

LIVING WATERS



A calm and undisturbed
mind and heart
are the life and health
of the body

Proverbs 14:30

Encouraging Enabling Challenging
in the Tynedale Methodist Circuit

AUTUMN 2024

Another Methodist year begins. Another year of working out how best to serve God and our communities as the Methodist Church in Tynedale. This year though, we are looking at the possibility of new ways of doing this, and are considering unique ideas and big changes.

I was reflecting on the moments where people in Scripture make big changes in their lives and to the things they usually do. There are lots to choose from but the one that strikes me most is the calling of Simon Peter and Andrew. In Matthew 4 we see they immediately dropped their nets after Jesus invites them to follow him.

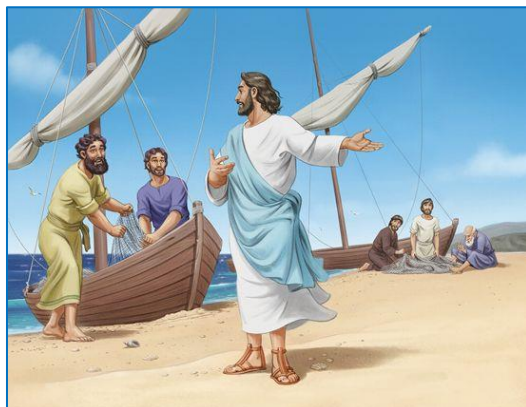
Two men, who meet Jesus for the first time and leave everything because he called to them. Their nets aren't insignificant, they were a symbol of something they had known all their lives, something that they had believed as being part of their future until the day they died. They will have grown up with nets knowing they were destined to be fisherman.

Likewise, further up the shore, two other brothers left their nets with their father and his boat. Starting working with the boats at a young age; getting up early each and every morning ready to take part in something they know, something that feels safe and routine; yet at the call of Jesus they drop what was routine and familiar and leave it behind them.

No promise of what the future will look like, no real understanding of where they will end up, or who the man is that they are giving up their safe place for. But there's something about this Jesus that leads them to say, it's ok; we know what is worth leaving behind.

I pray we may all hear when Jesus calls clearly. But more importantly that we may feel that sense of trust that Simon, Andrew, James and John felt as they followed Jesus into new territory so that we may be able to leave our nets and follow to wherever we are called.

Rev Gareth



HEXHAM TRINITY'S LECTERN FALL

About 40 years ago the minister, Rev Arthur Wignall, asked me to make a lectern fall as he knew I did embroidery and had just spent a month at the Royal School of Needlework in London where I learned about goldwork.

I asked Arthur what he would like me to put on the fall and he had one or two ideas but they didn't appeal to me. So I came into church and sat there and looked around. Some of the windows had lovely shapes but the glass was very pale coloured. I looked at the woodwork of the pulpit and saw the different shapes. Can you see a bit that looks like a flower? This gave me an idea, so I went home and drew the design.



The carpets and cushions are blue so I decided to make the background blue and work in gold threads. At the centre is the Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. You know that there are different churches in Hexham (the Abbey, St Mary's Catholic Church, the Community Church, the United Reformed Church and West End Methodist. They all worship the same God but they have little differences. The petals therefore represent the different churches and each one has a different stitch though they are all gold. Through all the churches is the cross. Can you guess what the cross is made of? It is leather which you can cut with scissors and stitch into place.



A few years later an elderly lady in the congregation (Mary Kohn) came to church and loved to sing hymns, pray and talk about Jesus. Her family made this new lectern for us but the fall had been made for a smaller lectern and so was too narrow for the new one. I asked Jean Thompson to help me and we found some more blue fabric and renovated the fall, adding gold braid to hide the joins – and a fringe to add weight. David Bingham (Ann's husband) remounted the fall and fixed it in place.

Margaret Campbell

HEXHAM HOLIDAY CLUB 2024 – A Churches Together Event.



After a trial in 2023 when Hexham Holiday Club produced their own material, rather than relying on Scripture Union Holiday Club designed programmes, a similar format was repeated this year. These were based on bible stories from the Lion Storyteller Bible, formerly used for 'Open the Book' assemblies in First and Primary Schools, but developed by the club as 'Explore the Book'.

