



Beeston **Methodist** Church *Newsletter*

**Scratch beneath
the surface
this Advent
and Christmas**



**Out
of the
Ordinary**

December 2023 / January 2024

Out of the Ordinary

Out of the Ordinary – the Methodist Church’s Advent and Christmas campaign this year – shares the wonder of how God’s love is revealed in the ordinary. See pages 6-7 of the newsletter for more about the campaign and how to find out more on the Methodist website. Also, don’t miss the Reflection for Holy Night by former circuit minister Rev Stuart Burgess on page 24.

We continue to hope and pray for peace in the Holy Land as the horrifying loss of life continues, notwithstanding the current ceasefire. As we enter the season of Advent, listen for the Prince of Peace speaking to us through the words of Rabbi Irwin Keller who imagines a truce that “came and forgot to leave” (page 9).

Merry Christmas to you all.

Mark Ramsey – Editor

Beeston Methodist Church Newsletter – Dec 2023 / Jan 2024

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Cover photo from Methodist Church web site.

Minister's message

A couple of weeks ago I was volunteering for a charity. I was part of a team that was looking to sign people up to be potential stem cell donors. We were trying to attract the attention of the students who were passing. Each one of us had a different strategy.

It had to be something to get the message across quickly and have an impact.

In some cases, “Hi would you like to be a lifesaver?” was something that brought people to a stop.

In other cases when I’ve seen that they have been looking at the poster, I’ve asked if they wanted to know more about the work.

The reaction to the approach was very different. In some cases, people would just walk on by without making any form of response whatsoever. Or you could see them heading in a different direction in order to avoid any form of dialogue.

In other cases people would stop and you’d ask them if they were interested. I’d very briefly highlight what was involved and sometimes people would say No thank you and walk off. In other cases, they would ask for more information or time to think about it.

There were other people who would listen to what you had to say and go OK, I’ll do it and that would be another potential lifesaver signed up.

My favourite response was from a lady when I asked if she wanted to know more about the charity. Her response was, “Yes but can I go to the loo first?” I wasn’t going to stand between a lady and the loo!

Just down from where we were based was another group of people. Their way of attracting attention was to offer free popcorn. The reaction by people was similar to the one that I received. Even the offer of food isn’t the best way to entice people to participate.

The reaction of people made me wonder about how we engage with people for the first time to talk about our faith. How do we start those conversations and

how effective are they. What would people say if we just went up to them and asked Do you want to know more about Jesus?

What would we do if they said Yes? What would we tell them or give them so they could learn more about what it means to have a relationship with Jesus.

At this season of Advent as we prepare for the coming of Christ and Christmas as we celebrate His birth, how will we encourage others to join in the celebration.

Free mince pie anyone?

God bless

Andrew



Christmas Jokes

What did Adam say the day before Christmas?

"It's Christmas, Eve!"

What's the most popular Christmas wine?

"But I don't like Brussels sprouts!"

Prayer

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for those treasures we have from you – the gifts of different resources, wisdom, understanding and compassion.

Encourage us to be willing to share those gifts and not to hide them away. As we journey through this connexional year help us to be truly present in the light and dark of our own lives so that we can encounter your presence with us. Through our personal experiences and discipleship may we also be willing to share the light and darkness of those we are called to serve in our different communities.

We pray in the name of Christ. Amen

Andrew de Ville, District Chair, Southampton

Taken from www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/prayer-of-the-day

Taking sides



Today I am taking sides.

I am taking the side of Peace.

Peace, which I will not abandon
even when its voice is drowned out
by hurt and hatred, bitterness of loss, cries of right and wrong.

I am taking the side of Peace
whose name has barely been spoken in this winnerless war.

I will hold Peace in my arms,
and share my body's breath,
lest Peace be added to the body count.

I will call for de-escalation
even when I want nothing more than to get even.
I will do it in the service of Peace.

I will make a clearing in the overgrown thicket of cause and effect
so Peace can breathe for a minute and reach for the sky.

I will do what I must to save the life of Peace.
I will breathe through tears.
I will swallow pride.
I will bite my tongue.
I will offer love without testing for deservingness.

So don't ask me to wave a flag today
unless it is the flag of Peace.
Don't ask me to sing an anthem
unless it is a song of Peace.
Don't ask me to take sides
unless it is the side of Peace.

Rabbi Irwin Keller, Oct. 17, 2023

Taken from www.irwinkeller.com/itzikswell/taking-sides

Out of the Ordinary

The Methodist Church's Advent and Christmas campaign 2023

Christmas brings joy to many and stress for some. When Christmas makes us feel anxious or inadequate, scratch beneath the surface and you can discover the extraordinary moments waiting to be found.

Out of the Ordinary shares the wonder of how **God's love** is revealed in the ordinary...

How a seemingly **ordinary birth** becomes God's **out of the ordinary** world-saving event through Jesus.

