

Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Facebook Posts

November 2024

A thought from Aileen Fox:

I love colour, crafting and I have drawers full of material, patterned and plain, more than I will ever have time to use in projects. I am drawn to colour and design especially in fabric. Last year I had a day visit whilst in Italy to Milan, loved the Cathedral, the square and some of the museums. Of course the Galleria Vittoria Emanuele II shopping arcade is a must visit. It is a beautiful 19th century shopping mall, now housing the famous names Chanel, Gucci and so on. People wander in taking photos, some casually dressed others dressed in couture outfits. It is the place to be seen and photographed in.

Apart from the luxury shops (and I didn't go in) the architecture is stunning and on the floor are lovely colourful designs, one shows Romulus and Remus the legendary founders of Rome suckling, but another is more of a Celtic design. It was this one that particular caught my eye and when I got closer I saw it was actually a mosaic, each piece painstakingly added to the design, and each necessary otherwise it would not be complete. As I look back at the photo, I am aware that many pieces are cream, quite ordinary but all are necessary for the colour to be highlighted.

Sometimes we feel ordinary, we don't have the charisma or the looks or the skills and talents that others seem to have. However, for many in leadership they need the backup, the often forgotten people, to assist, to do the practical stuff. When we feel down and ordinary, remember that Jesus used ordinary everyday people to spread the good news. The disciples made mistakes; they often didn't understand but he knew they would get there. God loves us all he knows what we are capable of and he knows that each of us is valuable just like the cream pieces in the mosaic.



A thought from Rev Derek: Mischief!

Long before trick and treat was a thing in this country, I remember from my childhood the night before bonfire night (4th November) was mischief night in Yorkshire. I have never asked the question whether this was just a northern thing or whether this was much wider spread. I used to dread this evening; my mum would stuff out letterbox with newspaper to avoid scallywags shoving fireworks through our letterbox. I remember somebody telling me how when he was a lad, a group of them had gone around the village with a screwdriver and exchanged all the street name signs which caused a load of confusion. I thought this hilarious, this was my idea of mischief and as a young lad I would love to have seen people's faces.

I didn't see the funny side of it in the early eighties when the night watchman at the mill behind our house knocked on our door on mischief night "can you tell your kid that someone's let his tyres down on his van. My brother had a car and a transit van which he parked in the mill car park, he was out with his girlfriend that evening, so chuntering under my breath I walked around with the night watchman and sure enough both front tyres had matchsticks in the valves and the tyres were flat to the rims. I was just chuntering under my breath, when the night watchman said, "you think you've got problems, the poor bloke with that Ford Escort has all four of his tyres flat!" that was my company car!

As a consequence of a few moments of mischief, I spent my evening with a foot pump, inflating six tyres, sufficiently to drive the vehicles in turn to the garage and finish off the job with the garage's more powerful pump. I felt sorry for a young woman who had a white MGB roadster, and somebody had clearly tipped a full tin of treacle on the roof. She had made the mistake of taking it through the automatic car wash and had inadvertently caked the entire car in the treacle and was using a scraper to clean the car. It caused me to think that mischief can be fun, but there can be a fine line when it goes way beyond fun and becomes destructive and hurtful.

Today I am questioning what motivates us in life. So many people are motivated by power, by popularity by wealth and even dominance. Some think that living by the rules of life is more than sufficient, but I think that maybe it should be our desire to be good, kind, moral people. I like a bit of fun as much as the next man, but there is a line, and crossing it can cost other people.



Please pray for the congregation and community in Walsingham



From The Methodist Church:

We need your prayers!

We welcome prayers formed around the theme Our Story, Our Song for the 2025/2026 Methodist Prayer Handbook.

Feel free to be imaginative! Visual prayers, such as drawings, may also be submitted.

