



Beeston **Methodist** Church

Newsletter



Christ in the Rubble

February 2024

Christ in the Rubble

With the Israel/Palestine conflict continuing, and over 25,000 dead in Gaza, BMC followed the call of the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem not to light the second Advent candle in December (see page 7). On page 8, Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac's sermon in a Bethlehem church at Christmas decries western Christians' complicity in what he describes as genocide in Gaza. He states, "When we rely on power, might, and weapons, Jesus is under the rubble."

The newsletter also features the Lent campaign of the Methodist Church in 2024 – Unbounded Love – which takes us through some familiar lines from the wonderful hymn *Love Divine*, highlighting the different ways our discipleship should be characterised by God's love. For more details see page 5. In his minister's message, Andrew also challenges us to seek to know more of God's love, and to live it through our actions, throughout Lent.

Mark Ramsey – Editor

Beeston Methodist Church Newsletter – February 2024

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Any articles for inclusion in the March 2024 issue should be emailed by 16th Feb to newsletter@beestonmethodist.church. Articles may be edited for space.

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Cover photo from Friends of Sabeel North America www.fosna.org

Minister's message

It only seems to take a moment for shops to switch their displays round to entice people to buy things for the latest season or celebration. It is very difficult to avoid the red hearts that festoon shop windows reminding us that it is Valentine's Day in a few weeks.

What do you do for Valentine's Day? Are you one of these people who buys chocolates, flowers, cards or cuddly toys? In 2022, over £1.3 billion was spent on gifts for Valentine's Day. I do wonder whether this is the best way to show love.

This year, 14th February is also the start of Lent. How do we approach the season of Lent and show God our love and our commitment to follow Jesus? In some church traditions, there is a service of ashing where people receive the sign of the cross in ash on their foreheads. Some people remove this sign almost as soon as it is applied whereas others keep it on for the remainder of the day. How much do we show to the world about our commitment to God? Do we put it on for a short period and remove it as soon as we can or is it there for all to see?

I saw a t-shirt which had the caption Love me more. I wasn't sure whether this was in reference to the need to show more love to a particular person or whether the request was to favour one person over another.

If we are asked to love me more, what would we do if it was Jesus who was asking this?

What are we going to do during Lent to examine our relationship with Jesus and to work out how we can show that love to all we meet?

Lent is usually a time for giving things up which is worth bearing in mind especially if you are thinking of giving chocolates on Valentine's Day!

If you do decide to give something up then think how you can make it make a difference. If you give up sweets for example, why not give the equivalent you would have spent to a charity?

We might need to remind ourselves that Jesus doesn't play favourites and that His actions were for everyone throughout the world and for all time.

May this time of Lent be a time to reflect on our relationship with Jesus and allow us to prepare for that great example of how much God loves us and how much Jesus was prepared to do for love of us.

Andrew

A Circuit Calling



Circuit stewards play a critical role in each and every church in our circuit. Their role is the appointment, pastoral care, housing and support of your minister(s) and all circuit staff. We have been hugely blessed with wise and capable circuit stewards over the last few years, however two of them are now stepping aside having finished their appointment. By 1st September 2024 we will require up to six new stewards to enable your church and circuit to function legally and effectively.

Is it your calling to be a circuit steward?

You may already have skills in finance, HR, prayer support, property, safeguarding or strategy that you would be willing to contribute as part of a team of circuit stewards drawn from churches across the circuit. To find out more please talk to your minister, one of the existing circuit stewards or previous circuit stewards. There is induction and training available. Please pray if this is your calling. Please contact Rev Tony Malcolm, John Walton (Tel; 07736 782996 or email; jrwatson@talk21.com) or Ann Sanders (tel; 07847 998568 or email; annsanders1958@gmail.com)

NTV Circuit Stewards from 1st September 2024: John Walton (Trinity), Ann Sanders (Stapleford) and John Hindson (Justice Champion).

NTV Circuit Stewards retiring from 31st August 2024: Martin Sykes (Grangewood) and Richard Collins (BMC).

23rd January 2024

Unbounded Love



God's love doesn't stay in the lines

Charles Wesley's famous hymn *Love Divine, All Loves*

Excelling talks about Jesus as 'unbounded love' – a kind of

love that cannot be contained, that works in our lives and in our world to free us

and heal us. **Unbounded Love** is the theme of the **Lent campaign of the**

Methodist Church in 2024 – holding together our commitments to be a justice-seeking church, and a people who experience and proclaim the good news of God's uncontainable love.

Throughout Lent we are sharing daily email reflections that explore the theme of Unbounded Love. The reflections will be a range of resources that connect the Gospel readings from the Sunday lectionary throughout Lent to weekly themes, each one a line lifted from "Love divine, all loves excelling". The themes are:

- **Week 1** – "Unbounded love": Jesus' baptism and wilderness experience – God's love bursts the barriers of heaven, and then bursts into the realms of darkness.
- **Week 2** – "Visit us with thy salvation": Losing our life (psyche) to find it – the ways we attempt to insulate ourselves from God's love.
- **Week 3** – "Pure and spotless let us be": Turning the tables in the Temple – corporate religious attempts to boundary God's love.
- **Week 4** – "Finish then thy new creation": God's unbounded love for the cosmos.
- **Week 5** – "Changed from glory into glory": Like a seed that has to die before it bears fruit, death is no barrier to God's love.
- **Week 6** – "Till we cast our crowns before thee": As Jesus entered Jerusalem the people responded by taking off their cloaks. What's our equivalent?
- **Holy Week** – "Lost in wonder, love, and praise!": As Jesus becomes bound by his opponents, will God's love stay bound?

