



Beeston **Methodist** Church

# Newsletter



# New beginnings

September 2023

## New beginnings

Every September we begin a new Methodist year with a new President and Vice President of Conference in place. You can find out about them on page 8, with the new President's address to conference starting on page 12.

This year, we mirror this with our own new start. We have a new minister at BMC, Rev Andrew Checkley, and we look forward with excitement to see how he will help to lead our church forward over the next few years. He will also be minister of Stapleford and Sandiacre Methodist Churches.

In addition, our Trent Valley circuit has a new superintendent, Rev Tony Malcolm, who will also be minister of Grangewood and Kingswood. Further afield, Rev Andy Fyall is the new chair of our Nottingham and Derby District.

Many new beginnings, we pray for every success for them all.

*Mark Ramsey – Editor*

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## Beeston Methodist Church Newsletter – September 2023

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Any articles for inclusion in the September issue should be emailed by 16th Sept to [newsletter@beestonmethodist.church](mailto:newsletter@beestonmethodist.church). Articles may be edited for space.

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*Cover photo of President and Vice-President of Methodist Conference 2023-24 from [www.facebook.com/MethodistPresidency](https://www.facebook.com/MethodistPresidency)*

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## Minister's message

September is a time of new beginnings. There are people starting in new classes or at new schools as well as those who are heading off to university. There are also times when people move to take up new posts or to retire from work, although I appreciate this isn't directly linked to September. It is also the time when in general ministers move to take up new stations.

With any move, there seems to be certain questions that are asked. When you move into secondary school, the question seems to be What Junior school did you go to? When you move to university, the questions are more along the lines of Where do you come from? What A levels did you do? and What are you studying?

In a new post, there are questions about what you have done before moving to take up the current post. So, If I were to answer these, here is what I would put:

I went to Thornton Junior School.

Where am I from? That can be answered in so many ways and depends on what you mean. If you mean, where was I born, I'd say Birmingham. If you mean where did I live before moving, that would be Kippax in Leeds. I studied A levels in Maths, Physics, Chemistry and General Studies. I did two years teacher training at university but did not complete a degree.

In terms of work prior to moving to Nottingham. I have been a minister for 14 years and served two circuits in Leeds and Wakefield where I spent 9 years and was in Chesterfield for 5 years. Prior to entering the ministry, I worked as a civil servant for 7 years and was a school lab technician.

Jesus asked and was asked lots of questions. The answers he gave sometimes confused people but also gave insights as to what it means to live a life like His.

I wonder what all of the answers I have given tell you about me? Does it give you sufficient to form a picture of who I am or are there other questions you would like to know the answers to?

Maybe you could ask. You never know what you might find out.

God bless,  
*Andrew*

## Update from the Leadership Team

It was noted that the Circuit Meeting had approved an increase in the circuit assessment paid by Beeston Methodist Church for the period 2023/24 – it will be £79,000 pa.

**Care and Nurture Group** – A successful meeting had been held with staff from Goodman House regarding family members being enabled to attend worship. Ways of ensuring they feel comfortable in the church and that their needs are being met are being put into place.

**Back to Church Sunday** was reviewed. It was felt that some links had been renewed and the day had a positive feel. A further Back to Church Sunday is to be considered after Rev Andrew Checkley has arrived.

There is to be a **Welcome Coffee Morning** for the **Rev Andrew Checkley** on Saturday 9 September. Everyone is invited to come along and to meet Andrew.

Thanks were expressed to **Rev Christine Fox** for her support over the past 9 months and best wishes extended to her for her retirement. Thanks are also expressed to Janice Phillips who has completed her time with the Circuit Leadership Team. She has been a supportive member of the team and will be missed.

*Susan Holmes, on behalf of the Leadership Team*

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## Stride and Ride – Saturday 9th September

The annual Stride and Ride for the Notts. Historic Churches Trust takes place this year on Saturday 9th September. Dave Lowe and Andy Taylor will again be doing a sponsored walk visiting several local churches and you are welcome to join us if you wish. BMC will also be open for visitors during the day from 10am and we are again needing volunteers to be part of a rota to look out for them. If you are able to help please let Andy Taylor know (0115 9135571).

As usual half the money we raise will go to the NHC Trust, this year the other half will be for the new BMC charities for 2023-24: the Canaan Trust, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, and the Student Christian Movement.

*Andy Taylor*

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## BMC 10% giving to Charity 2023

This year the Finance group again decided to follow the pattern of giving 10% of our ordinary given income to charity. This is in addition to the special fund-raising for the Church Charity. 80% goes to Methodist charities and 20% to other charities nominated by members of our congregation.

This year the allocations were made as follows:

Methodist concerns		Requests from congregation	
Fund for World Mission	£2960	Beeston Women's Refuge	£200
Mission in Britain	£1680	Datum Foundation	£200
All We Can	£960	Embrace	£200
Methodist Church Fund for Property	£800	Ethiopiaid	£200
Action for Children	£400	Gitare School	£200
Methodist Homes	£480	Hayward House	£200
Fund for support of Presbyters & Deacons	£480	M.E. Association	£200
Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust	£240	National Deaf Society	£200
		Nottingham Samaritans	£200
		Nottingham Street Pastors	£200
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>£8000</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>£2000</b>
<b>Total £10,000</b>			

*Maureen Beardsall, on behalf of the Beeston Methodist Church 10% giving group*

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## Prayer

Holy God,  
may our hearts be warmed by your Spirit as we read your word and reflect upon it. May we be ready to answer your call and live lives that help other people to know that they can be saved to the uttermost.  
Amen.

*Rev Graham Thompson, President, British Methodist Conference 2022/2023*

Taken from [www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/prayer-of-the-day](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/prayer-of-the-day)

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## Update from the Development Group

We've not updated you since July so we have quite a lot to tell you.

### The Bats

During the second investigation by the external Ecology team, they observed a bat flying into the spire. Although, none were seen entering the rest of the building we have had to apply for a licence from Natural England, before we can do the work on the interior of the spire. There will be conditions imposed, covering timing, preservation of entry/exit points, the setting up of some temporary accommodation (i.e. bat boxes) and not working too closely to any active sites. We are awaiting this licence.

