who journeyed through the schools where he taught and led.

One of Keith's most memorable adventures was visiting Zimbabwe with Reverend Freddie and working with the young people and single mums in Gweru. The second time he went to Zimbabwe was made even more special due to the group of young people who travelled with them – some of whom are here today.

Music was not only part of Keith's life at church, he also enjoyed being part of a choir. For many years he sang with Diadem – even touring with them in Canada. More recently he joined the Hellesdon Community Choir. He also sang in many of the Roger Jones Musicals and visited the Royal Albert Hall with the Prom Praise Choir. Keith was an accomplished accordion player and enjoyed playing alongside others in the Jigsaw Band. For a number of years, he enriched the lives of children with special educational needs through his volunteering with Musical Keys. As a family, we have all enjoyed sharing in Keith's piano playing at home; he was not one to keep his musical ability to himself and brought joy to many others as he shared this.

Keith combined his love for Jesus and his love for biking and would often be out and about on his bike – keeping himself fit and praying for the places he visited on his bike – though he would assure us that he kept his eyes open whilst praying!!

Making time for others was part of who Keith was. Keith invested in the people around him. As Keith's daughter, I am grateful that Keith was an encourager and enabled me to not limit what I do. Keith always supported and believed in people and I know that many of you, as you remember Keith, will be able to think of a time when he supported and believed in you too.

I hope and pray that as we remember, we are able to cherish something that Keith did or who he was. I hope that we can all take with us a small piece of Keith's generosity, or his grace or his kindness or his enthusiasm as we journey on.

Ruth Lilley

## OTHER NEWS

THE 2025 METHODIST CONFERENCE will take place at the Telford International Centre from 26 June - 2 July 2025.

As well as its 225 representatives Conference welcomes interested visitors and anyone may attend the open Conference sessions, visit the exhibition or attend fringe events. For those at home all public sessions will be available to watch live on the Methodist Church webpage via an embedded YouTube live stream, and can prayerfully support the officials and representatives during Conference.

HOSPITAL BEDSIDE BIBLES, a familiar sight in patient's bedside lockers since 1949, were removed during Covid, and the first have just been reintroduced through Good News for Everyone, (formerly The Gideons). Wendy Moss, a qualified nurse at Macclesfield General Hospital, and Lay Minister with the Anglican Church, said she was sad when they were removed from patients' lockers during Covid, so it's wonderful to be able to begin reintroducing them in time for Easter.

UKRAINE continues to be in the news. Two pieces of news from Norfolk.

*Blessing the Baskets.* This Easter Eve service was celebrated in Pulham Market when Ukrainians from all over Norfolk gathered together on the village green to share in this greatly loved Ukrainian tradition, when families take their decorated baskets full of Easter foods to be blessed, before Easter Day.

The local Rector conducted a gentle subdued service in the glooming on a rather cold evening, and it must have been a great comfort and joy for Ukrainians, who have been living in this country after the Russian invasion, to meet together for this special Easter service.

We have written before about a young family in King's Lynn who welcomed to their home in Spring 2022, a Ukrainian mother and daughter. Two years later they moved into their own home and their husband/father joined them. "They continue to thrive, their daughter Dasha is really happy studying Graphic Design at Norwich University. And just before the Easter holidays they brought Grandmother and their three cats

back to King's Lynn. That's everybody here now, everybody safe!"

## **AND NEWS FROM OTHER SOURCES.**

THE METHODIST RECORDER. On 2nd May it included these items:

\* The front page headline was 'Methodist prayers mean a great deal to the Catholic Church', and reported the words of the Archbishop of Birmingham following the death of Pope Francis, in response to the action of the Methodist Church.

\* In AD 325 in Nicaea, Turkey, 318 elders gathered to thrash out their differences which led to the creation of the (Nicene) Creed, and now 1,700 years later Church leaders in England have called for Christians to celebrate, with one voice and one heart, the work of those divinely guided individuals, and defend the truth that has been entrusted to us.

\* VE Day. A three page special feature marking the 80th anniversary of VE day, included events planned for the anniversary, memories of the past and recipes from 1945, including mock banana sandwich filling using parsnips.

## **NETWORKNORFOLK**

This Christian community website continues to keep news flowing between the churches, and on 1st May shared news of two events with guest speakers that month, with the renowned speaker and author Canon J John visiting SOUL Church, and Palestinian Christian peacemaker, Zoughbi Zoughbi, speaking at St Catherine's, Mile Cross. Those have already happened.

But on eight Sundays in June and July (not 29th June) the BISHOP'S HOUSE GARDEN, the oldest private garden in Norwich, will be open to the public to raise money for local charities. Last year more than 3,000 people enjoyed these beautiful extensive gardens, raising £25,000 for local good causes. These events are highly recommended.

## **News from the churches**

### **Bowthorpe**

The Lent course was well-attended for the six weeks. It followed a timely study from 'Embrace the Middle East'. The Bible passages were read by different people speaking the words of each character, plus the narrator. It was a good way to include everyone, and to experience the drama of the events described. The focus was on living through hard times only by the Grace of God and the example of Jesus.

In May and June the church is running a Christianity Explored course entitled "What's the Best News You've Ever Heard?"

It will take place at a neutral venue, the lounge of one of our sheltered accommodations that hosts various community activities. We await the response!

Sally Simpson

## **Drayton and Horsford**

We shared an enjoyable social afternoon, playing Beetle Drive and eating some tasty cakes and scones. It's amazing how much fun can be had with such a wide range of ages, pencil and paper and a dice. There were some very strange looking beetles.

Our children's craft afternoons are continuing with themes of birds, Easter and people. Thank you to David for the loan of the badge making machine, it went down well with the children.

We delivered our Easter message and small gift to the properties around Carter Road and the two new housing developments opposite. We continue to pray that this outreach to the local community along with our monthly coffee mornings, will bear fruit. This year, our chosen charity for donations from the coffee mornings is Marie Curie Cancer Care.

Elsewhere in this magazine, there is more information on our Anniversary weekend in October, when the focus will be on 200 years of Local Preachers coming to both villages, even before the chapels were built. We hope you will be able to share this with us.

We wish Andy and Ruth a happy retirement in France and thank them for their service to the circuit and our churches.

Kim Pike

## **Rosebery Road**

At the beginning of February, we were worried when the council instructed Angel Road school to tell us we were no longer to use the car park. After some discussion, we realized that we could manage on Sundays as long as people parked on the diagonal but one of our long-term hirers left us immediately. Fortunately, everyone else has continued to use our premises and with the local councillor and MP both on the case, we do hope that Highways will be repairing the offending sink hole shortly to enable us to resume our use of the car park.

On a lighter note, we are hoping to have an outing for an afternoon tea during the summer and are also looking forward to welcoming the new Year 3s from Angel Road in October to see our Harvest displays and to do a craft activity. The current year 3s visited us before Easter when they heard the Easter story, did three craft activities and learned Fred Kaan's song "We have a king who rides a donkey".

Joy Southam

design by pauline 2025