Learn more about the theme and how to submit your prayers at methodist.org.uk/faith/methodist-prayer-handbook/



Swaffham
Methodist Church

Christmas Fayre

Saturday
30th November

9.30am – 12 noon

Cakes, savouries & preserves

Green & Red stall

Tombola / Children's Tombola

Books, games & jigsaws

Children's Corner

Gift stall

Refreshments

Charity Registration No. 1163777

TINSSEL FAIR

TEA - COFFEE & MINCE PIE - CAKE

HAND-MADE CRAFTS

CHRISTMAS CAKES

BOOKS & JIGSAWS

RAFFLE

SAHAM HILLS METHODIST CHAPEL NOVEMBER 23rd
10 - 12:00



A thought from Pippa Cook:

I am trying to have a bit of a sort out before Christmas! For several years I have had these odd socks, for which I am sure there is a pair somewhere, but my sensible head says, 'Just throw them away.' It must be lovely to be one of those people employed to go into someone's house to help them declutter, without any emotional attachment to the objects of their sorting.



I think my mind must be like my sock drawer. It's full of unnecessary memories that can bring hurt or shame, grudges that I hold against people who have hurt me, and who probably have no recollection of the incident, and dreams that were never, and never could have been, fulfilled.

Jesus invites us to lay down our burdens, unwanted memories, grudges, unfulfilled dreams and accept his rest. I'll throw those socks away now – unless anyone wants them to make puppets!

Rev Anne reflects: last night I went to enjoy 'A Programme of Entertainment' in aid of the Poppy Appeal, organised by the Swaffham and District branch of the Royal British Legion in the parish church. It was a full offering of music and poetry and readings. I was proud that some of the Swaffham Methodist members were performing, or were involved in the organisation. Everyone did a fantastic job!

Just one thing jarred for me (and it wasn't just my back after sitting on a pew for 90 minutes!) At the end we sung three verses of Onward Christian Soldiers and then the chorus of Land of Hope and Glory, with the National Anthem at the end. Yes, as Christians, we are engaged in spiritual battle but I don't find the language of war helpful to describe the Christian life. War is such a destructive, negative force, displacing people and causing untold misery to millions around the world. I believe we are right to commemorate those who died in wars and to help those who have been damaged. But using the same language to describe our discipleship and the sacrifice of those who have lost lives in war, just doesn't sit well with me. Is there an issue with this or is it just me?



A thought from Rev Derek: Remembering



A few years ago, my brother and I went to the opening event of a memorial garden in the village we grew up in. By pure chance, I happened to be in Yorkshire, and it was good to stand in Calverley and remember the fallen. The neighbouring villages of Calverley and Farsley had created this special space, we had a short service in Calverley in front of the newly created monument, I stood and looked at the list of the fallen, a total of fifty-seven names.

We walked in silence through a wildflower meadow towards a similar memorial in Farsley which listed a similar number of people. The population of both these villages has ballooned since the end of the First world war and I found myself reflecting on the devastating impact on two relatively small villages.

I am too young to remember either the first, or second world wars, but my father was eleven when the first world war began and thirty-six when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced the commencement of the second world war, and my mum was sixteen at the time. For me, Remembrance Sunday had always been my attempt at respecting the cost paid by so few for so many. For my parents and their families and peer groups, they were reliving memories, that at the best I can only imagine. I can't even imagine the effect of losing fifty seven people from a small tight-knit community, there is more than one occurrence on the list of identical surnames, that doesn't necessarily mean that they are brothers, but in a village like this, they are almost certainly from the same family and I can't even start to imagine the pain, my guess is that, were he still alive, my dad would have known some of those people personally and he could put faces to anonymous names.

When I started working for Greenwoods Menswear in 1998 the company came to a complete standstill at 11am on the 11th November everybody stopped where they were and stood in silence until a siren sounded to mark the end of the two minutes. There was just one man who kept working and when questioned by his colleagues he remarked that all this was a long time ago and it was time to stop doing this. Was he right? I think not. The first World War was meant to be the war to end all wars and yet over a hundred years on people are dying in Gaza, Israel, Lebanon, Ukraine, Russia, and over a hundred other conflicts.

Please make a space for a couple of minutes and be quiet, remember the fallen, maybe family friends, maybe ancestors, and in silence pray for peace.