Sign up to receive these each day, beginning on Wednesday 14 February, at www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/len-and-easter/unbounded-love

Update from the Leadership Team

BMC Leadership Team wishes you a Happy New Year and hopes that you enjoyed your celebrations at the coming of the Christ child over Christmastime.

Our children and young people in **Junior Church** are trying something different for the next couple of months, and will be joining us for the final part of our morning services rather than being there at the beginning. This will enable them to tell us about what they have been doing in their separate sessions and to join us for Communion.

We would like to thank everyone who has given us their ideas about the kind of role they would like to see a new **church lay worker** performing. We are considering all of these ideas and will keep you all informed.

We hope that you are all now aware about the new charges for the **council car park** next to our premises. Please don't be caught out and do let us know if you become aware that this is causing problems for anyone. Please continue to **look out for each other** and let Pastoral Visitors know if you have any concerns.

We will be looking for **new stewards/members of the Leadership Team** before too long, ready for September 2024. It might be something you have thought about before, or maybe you don't see yourself as that kind of person. Everyone can be that kind of person! It is never too early to seek one of us out for a chat if you would like to know more. It can be very fulfilling to be involved in this way and we are always keen to have new people involved.

We have recently reduced our meetings to every other month (from January 2024) so if there is anything you would like us to discuss, please do remember to let us know in good time. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 6th March.

Let us all keep warm, keep safe, and keep worshipping together into this new year.

Blessings to you from the team.

Sally Ramsey, on behalf of the Leadership Team

Call for Advent candle to remain unlit for peace



To remember all those who have died in the Israel/Palestine conflict, Methodist churches across the country are being called upon to leave their second Advent candle unlit this year. The call not to light the candle, which represents peace, on the second Sunday in Advent (10 December) and on subsequent Sundays, follows the news that celebrations to mark Christmas in the Holy Land will be subdued this year.

The Rev David Hardman, Methodist Liaison Officer, Jerusalem, is currently fulfilling his role from the UK and remains in touch with those living in the Middle East. David explained, “Our Christian colleagues in Bethlehem tell us that this Advent and Christmas the lights that normally adorn the birth place of Jesus will remain unlit in memory of those who have been killed in the current conflict. We are inviting Methodist churches in Britain to leave the second candle of Advent unlit to serve as a reminder that we stand in solidarity with all who are suffering in the Holy Land.”

The President of the Methodist Conference, the Rev Gill Newton, commented, “The events of over 2000 years ago and of now, remind us that sadly, nothing much has changed. We are still caught up in conflict and challenge, fear and uncertainty. This Advent, to stand with Palestinian Christians, we invite Methodist Churches to leave the Advent candle on the Second Sunday unlit and for it to remain unlit throughout advent. God is still present even in the most difficult places, and in the midst of violent conflict so many people are wishing for and seeking peace!”

On Christmas Day churches are invited to take a photo of their Advent Ring with the second candle unlit and send it to the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem who will forward pictures to local church communities in the Holy Land.

30 November 2024. Taken from www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/latest-news/all-news/call-for-advent-candle-to-remain-unlit-for-peace

BMC did not light its second Advent candle this year. A photo was taken and sent as requested.

Christ in the Rubble: A Liturgy of Lament

Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church Bethlehem.

Sermon of 23 December 2023.

We are angry. We are broken. This should have been a time of joy; instead, we are mourning. We are fearful.

20,000 killed. Thousands under the rubble still. Close to 9,000 children killed in the most brutal ways. Day after day after day. 1.9 million displaced! Hundreds of thousands of homes were destroyed. Gaza as we know it no longer exists. This is an annihilation. A genocide.

The world is watching; Churches are watching. Gazans are sending live images of their own execution. Maybe the world cares? But it goes on...

We are asking, could this be our fate in Bethlehem? In Ramallah? In Jenin? Is this our destiny too?

We are tormented by the silence of the world. Leaders of the so-called “free” lined up one after the other to give the green light for this genocide against a captive population. They gave the cover. Not only did they make sure to pay the bill in advance, they veiled the truth and context, providing political cover. And, yet another layer has been added: the theological cover with the Western Church stepping into the spotlight.

The South African Church taught us the concept of “The state theology,” defined as “the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism.” It does so by misusing theological concepts and biblical texts for its own political purposes.

Here in Palestine, the Bible is weaponised against. Our very own sacred text. In our terminology in Palestine, we speak of the Empire. Here we confront the theology of the Empire. A disguise for superiority, supremacy, ‘chosenness,’ and entitlement. It is sometimes given a nice cover using words like mission and evangelism, fulfillment of prophecy, and spreading freedom and liberty.

The theology of the Empire becomes a powerful tool to mask oppression under the cloak of divine sanction. It divides people into ‘us’ and ‘them.’ It dehumanizes and demonises. It speaks of land without people even when they know the land has people – and not just any people. It calls for emptying Gaza, just like it called the ethnic cleansing in 1948 ‘a divine miracle.’ It calls for us Palestinians to go to Egypt, maybe Jordan, or why not just the sea?

“Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” they said of us. This is the theology of Empire.

This war has confirmed to us that the world does not see us as equal. Maybe it is the colour of our skin. Maybe it is because we are on the wrong side of the political equation. Even our kinship in Christ did not shield us. As they said, if it takes killing 100 Palestinians to get a single ‘ Hamas militant ’ then so be it! We are not humans in their eyes. (But in God’s eyes... no one can tell us we are not!)