### The Spire

Strictly speaking, this isn't part of the redevelopment work. It had come up at the Quinquennial Inspection (the regular inspection done on all Methodist Church buildings) that work needed doing both inside and outside the spire. It seemed sensible to co-ordinate this with the redevelopment work, but it is being funded from the Property Committee budget rather than Redevelopment money. The outside work could be done before the licence is obtained so we decided to go ahead with this. Many of you will have seen the steeplejacks at work and gasped at their antics as they have cleaned the outside and removed the vegetation. There is a bit more work to be done yet, but you will be able to see the difference already.

### How Ecologically sound are our redevelopment plans?

From the start, the plans have included efforts to make the church as Eco-friendly as we can within our budget.

- The new roof will be insulated and the existing windows will be double-glazed.
- We plan to have solar panels on some of the small roofs facing in the appropriate direction. Broxtowe has recently appointed a Climate Change manager who has been contacted to see she would like to work with us on the project. We hope to find out from her if there is any possibility of having solar panels on the main roof and if it would be cost effective to do this.

- Following discussion with the heating consultants and an ecological advisor, we were told that a modern gas boiler was the only option currently for a building like ours. We were advised that conventional heat pump based systems would not be effective enough in such a large space, and industrial heating systems would be too noisy to run. There is a possibility we could use 'green' gas which will help our carbon footprint and it may be possible to change to something like an air source heat pump or a fully electrical system when we will need to update again in about 15 years' time. Hopefully by this point low-carbon systems will have been further developed for use in buildings such as ours. We are getting some further advice from Derby University Eco researchers, to see what they think.
- The architects are aware that we have an agenda to make the project as Eco friendly as possible and will look at materials with this in mind.

### **Detailed planning prior to going out to tender**

The architects are progressing with the detailed planning – the Redevelopment Committee is providing them with input when there are choices to be made. When this is complete a quantity surveyor will estimate the likely cost of the project at current prices. As you know, the world has changed a lot since Brexit and Covid, so unfortunately we expect that prices will have increased considerably.

### **Grant Funding**

Because of the likely increased costs of the project, we have decided to engage a professional fundraising consultant to help us obtain grant funding. He will advise on which grants are available, the likelihood of a successful application and the wording to use. He is local and, mainly due to the excellent fundraising efforts of the church community so far, he seems optimistic that we have a good chance of being successful (although of course nothing can be guaranteed). If any members of the congregation would like to help with writing grant applications, or have ideas for organisations to approach for funding, please let us know.

*Connie Pullan and Chris Bridges on behalf of the Redevelopment group*

## **President and Vice-President elected and inducted for 2023/2024**



The Revd Gill Newton has been elected and inducted as President of the Methodist Conference. The induction took place on Saturday 24 June at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole, during the Methodist Conference.

Gill is a lifelong Methodist, raised in Cornwall, with experience in circuit ministry and has served as the Sheffield District Chair since 2014. Gill chairs the Ministries Committee overseeing the development of the church's ministry in many varied contexts. She also serves on the Strategy and Resources Committee and on the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes Board and has previously chaired the Ministerial Candidates and Probationers Oversight Committee and served as Chair of the Chairs.

In her Conference address, Gill reflected on her theme for the year, calling on all Methodists to look for 'Hidden Treasures'. She said: "It's my hope that during this year I will discover hidden treasures as I spend time with the Methodist people across the Connexion and that I might encourage others to discover the treasure that God has hidden for them."

The Vice-President, Deacon Kerry Scarlett, was also elected and inducted today. Ms Scarlett has been a Deacon since 2008, having previously worked for the Methodist Church in Ireland's Children and Youth Department. Kerry is part of the Learning Network, aligned to the Birmingham District. As a Deacon, she has a passion for justice, community organising, and seeking to enable and amplify the voices of others. She founded Adavu, which supports survivors of human trafficking and was involved in the development of the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network for practitioners. Kerry has served the church in a number of ways including circuit ministry, theological education, the Learning Network, a variety of committees including the Candidates Committee and has contributed to and worked on the Candidating Review report and Walking With Micah.

In her address to the Conference on the shared Presidential theme of 'Hidden Treasures', Kerry called for: "The Methodist Church in Britain, to re-discover our



treasures, both old and new. We need to seek the courage to understand who we are, as a church, and what God is calling us to be. We are also called to seek outwards, beyond the walls of our established churches, to the communities around us, where God is also at work, amongst God's beloved people there. To find out the glimmers of where God is, in the unexpected people and places where transformation is taking place."

The role of President of the Methodist Conference is reserved for presbyters and that of Vice-President for lay people or deacons. During his lifetime John Wesley chaired the Methodist Conference but after his death, the Conference determined to elect a President annually.

24 June 2023. Taken from [www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/latest-news/all-news/president-and-vice-president-elected-and-inducted-for-20232024](http://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/latest-news/all-news/president-and-vice-president-elected-and-inducted-for-20232024)

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## Storage Space Needed

**Look around in church.** Immediately prior to the redevelopment every moveable item, plus some that are not easily moved, will need to be taken out. Some items can be disposed of and some will be required for services in the hall but most, including all the chairs, will need to be stored until all the work is completed.

The hire of a storage container has been ruled out by the Redevelopment Group for financial and practical reasons. We are therefore asking the congregation for any spare capacity in garages, sheds and spare rooms. Even just looking after three or four chairs would help, the only stipulation being that the storage space would need to be weatherproof.

Unfortunately, at this stage we do not know when the redevelopment work will start or how long it will take. It is important, though, to be prepared for when that time comes.

I will be very pleased to receive all offers of help, however limited.

*Steve Ames, Transition Group Convenor*

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## ***Bible reading: Speech***



### **Something to read**

*“Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.”*

*Proverbs 4:24*

### **Something to think about**

I suspect that there are few people who would think of themselves as ‘devious’ or would welcome that label. Nonetheless, it is rare to meet someone who always tells the absolute truth in every circumstance. We are likely familiar with negotiating ‘grey areas’ when we choose what to say and what to hold back. Perhaps we let slip small untruths, or omit information, to spare someone’s feelings.

In the context of the wider passage, I think the author of Proverbs is less worried about these kinds of speech and more about ‘crooked’ speech that sends us and others off track, away from the good we might otherwise do. This kind of ‘crooked’, deceitful, or corrupt speaking has lasting consequences. It’s like a signpost pointing in the wrong direction, taking us so far away from where we need to be that we struggle to find our way back.

