



December 2025

**The monthly magazine of the Emmanuel Benefice,
Berry Brow Methodist Church, and Netherton Methodist Church.**

Feel free to take home



December 2025 Church Services

Sundays:

- 7th December 10.00 am Community Christingle Service
(Advent 2) at Armitage Bridge Church
 10.00 am Christingle Service (Rev Tim Francis)
 at Netherton Methodist Church
 10.30 am Morning Service (Rev. David Kent)
 at Berry Brow Methodist Church
- 14th December 10.00 am Holy Communion at Armitage Bridge Church
(Advent 3) 10.30 am Joint Service with Berry Brow (Rev Tim Francis)
 at Berry Brow Methodist Church
- 21st December 10.00 am Holy Communion at Armitage Bridge Church
(Advent 4) 10.00 am Carol Service (own team led)
 at Netherton Methodist Church
 10.30 am Holy Communion (Rev Frances Nunn)
 at Berry Brow Methodist Church
- 28th December 10.00 am United Service Christmas Season
 Holy Communion at Armitage Bridge Church –
 with Netherton and Berry Brow

Every Wednesday at St Paul's, Armitage Bridge.

9.15 am - Morning Worship, 30 minutes of worship and prayer.

All welcome.

Every Thursday - Christian Meditation, 5.30 pm, at various people's homes until clocks go forward next Spring. Please contact Rev. Debby for details, Tel: 07762236986 - all welcome.

December 2025 Readings

Sunday 7th December – Isaiah 11: 1-10 and Matthew 3: 1-12

Theme: a voice in the wilderness – a light in the darkness

Sunday 14th December – Isaiah 35: 1-10 and Matthew 11: 2-11

Theme: Joy, reassurance and hope in the darkness

Sunday 21st December – Isaiah 7: 10-16 and Matthew 1: 18-end

Theme: Emmanuel – God with us

Sunday 28th December – Isaiah 63: 7-9 and Matthew 2: 13-end

Theme: God's promise fulfilled

Special Christmas Services/Events

Armitage Bridge:

Saturday 6th December: 10.00 am – 12.30 pm

Christmas Craft Workshop with Christingle

Sunday 7th December: 10.00 am – Community Christingle Service

Wed. 17th December: Emmanuel Carol Service

Join us for festive refreshments afterwards

Sunday 21st December: 6.30 pm – Blue Christmas – quiet reflection for anyone finding this a difficult season

Wed. 24th December: 5.00 pm – Community Nativity Service

Wed. 24th December: 11.15 pm – Midnight Reflection with Holy Communion

Thurs. 25th December: 10.00 am – Christmas Celebration

Netherton Methodist Church & Berry Brow Methodist Church:

Thurs. 25th December: 10.00 am – Christmas Celebration
at Armitage Bridge

CONTACTS

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Ministers

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Churchwardens

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A VIEW FROM THE CLERGY – Rev. Frances Nunn

No matter how organised I try to be, the onset of the Christmas season always seems to take me by surprise. It feels like decorations and gift promotions fill the shops and festive TV advertisements abound earlier and earlier each year. If we're not careful, anxiety over having the 'perfect' Christmas can steal our joy, and in the hurly burly we risk missing the greatest gift and deepest joy of all – the coming of Jesus: Emmanuel – God with us.

I was struck by this image – in all the tinsel show and sparkle, the figures of Jesus, his mother Mary and Joseph sit simply, humbly, quietly. It spoke to me of the gift the Advent season affords, when we are invited to do the same – to find quiet moments of simplicity, to step out of the inevitable busyness and give thanks for this precious gift of God to us. We also look forward to the time Jesus will return and make all things new.



There is lots of busyness in the Christmas Narrative too – humorously expressed in U A Fanthorpe’s poem, ‘What the Donkey Saw’:

*No room in the inn, of course,
And not that much in the stable
What with the shepherds, Magi, Mary,
Joseph, the heavenly host –
Not to mention the baby
Using our manger as a cot.
You couldn’t have squeezed another cherub in
For love or money.*

*Still, in spite of the overcrowding,
I did my best to make them feel wanted.
I could see the baby and I
Would be going places together.*

I wonder how you might choose to welcome Jesus into your heart and home this Christmas – despite the busyness and overcrowding? I wonder how you see journeying with Jesus in the future? The message of Emmanuel – God with us – is we can know his presence whenever and wherever we are. My prayer is you will know his presence with you anew this Christmas and into the year ahead.