The hypocrisy and racism of the Western world is transparent and appalling! They always take the words of Palestinians with suspicion and qualification. No, we are not treated equally. Yet, the other side, despite a clear track record of misinformation, is almost always deemed infallible!

To our European friends. I never ever want to hear you lecture us on Human rights or international law again. We are not white – it does not apply to us according to your own logic.

In this war, the many Christians in the Western world made sure the Empire has the theology needed. It is self-defense, we were told! (And I ask *how?*) In the shadow of the Empire, they turned the colonizer into the victim, and the colonized into the aggressor. Have we forgotten that the state was built on the ruins of the towns and villages of those very same Gazans?

We are outraged by the complicity of the church. Let it be clear: Silence is complicity, and empty calls for peace without a ceasefire and end to occupation, and the shallow words of empathy without direct action — are all under the banner of complicity. So here is my message: Gaza today has become the moral compass of the world. Gaza was hell on earth before October 7th.

If you are not appalled by what is happening; if you are not shaken to your core – there is something wrong with your humanity. If we, as Christians, are not outraged by this genocide, by the weaponising of the Bible to justify it, there is something wrong with our Christian witness, and compromising the credibility of the Gospel! If you fail to call this a genocide. It is on you. It is a sin and a darkness you willingly embrace.

Some have not even called for a ceasefire...

I feel sorry for you. We will be ok. Despite the immense blow we have endured, we will recover. We will rise and stand up again from the midst of destruction, as we have always done as Palestinians, although this is by far the biggest blow we have received in a long time.

But again, for those who are complicit, I feel sorry for you. Will you ever recover from this? Your charity, your words of shock *after* the genocide, won't make a difference. Words of regret will not suffice for you. We will not accept your apology after the genocide. What has been done, has been done. I want you to look at the mirror and ask: where was I when Gaza was going through genocide?

In these last two months, the Psalms of lament have become a precious companion. We cried out: My God, My God, we have you forsaken Gaza? Why do you hide your face from Gaza?

In our pain, anguish, and lament, we have searched for God, and found him under the rubble in Gaza. Jesus became the victim of the very same violence of the Empire. He was tortured. Crucified. He bled out as others watched. He was killed and cried out in pain – My God, where are you?

In Gaza today, God is under the rubble.

And in this Christmas season, as we search for Jesus, he is to be found not on the side of Rome, but our side of the wall. In a cave, with a simple family. Vulnerable. Barely, and miraculously surviving a massacre. Among a refugee family. This is where Jesus is found.

If Jesus were to be born today, he would be born under the rubble in Gaza. When we glorify pride and richness, Jesus is under the rubble.

When we rely on power, might, and weapons, Jesus is under the rubble.

When we justify, rationalise, and theologise the bombing of children, Jesus is under the rubble.

Jesus is under the rubble. This is his manger. He is at home with the marginalised, the suffering, the oppressed, and displaced. This is his manger.

I have been looking, contemplating on this iconic image. God with us, precisely in this way. *This* is the incarnation. Messy. Bloody. Poverty.

This child is our hope and inspiration. We look and see him in every child killed and pulled from under the rubble. While the world continues to reject the children of Gaza, Jesus says, “just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.” “You did to *me*.” Jesus not only calls them his own, he is them!

We look at the holy family and see them in every family displaced and wandering, now homeless in despair. While the world discusses the fate of the people of Gaza as if they are unwanted boxes in a garage, God in the Christmas narrative shares in their fate; He walks with them and calls them his own.

This manger is about resilience. The resilience of Jesus is in his meekness; weakness, and vulnerability. The majesty of the incarnation lies in its solidarity with the marginalised. Resilience because this very same child, rose up from the midst of pain, destruction, darkness and death to challenge Empires; to speak truth to power and deliver an everlasting victory over death and darkness.

This is Christmas today in Palestine and this is the Christmas message. It is not about Santa, trees, gifts, lights, etc. My goodness how we twisted the meaning of Christmas. How we have commercialised Christmas. I was in the USA last month, the first Monday after Thanksgiving, and I was amazed by the amount of Christmas decorations and lights, all the and commercial goods. I couldn't help but think: they send us bombs, while celebrating Christmas in their land. They sing about the prince of peace in their land, while playing the drum of war in our land.

Christmas in Bethlehem, the birth place of Jesus, is this manger. This is our message to the world today. It is a gospel message, a true and authentic Christmas message, about the God who did not stay silent, but said his word, and his Word is Jesus. Born among the occupied and marginalised. He is in solidarity with us in our pain and brokenness.

This manger is our message to the world today – and it is simply this: this genocide must stop NOW. Let us repeat to the world: STOP this Genocide NOW.

This is our call. This is our plea. This is our prayer. Hear oh God. Amen.

Taken from <https://www.redletterchristians.org/christ-in-the-rubble-a-liturg-y-of-lament>

Prayer of Lament: 100 days of war in Gaza

O God, whose Son Jesus came to transform the world,

We lament the last 100 days of war in Gaza and Israel.

We lift before you those injured, killed and bereaved. Those who have lost everything and been displaced. We cry to you for those still held hostage, and for their families and friends.

We pray for the leaders of Israel, Gaza and Palestine. That they might have the courage and imagination to recognise the humanity in each other and walk towards peace.

Forgive us for when we carry violence and hatred in our own hearts. Turn our eyes to your Son, that our hearts and minds might be transformed by him and our lives become reflections of his redeeming love.

Amen.