To put away crooked speech, then, would mean examining who we listen to and why. It would also mean paying attention to how our speech is affecting the ability of others to do good and live well.

Think about who you are listening to – which public figures, organisations and movements are shaping your speech and thinking? Check the sources of information that you share. Think about how you can choose your words carefully to help others rather than throw people off track.

### **Something to do**

When you engage with the news and current events, identify people who are speaking out in ways that are helpful and fruitful. Where are the voices that give you fresh ideas and new tools with which you can do good? How can you amplify those voices?

## Something to pray

Jesus, grant us wisdom and discernment

That we may hear you speaking through others,

Words of truth and love.

Jesus, make us bold

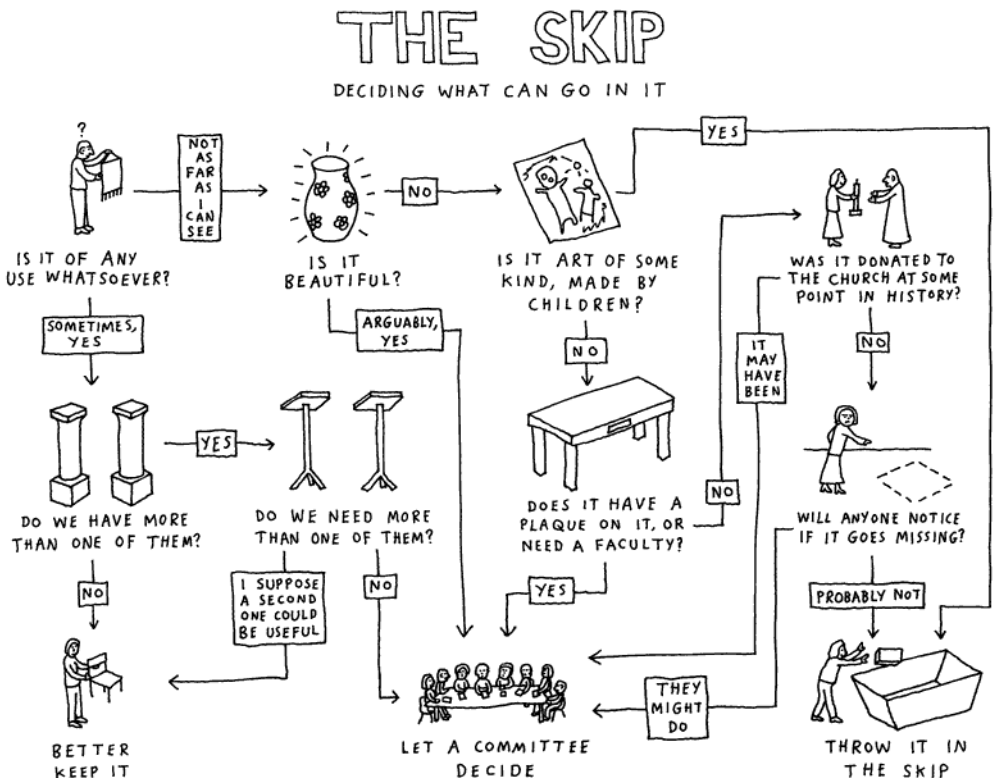
That we may challenge crooked speech,

And raise up instead the voices of those whose words do good.

Amen.

*Contribution by Dr Frances Clemson, Faith Communications and Just Scripture Specialist, Christian Aid.*

Taken from [www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/daily-bible-readings](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/daily-bible-readings)



# ***Hidden Treasures – The President’s Address to Conference 2023***



## **Introduction**

“There’s a pot of gold at the end of every rainbow!” That’s the legend we’ve all grown up with, isn’t it? But where does it come from? History tells us that Vikings invaded Ireland in the eighth century and were known for looting and then burying gold – in places where they hoped it wouldn’t be found! When they left Ireland, they left some of their stolen gold behind and the legend began, suggesting that Irish leprechauns found the gold and buried it again so that humans could never find it!

And so, the folklore suggests there is a pot of gold hidden where the rainbow touches earth. But of course, we know that’s an illusion, and rainbows usually seem to move away as we move towards them. How frustrating! And a reminder of how easy and tempting it can be to look for treasure in the wrong places!

I’ve never thought of myself as a “treasure seeker”, although the thought of giving up a well-paid banking career when I sensed a call to ordained ministry was a significant hurdle to overcome! But so was the prospect of remaining single and childless – that was my lot at the time, and I didn’t want it to stay that way. Perhaps that’s a powerful reminder that treasure comes in many forms!

Here in front of me today, I see many people who are treasures in my life. Family members, friends, colleagues in ministry – some of you nurtured me by your faith and example to find my faith in Christ, some of you were in home groups and prayer triplets with me where we shared joys and challenges, some of you were on the receiving end of ministry I have offered, for good or ill. Together your encouragement, wise guidance and prayers have enriched my life and enabled me to take on roles I never imagined I could fulfil.

And my most personal treasure, which I genuinely thought I had given up all hope of finding when I candidated for ministry – my husband Leslie and our daughter Laura. Without your loving support, encouragement and prompting, there is no way I would have the privilege of standing here today. In different

ways, God has worked through each of you to speak to me over the years. So, thank you for being my treasure!

But, enough about me and my treasure. What about the rest of us? Don't we share a desire deep within to find what is hidden, to uncover what is secret or to discover treasure? That's probably why children play hide and seek, and why many of us spend hours reading crime novels or whodunits? And why some wander along coastlines with metal detectors or travel the world geo-caching? We love to get to the bottom of something, to solve the mystery, to bring into the light what is currently in the darkness.

Each of us have our own personal treasures, those things we'd rescue from a burning home – photograph albums, keepsakes made by children or grandchildren, holiday souvenirs – the lists would look different for each of us.

But what about the legal definition of treasure? Well, the current Treasure Act says that newly discovered artefacts are legal treasure if more than 300 years old and made of precious metal or part of a collection of valuable objects. If you find anything like that, you must notify the relevant authorities within 14 days because treasure is owned by the Crown, effectively the King!