For the Fallen

By Laurence Binyon

***They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.***

Please pray for the congregation and community in Watton



Pray with us today

Let us praise God,
who summons us to live as people of hope,
who lifts us when our hearts are weary,
and raises our eyes, restoring our vision,
to see a new heaven, a new earth,
which breaks in where we least expect it;
inviting us, beyond imagining,
to involvement in making real God's purposes of justice, righteousness and peace.
Let us praise God,
who leads us beyond death, to life in all its fullness,
not for our sakes, but for the sake of others;
that by God's Spirit we live with courage, compassion and commitment;
so we might be agents of change, sharing the gospel of truth and love,
as we join with God's work in the world.
Find more ways to pray at methodist.org.uk/prayer.



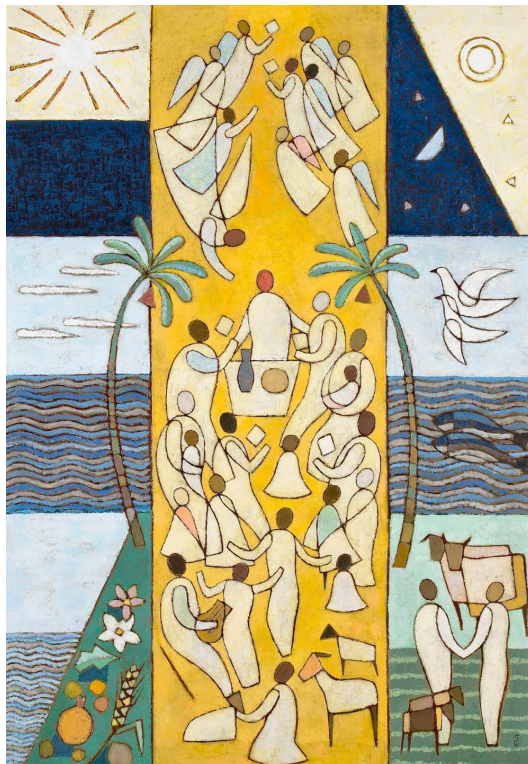
A thought from Rev Jonny:

Artwork: To God Be the Glory (2009), Soichi Watanabe (Japanese, 1949–), acrylic on canvas, 52 × 39 in. Last week, I posted about a liberation theologian, Gustavo Gutiérrez. He saw that poverty, deprivation and exploitation are the result of the failings of social structures/institutions. To counter these failings, we need love, which he describes as “...concrete options to build a true human fellowship, in our historical initiatives to subvert an order of injustice...” (p.269 in *A Theology of Liberation*). Love is a verb, an action, and a thing we do; and Gutiérrez’s definition points to this. But let’s unpick what he says about this in relation to poverty.

The “concrete options” are the actions or “works” as it is described in the book of James 2:14-26. They are the real, tangible things we do that help us to “build a true human fellowship”. And is this not what we seek to do in church and the communities we live in? We want to connect with each other in authentic, generous ways. The historic initiatives are about who and what has come before us – those people who have acted in love and passed down the perfect demonstration of love as seen in the gospel. This then leads us to see how things can be done and how things can be different – that stuff of

‘subverting orders of injustice’. It is to “...hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good” (Romans 12:9b) By going against and changing the ways in which people are oppressed and exploited, to challenge and undermine the ways in which causes people to be in places of poverty and deprivation, that is one of the consequences of the action of love.

The painting by Watanabe, *To God Be the Glory*, shows a glimpse of what this may look like: of people living together, with creation and God, with joy and goodness at the core of this. What do you see in this image? Is it a party? A feast? A procession? Something else? And how does it express love as a verb, as a doing word?



A thought from Dee:

John Keats wrote:

**“Seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
close bosom friend of the maturing sun”**

This wonderful poem continues to extol the feel of Autumn. As I looked out, at about 7am, into our garden his poem came into my mind. The mist hung in the air clothing the tree tops and enhancing the shades of Autumn, leaves turning into beautiful rich colours, scattering and falling coating the ground. I stepped out to appreciate it more fully, it wasn't cold but there was a quiet stillness that I can't quite put into words, it was as if the world was waiting in that stillness – holding its breath!



Then I thought, the world is waiting – waiting for peace, longing for peace and peaceful solutions. This was one of the prayers written for 'A Week of Prayer for Peace' by Year 6 in a school in Neath South Wales UK.