Blessings,

Fran.

Letters from Paul the Apostle

Back in early November David Kent led a service with a sermon based on Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. He wondered if Paul was to write to us Armitage Bridgeans today, what he would write. He set us that challenge – a letter from Paul, adding that they would likely appear in future editions of Focus – so here are the first two.

'Grace to you all, Armitage Bridgeans and Peace from God the Father. I am honoured that your church has taken my name. I am watching over you and in you at all times from my lofty pillars at the front of Church, firstly on the road to Damascus when I was afflicted and secondly following my amazing conversion, when I started to spread the Good News of Christ.

As you know I suffered many hardships in my life, travelling great distances, being shipwrecked and imprisoned whilst building up the early churches, but God was always with me, even in the most trying of times, as he is with you, now and forever, in good times and bad. My time in prison enabled me to write to the faithful Christians, and my message to you is exactly the same now as it was then – a message of thanksgiving and encouragement, as you strive to build up and maintain your own church, offering a warm welcome to all who come.

Be strong in your faith, pray, study The Bible and tell others about it. Spend some time each day with God, listen to his plan for you. Be thankful and content with what you have. Be generous according to your means. Do love and care for one another. Be peacemakers. Continue your outreach work, spreading even further to reach those not yet known to you, whatever their needs. We are all one in Christ, they are our brothers and sisters. Find joy in each day, wonder at God's marvellous creation, care for all in it and on it, for future generations.

Finally, my Friends, may the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you evermore.

Blessings to you all,

Your faithful servant,

Paul.'

...and here is the second letter received:

Letter from St Paul to the Church in Armitage Bridge.

'Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, to the church gathered in Armitage Bridge, Grace and Peace to you all. I thank God for your faith and for the steady, faithful ways you serve your community. Your kindness, prayer and generosity are signs that the Spirit of God is alive among you. But I also urge you to stay awake to the hope you have in Christ.

This world is weary with conflict, fear and division, and the church must not be silent. You are called not only to worship but to act - to be peacemakers, advocates for reconciliation, voices that speak Christ's peace into a troubled world. Encourage the wider church to be an activist for peace, shining with the light of the gospel where darkness threatens to prevail. Support one another, for every member of Christ's body has a part to play. Be patient, forgive freely and let your unity be a witness to the world God loves. Pray constantly for your leaders, for the vulnerable, for the nations and for all who long for a just and lasting peace. Remember: no act of love and no word of peace is ever wasted in the Lord.

May the God of hope fill you with courage, strengthen your hearts and keep you faithful until Christ comes in Glory. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.'

(David Kent)

Knitting in Advent

Readers may remember from last year the Advent Knitting Initiative hosted by Victoria Methodist Church in Bristol and advocated by Angela. Well, as the nights draw in, the prospect of knitting in front of the fire may be an attractive proposition for some. Details are below.

Over the course of Advent, participants are invited to knit a little neck scarf, which can be worn or given as a present on Christmas Day. As it's a mystery knitalong, the exact design of the scarf is a surprise and will be revealed as you knit, but it will feature a lace design.

The Knitalong will follow the format of previous Advent Knitalongs: the pattern will be laid out across 24 days (1st - 24th December) and will be accompanied by reflections, kindly written for us this year by Vicky Davies.

The scarf can be knitted in a variety of yarn weights and will require the following yardage/needle size (you'll be working with a maximum of 33 stitches, so short needles are fine!)

Knitters can use 4ply/fingering or Sport weight yarn, and will need approximately 40 - 45 grams of yarn and 3.75 mm needles. Alternatively, knitters can use DK weight yarn, in which case approximately 50 - 55 grams of yarn and 4 mm needles are needed.

There is the option to lengthen the scarf if you wish, (details given in the pattern) but this will require more yarn!

As the pattern is made up from lace stitches, a solid-coloured yarn is recommended.

The pattern requires knitters to cast on and off, work the basic knit stitch, and some simple lace stitches: K2tog, SSK, YO and CDD - these will be explained in the pattern (and there is always help available in this Facebook group if these are new to you!). The knitting should take an average knitter 20 - 25 minutes each day.