But, in choosing the theme *Hidden Treasures* for this coming year, the Vice-President and I are not interested in the treasures owned by King Charles, but the treasures offered to us by the Creator of the world, the King of Kings. Why spend time looking for worldly treasures when there are untold treasures awaiting us through a deepening relationship with God in Christ, and when there are undiscovered treasures in our churches and communities, treasures we've not dreamt of or imagined hidden for us by God!

### **Biblical context**

There are, I've learned, seventy-seven verses in Scripture that mention treasure! Seventy-seven is a significant number in Scripture, but I'm not going to get into that now. Some of those verses may be familiar – the parables in Matthew 13 where Jesus spoke of people giving up everything to acquire treasure buried in a field or a precious pearl, or the encouragement from Jesus to store up treasures in heaven included in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6.

So, why choose Isaiah 45:3? *“I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.”* (NRSVA)



Well, let's begin to see how rich with meaning and full of God's promise that verse is. Could this really mean God wants to open our eyes to things we would not otherwise see and take hold of things that would otherwise remain hidden and unclaimed? It seems so! But note the treasures are stored in darkness and the riches are hidden in secret places – that must mean these treasures are all around us! God isn't trying to hide treasures from us, instead God is hiding them for us! So, what's the story behind these amazing words?

Isaiah wrote this prophecy almost 200 years before King Cyrus was born. He foresaw Cyrus invading Babylon, liberating the Jewish people from captivity and repatriating them to their homeland, just as history then unfolded.

The prophet Daniel was amongst those Jewish exiles experiencing captivity. Studying the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah, he discovered the Jewish people had completed their seventy years in captivity and that Isaiah had predicted that King Cyrus would liberate them. So he took the scroll of Isaiah to Cyrus and showed him that long ago, God had named him. Cyrus, a heathen king, was undoubtedly shocked, but this revelation gave him confidence to liberate the Jews, return them to Israel and announce the rebuilding of Solomon's Temple.

But there was more! God promised that when Cyrus freed the Jewish people he would “give the treasures of darkness and wealth stored in secret places”. And Jewish records confirm that when Cyrus declared the temple could be rebuilt, the soldiers in Babylon, uncovered vast amounts of treasure that the king of Babylon had hidden under the Euphrates River!

The Jewish people were in an extraordinarily difficult place. The temple had been destroyed. They had been in exile for 70 years. Life as they had known it had been turned upside down, but amid this pain and anguish, treasure is discovered and life takes on a different perspective. God was at work, using Cyrus' desire for earthly treasure to free his people, but doing that in such a way that Cyrus knew it was God who had called him by name.

The terrain they had to navigate was challenging. And as we look around the world, this nation, our neighbourhoods and the Church, the terrain we must navigate is also challenging. The world groans with war, famine, earthquake and faces a climate crisis, our nation struggles to be a just and welcoming society in which all have enough, our neighbourhoods don't all have a sense of community and caring and the church ... fragile, declining, vulnerable, irrelevant – these are words that we hear used to describe us today.

In her Presidential address to the 2017 Conference, the Revd Loraine Mellor quoted Catherine Booth, joint founder of The Salvation Army as having said, “If we are to better the future, we must disturb the present.” Loraine challenged us about how we were disturbing the present then – six years ago? Well, like it or not, and whether we were willing to allow it or not, the present has been disturbed for us – by Covid, the cost-of-living crisis, the contracting Methodist membership, fewer available ministers – the list could continue!

But the Jewish people found “treasure in the darkness and riches in the secret places.” So, if God is also hiding them for us, then there must be treasure to uncover today, even in the middle of all that is challenging, painful and dark around us. What might we seek, discover and see brought to birth in our own lives and in the life of the church?

### **What does treasure look like in our personal lives?**

All this talk of treasure may prompt thoughts of stories like Treasure Island or films like Indiana Jones and the Lost Crusade. The treasure is locked away and the hunters embark upon all kinds of adventures to discover what is hidden. Indiana Jones faced many perils and risked his life to find treasure. That's extreme, but it's that kind of passion we need for God if we are going to discover the treasure, he has for us.

Daniel chapter 2 tells the story of Nebuchadnezzar having dreams that no one could interpret. Nebuchadnezzar therefore declared that all wise men in the land should be executed. But Daniel pleaded with the King for more time and urged his friends to pray. That night, in the darkness of his dreams, Daniel received the interpretation the king longed for.

In those challenging times, Daniel was given the treasure needed to secure a different future for him and others. So, both he and Cyrus found treasure whilst in difficult and dark places and that can be our experience too. In those unwanted places of suffering, those hopeless dark places – when God is the one we cry out to, the discovery of treasure may be just a moment away.



Some of you will know, that at the start of this year, when I knew I needed to get cracking with preparations for this role, I woke up on 5 January with no voice at all! Later that evening, my husband Leslie collapsed. He spent a few days in hospital and was ultimately fitted with a pacemaker. That wasn't the start to the year we had planned! As days became weeks, Leslie and I became adept at text messaging and sign language, but I grew more frustrated at not being able to speak or engage with ministry in the ways that I wanted.

Yet amidst the frustration, treasure emerged. In my prayer journal in mid-January, I wrote of confusion and frustration but of my growing awareness that God was present and active. He had been spectacularly at work through hospital staff, family and friends. We had seen and known amazing care, attention and support and were so thankful that God had walked, unseen, with us.

Secondly, I realised what a gift it was to have lost my voice at this time – not just because I couldn't nag Leslie, but because whilst I was not well enough to work normally, I was not too ill to look after Leslie. Had I been well, I would have been torn between being at home and being away fulfilling other responsibilities.

And thirdly, a good friend, here today, sent me an article about Zechariah's experience of being struck dumb. It described a time when Zechariah was prevented from re-telling old stories and had to observe and receive from God the new story that was being revealed to him. Was this time for me to be silent and still and consider what God wanted me to share with you?

Even during frustration, pain, anger, or disappointment, God has treasure to reveal if we reach out to him, seek him, dig deep into him. The treasures of faith, perseverance, patience, empathy and trust are all there to discover because God is working, even in the darkness. And, of course, God's word, the Bible, is treas-



ure itself. When we spend time quietly reading and meditating upon it, we store up treasure for the future and discover secret riches as we draw closer to God. We also discover that we are treasure to God – he cherishes and values us – we are precious to him.