14 January 2024. Taken from www.embraceme.org/blog/finding-hope-through-lament

The Inclusive Language Guide



The Methodist Church's [Inclusive Language Guide](#) helps the Church hold conversations without making assumptions or inadvertently causing upset. In this blog, the Assistant Secretary of the Methodist Conference, Rev Michaela Youngson, explains why words are important and how the guide affirms traditional terms such as husband and wife while allowing people to express themselves using the language that is right for them.

Words in general are powerful and important and, of course, human language is changing all the time. The Methodist Church, as part of our calling to be an inclusive Church, is paying attention to the language that we use and is encouraging everyone to be careful in the words used when we are talking with and about people. We should never use offensive, racist, sexist or homophobic language but also part of loving our neighbour is to consider how they might want to be addressed or described.

Those in the life of the Church who help prepare people for special events such as baptisms, funerals and marriages will want to use language that is inclusive and reflects for those involved the language that they would choose to use for themselves. So, as well as traditional language such as 'husband and wife' it might be appropriate to use words such as 'partner' or 'spouse'. This is not a discarding of particular terms but an opening up of our language in a way that reflects the gracious and inclusive nature of God's love.

As the world's understanding of each person's identity changes, the Church is learning more about what it means to be created in God's image – our language about God is limited by our human understanding – as that understanding grows, so does our knowledge of the God who created us. In our guide to inclusive language we offer practical advice about how our language might be used in ways that do not exclude people, whatever their identity. We are called to love in the way that Christ loves, recognising, as St Paul's Letter to the Galatians, that in Christ Jesus we are all children of God in faith.

Rev Michaela Youngson, 3 January 2024. Taken from www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/the-methodist-blog/the-inclusive-language-guide

Responses to COP28



COP28, the annual United Nations meeting where governments discuss how to limit climate change, took place in Dubai in December.

The Methodist Youth President, Thomas Hart, offered the following response to the COP28 deal.

“At the close of COP28, it is encouraging that there has been a novel deal struck, that encourages all countries to move away from fossil fuels. However, it is truly disappointing that governments have not collectively agreed to phase out fossil fuels completely. We have been blessed with a wonderful world that has been crafted by our Creator God, and it is time that global governments take collective responsibility, to stop the gluttonous nature of deals and proactively protect God’s World, our home.

“The agreed deal must move away from fossil fuels promptly and fairly to protect those most affected by the climate crisis. Our UK government need to make sure that we decarbonise our economy, as well as providing adequate financial support developing nations to move to a more sustainable world.

“Children and young people of the Methodist Church continually highlight their concern about our climate crisis and their passion for environmental justice. 3Generate gave children and young people the opportunity to send letters to their local MPs indicating issues that concerned them and a number of which, highlighted the climate crisis. It is important, that we hold our government and global authorities in prayer to make the actions and decisions, which are true to building God’s Kingdom on earth.”

Dr Hamish Leese is the Action for Hope Implementation Officer, his job is to help the Methodist Church of Britain reduce its carbon emissions, aiming for net zero by 2030. He offers this reflection.

“As the dust settles on COP28 we are left to digest the agreement which was finally reached. It is clear that it falls well short of the decisive position we had hoped for, but there is a slight cause for optimism in the form of the agreed

transition away from fossil fuels. It is easy to lose hope or despair at the lack of decisive international action to address climate change. While this is a natural feeling, and no-one should feel bad for entertaining these emotions for a while, it is also a call to action for all of us. It is more important than ever that we engage with politicians to demonstrate the importance of these issues, and do what we can as Methodist people to reduce our own negative impact.

“As climate change once again leaves the news cycles it is vitally important that we hold our elected representatives accountable for the promises they have made, and that the transition is undertaken in a way which is equitable and genuinely listens to the needs and concerns of those most affected by climate change. As Methodists we have a deep commitment to the earth as part of God’s creation and our fellow humans around the world, and it is crucial that we do all that we can to minimise the damage we cause and speak with a credible voice on these issues.”

13 December 2023. Taken from www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/news/latest-news/all-news/responses-to-cop28

Why not consider becoming a BMC Zoom host?

During lockdown we all benefitted from getting together on Zoom, and this has become an important and enduring part of our ministry for people who can’t be with us in person on a Sunday morning.

We need more volunteers to join our team of Zoom hosts. You’ll need to have an internet-connectable device, with a camera and microphone, and to be available when ‘on duty’ to open the meeting (either from home or church) at about 9.45am and work with the AV operator to admit people online, make sure the sound is working, initiate recording of the service and then download the recording and send on to those who’ll arrange distribution and social media upload. You’ll still be able to enjoy the worship yourself and it’s a great chance to have a chat with people who join us online before and after the service. Full guidance and support will be given to anyone who’d like to give it a go. Please speak to any of the stewards if you’re interested and able to help. Thank you.

Paula Dawson

Update from the Redevelopment Group

The Spire

The internal work on the spire was delayed due to complications in manufacturing the new steel beams to fix inside it. Although they are now finished, the contractor is now fully occupied doing emergency work following the recent floods. The work will be completed as soon as possible, and the balcony will remain in use until it recommences.

Heating in the church

As part of the project the heating system for the sanctuary will be replaced. You may know that we have a problem with flooding in the basement (where the boilers are currently sited), so we are exploring the possibility of siting the new ones at first floor level, probably at the top of the stairs that currently go up to the balcony from the coffee bar area; they will not be needed to access the upstairs seating when side balconies have been removed. Various options for the type of heating are being considered. We like the idea of underfloor heating, but this, on its own, would not be sufficient to heat the church. Therefore, we are exploring the possibility of a hybrid system with background underfloor heating that would be boosted, when necessary, with radiators.