The pattern/reflections will be released as one document (with a large print option) on Wednesday 26th November, ready for the

knitting to start on Monday 1st December, and you can receive this document in a variety of ways:

Knitters on the Victoria Methodist Knitalongs mailing list will automatically receive it by email. To sign up to the mailing list, please sign up online at [www.vic-methodist-bristol.org.uk/knitalongs](<https://www.vic-methodist-bristol.org.uk/knitalongs/>) or contact Vicky and Helen at [learning@vic-methodist-bristol.org.uk](<mailto:learning@vic-methodist-bristol.org.uk>).

The document will be uploaded this 'Victoria Methodist Bristol Knitalongs' Facebook group! There will be threads to share photos of your knitting progress, chat about the knitting and share thoughts on the reflections.

The document will also be uploaded on Victoria Methodist Church's website ([www.vic-methodist-bristol.org.uk/advent-knitalong-2025](<https://www.vic-methodist-bristol.org.uk/advent-knitalong-2025/>))

Finally, users of Ravelry can access the document there (search Advent Knitalong 2025) as well as add project pages and keep track of progress.

We hope that you'll join us!

I'm sure that Angela will help out if you have any queries as this is well outside the editor's comfort zone!!

Warm Welcome at Berry Brow Methodist Church

Weekly on **Tuesdays** from 12.30 pm onwards – bring an extra layer in case the heating isn't quite on! Please note: There will **not** be a session on 23rd and 30th December.

Film Café at Berry Brow Methodist Church

Come along for feel good, fun films, with an interval and light refreshments for all ages.

Contact 07740425093 for further details

‘The Bread and Butter Thing’

Every week from 11.45 am, at Berry Brow Methodist, but please note there will **not** be a ‘Bread and Butter Thing’ on 23rd and 30th December. Please remember that after the Christmas break, volunteers are always welcome.

South Crosland Coffee Mornings

On the second Saturday of each month at **South Crosland Junior School, Moor Lane, Netherton**, funds are raised for a selected charity each month.

The November monthly community coffee morning held at South Crosland Junior School, raised £178.50 for Age UK.

A smaller than usual attendance but a lot of pleasant chat and a very enjoyable morning. Thank you to all who helped and generously supported the event, and well done to those who went on to the Pop-Up Shop at Newsome.

Thank you again to our team of talented and dedicated bakers, whose efforts were a large contributing factor to the handsome amount raised.

All are welcome at future events:

13th December - The homeless charity, Crisis

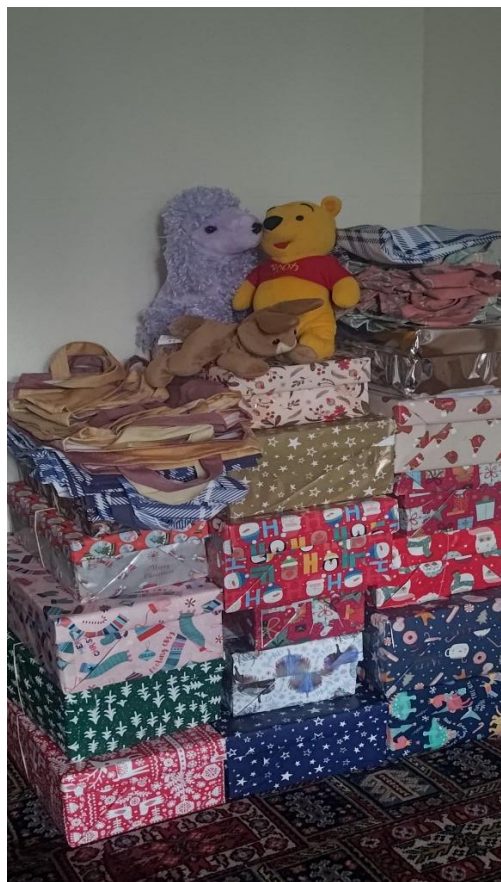
10th January – School funds (to help with the coffee morning running costs)

February onwards - suggestions have been put forward by attendees, of the charities they would like to be supported in near future months. These will be sorted into a “batting” order and published next month.

EVENT REPORTS

Shoebox appeal 2025 update

Below is a photo of just a few of the shoeboxes from St Paul's, (plus fillers and money), which will all be checked and sent to needy children in Eastern Europe. Grateful thanks to all at St Paul's for their ongoing and fabulous support. We'll update on the totals in the New Year



You're having a laugh...