Recently I discovered this quote: “A treasure that has stayed with me all my life was an opportunity for half-an-hour’s quiet time early morning.” What a difference it could make if every Methodist was sharing that regular commitment to discover the treasures that God has hidden in his Word? Digging for treasure does take effort and time, but the rewards are amazing!

Being rooted in God’s word, being able to draw on its riches and treasures when days are dark – as perhaps they feel to many within the church now – would give fresh hope and confidence as we discern how God wants us to be his disciples and his Church in this time. It’s very easy to feel abandoned by God. But all the time God is working in the darkness, in those secret places, bringing things to birth. Remember that the greatest thing that God ever did, bringing Jesus back to life, was done in the dark and the cold of the tomb!

### **What does treasure look like in the church?**

We’ve thought about how and where we might find treasure in life, but what about us as the body of Christ, as the Church? What and where are the hidden treasures that God is hiding for us? It may seem prophetic to speak of finding treasure whilst surrounded by decline and fragility. Some of you may think it foolish and naïve! But I want us to consider that there may be treasure within the Church that we have not discovered, unseen things happening that need to be nurtured.

As I’ve already acknowledged, searching for treasure takes hard work, dedication and patience. As I reflected on this, it resonated with what I learned about the qualities of a midwife, as I studied the theology of ‘God as Midwife’ during my last sabbatical. I spent many hours re-watching episodes of *Call The Midwife*, but also reading around the concept of God bringing things to birth.

Birth is a strong narrative thread throughout Scripture. From the whole creation being brought to birth in Genesis to Christ yielding to the process of human birth

and then speaking to Nicodemus about the need to be “born again”. These and many other stories in Scripture highlight the importance of the birthing process but also acknowledge both the joy and the pain associated with it.



When we think about embryos forming in the womb, it happens in the darkness, hidden from the eye. And even though what’s happening becomes apparent to the one carrying the embryo at an early stage, no one else knows what is happening in that secret, hidden place.

The midwife’s role is to notice what is happening throughout the pregnancy and most critically at the birth. They are intimately involved in the birth process and require qualities such as being patient, encouraging, supportive, unobtrusive and trustworthy – not least when the outcome of the process is not as expected. These are all qualities found in God and his dealings with us. And yes, some of these same qualities are found in treasure seekers too!

So, as God displays the qualities of a midwife and we are made in the image of God, perhaps we are also being called to be midwives. Where in the church are we pregnant with potential? What treasure is God hiding for us that we are being called to discover and bring into sight?

In his book *Reproducing Churches*, George Lings affirms that the calling of the Church is to reproduce. He suggests that reproduction is inherent in what Church is, rather than it being a function of the Church. It’s how the Church fulfils its mission. So, if the Church is to reproduce, then midwives are necessary – reading the signs, bringing to birth what is germinating in the darkness, uncovering the treasure, remembering that God is hiding it for us, not from us. Our calling is to notice and to uncover with the help of the Spirit.

But of course, when reproduction takes place there is a huge connection between parents and offspring, but the offspring are never identical to the parents. It is reproduction not replication. Yet, when we look at the history of the Church and the way new churches have emerged over the years, often they have looked exactly like what went before. We have too often cloned rather than allowing our offspring to look and be different from us.

It's a challenge, isn't it? When offspring arrive in a family the dynamics immediately change. Every generation looks and behaves differently from the one before. And so, with the Church! The next generation of Methodist communities need to look different from the existing ones, yet still carry our DNA. And it's a joy to see where that's happening! But I wonder if sometimes we have noticed the treasure of something new emerging but then quickly buried it again, like the leprechauns with the Viking's gold. We haven't had the midwife's patience to wait, we haven't offered the midwife's encouragement to those involved, we haven't been willing to bear the pain that comes with birth.

So, our treasure isn't our buildings, or our financial resource. Our treasure is likely to be something that we haven't yet seen or imagined! Whilst on my visit to Scandinavia earlier this year, one of the pastors talked of them "stumbling upon" the needs of their communities and recognising what their mission needed to be. That's a wonderful expression that we could apply to our treasure seeking!

Not many treasure seekers these days follow a map with X marking the spot. They are more likely to "stumble upon" it and be surprised by it. In the Church, we may well stumble upon a person or a situation or an opportunity and slowly discover that here is treasure. Here is something or someone that must be nurtured and cherished and allowed to blossom in ways that we cannot yet imagine.

### **Discovering the treasure/bringing to birth**

So, is this possible? Can we find treasure amid all the suffering in the world, amongst the fragility, pain and anxiety in the church? Tom Wright says, "the picture of birth pangs has been used for centuries by Jews as they reflected on the way in which as they believed, their God was intending to bring to birth his new world, his new creation, the age to come in which justice and peace, mercy and truth would at last flourish."

So, when it feels as if everything is falling apart in the Church and we are in pain, could God actually be putting us back together? Is it death we are experiencing or new life? What might God be revealing in these challenging times?

If, like me, you believe it is possible that the Church is pregnant with potential, that God is doing something in the darkness, that there is treasure to be un-

earthed, what might be expected of us in this process of bringing new things to birth, of being the midwives?



Sheila Kitzinger, a natural childbirth activist, describes a midwife like this, “A midwife is the opener of doors, the one who releases, the nurturer. She is the strong anchor when there is fear and pain; the skilled friend who is in tune with the rhythms of birth, the mountain tops and chasms, the striving, and the triumph.” These qualities can apply in the birthing, pioneering, or initiating of anything, and so in the Church, we need more midwives!

The term midwife literally means “with woman”. But the term obstetrician means “to stand in front of”. So, in these roles involved in the birthing process we see leadership and partnership at work. But how these qualities are exercised is vital. In their book, *Midwives Of An Unnamed Future*, Broz and Flynn write “Being a midwife is a co-operative exercise. When some of us are tempted to call the journey off, others are there to remind them that we are all in the process of giving birth and that birth is hard, focused work.”

Midwives are good listeners, not necessarily making quick judgements, but listening and looking carefully for signs of activity or concern that are not yet visible. It’s an attentive rather than a directive approach. The Church would do well to do the same. Listen carefully to our people and our communities and tune in to what is going on beneath the surface, becoming aware of what needs bringing into the light and recognising treasure when we find it! By listening carefully, we let go of preconceived ideas, prejudices and agendas and become more aware of how the prevailing culture might be shaped by kingdom values and enable new birth to emerge.

