

Circuit Newsletter

Spring 2025



Those who took part in the Sleepout for Homelessness,
January 2025

Please contact the Circuit Office if you would like to receive the weekly Circuit News email, or visit our website for information and other resources: www.yorkmethodist.org.uk or follow our Facebook page for news and updates: www.facebook.com/yorkmethodistcircuit/

York Methodist Circuit Hub

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Improvisation

Dear Friends,

The idea of improvisation has been very much in my mind recently, having been placed there by my reading of David Ford's relatively recent commentary on John's Gospel. Broadly speaking improvisation is about using what we have in order to create a way forward. This might emerge in moments of scarcity. There may be times, for example, when we don't have the right tools for the task or don't seem to have sufficient resources to make something work, but we find a way through by focusing on what we do have. We "make do". In other settings improvisation develops, not from scarcity, but from abundance. Musicians, but not only musicians, often have the talent, skills, experience and imagination to "play around" with the music, creating new textures, sounds and harmonies. This can leave us wondering where the music is going next. There is an open-endedness as to where the whole enterprise is going, not least when a group of musicians are playing together, listening to one another and feeling their way through to the new.

Literally, improvisation is about **encountering the unforeseen**, responding to something that we didn't expect or anticipate or were not particularly prepared for. It is an invitation into the unknown, the as yet unimagined. We spend quite a lot of our lives improvising, adapting and re-shaping according to the unforeseen or unforeseeable that come our way. Sometimes it arises out of scarcity, sometimes out of abundance. Sometimes it feels like a challenge, sometimes more like an opportunity. We find that we draw on resources from within ourselves, but also from beyond ourselves. It is often this partnership that makes the difference.

As we make our way through Lent this year, perhaps it might be an opportunity to pay particular attention to the ways in which Jesus responds imaginatively to situations both of scarcity and potential, in order to draw people into what John's Gospel calls life in all its fullness. In fact you may find that John's Gospel is a good place to start when thinking about the difference that improvisation can make. Time and again Jesus and others around him are involved in "**making do**" with the resources available and "**playing around**" with images such as shepherds, vines, light, gates, fish, ladders, water, wells, perfume...

Whether it is reading John's Gospel or reflecting on the richness of the ways in which you respond to the unforeseen in your own life, perhaps the notion of improvisation can provide us with a reminder of how imaginative and creative we already are and of how imaginative and creative we might be in contributing to the shaping of what's to come.

With my best wishes to you all.

David

Circuit Diary Dates

- Wednesday 12th March 2025, 7 pm, Circuit Council at Haxby and Wigginton
- Wednesday 11th June, 7pm, Circuit Council, venue TBC
- Farewell service 20th July, 10.30am, venue TBC
- Welcome service 7th September, 10.30am, venue TBC
- FLOURISH: Woven Threads, 13th-15th February 2026, University of York, www.yorkshirenemethodist.org/flourish26

Staffing News

We are delighted that in September 2025 we will have three new members of staff coming to the York Circuit. Jill Pullan is a presbyter and will have pastoral oversight of Acomb, Copmanthorpe, Bishopthorpe, Acaster Malbis and West Thorpe. Kate Paterson is a probationer deacon who will be working in the city centre and with Southlands and Central. Alex Middleton-Laing is a presbyter and will have pastoral oversight of Easingwold and Villages Together, also working alongside Lorraine and Rory at Haxby and Wigginton, before taking on pastoral oversight of Haxby and Wigginton in September 2026. We look forward to all that Jill, Kate and Alex will offer to the circuit and our different communities.

David Bidnell

Seeking Justice

Micah 6 v8: *He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

It is not easy to put these wise words into prayerful action when world events, personal circumstances and 1001 other things feel so overwhelming. As a “Justice seeking community” Christians are challenged to ‘do justice’ and ‘to be just’ by ‘keeping our actions grounded in and guided by our faith’ as we live each day. Hope and faith are interwoven with compassion and mercy.

Arundhati Roy writes "There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless.' There are only people who are deliberately silenced, or, preferably, unheard." How might we best give voice to people experiencing injustices? How can we really listen? Or respond with grace?

Within the Circuit newsletter, we are hoping to bring you some thoughts about particular injustices around us and to include a some justice seeking actions that could be taken. This might be around poverty, homelessness, foodbanks, the impact of a changing climate, and more. We'd love to hear what you feel is important and what you are already doing. What experiences of 'seeking justice' are you (individually or as a church community) already taking? If you would like to share them in Circuit News to inspire others to prayer and action, we would love to hear from you. Please send them to the Circuit office.