Ever thought of challenging Santa Claus to prove his identity? Santa imposters make a mockery of Christmas. Ask one to show his bona fides. If he refuses to co-operate, pull his beard. If it comes off, he's an imposter. If it doesn't he's an imposter with a beard!

Beetle Drive

On the evening of Saturday 22nd November almost 60 members of our congregations attended a beetle drive at Armitage Bridge. Prior to the 'main event', a delicious hearty meal was served followed by sweet nibbles, tea and coffee. The bellringing quiz team provided almost 20 bottles of wine which were much enjoyed. A raffle raised £64.00 for church funds and a quiz was provided for each table (just for fun).

As for the beetle itself, with 13 tables operating, the expected chaos ensued, but it was enjoyable chaos nonetheless. The progressive nature of the event certainly gave people the chance to meet and talk to new friends, which of course is the main reason for holding such occasions. It was particularly good to see some of our younger members of the congregation getting into the spirit of the thing, especially James and Gabe – they were quite competitive too!

For the record, the joint winners of the beetle drive were Alison and Alex, so appropriately for a bellringers event, it was ringers who took the honours. As for the booby prize, well we won't talk about that, eh Tony?

As always there are numerous people who contribute to making these events work, so special thanks go to:

- the ringers, for being such clever dicks and providing the 'bar'
- Paul Coldwell for providing the background music
- Tony of course, for always being where he was needed
- Heidi, our caterer, for her excellent meat and potato pie
- All the ladies who provided the cakes as desserts
- and all others who contributed to making the event a success which the editor has forgotten – sorry!

As a footnote, there was a little dancing after the beetle, which was photographed and it seems to lend itself to a caption competition. The photo in question is shown below:



As a starter for ten, how about a caption of ‘Where’s my prosecco?’

Pop-up Shop Christmas Extravaganza

Christmas came early to Newsome Scout Hut on Saturday 8th November as we held our “Christmas Extravaganza” pop-up shop, to raise much needed funds for the community shop. Plenty of folk came for the bargains, refreshments and fellowship. After costs, we managed to add £763 to the Community Shop funds! The Explorer Scout leaders did a fantastic job serving bacon butties, cake and hot drinks and added to their funds.

Thank you to everyone who was involved in any way in contributing to the pop-up shop, whether as a helper, as a customer or both! It’s always a great team effort, hard work, but definitely worth it for such a good result.

The 2026 pop-up shop dates are booked and will be held at Newsome Scout Hut on the following Saturdays, 10am-1pm:

28th February

30th May

22nd August

7th November (Christmas Extravaganza)

The Explorer Scouts will once again be providing refreshments. Get the dates in your 2026 diary, spread the word, bring your friends and family, enjoy fellowship over delicious refreshments and take home some amazing bargains!

Caroline Jones

Remembrance Sunday Services

Sunday 9th November was Remembrance Sunday for our churches, when we traditionally pay tribute to those who laid down their lives for their country in war. For the first time in many years at Armitage Bridge the Scouting Movement attended the service, including Squirrels, Beavers, and Cubs. This meant that church was pretty much full, which was gratifying. The service was led by Fran, for the first time and included prayers read by members of our younger congregation. (see photos at the back of the magazine). This was followed by the usual outdoor element of the service, in fortunately dry weather. The reading of the list of fallen from our war memorials was shared by various members of the congregation and followed by the Last Post, the 2-minute silence, the Kohima Epitaph:

'When You Go Home, Tell Them Of Us And Say, For Your Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today' ...

and finally, tolling a single bell, half-muffled (thanks to Lorraine).

Armitage Bridge Ringers - News From The Belfry

Church bellringing takes many forms, most of us learn to ring on 6 bells (Armitage Bridge for example) and progress on from there. Many of our local towers house rings of 8, i.e. Holmfirth, Almondbury and Lindley, we also have 2 rings of 10 bells at Huddersfield Parish and Marsden, but we are lacking a ring of 12. Since its inaugural conception in 2009 an annual 12 bell striking competition has been competed for in Yorkshire, called "The White Rose Contest", we have entered previously but not for a number of years. Over cheese, beer and a lot of Port Wine at Doc Sues New Year party it was agreed that we should arrange a band, practice and have another go. After all we had 10 months to sort ourselves out. Precious practice time was lost through various injuries, illnesses, holidays and other commitments.