How every day, **ordinary** acts of kindness can breakthrough to the **extraordinary**.

Find out more, and sign up for daily Advent reflections, at

www.methodist.org.uk/outoftheordinary



So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven

Look at yourself.

Where do you see the **divine reflected** back at **you**?



Yet in thy dark street shineth the everlasting light

Look at the people around you.

Where do you notice the **divine shining** back at **you**?



Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by

Look at the world around you.

Where do you see **glimmers** of the **divine**?

Calling for a ceasefire



Christian Aid, the undersigned church leaders and Christian organisations are gravely concerned by the mounting death toll across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. There can be no justification for the deliberate killing, maiming and kidnapping of civilians, which is a crime under international law and for which the perpetrators should be held accountable. We unequivocally condemn the violence carried out by Hamas in Israel on 7th October.

The subsequent Israeli military response in Gaza has added enormously to the toll of civilian suffering. Innocent Palestinians are going through an increasingly grave humanitarian crisis as a result of the Israeli government's strategy of relentless bombardment, which has left no place safe, and of siege, which effectively strangles life. The death toll in Gaza is over 7,000 and, with no end in sight, will no doubt dramatically rise.

We call on all governments with influence to help bring about an immediate end to the violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. Specifically, we call for the following steps to be taken:

- Protection of civilians and an end to all violence, with adoption of a ceasefire without conditions.
- The unconditional and immediate release of all hostages.
- Unfettered and immediate humanitarian access, as urged by the UN, including immediate reconnection to water and electricity.
- Unequivocal support for the ICC to conduct a truly independent investigation into all war crimes to ensure accountability.
- Acknowledgement of the failure of the international community to effectively engage with any meaningful peace process, and a commitment to work ceaselessly from now on to address the root causes of the violence which must include an end to the occupation.

Letter signed by Revd Gill Newton and Deacon Kerry Scarlett, President and Vice-President of the Conference of the Methodist Church, as well as over 20 church leaders and Christian organisations. 27 October. Taken from www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/israel-palestine/statements-and-briefings

This night of truce



On this night of truce
may time slow,
this day lingering until it is endless.
No pressing engagement.
No war anyone is racing to resume.

On this night of truce
may time slow,
warriors becoming sleepy, bored, and out of practice,
while captives – every one of them – return to familiar homes,
where they are held and healed.

On this night of truce
may time slow
so hearts can grieve in a luxury of time
and strong-rooted trees grow from tear-filled graves
bearing lustrous flowers and heavy fruit.

On this night of truce
may time slow,
guns growing rusty, bombs forgetting how to drop.
May homes be rebuilt, with gardens around them,
scent of jasmine kissing onions and cumin
at the balcony's open window.
May time slow
and walls crumble,
because no one cares to maintain them or even remembers how.
May lost children become holy guides
and living children grow to old age
telling a story of the truce that came
and forgot to leave.

Rabbi Irwin Keller, Nov. 24, 2023

Taken from www.irwinkeller.com/itzikswell/2023/11/24/this-night-of-truce

Update from the Leadership Team

Greetings to you all! I'm writing this piece, on behalf of the BMC leadership team, from Lagos in Nigeria where I'm helping to lead some training workshops for staff working in rural health care facilities supported by the Nigeria Health Care Project, a charity which some of you know well.

We hope and pray that you and your loved ones will experience blessings in this time of Advent and during the Christmas festivities as we remember the coming of Jesus, our Saviour and Lord.

Over the past month your leadership team has focused on the following issues:

1. We've agreed that we should prepare a proposal for consideration at the January 2024 Church Council to employ a **lay support worker** again. It has always been anticipated that we would want to do this at sometime in the not too distant future – after all, there is plenty for a lay worker to do – and we feel that the time has come, now that Rev. Andrew is with us, for us to formulate a clear plan after careful consideration of what we would want the remit of this worker to be. A small team from the leadership team will be working to prepare a proposal and will consult with church groups and congregation members.
2. We've discovered that from January 2024 Broxtowe Borough Council is introducing **increased parking charges** which will affect the car park next to BMC and hence the possible use of our own parking area. More information is being sought on the exact nature of the charge changes to consider the impact on parking availability for those accessing our premises. Improved signage indicating church use only of our car park is to be arranged.
3. We have discussed the issue of **fire safety** on our premises, and would like to remind you all to make sure you're familiar with where our fire exits are situated.
4. We note that, until further notice, **Rev. Andrew Checkley** has assumed responsibility for pastoral oversight of Toton Methodist Church. We acknowledge the increased workload which this change places upon Rev. Andrew's shoulders.

5. We have been discussing a wish to develop closer links with the **Korean Church**. We would like to encourage our members to consider joining our Korean friends when they have an English-speaking service.

Amidst all the concerns and problems evident in our world today, we hope and pray that we may, with God's grace, continue our mission to show the love of Jesus to all those we know and meet, making BMC a beacon of Christian hope as we move into 2024.