You can find out more about the Justice Seeking Church initiative and resources at www.methodist.org.uk/action

And on your feet wear the Good News of peace to help you stand strong. Ephesians 6 v15.



Sleepout for homelessness

Being a youth worker means doing things that are challenging, difficult and outside my comfort zone. After six years, you could be forgiven for thinking that the sleepout is none of these. Whereas the opposite is true. I struggle with the cold, hate camping, (I may have mentioned this before!) and spend the entire time concerned about the safety of the other participants, and so get little sleep. And that is during the event, in the run up to the night, I worry about signups, fundraising and the weather forecast.

So why do it? There are several ways I could answer that question. The first is simple, involving what it means to be a youth worker in the Methodist church. Our roots are in social justice; the adoption by conference of *A Justice Seeking Church* report “...reaffirms the Methodist church’s longstanding commitment to be a justice seeking church.”¹ Our young people need opportunities to turn their desire to seek justice into action. More than that, they need role models who are willing to do this with them. By this I do not mean me, many adults across the District engage with the sleepout in a variety of ways. Not only sleeping out, but through boycotting their beds, praying for us and people who find themselves homeless, financial donations and supporting the charities we work alongside. Without all these people the sleepout would not happen.

Another reason for sleeping out is that it highlights how it might feel to be homeless. Please understand that I do not mean we know how it feels after just one night; but to experience the cold and discomfort, even for one night gives us empathy for people for whom this is their life. It is all too easy to forget the challenges that are part of sleeping rough; the struggle to stay clean, dry and warm. How to charge a phone or other device that offers crucial contact to the internet, and where to find clean, or at least cleanish public toilets. For people in temporary housing, they are often living in overcrowded rooms without access to outdoor space, or easy access to facilities such as launderettes. Aspects of life that we might take for granted such as space for younger members of the family to do their homework, privacy, the need to exercise, eat a good diet or stay hydrated, and making plans to achieve our hopes and dreams for the future are lost amongst in the struggle to get through each day.

We were once again joined by representatives from the charities we are supporting this year, Inspire North, Carecent and SASH along with Rachael Maskell MP for York Central.



Carecent is primarily for over 18’s who are homeless, or otherwise socially excluded. They offer food, support and community, alongside connecting individuals with both statutory and non-statutory services that will be beneficial to them. www.carecent.org.uk

Inspire North runs several housing and homelessness services and a young people’s service across North Yorkshire. Last year they helped



¹ A Justice Seeking Church: A guide to the 2023 Methodist Conference report on the Walking with Micah project. 1

274 young people looking for a safe home. Young people accessing the service are supported to live in safe and secure homes so they can begin building a brighter future.

www.inspirenorth.co.uk



SASH offer services which support young people who are experiencing homelessness. These include Nightstop emergency accommodation for up to two weeks and Supported Lodgings where a young person can stay with a host for up to 2 years. Each young person within SASH has

access to an enhanced support programme, which helps them to build emotional resilience and wellbeing, provides education, employment and training opportunities and equips them to develop key skills to live independently in the future. www.sash-uk.org.uk

Alongside these presentations we have developed a number of new activities based on popular games to help the young people to understand the range of homelessness and the challenges people, especially young people, might face when trying to establish themselves in a home.

This year, worship after the sleepout was a circuit service, at which people generously contributed almost £500 towards our fundraising, which now stands at £4668. If you would like to donate and help us get closer to our target of £5000

www.justgiving.com/campaign/sleepout2025 we would be very grateful!



Victoria Etherington

Seeking justice for Palestine

“One day someone will dig up the records of these meetings and will see us pleading for the lives of our people over and over and over and over again, and they will try to understand why our calls were not heeded.” So said a Palestinian diplomat at the UN Security Council at the end of 2024, after the United States had yet again vetoed a Resolution calling for a ceasefire.² Despite the fact that many politicians suggest that the Middle East crisis began in October 2023, its roots go much further back. Whether it is the British Government’s 1917 Balfour Declaration or the 1948 Nakba or ethnic cleansing of over 750,000 Palestinians³, the region continues to live with the consequences.

Ceasefire in Gaza

Whilst the conflict is deep, the latest round of fighting, however, started with the appalling attacks by Hamas of 7th October 2023 that killed over 1200 people. Thankfully, in January 2025, after 15 months of mass slaughter, a precarious ceasefire was finally called in Gaza.