In 2023 the stories involved water and the programme was called 'The Big Splash'. The 2024 stories related how meeting Jesus changed lives and named 'High Five Fest' – a nod to modern youth culture as to how good news is celebrated. Each story was first presented at Hexham's bandstand by some of the Open the Book Storytellers from the different schools teams. Registered children meet at the bandstand with parents/guardians/carers before moving onto venues where the children can be left for age specific teaching and activities based on the story. At the bandstand there are also songs, memory verse recall, a communal activity or game that can be loosely related to the story and, as has become tradition, the 'gunging' of a team member.

Monday's story was the fishermen who were called by Jesus to follow Him and become fishers of people. On Tuesday a blind man was healed (pictured). Wednesday, Jesus welcomed children. Thursday, a tax collector changed his ways. Friday, two people didn't recognise Jesus until.....



Martha Flavell of The Bible Society, supported by team members, compiled the programme and the Bible Society are keen to develop this initiative.

Team leaders were greatly encouraged by the support of a large Junior Team (15 - 17 year olds) from different churches and ex Junior Team taking on leadership roles. The bandstand band (who also played at the Friday evening show) were nearly all juniors & youth.

Clergy, ministers or pastors from different churches led the team devotions at Trinity each morning based on the story of the day.

Overall 137 children from 94 different families learned more about Jesus in seven different venues close to the town centre.

HOLIDAY AT HOME – Stocksfield

In August the church was transformed into a seaside location because we wanted to provide a holiday setting for those who rarely, or cannot, go on holiday. The Stocksfield Lunch Club and other activities close for August, so, for many older people, August seems a long month. A small team of us planned 4 days of activities and provided tea, coffee, biscuits and lunches for up to twenty people.



We had table games, such as scrabble and dominoes, but also, seaside activities such as “hook the duck” and “grab the crab”. We adapted a beetle drive into a crab drive, donkey drive and seagull drive, with some amazing drawings created by the participants! We also showed slides of gardens and beaches in Cornwall, Whitley Bay in bygone days, which evoked many memories, and Butlins in its heyday.

We watched “Summer Holiday” starring Cliff Richard too. There was more, but you get the idea. There were plenty of activities to choose from, plenty of space to move around, so, even the people who prefer quiet could find a corner to sit and chat.



This is the first time we have done this, the idea developed from a project at Kidlington Methodist Church, but we have received nothing but praise from all who came. The volunteers have found it tiring but so rewarding and there has been much joy and laughter.

Why don't you give it a try next year? It is highly adaptable to individual circumstances, you know you can!

Edna Leeson



PROFILE. Daryl Ralston Local Preacher on Trial

“Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day. It is a choice based on knowledge that we belong to God and have found in God our refuge and our safety and that nothing not even death, can take God away from us.”

As a local preacher on ‘trial’ I am deep into my studies, as I navigate the many coursework assignments and prepare sermons and services around the circuit. By profession I am a Chartered Building Surveyor and I live in Hexham with my lovely wife Ruth and our three children (all under the age of 7!).



I am originally from South Lanarkshire in Scotland and I grew up in the Church of Scotland. I then met my wife in the Scottish Episcopal Church, got married in an Anglican church in Yorkshire and now find myself a Methodist member at Trinity in Hexham! Then somehow I find myself on a Sunday morning preaching across the Tyne Valley. At times in my life it’s not something I ever envisaged myself doing. There has been times when I was younger that I have ‘wandered’ away from my faith but certainly in those times there was always something missing and a feeling that God was dragging me back to him. The door never closed, I just had to respond and look for the door again.

I am grateful for the learnings I have taken from the various denominations I have been part of over the years and feel these give a good foundation to my preaching. I am far from the finished article in terms of preaching. I am learning and I do feel called to preach simply, almost like a bible study, taking us through what I have learned from the passages and sharing that with you.

Outside of work I enjoy spending time with my family, running, going to the gym and supporting my football team Glasgow Rangers from afar.

I love studying for the sermons and spending time with the different congregations around the circuit. It feels like a real privilege to stand up front and out there for God telling people about Jesus and what he has done for me. The training modules are tough and extensive! So please keep me in your prayers as I juggle life, work, training and preaching.

The quote at the start is from the Dutch Catholic Priest Henri Nouwen. I came across this when preparing for a service earlier in the year. I have this quotation paraphrased on a note above a smiling picture of my daughter and the aim for me is to choose joy every day. God is joy. It's about choosing God every day. Let him journey with you. The mighty hand of God will never let us go. He has never let me go.