Paula Dawson, on behalf of the Leadership Team

Beeston Methodist Carol Choir: Christmas 2023

The Carol Choir will be back in business again this year with a typical programme of events. We started with a practice in the Epworth Room on Sunday 26th November. Our subsequent fixtures will be:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| • Sunday 10th December | Singing in the morning service at BMC |
| • Tuesday 12th December | Singing for the Tuesday Connection, 2pm |
| • Wednesday 13th December | Singing at the Crown Inn, Beeston, 8.45pm |
| • Thursday 14th December | Singing at the Beeston Memory Café, 1.45pm |
| • Monday 18th December | Street singing (start Sidney Rd 7.30pm) |
| • Thursday 21st December | Street singing (start Newcastle Ave 7.30pm) |
| • Sunday 24th December | Street singing (start Grove Ave 7.45pm) |

The Carol Choir basically has a three-part mission: to bring our carols about the birth of Jesus to our wider local community; to raise money to help those in need locally through the work of the Benevolent Society and other charities; and to support each other and enjoy our own fellowship through the singing.

If you would like to join us please let me know. Many of the carols are very well-known and the others can be learnt as we go along. We will also be in need of people to help with collecting when we sing "on the streets" and would very much appreciate any offers of help for this.

Merry Christmas to everyone.

Andy Taylor

Whitby 2023

Wednesday was our 'free' day during our stay in Whitby. An opportunity to have a Full English Breakfast, lunch at a famous fish & chip shop, an afternoon cream tea at the hotel then later a three-course evening meal, though the ice cream came without a wafer. Such a diet needed to be balanced by the exercise provided by all those steps during the day. Our hotel, The Royal, stands as a prominent landmark looking across the harbour to the opposite headland which features the square tower of St Mary's church and the stark ruins of the Abbey. In front of the hotel is an arch made of whale bones dating from the days when Whitby flourished and prospered as a whaling port and the port's famous son is acknowledged in the statue of Captain Cook who sailed the oceans in particular the antipodean region. Numerous steps and ramps bring us down to the harbour level then across into the town. Along the narrow streets and alleyways there are the shops selling the usual trippers items and others that display jet & amber jewellery and ammonites, fossils found locally on the shore. Followers of Goth fashion are attracted to Whitby and a few weeks ago there was a Dracula convention. In Bram Stoker's novel, it is at Whitby that Count Dracula comes ashore when shipwrecked. Amongst our party there are some very good walkers, I do not know if any ascended the 199 steps to the church. The church of St Mary has a nautical theme to its interior, beyond that is the ruined 13th century Abbey. It was here at the Synod of Whitby in AD665 that the method of determining the date of Easter was established. The narrow streets had provided shelter from the strong winds that now hit with force when walking out along the harbour wall. From the hotel turning away from the town the cliff top paths lead to Westcliff and the start of the Cleveland Way. Along the route we heard the talking litter bin that says a 'thank you' when being used and saw a signpost with the directions to Captain Cook's global ports of call. There are



many attractive sculptures about – ‘Herring Women’ at the harbour, the ‘lookout’ in the crow’s nest on the cliff top.

On the outward journey the lunch stop had been at Pickering with just enough time to visit the parish Church of St Peter & St Paul. On both sides of the nave are marvellous medieval wall paintings – biblical scenes, the life of saints, the jaws of hell. The last restoration was after a vicar covered the paintings with whitewash because he thought the congregation’s attention was attracted too much by looking at the pictures than attending to the words of his sermon.

Scarborough provided a good chance for a satisfying walk along the sea front. Either in the direction of the north bay, the Marine Road showing signs of some very high tides, or in the opposite direction over a wide expanse of sandy beach to the Spa. Even viewing all of Scarborough from an open topped bus. Out of season, the lifts were not working and that meant descending a long flight of steps with the knowledge of the return climb later. This was accomplished with pauses to look at the scenery and chatting to people as they overtook us. It was an observation during the week that we are now a nation of dog owners.

York was a city busy with traffic and people. Not only was it the first day of the Christmas Market, at the Minster, there was a graduation ceremony in progress. A fairground carousel was the first sign we were on the right track to find the market. The narrow streets open out into an open space filled by two lines of decorated stalls, selling all sorts of things you could want, and not want, for Christmas. It was a cold overcast day but no doubt as the daylight faded, and the lights burned brighter the festive atmosphere would be present, perhaps with the addition of some musicians. The Shambles with its overhanging roofs was teeming with people and had some curious shops (witches broomsticks for sale). A line of people standing in the street were, apparently, queuing for Betty’s teashop. Tucked away amongst all this was an oasis of calm the Sanctuary of Margaret Clitheroe, a martyr in the religious conflicts of the 16th century.