Dear God,

Please forgive us for all the terrible things that humans have done to each other and the planet. There is so much destruction and pain caused by terrible wars that have gone on forever. We know that animals and natural environment also suffer when there is war.

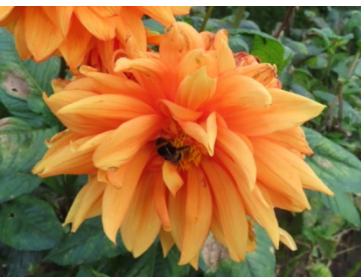
Help us to be better people and to treat everyone with respect and kindness.

Please encourage our world leaders to look for ways that avoid war and violence.

May all faiths of the world come together in friendship and work for world peace so that we can all feel safe.

Please help us all to work together for a kinder world.

A thought from Aileen:



Autumn 'the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' according to the poem by John Keats. We look out at those flowers that are still showing colour but as my photo shows, they are beginning to fade around the edges, the dahlia is not quite in its original loveliness, yet is still colourful. However, look in the middle and you will see a bee busy at work. It was truly a dull day (31.10.24) the light was fading but the bee carried on doing what it needed to do to, collect nectar.

We are a bit like bees, yes keen to work, to do our bit, but sometimes we can get distracted and even have tunnel vision, so that we keep on doing what we have always done without looking at the needs around us. This can be so in our chapels, are we looking at what our communities need? Like many people I find the days in winter hard, getting out of a warm bed, getting motivated, finding that extra energy. Yet we can take a lesson from the bee, if one flower doesn't have what it needs it will move on. Are we ready to face new things, do things differently, listen?

Advent is approaching, already 'Christmas' has exploded into the shops and even on the canned music in-store! Are we ready to be workers, busy like the bee but sometimes doing things differently with the focus on Christ and reaching out into the shattered world?

A thought from Rev Derek: Park and ride

One of the big thrills of moving from Bradford to Norfolk in August 2005 was that just along the road from the village of Hethersett was the Thickthorn Park and Ride and I loved it. I hadn't travelled on a bus in years, so that alone was quite a novelty, but I love a bargain, and, in those days, you could park your car for two pounds and all the occupants could travel on the bus for free. Being the owner of a seven-seater car, I took liberties with the system and was delighted when we had family and friends staying with us and six or seven of us could travel into the beautiful city of Norwich for two pounds, I couldn't have found a car park so cheap. Back then, the buses were full particularly at Christmas and it was difficult to find a parking space. There were six Park and Rides around Norwich, and this was by far the most efficient and fastest way to get right into the heart of the city.

Moving back into the area during the summer, I have taken advantage of the park and ride twice since we moved back into the area this summer, I was surprised to see how few cars there were in the car park, admittedly it was mid-morning and there was about half a dozen shoppers in addition to my daughter who got onto the bus, the payment system has changed now, you pay per passenger on the bus, the first ticket costs three pounds and any additional passengers up to seven pay one pound, so even with my current seven seater car, the cost would still only be nine pounds. You may well reel in horror at the price hike over nineteen years, but I think that it still represents good value and saves all the hassle of negotiating the busy streets of the city, finding a decent parking place and then paying maybe a fiver to park your car. I still think that the park and ride is good value for money.

One of the original six sites is now closed, and I wonder how long the other five are sustainable. I spend my time in Church meetings wondering why people don't come anymore, and it strikes me, that here we have a perfectly good service to take advantage of, and with all the thousands of houses being thrown up around the city, I would have expected the buses to be packed, it just doesn't make sense to me. We live in an age where climate change is high on the agenda of most developed countries, people are exchanging their petrol and diesel cars for greener hybrid and electric alternatives.

There may be a throwback to the pandemic, and I appreciate that many people now feel uncomfortable being in confined spaces and alongside churches, we are seeing other community-based businesses like pubs struggling to make ends meet all at a time when the mental health of people is reaching crisis point and it concerns me that we prefer to be locked away in our homes and driving around in our cars, than mixing with other people. I would recommend ditching the car in well-proportioned parking space, paying what I consider is a reasonable fare and sailing down the bus lane passing queuing cars, it is very satisfying.