Fire alarm

To meet current legislation, we will need to install a new fire alarm system that covers the whole premises.

Lighting

Over the next month we will look at the various options for lighting in the church. Most of you will not be surprised to know that we have been told that the current lighting is significantly dimmer than it should be.

We are currently waiting for an up-to-date cost estimate – that will enable us to see what exactly we can afford. Our current plan is to go out to tender by Easter; when the work finally starts will depend on when building firms can start it.

The transition group is planning to do a dummy run of setting up the hall for Sunday services so that we are well prepared for when the time comes.

Chris Bridges and Connie Pullan, on behalf of the Redevelopment Group

Update from the Worship Team

The BMC Worship Team met just before Christmas to discuss arrangements for services in the Mar- May Plan, and also to consider other worship related matters.

After finalising the arrangements for services over Christmas, we discussed holding a **Welcome to Church Sunday** on 11th February which will be led by our Minister, Andrew.

We looked forward to **Lent** which starts on 14th February Andrew has agreed to find a suitable liturgy for services. On the evening of **Passion Sunday** (17th March) there will be a service of reflection with words and music, where we will be joined by singers from St Mary's Attenborough. During **Holy Week** we plan to arrange a service on Maundy Thursday and a meditation with music and readings for Good Friday. On **Easter Sunday** we hope once again to arrange a sunrise service at Attenborough, and our service at 10.30am will include Holy Communion. This is to be led jointly by a Local Preacher with Rev Joseph Kil presiding at Communion.

Looking ahead we will look at the material provided for **Bible Month** in June, which this year is based on Genesis, to see if it would be suitable for some themed preaching and a related Bible Study. In July we hope to organise a service to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women to the Methodist ministry.

We also noted that the team of **AV** operators will be down to 3 as at the end of February. As the conduct of worship at BMC depends greatly on the availability of the AV system, we urgently need to find some new AV operators. This is essential to avoid overburdening the rest of the team, or impacting on our weekly services of worship. If you think you can help (or know someone who could help) then please speak to me asap – training and support will be provided.

As ever, new members with an interest in Worship related matters are welcome to join our meetings – our next meeting is on Thursday 7th March at 7.30pm.

Martin Weir, Chair of the Worship Team

Church Charity – Canaan Trust



Since 1995, the Canaan Trust homeless charity has supported the homeless and those threatened with becoming homeless from across our Local Communities.

The Trust operates 24-7, 365 days a year from its base on Main Street, Long Eaton. We are a Christian charity providing care and support to anyone in need, regardless of gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, creed, individual or family. The Trust seeks to reach out to all who are isolated and in need providing access to help and support – with issues relating to homelessness, insecure accommodation, benefits, debts, or food poverty.

The Canaan Trust homeless charity cares for each unique individual or family in a holistic, person-centred way. The goal is to enable each individual or family to address the issues that caused their homelessness or trapped them in being homeless, supporting them to ‘Rebuild their Lives’ so they can positively move forward to achieve independent living back in the Community.

New female support house – *Aspire House*

In recent years the calls on the Trust’s Services from individual females and families have increased to the extent that the Trust is in the process of developing a new dedicated female only project.

Women experiencing homelessness tend to be hidden from view and face different challenges to men in the same position. According to frontline services, women facing homelessness are more likely to have experienced abuse and trauma both before and during homelessness. Women experiencing homelessness are invariably living in a state of survival often in high-risk environment.

The Trust is pleased to share that it has now gone out to tender for the extensive works which need to be undertaken in No 16 Main Street. it is hoped that the actual physical work will commence in early in 2024 with a view to the house being ready to open probably during the course of the third quarter of 2024.

Once the building works have been completed the next challenge will be fitting the house out. Over the next six months the Trust will be looking to raise the funds to purchase all the items required to furnish and fit the house out. The Trust will need: 9 beds and mattresses; 9 chests of drawers; 9 bed-side cabinets; 9 wardrobes; 9 small arm chairs; 9 small TVs; 9 kettles and toasters; 9 small fridges; for the lounge – a large TV, a number of large sofas, coffee table; office furniture; Bathroom/toilet fittings – toilet roll holders; toilet brushes etc.

If as an individual, as a family, as a group or organisation you might be able to consider contributing to any of the above items your support and help would be appreciated and valued.

More information about the work of the Canaan Trust and how you can make donations can be found at www.canaan-trust.co.uk

ONLINE SERVICES

THINGS THAT CAN GO TERRIBLY WRONG



PROBLEMS WITH
THE SOUND



ACCIDENTAL
SCREEN-SHARING OF
PASTORALLY-SENSITIVE
INFORMATION



INTERNET BREAKS
AT CRUCIAL
MOMENT



LINDA!
HAVE
YOU
SEEN
MY
SPECTACLES?

FAILING TO
MUTE THE
CONGREGATION



ANIMALS
RUNNING
AMOK



THE APP
HASN'T BEEN
CONFIGURED



LIVE ARREST OWING
TO IGNORING
COPYRIGHT



INVASION BY
ROWDY GROUP
OF METHODISTS

This CartoonChurch.com cartoon by Dave Walker originally appeared in the Church Times

Praying for the Earth



7: Extinction

Father of Creation, God of Compassion,
You made a beautiful world, full of awe and wonder,
Full of possibility and potential.
You declared it to be good.
To you be all praise, honour and glory.

Father of Creation, God of Mercy,
You gave humanity a call to tend and keep,
Yet we have sinned in thought, word and deed.
Through consumerism and exploitation
We have acted like parasites instead of gardeners.
We have acted like ecological vandals instead of caretakers,
Have mercy on us!