² Speech of Ambassador Majed Bamyra, <https://x.com/majedbamyra/status/1859298910390682079> (Accessed, 7th February 2025)

³ UN Nakba Commemoration 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/gapal1467.doc.htm> (Accessed, 7th February 2025)

Estimates put the Palestinian death toll at around 58,340 people including 18,130 children⁴, although with a devastated healthcare system, so many deceased under the rubble and so much starvation and disease, the losses are potentially much higher. According to Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, the dead include 2585 healthcare professionals and 204 journalists who have so bravely attempted to document the violence.

In its January 2024 ruling⁵, the International Court of Justice placed Israel under mandatory orders to obey the Genocide Convention. Israel nevertheless carried on not just with its bombing but what many observers say has been the deliberate starvation of a captive population. Very little aid was let into the Gaza Strip.

One could be forgiven for thinking that with the ceasefire, the immediate crisis has been brought to an end. And indeed, it has been heartening to see the mass return of many hundreds of thousands of displaced people back to the areas they were previously forced from in the north of Gaza. With the documented aims of so many in the Israeli establishment to permanently exclude them from their land⁶, this mass return has indeed been most unexpected. However, as people have returned, they have done so to devastated towns. At least 92% of Gaza's housing units have been destroyed or badly damaged, 88% of schools destroyed or seriously damaged⁷, most of the hospitals have been devastated. As the Palestinian people return and try to rebuild their lives, they now live with the new threat by Donald Trump of expulsion to Egypt or Jordan. With the siege of Gaza having already lasted decades, and many previous massacres in 2008, 2014 etc, further attacks might take place.



Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel

⁴ Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, <https://x.com/EuroMedHR/status/1882496640554242421> (Accessed, 7th February 2025)

⁵ International Court of Justice ruling, January 2024, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf> (Accessed, 7th February 2025)

⁶ For example, the current Israeli Minister of Defence, Israel Katz wrote, "All the civilian population in Gaza is ordered to leave immediately." https://x.com/Israel_katz/status/1712876230762967222 (Accessed, 7th February 2025). Other statements recorded in the South African submission to the International Court of Justice <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20231228-app-01-00-en.pdf> (Accessed, 7th February 2025)

⁷ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-4-february-2025> (Accessed, 7th February 2025)

West Bank

And yet just as a ceasefire has come to Gaza, violence against the people of the West Bank has increased. Speaking to a friend currently staying near Bethlehem, they report a significant increase in the number of checkpoints cutting neighbourhoods off from each other, towns from their supplies and farmers from their fields. Some communities are only surviving as people pass food through holes in the iron gates. Israeli military incursions into the northern town of Jenin have also intensified, with numerous people killed, including 2-year-old Laila Al-Khatib, and 150-180 homes seriously damaged⁸. One of the features of such Israeli incursions is the use of armoured bulldozers that have also been deliberately adapted to destroy underground structures such as water pipes.

Matrix of Control

Israeli military administration of the Occupied West Bank has long been associated with what Israeli activist, and opponent of the Occupation, Professor Jeff Halper calls a “Matrix of Control”. With the use of illegal settlements, now housing around 700,000 on Occupied land⁹, Israeli only roads, walls, hundreds of checkpoints, control of water resources, control of the population registry and electromagnetic sphere, through a different legal system for Palestinians over Israelis and numerous other means, Palestinian life is controlled and regulated. The severe difficulties this causes to Palestinian economic life, as well as the ongoing presence of numerous refugee camps means that the Palestinian people are dependent on aid, especially from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). It provides healthcare, education and numerous essential services. Unfortunately, despite its crucial role for more than 75 years in providing aid to the refugees, the Israeli Government decided that from 1st February 2025 UNRWA would be banned in the Occupied Territories. The agency is still trying to do what it can.

What we can do

Obviously, we in the York Circuit cannot hope to be able to bring peace and justice by ourselves. However, as citizens of a country that continues to send weapons to one side – Israel - we have a responsibility to argue for justice and equality for both people groups. Here are some ideas:

- We can find out more and be prepared to discuss the situation with others.
- We can write to our MPs and other representatives.
- We can join demonstrations or silent vigils.
- We can raise money for charities such as Medical Aid for Palestinians – money that with the banning of UNRWA is needed all the more.
- We can watch Christian Aid’s film Tinderbox, and we expect there will be several showings in March at different churches.