At the end of our winter break the sun came out for the journey home. Pat Shirra was not very well at the time she had to make the arrangements for this holiday, so we are extra grateful that she managed the trip and could call upon helpers. Thank you very much Pat for a very enjoyable holiday.

Robert Dawson

Reflection on ecumenical peace vigil



Piccadilly Circus was as busy as ever when I emerged from the tube station on the afternoon of Sunday 22 October, but the inside of St. James's, Piccadilly, was an oasis of calm amid the busyness of the city and the turmoil of the world around us.

People of all ages, backgrounds and cultures began to gather in this beautiful, peaceful place to participate in an ecumenical prayer gathering and peace vigil, motivated by the horrors of the situation in Israel / Palestine.

Those who had arranged the event had no idea how many people would feel this was an important way to spend their Sunday afternoon, but as we moved closer to the start time of three o'clock, the church steadily began to fill, as many came to pray and stand in solidarity together in these harrowing times.

The time of prayer and vigil was beautifully and sensitively led by Rev Dr Ayla Lepine and accomplished piano accompaniment for the singing of Taize chants was provided by Rev Lucy Winkett, the Rector at St James's.

We were led through a beautiful and poignant liturgy by a range of voices representing different denominations and charities that had been instrumental in arranging the event. We shared in prayers, in silence, and in sung chants and in every period of silence there was an opportunity to light candles which was always taken up by a steady stream of participants.

Some of the words shared were quotes from those who are being directly impacted by the atrocities, including a survivor of the attack by Hamas, an inhabitant of Gaza City, a Council of Churches employee, and a hospital doctor. It was my immense privilege to share a powerful and poignant prayer written by two mothers.

As we spent that hour together, it was deeply moving to see people of all ages step forward to light candles as an act of prayerful solidarity with those who are suffering and as a reminder of the light that can and does shine in the darkness. It was powerful to see people giving each other space and time and patiently waiting for their own quiet moment of candle lighting – small but gentle and loving acts of kindness and consideration towards each other – a model of how

we long for the world to be, treasure in the darkness. At a time when we feel helpless, these small acts remind us that we can make a difference in the world and to the lives of others, and as so often, these things are better done together!

The prayer that I was invited to read included these words:

“You did not create us to kill each other, nor to live in fear or rage or hatred in your world.

You created us so that we allow each other to sustain your name in this world: your name is Life, your name is Peace...

Please God have mercy on us. Hear our voice that we not despair, that we will witness life with each other, that we have mercy one for another, that we share sorrow one with the other, that we hope, together, one for another.”

We may not be able to solve all the problems of our troubled world, but we can certainly make a difference to the worlds of those around us! So, what can you do today to model peaceful living, to share someone else’s burden, to provide treasure in someone else’s darkness, to honour the name of the One who came to bring and to be peace?

Rev Gill Newton, President of the Methodist Conference.

Taken from www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/the-president-and-vice-president-of-the-conference/the-blog-of-the-president-and-vice-president-of-conference/reflection-on-ecumenical-peace-vigil



Christmas coffee morning

There will be a **Church Christmas coffee morning** on **Saturday 9th December** from 10.00am-12 noon. Why not come along for a coffee, tea or hot chocolate with friends or family for a drink and a chat with good company. We are also hoping to do warm/hot mince pies as well. More information from *Paul Tivey* or *Mary Higgins*.

Update from the Redevelopment Group

You have probably noticed all the work taking place outside church during November. It's exciting to see the redevelopment project progressing and we would like to thank the members of the Redevelopment Group (and others) who have coordinated the activities of the different contractors, been on site to greet them and worked in the background answering email queries.

The Spire

Work on the internal structure of the spire started mid-November and is now well on way to being completed. We haven't yet found any bats that need re-housing, but a bat box has been put up on one of the trees at the side of church. Any bats that are found will be rehoused in it. You will be aware that the gallery is out of use until the work is completed and we expect this to be in early December.

New Side Entrance

The engineers requested a ground survey where the new entrance will be – this will help them decide how to build the foundations. You may have seen holes they dug – the work is now complete.

New AV system

Discussions are underway about the requirements for a new AV system in the refurbished church.

Flooring

We have started to explore the options available for the new flooring that will go in the church and the coffee bar. Our final decision will be based on a mix of design/material, cost and durability. Our choice will be fed into a cost estimate that will help with the budgeting for the project.

Over the next few weeks, details will be finalised ready for us to start the next phase of our work – going out to tender.