We pause to remember and grieve the loss from this world of non-human
worshippers who have now become extinct.

Bramble Cay Melomys
What have we done? Have mercy on us

Yangtze River Dolphin
What have we done? Have mercy on us

Northern White Rhino
What have we done? Have mercy on us

West African Black Rhino
What have we done? Have mercy on us

Spix Macaw
What have we done? Have mercy on us

Golden Toad
What have we done? Have mercy on Us

Zanibar Leopard

What have we done? Have mercy on us.

Father, we know these are but a few of the creatures you have made who are no longer with us.

You declared them to be good, but we made them extinct.

Have mercy on us.

Father of Creation, God of Mercy,

We thank you for your Son Jesus,

Our brother, king and friend.

We thank you that in Jesus we see

Justice embodied and entwined with extravagant mercy.

We thank you that he welcomed the weak, gathered the oppressed and laid down the prophetic challenge to the unjust structures and systems of his day.

Father of Creation, God of Justice,

Embolden us with the Spirit of Christ,

That we may rise from the ashes of our lament into the prophetic waters of justice.

Restore us that we may be restored,

That your church may arise with healing in its wings.

Set us on fire with a love for all of your creation,

That we, your covenant people, would shake off our parasitical past and instead be the stewards, caretakers and love-filled creatures you have called us to be.

Let your church be so empowered that we would peacefully and publicly join with others in rebelling against extinction.

Father of Creation, God of Justice,

To you be all praise, honour and glory,

Now and Forever.

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

Bible reading: Peace making

Something to read

“The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.”

James 3:17-18

Something to think about

There’s a big difference between peace loving and peace making. Surely, we all love the idea of peace. But peacemakers are those who are willing to do the tough job of getting involved in situations where there is no peace, in order to make peace. Peacemaking sounds like a quiet and gentle way of life. But it’s often the exact opposite. The person who wants to make peace needs to be tough enough to engage with those who are in bitter dispute with one another. Peacemaking is a wonderful way of life but the person who thinks that it’s easy has almost certainly not understood what it’s about.

Jesus said: “God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). Jesus was the Man of Peace. Through both his life and death he brought peace to humankind, but that certainly didn’t mean that he avoided difficulties and dodged disputes. Far from it! His ministry was continually characterised by spending time with and challenging his detractors – and it was all in the name of peace.

Every day, we will be given opportunities to be peacemakers. In Romans 12:18, the apostle Paul wrote: “Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.” There will be times when we fail to bring peace, but we must keep trying. Because when we succeed, we will have sown a seed for God. And that seed will grow, says James, and produce a harvest of good things. When we sow peace, we may never know all the wonderful things that grow as a result.

Our daily peacemaking will often involve more listening than speaking. Often, tensions are lessened when people feel listened to. We may need to challenge unhelpful actions and words, but we can always encourage, too. The impetus for doing this comes not from a heroic desire to make the world a better place, but

from the inspiration that Jesus gives us. As Billy Graham said, if you want to be a peacemaker: “you must know the peace giver”.

Question

In what ways might you be able to be a peacemaker today?

Something to pray

Loving God, thank you that you are the source of all true peace. Help me to discover more of your peace for myself, so that I may be able to share it more generously with others. Amen

Jonathan Edwards. Taken from www.premier.plus/be-still-and-know/podcasts/episodes/september-1st-james-318

Ralph Hadley remembered

February was always synonymous with Pantomime on the Queen’s Road church calendar, which is an appropriate time to remember Ralph Hadley who died in December 2023. Ralph was the driving force behind the annual pantomime, perpetuating it as a church activity which made an awareness of the church in the local community. With that same enthusiasm the Men’s Fellowship continued, taking on the role of Secretary from 1982 until 2022, ever trying to encourage new members. His report to the AGM was always entertaining as even he could not read his own handwriting. Over the years he held various posts in the church such as church steward, pastoral visitor, choir member. As church organist he would often be found in church practicing the Sunday hymns or just for the pleasure of playing the organ. Outside of church one thinks of his other interests pursued with avidity – Gilbert & Sullivan, cricket, rail travel and hiking. For many years towards the end of the Easter holiday Ralph would arrange the church hike, using his knowledge of Derbyshire for the best scenic routes, usually described as undulating. He led a walking group with varying abilities who could not have matched the speed he would have taken on his own. In fact, whenever you met him, he was always dashing about, he had so many things to do.

Robert Dawson

How To Be A Good Christian Ally



While the national denominations and traditions continue to argue over their stance on the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people, the Student Christian Movement (SCM) and OneBodyOneFaith have joined together to publish a resource for churches who want to take a step further along the journey, and who want to grow not only as allies to LGBTQ+ people but also in their own faith too.

How To Be A Good Christian Ally is the first in the *Affirming Christianity* series, a project led by SCM. Rather than debate Biblical verses that cause disagreement, this short course seeks to offer ways to explore the idea of allyship in the bible, and as a church, as well as to learn from LGBTQ+ stories.

Rev Naomi Nixon, CEO of SCM, says, “We believe that the future of the church is affirming. Campaigning to get there is important, but we also need to prepare for that future. We want to create discipleship resources which inspire and equip affirming Christians for the years ahead, for the future God is calling us into.”

Intentionally simple and accessible, the structure of the course introduces key principles, bible studies and exercises, as well as a video made by students to convey their experiences and identities. It is a dynamic, engaging, and thought-provoking resource that is a timely and necessary addition to the ongoing national dialogue.