Looking for treasure is painstaking and time consuming, and the process of birth is messy, painful and sometimes distressing. If we take seriously our roles as treasure seekers and midwives, we do well to anticipate that we will need patience, endurance, stamina and compassion. We can expect life to change as new Christian communities emerge which don’t look like the church we know now, but which display the characteristics of the kingdom. After all, it’s the kingdom of heaven that is the treasure, not the Church! It’s signs of the kingdom that we must look for, not a replication of the church we know!

## Conclusion

During my visit to Scandinavia, I visited Drammen Methodist Church which had 100 children's bicycles in its basement. The church, in a poor part of town, had recognised that many children in their community didn't have bikes. One church family, who are cycling fanatics, had worked hard to obtain bikes for free or little cost by trawling the internet and had spent time ensuring they were safe and roadworthy. Each year the church holds a day where families are invited to come and receive bicycles for their children. Often, they come returning last year's bike and looking for a bigger one for their growing child. They had stumbled upon a need, sought out the treasure and were transforming lives in their community.

Then at Horten, the congregation realised that the church courtyard was a sun trap and amazingly, in a cold Scandinavian country they discovered they could grow grapes. They now make grape juice, bottle it, and sell it to fund their missional work. It has enabled them to convert an old garage into a beautiful meeting space and library where they offer hospitality to anyone who comes seeking conversation, support, or companionship. They had stumbled upon treasure, hidden by God for them, right under their noses!

It's easy to keep telling the same story about the Church, but as we saw through the experience of Zechariah, God encourages us to stop sharing the same old stories and wait until we've received the new story. We will never perceive a different future for the church while we continue to pedal the old stories about ourselves. So, let's embrace the treasure that we discover, and welcome what is being birthed, so that the future is not held back by the present or the past.

The pain that we are experiencing within the church now may be the very sign that something new is emerging. The treasure that God has hidden for us is waiting to be discovered and used, not hidden away in a museum or a cabinet only to be used on special occasions or buried again for others to find.

But as we open our eyes and attune our ears to be more alert to where God is placing treasure in the darkness, let us never forget that we ourselves are God's treasure. Scripture reminds us that we are God's chosen treasure and that he has called us out of the darkness into the light. That means that others we encounter in our communities are treasure too.

As his treasure, God longs for us to discover the treasure that he has hidden for us, not from us, even when life is hard, painful and confusing. No, there isn't treasure at the end of the rainbow but maybe the rainbow itself is the treasure – that reminder to us of God's continuing faithfulness.



So, may we be a Church that traces the rainbow through the rain, discovers the treasures in the darkness and fulfils the expectant potential that God has placed within us, his people.

*Rev Gill Newton, President of Conference 2023-24*

Abridged from [www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-conference/conference-2023/presidency/the-presidents-and-vice-presidents-addresses-to-the-methodist-conference-2023/the-presidents-address-to-the-methodist-conference-2023](http://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-conference/conference-2023/presidency/the-presidents-and-vice-presidents-addresses-to-the-methodist-conference-2023/the-presidents-address-to-the-methodist-conference-2023)

Further reflections on Hidden treasures can be found in the vice-President's address at [www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-conference/conference-2023/presidency/the-presidents-and-vice-presidents-addresses-to-the-methodist-conference-2023/the-vice-presidents-address-to-the-methodist-conference-2023](http://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-conference/conference-2023/presidency/the-presidents-and-vice-presidents-addresses-to-the-methodist-conference-2023/the-vice-presidents-address-to-the-methodist-conference-2023)

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## Gift Aid

£32,656.90 has just been repaid to the church by HMRC for the Tax Year 2022-23. This includes Gift Aid tax refunds on Offertories, Church Charities and other donations; including £9,967.33 for the "BMC Mission Possible" Redevelopment Fund, mostly from the April 2022 Gift Day, Music-a-thon, concerts and other events. It also includes the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme. If you pay enough tax but do not currently Gift Aid your giving to the church, please contact John Foster (Gift Aid Secretary). Please also let me know if you no longer pay sufficient tax after any income or tax changes. Many thanks to all who Gift Aid and to all who give generously to the church!

If you would like to start (or change) **regular giving** to the church by Standing Order, please ask John Foster or Ray Howard for a form. If you would like to start (or change) regular giving by Envelope, please ask John Hudson.

*John R Foster, Gift Aid Secretary, Beeston Methodist Church*

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## BMC Mission Possible – Four Week Sponsored Cycle Ride



A few months ago I had an M.O.T Health Check in order to make sure it was safe for an old man of 78 to do a sponsored cycle ride! I was advised by the doctor to prepare myself to get fit first before going ahead with it. Consequently over the last 3 months I have been in training to prepare myself to commit to cycling 100 miles during September to raise funds for BMC Mission Possible.

Each week of September I will ride 25 miles at the West Park Leisure Centre. To start the ball rolling my dear wife Diane as already sponsored me for £10 per mile. (She obviously has some money hidden away that I am unaware of!! )

I will be very grateful to BMC church members and friends who feel able to sponsor me for this ride. However I am keenly aware of the present cost of living situation and do not wish to put anyone under pressure to feel obligated to support me, so please only commit to sponsoring me if you can afford it.

I will be seeking out as many members, friends and family as possible to enter their names on my sponsor form and will also pin a copy to the notice board in the coffee bar.

In anticipation,  
*Malcolm Wilson*

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## *Joke*

Little Sonia was shouting her prayers. “Please God send me a new doll for my birthday.” Her mother, overhearing this, said, “Don’t shout dear, God isn’t deaf.” “No, but Grandad is, and he’s in the next room,” Sonia replied.

Taken from [www.beliefnet.com/entertainment/joke-of-the-day.aspx](http://www.beliefnet.com/entertainment/joke-of-the-day.aspx)

## ***Praying for the Earth***

### **Darkest Hour**

Father of Creation,  
God of Compassion,  
You created a world of wonder,  
Of possibility and potential.  
You declared it to be good.

For this we give thanks.  
To you be praise, honour and glory.