LOCAL PREACHER AWARDS

At our last Local Preacher and Leaders for Worship meeting at Allendale we celebrated with joy two long service awards.

Evelyn Charlton marked 60 years as a local preacher and Margaret Weatherson 25 years. Both were presented with certificates signed by the President of Conference and the Connexional Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Officer.

As a part of our meeting we heard about Daryl Ralston's progress in his training as a preacher, we shared in communion together and shared in an act of reaffirmation of our call to preach.

Evelyn shared with us testimony of how she received her call to preach from God following work with mission bands of young Christians travelling to lead worship in small chapels up and down the Allen Valleys and of how God had moved in people's lives.



L-R. Rev Marie Beard Margaret Weatherson Evelyn Charlton Rev Michael Holland

Might God be calling you to preach or lead worship? If so the next step would be to contact your minister for a conversation.

MH

IONA PILGRIMAGE

On Monday 29th July a group led by Roberta and Chris Ritson travelled to the beautiful island of Iona on a four day pilgrimage.

Six of us caught the 6am train to Carlisle, including Margaret from St Oswald's church, Bellingham. After changing for Glasgow Central and taking the hopper bus to Queen Street we met Mary Taylor, a URC minister from Galashiels and friend of Roberta's. We travelled on through stunning scenery and finally reached Oban, where we hurried onto the ferry to Craignure, on the isle of Mull. After a refreshment stop we caught the last bus to Fionpfort, travelling for 30 long, twisty miles. Our bus driver hooted for the last ferry to wait, and we were carried across the rough channel to Iona.

Four more friends were waiting for us there, making a total of 11. We were welcomed at the Argyll Hotel with a delicious meal. We bonded together during a time for sharing poems, closing with night time devotions. Tuesday came, with more shared meals and time together in the calm of the Abbey. Caro Penney gave us a wonderful introduction to the Iona Community. We also enjoyed the North beach. After supper some returned to the Abbey for the 9pm evening worship. Pat Ellison also offered Compline right there in our group's sitting room. (Pat is Roberta's friend from Scottish Episcopal Institute days).



On Wednesday two members of our group braved the seas to visit Staffa and Fingal's cave. Others enjoyed walking to St Columba's Bay, or just sitting to enjoy the garden view of the bay, with the boats bobbing up and down and the ferry bringing yet more visitors to and fro.

We gathered together to hear Mary's interesting introduction to the Cross of Nails, a world-wide movement for peace and reconciliation. It grew following the bombing of Coventry cathedral during World War 2, bringing former enemies together as friends. We also attended an Anglican Eucharist at Bishop's House. It was short as well as enriching, bringing islanders and visitors together as one.

On leaving the island we made a group circle and thanked God for our time together. We vowed that if Roberta was up for it, we would have another pilgrimage sometime, somewhere, both renewing our friendships and extending the invitation to others who would like to join in. A time of stillness and calm was felt by all. Be still and know that I am God

Gillian Scott (Bellingham, formerly of Barrasford)



CELEBRATING ECO CHURCH - WORKING WITH WHAT WE HAVE AT PRUDHOE

John Wesley is known to have preached in Prudhoe on several occasions and indeed a plaque a few hundred yards up the hill from the current church commemorates his visit on 27th June 1757 – exactly 267 years to the date that I met with church steward Martyn Johnson to talk about Prudhoe MC's recent Silver Eco Award.

"The award", says Martyn "is the result of several year's work, and the vision of people who could see potential beyond the obvious trials of an 1870's building". I wonder how many of our churches have architectural features such as the archway (now a window) where visiting preachers would dismount from horses, and the caretakers flat in the attic, still bedecked in 1960's décor from its last inhabitants.

"We had to begin to appreciate what we've got" explains Martyn, showing me round the extensive property week during term time. Martyn described how ecodecisions are now an integral part of the mission, sustainability and future path of the church, and attributes some of their success to focussing on small achievable steps. "It's like David & Goliath, a little church taking on a huge issue" says Martyn "and all the small steps add up to make an impact which improves our sustainability as well as lowering utility bills"

Outside the church is surrounded by the most wonderful gardens which are jam packed with plants, many donated to the church from member's gardens. The local wildlife seem to love it and there are plans to add bird boxes. But it's not just the wildlife that love the garden. Local school children and adults often take the path through the gardens.