⁸ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/humanitarian-situation-update-260-west-bank-enar> (Accessed, 7th February 2025)

⁹ Report to UN Human Rights Council <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/human-rights-council-hears-that-700000-israeli-settlers-are-living-illegally-in-the-occupied-west-bank-meeting-summary-excerpts/> (Accessed, 7th February 2025)

- Local Preachers and Worship Leaders can speak out about the great need and the desire of God for justice for all.
- As encouraged by the Methodist Conference, engage with the principles proposed by the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement.
- Above all we can pray that justice would indeed come.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a noted campaigner for the Palestinians once said: “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” Let us use the privilege we all have as British citizens and as justice seeking Christians, to speak out for the marginalised and for an end to the inequality that plagues the land we once called holy.

Alyson Christy and Stephen Leah



Eco Task Force Newsletter Spring 2025

Welcome to the Spring Edition of the Eco Task Force Newsletter.

The Methodist Church, as part of its Justice Seeking Church commitment, has as one of its five priorities:

“Enabling a flourishing environment: right relationship between people, planet and God.”

Our next Eco Task Force meeting will focus on the ‘Teaching and Learning’ aspect of Eco Church with a view to putting some resources together that can be used in our churches for Climate Sunday services or Own Arrangement Services, or for giving talks. We will explore Eco Church as a response to injustice, rather than simply about doing a bit of recycling or remembering to turn off the lights. It will be on Tuesday 18th March at Haxby & Wigginton Methodist Church, 7pm. Feel free to come along and share ideas. The beauty of the group is our ‘hive mind’; we have all come across various resources that we can collate and offer for others to use.

Haxby & Wigginton have Achieved Silver!

Well done to the team at Haxby & Wigginton for achieving their silver Eco Church Award. They just managed to sneak in their award before the Eco Church survey changed. It’s going to be tough going for Gold, but they are up for it.



Medicine Blister Pack Recycling

You can now recycle your medicine blister packs in the Coney Street branch of Boots, in the town centre.

!Take Action! If, like me, you were dismayed and confused about the government’s decision to support another runway at Heathrow, Friends of the Earth have a petition you can sign. <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/>

Forest Church Training

I am very excited to announce that Forest Church Training has been arranged for Saturday July 5th. It will be led by Siggy Parratt-Halbert from the Learning Network. A few folk are thinking about offering Forest Church after we have had training. Let me know if you are interested in attending Forest Church in general or in attending the training.

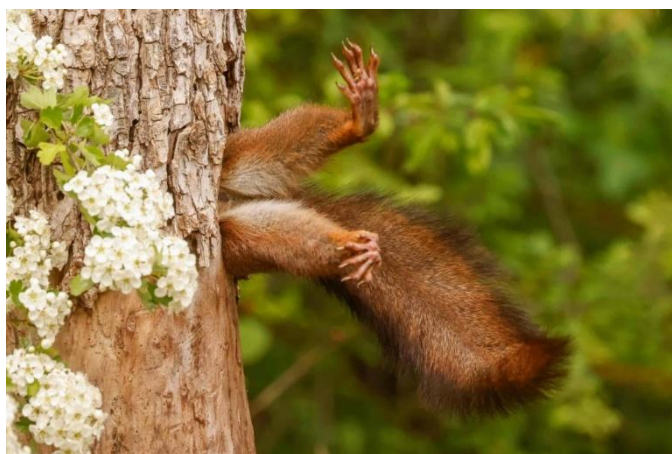
About Forest Church

Forest Church is a nature-based way of engaging through God through the First Bible. What can we learn from Him through the natural world? It is not your usual church service held outdoors! It is a whole new way of thinking, praying, worshipping and engaging. This training day will explain the Forest Church ethos; present different 'hooks' on which you can hang your worship planning; show you how to plan Forest Church for people who don't go to church; and how to use it for mission. Above all you will leave with a different pathway to intimacy with God. So bring an open mind....and wellies.

About our Trainer: Siggy Parratt-Halbert is part of the Methodist Church's Learning Network Team. She is involved in facilitating a broad offer of training for churches, Circuits and Districts, working across the Connexion. Her main focus is on Creation Care: how to follow God's command that we care and nurture His planet and all that lives, becoming a Justice Seeking Church for all beings. She is a Level III Forest School practitioner, and has transferred this experience into supporting Forest Church.