It was only after our ringing holiday in Wales that we could turn our attention to our task, by which time it was September, surely too late now to organise ourselves. Wrong!! Folk still wanted to do it and with their encouragement and being egged on by the organisers we filled in the requisite forms and sent them off by email. The venue was Bradford Cathedral, the date, Saturday October 11th, with the first team on at 11:00am. On arrival tea and coffee was made available while ringers/teams gathered themselves together for the draw, rules and instructions for the day. A total of 8 teams had entered. We were astonished to find a German TV Channel (ARD) had arrived to film the occasion, videoing and interviewing a number of folk mainly the younger "Yorkshire Tykes", which was exciting.

Our initial intention was to ring first, as Lorraine and Alan were arranging wedding ringing at St. Chads, Saddleworth for 1:30pm. As things turned out a couple of our ringers were running late, it was agreed we would swap our slot with Stockton who also had another engagement. Close to 11:30am we ascended the tower to take our

go. Each team had 30 minutes in the tower to prepare themselves, allocating folk bells, adjusting ropes, practice and ring the specified test piece, which this year was 220 changes of Grandsire Cinques.

Bearing in mind that we had not practised ringing 12 bells together as a team, let alone practice the test piece, and a number of our band were very novice at 12 bell ringing, more than a few nerves were jangling. Having set to, we carried out the preliminaries had a run through the piece before giving the judges the designated signal that we were ready to start.

The judges were Jennifer Earis and Helen Illman, and on giving their thoughts and results after everyone had rung they commented on our ringing as follows

"This team had a nervous start, with uncertainty regarding the pace, disagreements over leading speed and hesitations in the middle of the change. This touch did though improve throughout and the ringing was much better by the halfway. The high point of this touch was the first two leads of the second course. Overall, this piece lacked a little control and we felt that a slower pace may have helped this band produce cleaner ringing on this set of bells". We were placed joint 5th along with the "Yorkshire Tykes". Our team was generally happy with our efforts and agreed in the main with the judges comments. Our congratulations to York Minster for coming first, and Leeds Minster as runners up. It would seem that everyone plus a few more are prepared to enter again in 2026, let's hope we can get some good practice time in. Our band this year in order from Treble to Tenor were: Alan, Carole, Lorraine, Helen, Finley, Rachael, Rebecca, Sally, Andrea, Alex, Oliver and Simon. (team photo towards the end of the magazine).

Science or faith?

Over the years scientists have sought explanations for the many phenomena which most Christians accept as part of their faith. At this time of year the 'Star of Bethlehem' take centre stage. The piece below, from a newspaper article in December 2020, demonstrates the point.

Star of Bethlehem to put on a show

A 'great conjunction' of stars due to take place before Christmas is 'maybe a credible scientific explanation' for the Star of Bethlehem, East Yorkshire astronomer George McManus has said. Starting from next week, the solar system's gas giants Saturn and Jupiter will edge closer together in the night sky, before 'kissing' on 21st December and then drifting apart.

Over the centuries, astronomers have speculated that such a great conjunction may have been similar to that observed by the Magi, mentioned in Matthew's gospel. In Matthew 2.2, the Magi ask 'Where is he who is born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him'. Mr McManus said:

'Theologians have long accepted that the Magi were astronomers who regularly observed the skies looking for spectacular events. The last time such a great conjunction took place that was so observable, was 4th March 1226. Great conjunctions have been known throughout history and we know around the time when we believe Jesus was born a similar conjunction took place. It could even have been a nova, the birth of a new star, which is impossible to predict'. He added: 'To Giotto (Italian painter and architect), the star was a comet similar to Halley's Comet of 1301. There are so many theories because we have no idea of the precise date of Jesus's birth. 'The written record may have been compiled up to 100 years after. What we are about to witness on 21st December (2020 remember), is a fantastic example of what may have occurred all those years ago.' Thanks to Michael Robinson for sending the piece in. (Editor).

Below, a couple of photos from the Remembrance Service at Armitage Bridge on Sunday 9th November.



Prayers led by members of our younger congregation



Processing out of church



The 12 bell White Rose Contest ringers outside Bradford Cathedral

Closing date for January 2026 issue: **Thurs. 18th December 2025,
due to printer holiday requirements**

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This magazine may be read on-line in full colour. If you would like a copy, please let Graeme have your email address to be included