Chris Bridges, on behalf of the Redevelopment Group

THE CHRISTMAS CHECKLIST

FOR CHURCHES



DIG OUT THE CRIB FIGURES ☐



DECORATE THE TREE AND CHURCH ☐



CHOOSE PEOPLE TO READ THE LESSONS ☐



CLEAN EVERYWHERE ☐



DECIDE WHICH CLERGY DO WHICH SERVICES ☐



BUY PRESENTS FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE WORKED HARD ☐



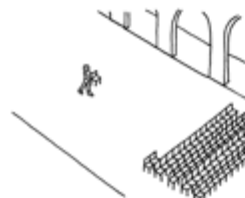
WRITE ALL OF THE SERMONS ☐



PREPARE THE CANDLES ☐



MAKE SURE THE CHOIR IS READY ☐



CARRY IN EXTRA CHAIRS ☐



REHEARSE THE NATIVITY PLAY ☐



DELIVER THE CHRISTMAS PUBLICITY LEAFLETS ☐



MAKE THE CHRISTINGLES ☐



COPY THE ORDERS OF SERVICE ☐



ORDER SUPPLIES FOR VICAR'S POST-CHRISTMAS BREAK ☐

Reflection for Holy Night



We gather in anticipation and impending joy to celebrate the birth of Jesus. The candles on the Advent wreath and the central white Christ candle are lit, with the glowing candles on the holy table, as we prepare to celebrate the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus in the sharing of bread and wine.

The collect for this Holy Night speaks to us in the following words:

*God of light and hope
Of stars and surprises,
Open our eyes to your glory
And our hearts to your presence.*

We try with our finite minds to understand the incomprehensible. We think of the greatness of God and use words such as Almighty, Omnipresent and Omnipotent to describe God.

We search for words but in the end, we are lost for words.

We try to unlock the great paradox that the God we are lost for words to describe somehow entered this world through a baby born in Bethlehem. It is unbelievable that such an event could happen.

Yet it is also, on reflection, the most natural thing for God to do. God the creator, the maker of heaven and earth, who created men and women in his own image and who has fallen in love with humankind, revealed his very self in Jesus.

Charles Wesley describes it in the following words in his great Christmas hymn:

*Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth.*

That is the supreme joy we celebrate this holy night. It is an insight into the great paradox of Christianity and it is through faith that we make this truth our own.

Tomorrow shall be my dancing day is an English carol which may come from the Middle Ages. The verses of this beautiful carol progress through the story of Jesus told in his own voice. An innovative feature of the telling is that Jesus's life is repeatedly characterised as a dance.

This Holy Night we are called to participate in the dance for joy.

Let's dance the night away for – Christ is born!

Stuart J. Burgess, Christmas Eve 1999. Taken, with permission, from the book Love Took My Hand by Stuart J. Burgess.

BMC Church Charities 2023-24



Lifeboats

The total raised by October 3rd was £1600.67

eBay	£769.00	Money jars	£39.10
Other items	£99.82	Recycled books and Cds	£57.75
Coffee mornings	£231.13	Coffee bar	£213.52
Events	£31.08	Event refreshments	£74.30
Coins	£54.97	Donations	£30.00

Recent contributions include £512 from eBay sales, £97 from the October coffee morning, £74 for concert refreshments, £31 from Light Night. The new outlet for coins has raised almost £55.

Since November 7th I have received an old Bournville Cocoa Tin which included coins going back to 1700. The most valuable was a George V sovereign and others included a Victoria double florin. These coins have raised £425 which will be added to the total in December.

Colin Firbank

Mental health and a beautiful but groaning creation



Common wisdom has it that time spent in nature has enormously positive impacts on mental health. It reduces feelings of stress, reminds us we are part of something bigger, helps us to be more physically active and lifts mood. The beauty of a flower, the comedy of baby creatures, the calm of a lake surface: these are profoundly soothing for troubled souls. But now the converse may be the case. Nature can be bad for mental health.

Levels of 'eco-anxiety' are high and rising, particularly among children and young people and clinicians warn of significant individual and societal impact. Where once the raw beauty of a thriving world drew people to worship the God who made it, now its diminished, faded glory provokes anger and fearful doubts. Has creation ever been more audibly groaning, to use Paul's word from Romans 8? Dearly loved places are stripped of familiar foliage; birds and insects rarely sighted; extreme weather events are more frequent and more extreme each passing year.

One solution would be to stay indoors and install digital windows portraying glorious (albeit fake) views of unspoilt natural beauty. If that thought fills you with horror as it does me, here are some other ideas for engaging with the reality of the natural world in a way that benefits rather than undermines your mental health.

1. See the world with eyes of faith

We could easily look around us and focus on what's wrong. Or we could choose to see something else. Psalm 19:1 says, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands'. Romans 1:20 adds, 'God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.' The evidence of God's character is writ large in creation, and his character is gloriously good. I know as well as anyone

that you can have faith in a good God and still suffer from clinical depression (or any other mental health disorder). But consciously turning attention to God while in the great outdoors is a helpful practice in dark times.

2. Put down roots

Israel's exile in Babylon qualifies as a dark time. Instead of changing their situation, God told them through the prophet Jeremiah to settle down and plant gardens (Jeremiah 29:5). While there are known therapeutic benefits to getting your hands in the soil and growing things, that's not what this verse was talking about. In this particular context, it meant living and not just waiting. It meant, 'You are here for now. Get stuck in.' However long we are in the place we are, it is a good idea to put down roots, get to know the local patch and make home.