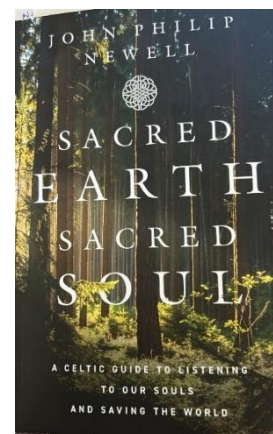
40 Acts of Kindness for a Better World Resource for Churches, Schools and Communities

I (Lorraine) put this together for the Strensall Holiday club, for the families, but it's a resource anyone can access. Find it on the Circuit Eco church page or at www.hwmc.org.uk/ecochurch. It's about spreading some positivity in the world and making it a better place for people and planet. As someone who's rubbish at giving up chocolate or anything like that, doing a kind act every day for Lent is something I can get on board with. There's an explanation poster and a list of suggestions, so it can simply be put up on your Church Noticeboard for people to look at. People can also have it at home to put on their fridge to prompt them every day. There's no right or wrong way to do it – do one thing every day, or a couple of things plenty of times, or do your own thing. First thing for me, making you smile with this fabulous nature photo! You are most welcome 😊



Book Recommendation: Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul, John Philip Newell.

I can't recommend this book highly enough. I speak to many people who think of themselves as spiritual people and are seeking meaning, but Church often feels like a foreign language to them. What if we can tap into some 'deep knowing' that they have sensed and help them to connect with God through nature? What if we looked for the sacred in all of God's creation? What would that look like for looking after each other and the natural world? The book made a deep impression on me and was very accessible in terms of being able to 'pick up and put down'. I read it over a couple of months.



Good News!

A plan has been announced to create England's largest ever bird Sanctuary. It is in the Geltsdale uplands reserve in Cumbria. The RSPB added a fresh chunk of wetland, forest and moorland to create a 50sqkm sanctuary.

This article might be of interest to any flower teams in our churches. It's all about using local seasonal blooms and greenery www.positive.news/society/dont-say-it-with-roses-the-school-leading-a-green-revolution-in-floristry/ Haxby & Wigginton Flower Team continue to explore other alternatives to using an oasis for flower arrangements. I recently took a beautiful arrangement that was in a jam jar to a member of the congregation who was ill. It looked stunning. Well done team!

- For information or to join the mailing list, contact Lorraine Jones on Lorraine.jones@methodistyouth.org.uk

News from the Children, Youth & Families team

Young people always seem to be in the media these days, and it's always the same headlines – they're labelled as being 'anti-social' either because their behaviour isn't what society deems acceptable, or they spend too much time on their phones and social media. So, when I read an article about young people purposefully trying to escape their phones, I was intrigued! This article said that more and more young people are turning to traditional crafts such as knitting, crochet and embroidery in an intentional effort to ditch their screens and spend time away from the immediacy of social media, calling it a lifeline.

I can't help but feel a bond with these young people, as I do feel very tethered to my phone, as I'm sure many people do. It's a lifeline, it connects us to people we don't get to see often, it gives us updates on what's going on in the world, it simultaneously offers us a way to connect with and escape from reality. But in doing this, it means we are constantly exposed to negativity and conflict, whether that is in the form of breaking news

announcements (because these are nearly always bad news stories) or of Facebook comment sections (although sometimes funny, they rarely consist of positive affirmations).

At ONE X, one of the things we are always trying to do is offer young people a chance to explore what they are seeing on their screens or devices, and how that fits, or doesn't fit, with their faith. We do this through conversation, but conversation sat around a table can often feel a bit daunting, so we always try to have conversation during an activity.

Most recently, an activity our young people seem to have loved, whilst chatting through world and life issues, has been candle-making. Well, it's less candle-making and more candle-re-making. You see, every year we use new candles for our Advent wreaths, symbolizing the new-ness that Advent brings, but what does that mean for the old candles. They only burn about an inch or so, and then they get chucked in a box and forgotten about, or worse, thrown in the bin!

Well, the ONE X group have been re-using these odds and ends of candles to make new candles, and you can too! Those teacups that have been hidden at the back of the Church cupboard. You know the ones, with the annoyingly small handles, the little chip in the rim, the mismatched saucers. Well, they make the best receptacle to hold your re-made candle! We were given a box full of these from one of the churches that closed, and our young people have given them new life as candle-holders. Here's how you can do it yourself – it really is quite simple!



Break the old candles into smaller pieces, take out the remaining wick (you may need to get some new wicks), and melt them down in a pan over a medium-low heat. Don't stir it too often as this slows down the melting!

Whilst it's melting, prep the teacup by placing your new wick in the base of the cup. Wrap the top of the wick around a pencil, straw or skewer and place over the top of the tea cup. This will help to steady the wick as you pour the wax in later. You may need to slightly warm the wick to make it bendy enough to wrap.