So the church has taken the opportunity to add biblical quotes on donated slates to encourage those who pass.

Connecting and caring for creation is central to the success of Eco Church, Martyn and Ruth are keen walkers and bird spotters and for them it's a natural decision to help others connect with creation too. "We talk about creation and climate justice in worship, and we ask questions about what else we can do. Some of the big things are not always possible, but we continue to increase awareness and it's fabulous when members bring their ideas."

The church is hoping to continue its eco journey by becoming paperless, and has invested in technology throughout the building to enable this. I asked Martyn for his advice for other congregations setting out to become an accredited Eco-Church – he says "keep working on the small steps and encouraging people to make small changes to their everyday lives, together we make a significant difference"

Kathy Bevan – Newcastle Methodist District Evangelism and Justice Enabler.

PRUDHOE OUTING

Members and friends of Prudhoe Methodist Church had a lovely afternoon on July 20th. admiring the beautiful garden of Pat & George Hodgson in Stocksfield. They are members of the National Garden Scheme. Not only is their garden naturalistically planted with a wide variety of beautiful perennial plants but they also raise money for health charities and the NSPCC.

Martyn Johnson





Fourstones chapel decided in June to have a flower festival when there would be lots of flowers in bloom. As part of the festival we also decided to decorate a cross outside the chapel with flowers and greenery. Our setting up day was July 24th when 12 window sills in the chapel were filled with all sorts of floral arrangements from Tiny Tots, Yoga, Stanegate Readers, the Town Hall, the Service Station, Newbrough W.I., Messy Vintage, Carpet Bowls, Fourstones Methodist Chapel and St. Peters Church.

The Chapel was open from 10am to 4pm Thursday to Saturday.

Most days refreshments were served and we collected money for Tools for Self-Reliance £180, when old unwanted tools were collected. Friday and Saturday were very busy.



The Stanegate Readers display and the 'white corner' with chapel members wedding photographs

We also collected for Medecin Sans Frontier and the chapel.



The Messy Vintage Window Display with some examples of craft activities

Members of Haydon Bridge chapel joined us for the morning service on Sunday 28th. Sandra Martin led the service 'Don't worry about tomorrow', with a flower based theme. (See last page)

We remained open to 4pm.

Many thanks to everyone who made this a success.

Margaret Bogie

On 27 June 2024, Circuit Meeting was held at Haydon Bridge Methodist Church.

Circuit Meeting members heard that a successful meeting with Church Safeguarding Officers had been held and the Safer Recruitment folders handed out for churches to use.

Rev Marie reported that Rev Roberta Ritson, the URC Minister looking after the North Tyne section is now a Recognised and Regarded Minister within the Methodist Church.

The meeting then received and accepted the financial report and the Auditor's report for the accounts for the year ending in August 2023.

Rev Marie led the meeting with a presentation and discussion concerning the future finances of the Circuit, how this impacts churches, membership numbers and how future ministry in the Circuit may look. This included a detailed analysis of the difficult financial situation the Circuit is facing and the steps the Circuit is taking to address the situation and how churches can respond. Rev Marie also presented a vision of how the Circuit could look if it operates as a one Church Circuit and asked those attending to take this information back to their churches for prayer, reflection and discussion.

The Circuit is asking churches "what do you want to do?"

Do you want four Ministers (plus URC non-stipendiary Minister in North Tyne section)? (Note: the first call on church finances is to pay the Circuit Assessment which covers the cost of ministry (SO650(4)) but churches need to be able to afford this.

Do you want to reduce ministry, but churches must recognise that ministry and church will have to be done in a very different way (one church model). The Circuit would still need a Superintendent Minister.

Churches need to tell the Circuit Leadership Team what they are prepared to do and what they would like.

A Special Circuit Meeting will be held on 15 September 2024, 4pm at Hexham West End Methodist Church with as many people from the Circuit to attend so that we can make bold decisions as a Circuit.

Before the meeting closed, thanks were said to Millie Robinson, who is retiring from her role as Senior Circuit Steward, for all her hard work and for taking on the role for an additional year.

The meeting also thanked Rev Marie with a round of applause for all her work on the issues facing the Circuit and the way she presented the information to the meeting.