3. Take care

Species are going extinct at a terrifying rate, clean water is scarce, air pollution is at unsafe levels in many places, diseases are becoming more severe and contagious – what is a person to do? Firstly, those of us who struggle with mental health must remember there is no way we can (on our own) avert the environmental crisis unfolding around us. Thankfully the world has a saviour – Jesus Christ. All things were made by him and for him (Colossians 1:17) and he has promised eternal faithfulness. Secondly, it is right to care for creation regardless of whether what we do tips the scales towards a good outcome. It is God's world, and he mandated us to look after it. Thirdly, even doing something small helps hold eco-anxiety at bay.

In conclusion, heading for the great outdoors is not a pure boost to human wellbeing. But we were created for life in the garden of Eden, and for interdependent relationships with the rest of the natural world. As we do what we can to care for our place, we'll be blessed by its God-soaked delightfulness and generous provision for our needs.

Jo Swinney, A Rocha International Head of Communications, 8 November.

Taken from <https://blog.arocha.org/en/mental-health-and-a-beautiful-but-groaning-creation>

Praying for the Earth



6: World on Fire

Father of Creation,
God of Compassion,
Your world is on fire,
Our home is on fire.
Our hearts ache,
We struggle to come to terms with what is happening.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy.

Father of Creation,
God of Compassion,
Your world is groaning,
Our hearts are groaning.
Our hearts ache,
We face missional paralysis, not knowing what to do.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy.

Father of Creation,
God of Compassion,
Still our restless souls,
Calm our frantic thoughts.
We look to you
For comfort, strength and wisdom.

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy.

Father of Creation,
God of Compassion,
Empower your church afresh with the gift of your Spirit.
Equip us afresh to our priestly and prophetic calling.

Help us to discern what we should do in this year of the COP 28 UN Climate Conference.

For those seeking to raise the alarm and stress the urgency of our emergency.

Father, we pray for pastors, protesters, prophets and poets who seek to provide a fresh imagination that moves beyond grief and despair.

For those across the world and those who are part of Christian Climate Action here in this country who have faced arrest and imprisonment for using peaceful civil disobedience in seeking to enact change with governments and corporations.

In prayer, we stand with these, our courageous brothers and sisters.
Lord, send your peace and hope.

Father of Creation,
God of Compassion,
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



Christmas Jokes

Knock, knock! Who's there? Dexter. Dexter who?
Dexter halls with boughs of holly...

What do you get if you eat Christmas decorations?
Tinsilitis!

Bible reading: Beautiful Saviour



Something to read

"Your eyes will see the king in his beauty; they will behold a land that stretches far away."

Isaiah 33:17

Something to think about

Over the last two years, the UK has been led by three Prime Ministers and two monarchs, with a high turnover of Cabinet ministers too. It's a good time to reflect on what we value most in leaders: perhaps honesty and integrity, perhaps charisma and confidence, perhaps the detail of their policy and strategy. However we answer that question, I expect very few of us would prioritise what they look like!

Isaiah looked forward to a time when God's people would see the beauty of their king. As we look forward to Christmas, a time when we are invited to discover God in a newborn baby, we might imagine the wonder of his soft skin and dark eyes gazing back at us.

But the truest beauty of all is to be found not in the appearance but in the character and actions of Jesus, which show us once and for all what God is like. We see his life of service and sacrifice, of healing and compassion. The king in all his beauty is the king whose courageous love would eventually lead him to the ugliness of the cross.

Something to do

Find a favourite story from the gospels – an episode from Jesus' life that you are drawn to. As you read it, ask yourself what kind of character Jesus shows and what beauty you find in his actions.

Something to pray

Beautiful Saviour, thank you for this time of year in which we look more closely into your face. As I gaze upon you this Christmas time, draw me beyond sentimentality to see and celebrate who you truly are. Amen.

Rev Claire Jones. Taken from www.christianaid.org.uk/pray/daily-bible-readings

BMC Mission Possible



Events continue to be organised for **BMC Mission Possible** even though the original target of £200 000 has been met. The total raised is now over £209 000. Malcolm's cycling brought in £680 and the Harlequin Concert £440 with gift aid still to be added.

Glenda is very happy to take unwanted Christmas presents again to sell at a stall at one of the end of the month coffee mornings in the new year and to run a tombola with any leftovers.

If anyone would like to offer to run an event or suggest ideas for more fundraising, please let *Andy or Glenda Taylor* know.

Hamid's story



Hamid was born in summer 2021 in Gaza City. The neighbourhood where he lives with his family is overcrowded, with an irregular water supply and frequent electricity blackouts.