Father of Creation,  
God of Compassion,  
In this time of climate breakdown  
Wake us from our slumber,  
Equip us afresh to be the justice-shaped people of God.

Father of Creation,  
God of Compassion,  
In this time of climate breakdown  
Wake us from our slumber,  
Equip us afresh to our priestly and prophetic calling.

That we would speak truth in a culture of denial,  
That we would enact hope in a culture of despair,  
That we would face what will be with love-filled action,

That in humanity's darkest hour you would enliven us so  
We would bandage the wounds of those caught beneath the wheels of climate  
injustice,  
That in humanity's darkest hour  
We would have the courage to drive a spoke into the wheel of climate injustice  
itself.

Father of Creation,  
God of Compassion,

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You created a world of wonder,  
Of possibility and potential.  
You declared it to be good.

In our grief,  
In our mourning,  
We give thanks.  
To you be praise, honour and glory.

*Rev Jon Swales, April 2021. Taken from <https://atyourservice.arocha.org/en/26-prayers-for-the-climate-and-ecological-emergency> Creative Commons License*

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## ***A Prayer for peace in Ukraine***

Holy and Gracious God

We pray for the people of Ukraine and the people of Russia; for their countries and their leaders.

We pray for all those who are afraid; that your everlasting arms hold them in this time of great fear.

We pray for all those who have the power over life and death; that they will choose for all people life, and life in all its fullness.

We pray for those who choose war; that they will remember that you direct your people to turn our swords into ploughshares and seek for peace.

We pray for leaders on the world stage; that they are inspired by the wisdom and courage of Christ.

Above all, Lord, today we pray for peace for Ukraine.

And we ask this in the name of your blessed Son.

Lord have mercy.

Amen

*Taken from [www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/ukraine/#prayers](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/ukraine/#prayers)*

*September 21st is the UN **International Day of Peace** 2023*

*[www.internationaldayofpeace.org](http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org)*

*Sunday September 24th is **Peace Sunday** [www.for.org.uk/peacesunday](http://www.for.org.uk/peacesunday)*

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## Civilian Protection in War



Today is the eighteen-month anniversary of Russia's devastating invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine's summer counter-offensive has made little headway. Both Ukraine and Russia are trying to develop the ability to re-source their troops for a longer-term conflict. They want to develop the capacity to sustain the fighting over the next year, two years, three years or however long it takes. As Christians and churches, we need to pray even more earnestly for peace yet at the same time we must address the excesses in the conduct of war.

On both sides, killed and injured are well in excess of 100,000. A country with a population of 43 million has 8 million refugees (the largest numbers are in Poland, Russia and Germany) and at least a further 5 million people internally displaced in Ukraine. That would suggest that as much as one in three of the population have had to leave their homes.

All war is barbaric but this one has been particularly brutal. In December of last year, Archbishop Justin Welby visited Irpin and Bucha as an act of solidarity following the mass executions of civilians. "Their blood calls from here, from this land, to heaven" he said while standing at the site of a mass grave. "A good ear must hear the cry of that blood". The evidence for such atrocities must be documented in the hope that there might later be an account of how and why they took place, and maybe also a reckoning for the perpetrators.

Civilian protection in war is a fundamental principle that we must strive to maintain. War is tragic but some actions in war are criminal. Russia was forced to make a major retreat in April 2022 and is now faced with the prospect of being beaten back in the Southern provinces. It has responded by taking war-fighting to a new level of destruction.

- Fuel depots and power stations may well support an army when a country is on a war footing but the civilian population relies on this infrastructure. Port facilities and grain supplies in Odessa should not be a target for attack.
- Dams and dykes get a specific mention in the second addition protocol to the Geneva Convention as "installations containing dangerous forces". The destruction of the Nova Kakovka dam has been described by one Ukrainian official as the worst environmental disaster in Europe since Chernobyl.

- Anti-personnel mines kill civilians long after a conflict has finished. Although 80% of states have ratified the international landmine treaty, others, such as Russia, use landmines in their military strategies. Ukraine has signed the Ottawa Treaty but it has also been accused of using anti-personnel mines.
- Cluster munitions litter civilian areas with unexploded bomblets that kill children and adults. We have come a long way in recent years in establishing a norm against their use and production, but not far enough. President Biden's decision to supply Ukraine with cluster munitions will see over 1 million unexploded bomblets littering Ukraine within the short space of a year.
- Russia's clumsy blundering missiles and artillery shells have flattened whole cities and towns. Mariupol, Bakhmut, Volnovakha, Chernihiv, and Popasna are just a few of the places where whole neighbourhoods have been levelled.
- In the face of this destruction it might seem disingenuous to draw attention to the drone strikes on the residential neighbourhoods of elites and the business district in Moscow. The only plausible motivation must be to exert a psychological impact on Russian people in the expectation that this might cause more to turn against the war. President Zelensky has defended these attacks saying that "this is inevitable, natural, and absolutely fair". While I feel pain for the suffering of Ukrainians, I would like to suggest that it is none of the three.

These excesses in war need to be named, as otherwise there is a danger that they become accepted as inevitable. In the midst of war, criticism from state leaders across the world will often be partisan and muted. As civilians we have greater freedom to speak up for citizens wherever they may be. Mindful of God's love and grace to all let's name the abuses so that when this war comes to an end we can hope to re-affirm our common humanity and recover vital international norms.

A new resource is available at [www.jpit.uk/ukraine](http://www.jpit.uk/ukraine) to help us think broadly about the Russian invasion and ensuing conflict and the situation of churches in Ukraine and Russia. We welcome your feedback so that, in the midst of suffering, we can think about peace and the roles that our churches might eventually play.

*Steve Hucklesby, Policy Adviser, Joint Public Issues Team, 24 August 2023*

Taken from [www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/the-methodist-blog/civilian-protection-in-war](http://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/the-methodist-blog/civilian-protection-in-war)

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## **Beeston Methodist Church spire gets a make-over**

Beeston's tallest structure – the 110ft high spire at Beeston Methodist Church on Chilwell Road – is being cleaned and repointed as part of a proposed programme of essential work to maintain and modernise the 121-year-old building.

Broxtowe Borough Council has granted planning permission for the redevelopment of the distinctive Victorian church, designed by Bradford architect William James Morley and opened in 1902.