Please pray for the congregation and community in Wells



A thought from Rev Jonny:

Artwork: Fractured Cross (2020) by Jonny Bell, fused glass on paper, 10 x 20 in.

Liberation theology is tied very closely to what Scripture says, to what it says in the Bible. We see the idea of God's preference for the poor running throughout the whole of it: from the liberation of the enslaved Israelites in Exodus; to the psalms, setting people free from poverty and cruelty; to the prophets, like Amos, with their cries against the injustices of the wealthy; to Jesus' own actions and teachings, like the parable of the goats and sheep in Matthew 25:31-46. Gustavo Gutiérrez argues that God shows a special love and concern for the poor, the marginalised, and the oppressed, and he uses scripture to justify this emphasis in his writings. He shows that there is a consistent theme in Scripture of God's special concern for the poor and oppressed. For Gutiérrez, following Christ involves advocating for social justice, fighting for the oppressed, and seeking liberation for the marginalised in society.



I chose this artwork of mine for today as it is made of broken pieces of glass that are then fused together with heat. It is like the fractured parts of the world being brought together with Christ at the centre; of our brokenness in the injustices being transformed by God's love and made into something beautiful. For you, what pieces of Scripture, stories, poems, songs, art, etc., help you think about these ideas of challenging oppression and building up those who are without?



Rev Anne writes: I was fortunate to have a place on a recent retreat day. This caught my eye. I don't think I've ever seen a cross that's there in the space between before. Obviously, this is clearly designed to show the cross, but how many times can we spot a cross in a space or unusual place - just a reminder that the death and resurrection of Christ are for us in every place and every situation, not just in Church!

Where can you 'see' the cross? Can you share a picture in the comments?

It's like when you catch a glimpse of a known face in a crowd - out of all those people we can pick out the one we love. The glimpses of the cross remind us that God says we are ones that are loved - in every place, in every situation - loved completely and for all time.



A thought from Rev Derek: Down with the kids

We had a day out with my daughter and eleven-year-old grandson during the summer, as previously mentioned in my thought for the days we went to the amazing Eureka Museum in Halifax West Yorkshire, as we dropped down to the point pictured above my grandson exclaimed excitedly "look at the view!" I took the opportunity to drink in the scenery around me from the impressive Victorian bridge to my right shadowed now by the huge 1960s concrete viaduct forming a triangle above the Calder Valley and impressive in its own way, I appreciated the vast range of different architectural styles that make up this modern town and the range of spires pointing heavenward and for a moment in the hustle and bustle of the busy town centre, I joined my grandson in his appreciation of the panorama in front of us "it is pretty amazing" I said "I've always loved the skyline here with all the spires" I commented in equal appreciation "dad" my daughter said bursting my bubble "he's looking at the cinema!" and sure enough, if you look closely at the Grey building to the left of the picture you will see the "Vue" sign.

I can still remember being a child and wondering why on earth my parents got excited by piles of old stones and remember visiting places like Bolton Abbey andountains Abbey and seeing them as great places for playing "hide and seek" while my parents appeared fascinated by their historical and religious relevance. Travelled through town and city centres and never once appreciated the beauty of some of our ancient architecture, but was far more interested in visiting toy shops, or watching the bus driver as he steered the bus through the traffic, crunching the gears and was always fascinated by the large orange mushroom shaped instrument down to his right where he operated the indicators. Suddenly I Halifax on that Tuesday morning in August 2024 I recognised the gulf between our two lives.

My grandson has a range of toys that I simply don't understand, I look at them totally confused and do my best to be interested in his world of computer games, transformers, TV programmes, social media clips, gadgets and gismos and I am baffled. I ask him to explain and to be honest, he might as well be explaining in Chinese as with serious look on his face he describes a world that is real to him, but alien to me. I nod intelligently doing my best to give the impression that following his concise and detailed explanation, I am now a much wiser granddad, but in truth, I am just baffled by how different our worlds are. Despite all of this, I love him dearly and will never stop being genuinely interested in his world, I can learn so much from him, because I might find myself trying to explain some of my values, some of my beliefs, some of my culture to him and I hope that he will do a better job of understanding than I do.