Throughout her pregnancy, Hamid's mother attended the Near East Council of Churches antenatal clinic that Embrace supports. She registered her son in the well-baby clinic when he was born and regularly attends the routine check-ups.

At one of these check-ups, the staff discovered that Hamid was anaemic – a common condition among children in Gaza due to poor diets as a result of poverty. The staff prescribed medication and gave his mother the support and information she needed to manage his condition.

His mother said: "Before the project I wasn't aware about which food to offer to my child or how to protect him from illnesses but now I am more confident. Now the health of my child is much better."

Gaza's health sector has been crippled by the Israeli blockade. The medical work Embrace supports there is vital to ensure that children like Hamid receive the care they need. Each year, the NECC well-baby clinic assesses, screens and treats 10,000 children.

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

Embrace the Middle East

Prayer Diary



3 December

Children born into poverty in the blockaded Gaza Strip have a better chance of thriving thanks to the Near East Council of Churches' free well-baby clinics. The clinics monitor children up to the age of six, ensuring early detection and treatment of illness or disability, and helping the parents to access support.

10 December

Domestic abuse is a widespread problem in Egypt, but one that remains taboo. Our partner, Think and Do, has established a shelter for women fleeing violence or exploitation, offering them a safe place to stay, as well as counselling and support with planning their future.

17 December

Under the Israeli blockade, Gaza's community health services are overwhelmed and patients with chronic conditions are at risk of deteriorating. Al Ahli Hospital provides free transport to bring people who would otherwise struggle to access healthcare to the outpatients department, where they can receive diagnoses, treatment and onwards referral as needed.

24 December

This week, we celebrate Christ's birth and give thanks for his example of compassionate service. Join us in praying for those who have answered Christ's invitation to care for people in need in the lands of his birth. Our partners' faith inspires them every day and we are grateful for their dedication.

31 December

The year 2024 marks 170 years since Embrace the Middle East's beginnings as the Turkish Missions Aid Society. We remember the generations of people whose lives have been changed by the charity's work, and ask for your continued prayers for all who experience poverty, marginalisation and conflict today.

Embrace the Middle East

Prayer Diary



7 January

Refugees can access Egypt's government health services, but language differences, bureaucracy and racism mean many people still do not get the care they need. Refuge Egypt delivers specialised health provision for this vulnerable population, which includes many people from Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea.

14 January

Amid Lebanon's economic turmoil, people living with disabilities have not been a priority for government support. As one of its many programmes that meet individual needs, the Al-Kafaat Foundation offers orthopaedic rehabilitation, mobility equipment and other support for people with cerebral palsy.

21 January

Living in a conflict situation severely affects children's mental health. East Jerusalem YMCA works in areas of the West Bank where Israeli settler violence is at its most extreme. The YMCA offers mental health first aid in emergency situations and longer-term group counselling for children who have been caught up in attacks.

28 January

Our partners could not continue their work without the generosity and solidarity of all those who support Embrace. We give thanks for everyone here in the UK who shows their compassion for the people of the Middle East, and we pray for those supporters who are currently facing challenges of their own.

*"The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth."*

Psalm 145: 18,19

Taken from https://embraceme.org/s/Embrace_Prayer_Diary_Aug23-Jan24_Web.pdf

Transgender Awareness Week



Karl Rutledge is a trans man and a Methodist Minister. In this blog marking Transgender Awareness Week, Karl shares a personal view on how it feels to have your gender become part of political debate.

When the results of the 2021 Census were published, it emerged that there are around 262,000 people who describe themselves as trans, which is likely an underestimate as I know of many wary of sharing that information with a government agency. That works out at around 0.5% of the population of the UK. It may therefore surprise you to discover that, as of mid-November, there have been around 31,000 news articles that have been published about us in the UK in 2023. That works out at one article for every eight trans people.

The vast majority of these have been negative, and many contain outright misinformation and pure scaremongering. We are routinely cast as sexual predators and/or enablers of cisgender male violence. We are told we are rejecting biological reality, and are seeking to push medical transition upon any child who does not constantly conform to gender stereotypes. We are depicted as denying women and children safety, dignity and opportunities in everything from prisons to park runs, and many opinion pieces imply that everyday language cannot now be used without the person being ‘cancelled’ because of trans folk. The similarities with prejudice thrown at lesbians and gay men in the 1980s are striking, showing up how much transphobia is recycled homophobia.

Given this background and the increasing weaponisation of our lives, bodies and identities by politicians pushing a divisive ‘culture wars’ agenda, I was dreading the Conservative Party conference. However, the reality was worse than I expected. It was stated that, despite a Freedom of Information request made to NHS trusts showing there have been precisely zero incidents in hospitals caused by trans women, they should be excluded from female wards. Some echoed these fallacious claims, which if enacted would also mean trans men like me being forced to use female wards. The comments strongly implied that the safety and dignity of trans people does not matter.