Once your candle has returned to liquid form, you can add a few drops of any fragranced oil and/or coloured pigment, stir it in and then carefully pour the wax into the teacup.

Leave the wax to set, and there you have your re-made candle! Perfect for placing in your own house, or gifting to family and friends, especially those eco-warriors in your life!

ONE X

We have been having lots of fun with our young people at ONE X in the past few months. Primarily by making lots of mess creating candles, watching videos of bad lip syncing and



plays that go wrong. We've also had some great conversations about faith, Donald Trump, justice and everything in between!

ONE X is our Circuit Youth Group, we run on Friday nights from 5-7pm at The Hub @Melbourne Terrace Methodist Church for 10-16 year olds. We talk, play games, get creative, and we eat a meal together to finish our evening. Get in touch with the team if you'd like more information!

ONE Family

At ONE Family we are never short of fun and laughter, especially when we're playing 'the floor is lava'! In the past few months we have been looking at what justice is, how we incorporate faith into our lives and how we balance it all, whilst playing games, doing experiments and getting crafty!

ONE Family is a group for 5-10 year olds (younger siblings are invited to stay as long as an adult stays with them), running on Friday nights at The Hub @Melbourne Terrace Methodist Church, from 4:30-6pm, with fun, fellowship and food! Get in touch with the team if you'd like more information.



Baptisms

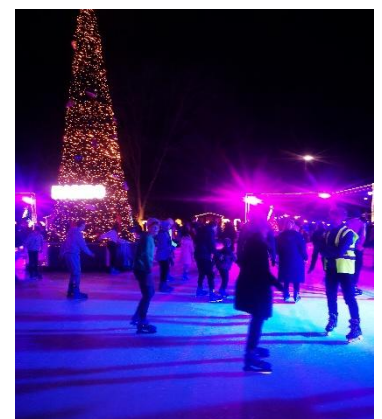
We were honoured to be invited to the Baptism of some of our young people earlier this year! Deciding to take this step in faith is something to celebrate, and it was lovely to see these young people being Baptised alongside friends from their church.

Sleepout

It was cold, but at least it was less rainy and windy than last year, and there were quite a few of us, including some of our young people, sleeping out! To find out more, Victoria has written an article specifically about the sleepout this year – see above in this newsletter. If you want to find out more, get in touch with the team!

Ice Skating

The young people really enjoyed their time on the ice over the festive period. We have learnt from last year though and none of the leaders joined them on the ice, however this meant that some of the parents got to go have some fun on the ice with their children. There were a few soggy bottoms but nothing a mug of hot cocoa couldn't fix!



Flourish

We are moving into the planning stage for Flourish 2026, which is shaping up to be a great weekend! The theme is Woven Threads, and it's all about looking at the place each of us has in God's Big Tapestry! As in previous years, there will be multiple ways for children and young people to participate in Flourish 2026. We will have residential and non-residential



options on the youth stream, and a flexible children's stream for under!

As we make our plans we will be asking for some volunteers to help us provide the best possible experience for our children, young people and families, so if you'd be up for offering a few hours over the weekend, get in touch with the team!

Emmaus Weekend

Our annual residential for those doing the ONE Opportunity course and those who are exploring leadership took place on the second weekend of February. In the last few years we have made this weekend a coordinated effort between the Yorkshire North and East, Yorkshire West and Sheffield Districts, and this year we were glad to welcome 25 young people from across the 3 Districts, as well as Connexional guests, Carolyn Godfrey (Vice President of Conference) and Bea Hulme (Methodist Youth President)! This is always an affirming and uplifting weekend, despite the lack of sleep and constant peopling. We had great conversations about what the young people want to see more or less of in the church, and how they think they could enact real and positive change in the world of faith and Christianity.



This weekend is for 14-23 years old's, but is geared towards those who are exploring leadership skills. If you think you have a young person who might benefit from this kind of getaway, get in touch with Victoria or Amy and they'll be happy to give you more information!

40 Acts Of Kindness!

As part of Strensall Holiday Club this year, Lorraine has put together a resource all about being kind to one another and the earth, called 'Bee Kind'. This resource can be used in all different contexts – perhaps you could put it up on your notice board, use it for your Lent services, or even take it into your workplaces, schools or other clubs! If you'd like a copy of the resource, please get in touch with Lorraine!