Maybe in the modern world the Church, religion, the belief in God and the value of ancient Biblical texts and words of hymns have little, if no relevance to so many and the truth is that we need to be able to speak into their culture, rather than expecting them to speak into ours.



Please pray for the congregation and community in Wendling



A thought from Rev Jonny:

Artwork: Christ on the Cross (2023) by Jonny Bell, monoprint, 5" x 7"

This month, I have focused on liberation theology, especially Gustavo Gutiérrez's ideas around poverty, Scripture and love. Today, I want to focus on the challenge liberation theology poses to us, which is how we are faithful disciples of Christ.

Gutiérrez says that the church needs to become a 'church of the poor'. This means that we need to not only seek out those who are deprived and oppressed, but also to live in solidarity with them. There is a phrase, 'If you aren't getting hit by the rocks being thrown at them, you're not standing with them'. This metaphor is about solidarity; if we do not also experience some of the hardship that others do, then we are not close enough; we are not a 'church of the poor' in Gutiérrez's words. This is a challenge for someone like me, who has a regular income that is based on the national average, expenses and I get to live in a nice house. I have never lived so well since being a minister! As someone who has experienced homelessness and joblessness, the challenge posed by Gutiérrez is a hard one because I am not necessarily living in solidarity with others today. However, just because it is uncomfortable does not mean that I should not do the work of working this out.

Struggling with this challenge is how we move towards a world that is more just, more in line with God's love. In some ways, we need to be like Jacob wrestling with God, trying to work out what it is we are meant to be doing. Essentially, we need to work out what being faithful to the gospel looks like today with what we do or do not have, what others do and do not have, and what God wants us to do with all of it. What is it that you wrestle with? How might the church be a 'church of the poor'?



**AUTUMN ALIVE!**

THOUGHTS ON THURSDAY

Thursdays 3.00 – 4.00pm
Thursday September 26 *
Thursday October 31 **
Thursday November 28 ***

Set aside 60 minutes to share your thoughts with others on some of life's important questions, over a cuppa!

Inspiring TED talks
September 26* **Radical Candour** Kim Scott
October 31** **Spirituality in a secular world** Rupert Sheldrake
November 28*** **The unheard story of David and Goliath** Malcolm Gladwell

All our events are free - donations welcomed

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**OPEN PLAY-READING AT THE HIVE**

Sunday 1st December: 2.30 - 5.30pm

On-site parking.
All ability access.
Seasonal refreshments.



Informal fun!
No previous experience necessary.
All our events are free.
Donations welcomed.

By Christopher Fry

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A thought from Aileen Fox:

On Sunday (1st) it will be the first Sunday of Advent and we begin the countdown to welcoming Jesus. Are we anticipating this, are we really waiting, are we excited? Are we prepared? What does Advent really mean? The word itself is a noun meaning the beginning of an event, or the arrival of something. For many in the world it is about the build-up to Christmas, the four weeks leading to Christmas day. Counting the days perhaps with an advent calendar containing a chocolate in it for each day.

For Christians it has a more spiritual meaning preparing for the birth of Jesus the Messiah. Are we preparing? Or are we busy caught up in food and present shopping? There is nothing wrong in celebrating, or gathering family and friends together or even giving gifts. We are celebrating the most precious gift we could ever be given, Jesus! We show his birth in a stable, we put out cribs, we get excited about the tree, the lights, the sparkle. But are we really preparing in our hearts?

The man (statue) in the photo is looking out, he is part of the recent exhibition at Houghton House by Anthony Gormley (Angel of the North sculptor). He is high up, he is looking beyond the gardens out towards the fields and the road. At the exhibition entitled Time, 100 statues were placed around the grounds each looking in a slightly different direction. Are we looking out for Jesus? Are we preparing for this greatest gift that went on beyond the stable. The gift that gives us hope to share his Love. Let's prepare ourselves to be open to that wonderful love and be ready to share it in whatever direction we find ourselves...



Walsingham Methodist Church
High Street, Walsingham

Presents a large exhibition of
Nativity Cribs



Tuesday 10th
Thursday 12th – Friday 13th December
11am to 3pm
and
Saturday 14th 11am to 2pm

All welcome – Free entry