Others spoke dismissing the reality of trans people’s lives, as well as showing ignorance of the Gender Recognition Act 2004, which allows trans people to

obtain a new birth certificate with the correct name and gender (note, this has nothing to do with access to single-sex spaces, which is covered by the Equality Act 2010 and earlier legislation, and is not dependent upon holding a Gender Recognition Certificate). Our leaders set the tone for much of our public discourse, so to see trans people being used to score cheap political points was more than disappointing, especially as the government's own data shows hate crimes against trans people continuing to rise rapidly.

At the Methodist Conference this year, we made a commitment to work towards becoming a justice-seeking Church and were reminded of how this means standing with those who are discriminated against and pushed to the margins of society. I know from my own experience that this is a lot harder to do than to say, so I was really heartened to see how the Methodist Church responded to the words used at the party conference. The statement it put out was genuinely courageous given the backlash that almost inevitably follows any affirmation of trans lives, and the Vice President of Conference's prayer was beautiful, heartfelt and moving. In the midst of a scary situation, it was so very encouraging to know that the Church I serve had my back, and the Methodist media team were lovely when I found myself approached for comment by the Press Association.

These are tough times in which to be an LGBT+ person in the UK. As we approach a general election, I do not doubt that even more transphobic culture wars messaging will be pushed out, and lest anyone think this piece is too party political, the Labour Party's front bench have been disappointingly unwilling to use their voice to counter the government narrative. Some in the party have amplified the language of groups and individuals who have signed a declaration calling for trans-specific healthcare and legal recognition to be removed, which is already happening in various US states.

It is not pleasant to feel reduced to an 'issue', a 'question' or a 'problem', instead of a person made in the image and likeness of God. Yet, at the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the sure and certain hope that love wins, and prejudice in all its forms will never have the last word. I just pray that those in positions of power in media and politics alike will learn to see our common humanity, not click-bate or opinion polls, when they speak or write about trans people.

Rev Karl Rutledge, 9 November. Taken from www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/the-methodist-blog/transgender-awareness-week

Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

I was interested and surprised to read in the October BMC Newsletter the report of *A Justice-seeking Methodist Church*. While one would applaud the policy concerning justice, it seems to me that the church has been so busy looking at what it might be doing in the world that it has totally failed to consider how it is operating within its own confines. Indeed I am reminded of the mote and plank.

I read that the church entrusts those in power with a special responsibility for upholding justice. Yet when our former minister, Rev Ali Jones, having had complaints against him laid by the former Superintendent Minister, was denied support at a hearing by the Complaints Panel. He was denied the right to produce evidence. He was denied the right of appeal. And he was not informed as to what he was alleged to have done to warrant referral to the Curtailment Committee.

The Methodist Church paid no regard to the Equality Act 2010, nor to the normal procedures for prosecution.

The Report says that those in power should not only uphold justice, but they should change structures and build relationships, and involve honesty and truth. How soon, I wonder?

Marion Wallwork

BMC Warm Space

BMC Warm Space takes place on **alternate Tuesdays** in the church hall from 2pm to 4pm. Dates for the rest of this year are **December 5** and **December 19**.

Everyone is welcome. Free hot drinks, soup and friendly conversation is on offer for those who come along.

For further information, please contact *Dave Lowe* or *Hilary Davies*.

Dates for your Diary

December 2023

Sat 2nd	Christmas Concert by Carlton Male Voice Choir at BMC 7.30pm
Sun 3rd	Advent Carol Service at BMC 6.30pm
Sat 9th	Christmas Coffee Morning at BMC 10am-12 Table Top Time – family board games at BMC 3-5pm
Mon 11th	Knit and Natter at BMC 2pm
Tue 12th	Beeston Methodist Carol Choir sing at Tuesday Connection 2pm
Wed 13th	Beeston Methodist Carol Choir sing at The Crown in Beeston 8.45pm
Thu 14th	Beeston Methodist Carol Choir sing at Beeston Memory Café 1.45pm
Sun 17th	Joint Carol Service with St John's Church at BMC 6.30pm
Mon 18th	Beeston Methodist Carol Choir street singing Sidney Rd 7.30pm
Thu 21st	Beeston Methodist Carol Choir street singing Newcastle Ave 7.30pm
Sat 23rd	Christingle service at BMC 4pm
Sun 24th	Junior Church Nativity in morning service at BMC 10.30am Beeston Methodist Carol Choir street singing Grove Ave 7.15pm Christmas Eve Holy Communion at BMC 11.15pm
Mon 25th	Christmas Day Family Service at BMC 10am

Weekly events

<i>Sunday</i>	Morning Worship at BMC 10.30am Evening Service 6.30pm (on 1st, 3rd and 5th Sunday of the month)
<i>Monday</i>	Little Acorns Parent and Toddler Group at BMC 9.30-11.15am
<i>Tuesday</i>	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)
<i>Wednesday</i>	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**.

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



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