Pride

Last year we managed to give out over 300 rainbows at the Pride Parade as they came past Southlands Methodist Church! It was an absolutely fabulous show of God's love for all, and this year we'd like to spread even more love – which we need your help for! There have been some who have been crocheting rainbows year round, but to make our goal of giving out 1000 rainbows this year, we need your help!

On 8th March at Southlands Methodist Church, a lovely gang of crocheters will be gathering to run a workshop on how to make rainbows at coffee morning. Feel free to pop along and learn how to make them, or if you already know how to make them, come along and make as many as you can alongside others! If you aren't able to make this date, but would like the pattern, please get in touch with Amy or southlands.church@gmail.com If you need someone to come and collect any rainbows you've already made, get in touch with Amy!



Contact the team

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CYF team Dates for your diary

ONE X & ONE Family	Other Events
28th Feb – ONE Family	8th Mar – Rainbow Workshop
7th Mar – ONE X	10th May – Synod
21st Mar – ONE X	7th Jun – Pride
28th Mar – ONE Family	11th-13th Jul – Venture (District Youth Weekend)
4th Apr – ONE X	3rd-5th Oct – 3Generate
25th Apr – ONE Family	18th Oct – Joined Up York
13th June – ONE X	
27th June – ONE Family	
18th July – ONE X-Tra Pizza & Chill	

Circuit Council Report December 2024

- The first round of the stationing process matched us with the Revd Jill Pullan, and following a visit in November this was agreed. Subject to confirmation at the Methodist Conference in June, Jill will be joining us in September to be minister at Acomb, Bishopthorpe, Copmanthorpe, Acaster Malbis and West Thorpe. We hope to be matched with another presbyter and a deacon in the next round of the process.
- The Circuit's draft accounts were noted. While they still show a deficit this is in line with the original budget. Our spending is mostly staff costs and expenses, and expenses and maintenance to do with our properties, including closed churches.
- It was reported that the church treasurers met in November to discuss the financial situation of their churches and to consider how the circuit assessment is calculated. Further discussions will be taking place in January to see if there are changes we could make to the methodology to help both churches and the Circuit.
- The circuit stewards- Nick Dawson, Janet Bowling, Vic Paylor, Ann Smallwood, Sally Gall and Sue Gill- were appointed as signatories on behalf of the circuit for legal documents.
- It was noted that Revd John Hayward will no longer be circuit safeguarding officer once from August 2025, and we will need to appoint someone to this role.
- The second part of the meeting focused on hearing about and discussing the situation in the Middle East. Alyson Christy and Stephen Leah led this section of the meeting and would be happy to talk to others who are interested.

Property update

- The sale of the former Trinity Methodist church completed in early December 2024. The buyers, Elim Church, intend to use the building for worship and to work with the local community.
- We have accepted an offer on the former Stamford Bridge Methodist Church building and the sale is progressing.
- Planning permission is being awaited before the Stillington church building can go on the market. By getting this in advance it is hoped the site will sell for a higher value.
- Legal work is taking place to resolve outstanding issues regarding the boundary at the former Dunnington church building before this can be sold.
- The tenants in the flat above Aroma chose to move out in December 2024, the flat is on the market with the hope that we will find new tenants soon.

Circuit prayer rota

2nd March	<p>The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Poppleton. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>Give thanks for our District team, led by Revd Leslie Newton, and for all the support they give to circuits and churches. You can find out more at www.yorkshirenemethodist.org</p>
9	<p>The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Rufforth. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>This Sunday is the first Sunday in Lent, when we remember Jesus's time in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry. How do you prepare for difficult tasks? Pray about anything that's coming up and ask God to be with you.</p>
16	<p>The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Sheriff Hutton. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>Today is the second Sunday in Lent.</p> <p>Because of his love, Jesus was determined to go through with his mission, despite all the difficulties and dangers he knew he would face. What do you care about enough to take risks for?</p>
23	<p>The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Southlands. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>Today is the third Sunday in Lent.</p> <p>Jesus knew that people needed support and nurturing to enable them to grow and produce 'fruit'. How are you supported? How might you be able to support others?</p>
30	<p>The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Strensall. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>Today is Mothering Sunday, when we celebrate those who care for us. Give thanks for those who have loved, cared for and forgiven you when you made mistakes. Are there people who you could show the same kind of love to?</p>
6th April	<p>The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Villages Together. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>Today is the fifth Sunday in Lent.</p> <p>As Jesus moved towards Jerusalem he gathered with friends to encourage and teach them. Who do you find encourages you in your faith?</p>
13	<p>The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is West Thorpe. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place.</p> <p>Today is Palm Sunday when we mark Jesus's entry into Jerusalem. Why not spend some time acknowledging and praising God? You could think about what God has done, especially at Easter, and/or who God is.</p>
18th April Good Friday	<p>Today is Good Friday, when we remember Jesus's death on the cross. His friends and followers must have felt bereft, alone, hopeless. Do you ever feel like that? How can you find hope in the darkness?</p>