**The next Circuit Meeting will be held on Thursday, 19 September 2024, at 7.30pm.
Venue: Wylam Methodist Church.**

The meeting then closed in prayer.

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE CIRCUIT OFFICE

Dear Friends

SPECIAL CIRCUIT MEETING | SUNDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2024 | 4.00PM AT HEXHAM WEST END METHODIST CHURCH

Everyone in the Circuit is invited to attend this Special Circuit Meeting which is to be held on Sunday, 15 September, 4.00pm at Hexham West End Methodist Church.

This is an open meeting. Please encourage as many people as possible in your church to attend this important Circuit event.

Some questions that each Church should consider and be able to answer at the Special Circuit Meeting on 15 September. Note that the answers from each Church would not be a formal commitment, more a direction of travel.

1 Has your Church questioned whether your building is an asset or a liability?

2 Should you decide to close your building, are there any activities you would like to continue in your area?

3 Are there alternate premises that could be used for worship, fellowship or outreach in your area?

4 Has your Church discussed the concept of being part of a Circuit Church?

5 Is your Church open to explore what a circuit wide church would be?

If you have questions that you would like discussed on 15 September, you can of course bring them on that date, but for a more considered response, please send questions to Marie or Laura by 4 September.

Blessings Rev Marie

OTHER QUESTIONS POSED IN THE SUMMARY OF 'FINDING THE WAY' (THE HANDBOOK ON THE METHODIST WAY OF LIFE)

A *Methodist Way of Life* encourages us to grow together.
Make time to discuss the following questions regularly with others.

Worship

- What is the pattern of your prayer life?
- How easy or hard do you find it to pray?
- What has spoken to you recently in worship or in the Bible?
- When, lately, have you felt close to God or distant from God?

Learning and Caring

- How have you practiced generosity since we last met?
- How have you shown hospitality toward others recently?
- How are you caring for yourself?
- How and what are you learning now?

Service

- How are you seeing to serve others in your communities and beyond? What has helped or hindered you in your service to others?
- How are you caring for God's creation?
- How are you using God's gifts (including your financial resources)?
- What issues of injustice are you currently concerned about? What are you doing in response?

Evangelism

- When was the last time you were able to talk about God?
- What opportunities to share your faith have there been since we last met?
- How have you responded to opportunities to share your faith?
- Is there anyone you might invite to consider the Christian faith?

Church Mice



PASSION FLOWER` Love, faithfulness, strength, and peace.

I had an appointment with my hairdresser a week or so before leading morning worship at Fourstones Chapel on Sunday 28th July, during the Flower Festival, and I told her about the lack of mention of flowers in the Bible. She suggested I preach about the Passion Flower – what a brilliant idea! So I did, including it as part of Jesus' words from Matthew 6 about anxiety and worry.



I was amazed to find that passion flowers are a symbol of love, faithfulness, strength, and peace, **as well as a religious symbol of the Passion of Christ with** the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross for the sins of humanity.

The different parts of the flower are said to represent features of the Passion, such as the crown of thorns, the nails, and the blood.

- 3 nails
- 5 wounds
- crown of thorns
- 10 commandments?

The passion flower also signifies new life and a fresh start. Today, the passion flower is used to counter anxiety: Passiflora – tincture / seeds / tea / herbs

Passion flowers (Passiflora) are deeply symbolic and meaningful flowers with a history dating back centuries. They were initially named in respect of the 'Passion' of Jesus Christ by Roman Catholic priests during the 16th Century. In the language of flowers, passion flowers carry meanings associated with calm, strength, and purity.

Sandra Martin



Tynedale
Methodist Circuit

Bellingham and North Tyne MURC
Wark Joint Partnership
Rev Roberta Ritson

Hexham Trinity
Hexham West End
Acomb
Rev Gareth Sherwood

Riding Mill
Corbridge with Slaley JP
Haltwhistle
Rev Marie Beard

Wylam
Prudhoe
Stocksfield
Rev Fiona Calverey

Allen Valley
Haydon Bridge
Fourstones with Warden
Rev Michael Holland

www.tynedalemethcircuit.org

Living Waters is co-ordinated by John Martin for the Tynedale Circuit.
If you have any comments / suggestions / ideas / photos for the Winter edition
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By **Monday 18th. November 2024** please.