One student said, “Allyship isn’t just saying quietly to the queer person you know, ‘We’re glad to have you here.’ That’s just being a reasonable human being. Allyship is going out and actually doing something about it.”

Luke Dowding, Chief Executive Officer of OneBodyOneFaith adds, “This resource is moving the conversation forwards. Whilst it remains important to have the challenging debates, it’s vital that we don’t forget about our churches who are seeking support in their journey in how to be a good ally to LGBTQ+ people. OneBodyOneFaith is delighted to partner with SCM on this, continuing our work so that LGBTQ+ people can thrive, not just survive.”

Taken from www.movement.org.uk/blog/how-be-good-christian-ally-new-resource-progressive-churches-and-communities SCM is a church charity.

Eco Church – Recycling



You will know that Beeston Methodist Church is an Eco Church and you will have seen the Bronze Award plaque on the wall in the coffee bar. If you are new to BMC and you're not aware of our affiliation to Eco Church do please make enquiries and find out more.

One of the many aspects of Eco Church is recycling and you may have seen the collection box in the coffee bar entrance. So we have appealed to everyone at church and to the community groups that use our premises to donate their used printer cartridges to us.

What happens when we've received these ink cartridges. Well, we have registered with a company called *Recycle4Charity*. They send me a postage paid box in which I put the collected cartridges and then send it back to them for recycling. I am not aware of the full recycling process but I'm just pleased that they are not being sent to a landfill site. And whatever we can avoid sending to landfill has to be good. Each time I send a box of cartridges to *Recycle4Charity* I get an email back to say how much we've raised and how much in weight has been saved from landfill. We don't get our own running total of what's been saved but the charity keeps an overall running total of cartridges saved from landfill by all those signed up to them since they started up in 2002 and up to this point they have saved 388,720kg (382.5 tons) from landfill which I think is quite impressive.

Each box of cartridges I send back earns some money for BMC depending on the type of cartridges and the quantity. The last batch I sent earned £15.65 and in the last 12 months we have received £76.45, and in total we have raised £321 since we started and every penny raised goes to Mission Possible, our church redevelopment fund. £321 may not sound like a large sum of money in the grand scheme of things but this is a 'win-win' situation as we keep ink cartridges out of landfill and raise funds at the same time. And to quote a well known supermarket slogan – every little helps.

Mick Towlson

God is on our side



Recently we released a new series of resources for small groups of progressive Christians. The first in the series, *How to be a Good Christian Ally*, is about our allyship as Christians, and how we can grow the kingdom by our actions. But while we've been working on it, I have been thinking about God's allyship. Because God is on our side. We often think about allying ourselves with God, as if it is all on us to find him and put ourselves where he is. But mercifully, as *John 3: 1-21* tells us, it is not all on us to find him and put ourselves with him. First and foremost he comes to us.

Even the most ardent campaigner among us has nothing on the passion of God to protect, accompany and encourage his children.

Protect, accompany and encourage are carefully chosen words. In one of the videos we filmed for the course, a vicar called Tom talked about his image of allyship as sometimes standing in front, sometimes behind, and sometimes alongside. Sometimes we need an ally to protect us, to stand in front of us and take what is being thrown at us. Sometimes we need an ally to walk alongside us, to experience life with us and talk about the tough times. And sometimes we need an ally to say nothing but push us forwards, encouraging us to use and own our voices.

I think it is great advice, and applicable to all forms of allyship, not just to the queer community. I was reading an article the other day about how the Government painted over child friendly murals in detention centres, for fear that children seeking asylum would feel welcome. That feeling you have right now, in the pit of your stomach? That's the fuel for allyship. That horror that a vulnerable person is being neglected or hurt. That sense of injustice and despair at the evil in the world. Those feelings drive us forward. But what do we do about it? Standing in front of the children arriving at those centres is neither practical or actually kind. It wouldn't comfort them if we were there shouting in their defence. Standing behind is a non-starter, and encouraging them to speak up for themselves at that moment is absurd. But a group of cartoonists found a way to stand alongside. They came together to draw a lovely friendly colouring book,

introducing life in the UK with Mr Men and Britannia drinking a cup of tea. Putting something warm and positive into the hands of people who have experienced the worst the world has to offer. It doesn't make that feeling of horror we had go away, it doesn't fix life for the child. But in a small way they are less alone. And that is what allyship literally means. It comes from the same root as alloy, the blending of metals, and ligament, the joining of muscles and bones. It's a binding together in a meaningful way to make something better.

I doubt I need to make much of a case then for God being then the ultimate ally. He sees us broken and afraid, and he comes to be with us. We know this, yet again and again we struggle to remember that God is on our side without us earning it. For progressive Christians I think the particular way we struggle with this is forgetting that our activism flows from God's love and acceptance and not the other way around. We don't have to make the world a better place so that he loves us, so that we have a place in it. We are already secure in his love and we act from that security not to earn it.

So I'm going to do something a little out of stereotype for SCM, I'm going to use a little systematic theology to think more about how God's allyship manifests itself.

Firstly, God behind us. Just by creating us and giving us free will, God began the whole project of humanity as an ally. The act of creation is entirely about standing behind us. Drawing the human out of the clay of the earth and setting them in the garden is a profound act of belief in us. Picture a child playing with a doll, let's make it topical and call her Barbie! The doll's movements about the dream house are dependent, she mimics a life, but she doesn't really have one. The agency is all in the mind of the child playing with her. The child doesn't prompt and encourage the doll, they own her. We are used to thinking of our free will as a contrast to this kind of image, but perhaps we don't think so much about the nature of God in that choice to make us free. In the beginning, God is an ally of his creation, watching what we will do like we might hold our breath watching a butterfly emerge from a chrysalis rather than stiffly perform the actions of our owner.