20th April Easter Sunday	Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia! Today is Easter Sunday. Give thanks for Jesus' resurrection and all it means for us.
27	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Acaster Malbis. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. Give thanks and pray for the work with asylum seekers and refugees that takes place in several of our buildings. These are often very vulnerable people- pray for them to receive the help they need.
4th May	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Acomb. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. Today is Vocations Sunday, when we think about the variety of callings we can have and the different ways we can serve the church. Is there something you may be being called to do? What steps could you take to explore what God might be asking you to do now?
11	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Bishopthorpe. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. The coming week is Christian Aid week. Give thanks and pray for the work of Christian Aid around the world. Maybe you could look at their website www.christianaid.org.uk and find out more about a particular project and the different ways you could support them.
18	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Central. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. Give thanks and pray for the work that takes place at Carecent, and for the food and support given to those who do not have stable homes. Could you or your church commit to supporting them by donating or volunteering?
25	The church on the Circuit prayer rota for this Sunday is Clifton. Give thanks and pray for the work of God in that place. Today is Aldersgate Sunday, when we remember John Wesley's experience of having his heart 'strangely warmed' that led eventually to the founding of the Methodist Church. Have you ever felt God 'warming' your heart or drawing a particular need to your attention? Find out more about Aldersgate Sunday here: www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/resources/seasons-and-themes/special-sundays/aldersgate-sunday

Reflections

The Methodist Church's theme for Lent is **Soul Food**. Find out more at www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/soul-food

Not by bread alone

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone.”’” Luke 4 v1-3



The time of Lent is usually associated with fasting, with denying ourselves something- often certain foods- to help us prepare spiritually for Easter. We do this remembering Jesus's forty days in the desert. Fasting can be a good 'discipline' if we use it to help us focus more on God, and if we use it in a way that is appropriate for us given our health and situation. But it's worth remembering that enjoying our food isn't a problem by itself. Most of us are fortunate enough to have plenty, and it's good to be thankful for that. In this passage, the problem isn't the bread. It's that we should be relying on God to satisfy us, rather than relying on our own strength. Where might you need to rely on God more?

Small but important

“He said therefore, ‘What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.’



And again he said, ‘To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.’ Luke 13 v18-21

When we look at the state of the world around us it can be easy to feel overwhelmed. War, climate change, political upheaval- we often feel powerless in the face of events that seem too big to grasp or influence. This can easily lead to disillusionment and disengagement. But Jesus here teaches that even the small things- tiny seeds, grains of yeast- can have a big impact on the world around them. Do you find this encouraging? Even if it may seem as though our actions make little to no difference, we may be underestimating the effect our example has on the world. Big trees grow from small seeds. Our prayers, our actions, our words, our faith may can make a real difference to the lives of others. Even if we can't end war or global heating, our actions can still make our world a better place than it would be without us.

Give it time

Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" Luke 13 v6-8



A newspaper story in January 2025 reported that figs are now growing better in the UK, thanks to changing conditions due to climate change. But like all crops, they require patience and careful nurturing, and sometimes even then you don't see much fruit.

If that sounds a lot like your church's experience of trying to reach out to your community, you're not alone! Are you like the man who wants to cut the tree down in frustration at the waste of resources? Or are you like the gardener who wants to keep trying just a bit longer, to see if more tender loving care, will produce the longed-for fruit? Maybe it will, and patience is a good thing. But does there come a point when we need to agree that something isn't working, and try something different?

Do this in remembrance



"Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'"

Luke 22 v19-20

Sharing food and drink brings us together, whether that's a cup of tea with a friend or Christmas dinner with our family. In this passage, Jesus instructs his followers to use the sharing of bread and wine to remind them of him- his teaching, his purpose and their mission. The service of Holy Communion still serves this purpose for many Christians, reminding us to give thanks for Jesus's ministry, death and resurrection, and reminding us of the difference this should make in our own lives.

How do we remind ourselves of what should be important? Maybe you could use your mid-morning cuppa as a reminder to spend some time in prayer, or show Jesus's love for those in need by donating to a foodbank, or connect with your community by inviting people to a food-based activity at your church.