The landmark spire became more visible after the demolition of several large mill buildings in the 1990s.

Andy Taylor, co-chair of the BMC Property Committee and a member of the Redevelopment Group, said, "Checks on the condition of the spire revealed that some re-pointing of the stonework had become necessary as well as surface cleaning to remove lichens, moss and some larger weeds. The work is being undertaken by ASC Steeplejacks, of Carlton."

The redevelopment project will focus on improvements to the church sanctuary and the main entrance at the side of the building. The church is currently expensive to heat. So, a new heating system will be installed and the church roof, which has come to the end of its natural life, will be re-slatted and insulated. The church windows will be doubled-glazed and new low-energy lighting installed.

The worship area will be re-modelled to meet the needs of a 21st century Methodist church while enhancing its role as an important community asset. The side balconies will be removed, allowing the impressive stained-glass windows in these areas to be fully revealed and bring extra light into the church.

A new level floor with insulation underneath will be installed to create a more flexible space, suitable for small and large group worship and a wide range of community events. The remaining ground floor pews will be removed and replaced with modern seating. The impressive pipe organ will undergo a complete overhaul as part of the redevelopment.

New audio-visual technology will facilitate live streaming of services and events, including concerts and other performances. The coffee bar area will be upgraded and automatic doors installed at the side entrance.

BMC, committed to making the building as accessible and eco-friendly as possible, is also considering fitting solar panels on some of the roofing towards the rear of the premises.

*Press release written by Dave Lowe and Andy Taylor*

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## BMC Church Charities 2022-23



**The Leprosy  
Mission**  
England and Wales

**Macular Society**  
Beating Macular Disease



The total raised by August 1st was £15280.31

eBay	£7640.54	Donations	£722.66
Other items	£2786.13	Recycled books & CDs	£712.13
Coffee mornings	£1487.61	Coffee bar	£1142.47
Money jars	£292.83	Event refreshments	£165.40
Events	£272.00	Wishing Well	£45.00

As August was the last month for fundraising for this year's three charities, the final total will soon be calculated. At the morning service on September 17th representatives of the three charities will have the opportunity to acknowledge receipt of the money which has been donated and give an indication of how the money is being used.

Thanks to all who have helped in any way to raise the money.

### Church Charity 2023-24

The Church Charity Committee thanks those who made suggestions for the next Church Charity. It was decided to support three again and they are the **Canaan Trust**, the **Royal National Lifeboat Institution** and the **Student Christian Movement**.

*Colin Firbank*

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# Embrace the Middle East

## *Prayer Diary*



### **3 September**

The Christian population of the West Bank has declined, with young people leaving for opportunities elsewhere. The Palestinian Bible Society's new Leadership Academy aims to change this by training the leaders of the future, both for the Church and for wider society.

### **10 September**

Blind and visually impaired children experience many challenges in Egypt, not least the negative attitudes of those around them. Our partner, Life Vision, provides life skills education, including Braille, computing, sports, music, and drama. They also work with communities to promote inclusion.

### **17 September**

The need for mental health services has increased drastically in Lebanon, but traumatised people can be reluctant to ask for help. Staff at the Karagheusian Health Centre are trained to assess the psychological needs of patients who attend for physical problems, offering counselling and medication to those who are suffering.

### **24 September**

Musalaha Ministry of Reconciliation takes a grassroots approach towards achieving peace and justice in Israel and Palestine. Their bespoke curriculum and workshops bring together Palestinian and Israeli women, to listen to each other and hear each other's stories, equipping them to influence their own communities towards peace.

From [https://embraceme.org/s/Embrace Prayer Diary Aug23-Jan24 Web.pdf](https://embraceme.org/s/Embrace_Prayer_Diary_Aug23-Jan24_Web.pdf)

# Dates for your Diary

## *September 2023*

- Mon 4th     **Knit and Natter** at BMC 2pm
- Sat 9th     **Coffee morning** – meet our new minister Rev Andrew Checkley  
at BMC 10am-12 noon
- Mon 18th   **Knit and Natter** at BMC 2pm
- Sat 30th     **Coffee morning** at BMC 10-11.30am

## *October 2023*

- Mon 2nd     **Knit and Natter** at BMC 2pm
- Sat 14th     **Coffee morning** at BMC 10am-12 noon
- Sat 14th     **Table Top Time** – family board games at BMC 3-5pm
- Mon 16th   **Knit and Natter** at BMC 2pm
- Sat 28th     **Coffee morning** at BMC 10-11.30am
- Mon 30th   **Knit and Natter** at BMC 2pm

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## *Weekly events*

- Sunday*     **Morning Worship** at BMC 10.30am  
              **Evening Service** 6.30pm (on 1st, 3rd and 5th Sunday of the month)
- Monday*     **Little Acorns Parent and Toddler Group** at BMC 9.30-11.15am
- Tuesday*   **ABC (Adults, Babies and Coffee)** at BMC 9.30-11am  
              **Little Acorns Parent and Toddler Group** at BMC 9.30-11.15am  
              **Open Space refreshments and fellowship** at BMC 11.15am-12.15pm  
              (lunch at 12.15pm every second Tuesday of the month)
- Wednesday* **Wholly Ground Café** at BMC 11am-1pm (including a short act of  
worship at 11.15am on the first Wednesday of the month)



# Beeston Methodist Church

**Here for You: God is calling us to**

- Offer **spiritual nourishment** and **growth** to all
- **Welcome** and **nurture** everyone
- **Serve** those in our local community
- Be a strong voice for **Justice**.

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## Beeston Methodist Church is an Eco Church

From meditation to insulation, from location to invocation, loving God and His creation should impact everything in our church lives. **Eco Church** is a scheme to help churches demonstrate that they care for God's earth, to help them 'go green' in all areas of church life.



Beeston Methodist Church gained the Eco Church Bronze Award in March 2021 and is now working towards the Silver Award. [ecochurch.arocha.org.uk](https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk)



## Beeston Methodist Church is an Inclusive Church

We believe in **inclusive church** – a church which **celebrates and affirms every person** and does not discriminate.

We will continue to challenge the church where it continues to discriminate against people on grounds of **disability, economic power, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality**.

We believe in a Church which **welcomes and serves all people** in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ.

[www.inclusive-church.org](https://www.inclusive-church.org)