Secondly, God beside us. This is the divine accompaniment of the Holy Spirit. The companionship of God is not theoretical. Jesus did not say he would be with us always in some vague metaphorical way. I think this is why the LGBTQ+ community get so angry about rainbow washing from big companies, or for that matter from churches and individuals. A bland generalised statement of support is no use to you as you trudge through life's messy bits, or skip through life's joyous bits. We want to know we have support for the whole journey, that our lives are seen, understood and made part of a greater whole. God's spirit is with us in exactly that way, present for the whole of our lives and offering fierce comfort to keep us on our way. God will never leave us standing alone, or lost from view. God is an ally who is more committed to us than any other, not just on our side but by our side.



So finally, God ahead of us. Sometimes an ally stands in front and takes the brickbats being thrown at us. Sometimes we just need to stop being hurt, because the hurt is too overwhelming. Sometimes getting in the way of the clenched fist or the angry word isn't infantilising, or robbing people of their agency; it's just kind. When we pray for protection for those we love, we are asking God to stand in the way of the grief that is coming for them because they lost a child, or the humiliation that they feel when they are rejected, or the fear they feel when stepping out in courage. Sometimes what we seek from God is the everlasting arms which protect us, and enable us to just keep living within the space he makes for us. But not all assaults come from the outside. The most pernicious attacks can often come from within, and they need a more permanent solution than God's comfort can offer. The shame of our failures, the propensity to damage our own relationships, the self-destructive turning away from God. These things needed a greater allyship, that of the cross. A lot of progressives struggle with the way atonement gets talked about. But if we picture Jesus standing between us and these things which hurt us we see that God being on our side means he is more on our side even than we are. This is allyship we can never hope to mimic, because we cannot get between a vulnerable person and the ways they keep hurting themselves. Yes, we can stand beside them, yes we can catch them from behind while it happens. But we cannot stand in between.

But God can and does, taking all the pain into himself, dying with it and restoring us to life when he is resurrected.

So yes it is good to think about how we can be better allies in the world. To stand with, behind, and in front of our queer siblings, trans siblings, those experiencing racism, sexism, ableism, and hatred in all forms. But let's never be drawn into thinking we have to do that or else the Kingdom of God is lost. God's allyship began before creation and lasts until the end of time. When we speak up, we act bravely or we offer comfort we are not initiating God's goodness, we are expressing it another way on his behalf. We are putting ourselves where God puts Godself, learning from the nature of the one who created, redeemed and empowers us. When we become allies we are putting ourselves on God's side, because he is already on ours.

21 November 2023. Rev Naomi Dixon, CEO of SCM. Taken from www.movement.org.uk/blog/god-our-side SCM is one of this year's church charities.

BMC Church Charities 2023-24



The total raised by January 3rd was £3381.66

eBay	£1273.57	Money jars	£39.10
Other items	£293.82	Recycled books and Cds	£150.85
Coffee mornings	£354.81	Coffee bar	£397.27
Events	£127.08	Event refreshments	£139.45
Coins	£545.71	Donations	£60.00

Recent contributions include £70 from coins, £234 from eBay sales and £82 from recycled books and CDs. Arrangements have been made to send £1,000 to each of the charities.

Colin Firbank

The Big Plastic Count



Nearly 100 billion pieces of plastic packaging are thrown away by UK households every year, and just 12% is recycled in the UK.

It's time the government got serious about tackling the plastic crisis. You can help by taking part in The Big Plastic Count!

Count your plastic for one week – 11-17 March 2024.

For one week in March, thousands of schools, households, community groups and businesses will be coming together to count their plastic waste. And we want you to join them.

In 2022, a quarter of a million people from households, schools, businesses and communities across the country made The Big Plastic Count the biggest ever investigation into UK household plastic waste. By counting your plastic waste for 1 week, you helped us to reveal a shocking truth: that the UK throws away 2 billion pieces of plastic every week, only 12% of which is recycled.

In 2024, governments will be negotiating a Global Plastics Treaty that could finally phase out plastic production for good. And so, we're doing The Big Plastic Count again – this time we'll be using the results to convince UK ministers to lead the way at these talks and push for a really strong treaty.

Register at www.thebigplasticcount.com to get your free counting pack (digital or via post) which includes everything you need to take part.

Mark Ramsey

BMC Warm Space

BMC Warm Space takes place on **alternate Tuesdays** in the church hall from 2pm to 4pm. The remaining dates for 2024 are **February 6 and 20, March 5 and 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

February 2024

Mon 5th	Knit, Natter and Craft at BMC 2pm
Tue 6th	BMC Warm Space at BMC 2-4pm
Sat 10th	Coffee morning at BMC 10am-12 noon
Sat 10th	Table Top Time – family board games at BMC 3-5pm
Sun 11th	Welcome to Church Sunday service at BMC 10.30am
Wed 14th	<i>Beginning of Lent</i>
Mon 19th	Knit, Natter and Craft at BMC 2pm
Tue 20th	BMC Warm Space at BMC 2-4pm
Sat 24th	Coffee morning at BMC 10-11.30am

March 2024

Mon 4th	Knit, Natter and Craft at BMC 2pm
Tue 5th	BMC Warm Space at BMC 2-4pm
Sat 9th	Coffee morning at BMC 10am-12 noon
Sat 9th	Table Top Time – family board games at BMC 3-5pm

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