

# *grapevine*

Spring 2022  
Issue Number 40



Transformations that inspire

The **Methodist** Church   
**EAST ANGLIA DISTRICT**

## **A Life-changing Touch**

**Once more, Lord,  
I have felt Your Touch –  
Gentle as Summer’s breeze  
Yet dynamic as a rushing wind;  
Light as a single snowflake  
Yet powerful as an avalanche! –  
For You have reached Your Finger  
Deep into my life.**

**In one moment of secret communion  
You have worked a radical change,  
That a lifetime of fiercest struggling  
Could never have resolved.**

**Once more, Lord,  
I have felt Your Touch,  
As sure as Spring bursts from Winter  
And morning’s sun banishes night!  
And I know – with joy I *know* –  
The time for singing has come!**

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**March 2022**

Welcome to the Spring 2022 edition of *grapevine* 'Transformations that inspire'.

What a delight of articles we have for you in this edition of *grapevine*, from incredibly inspiring transformations of outside spaces at Emmanuel Church, Bungay and Magdalen Way Church, Gorleston, to refurbishments of indoor spaces at St Ives Methodist Church, Wisbech Trinity Methodist Church and Huntingdon Methodist Church.

We have articles, such as those written by Rev Mary Sachikonye, Rev Joanna Jacobs and Rev Nigel D Fox that share with us how partnerships, individuals and the church can transform lives.

There is an introduction to our new District Administrator, Danielle, an article sharing the success of the recent Local Preachers and Worship Leaders' weekend, an update on The Hive at Great Cressingham, and other wonderful articles sharing the inspiring transformations that are taking place in our District.

One thing that these articles show, is that no matter what the size or scale of the transformation, it can enrich in a positive way, enabling us to grow and expand our reach with those within the church and the local community.

*Please remember this is your magazine. If there is something you would like included, we would love to hear from you.*

*The next issue is due in September 2022. You will find contact details on the back page.*

## ***grapevine***

is available in large print and on  
CD (audio)

**If you would like to request a copy,  
please contact the District Office:**

**01603 625765**

**[office@eangliamethodist.org.uk](mailto:office@eangliamethodist.org.uk)**

## **Contents**

<b>A Life-changing Touch</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction by Revd James Bamber</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>Emmanuel Church, Bungay</b>	<b>5-6</b>
<b>Picturing the Passion—The Local Preachers and Worship Leaders' Weekend</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Huntingdon Methodist Church - Here4Huntingdon</b>	<b>8-9</b>
<b>Harare West Partnership</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>Felixstowe Churches working with the Devils. Hot refreshments for cold football supporters</b>	<b>11-12</b>
<b>Wisbech Trinity Methodist Church—Kitchen Refurbishment</b>	<b>12-13</b>
<b>Transforming St Ives Methodist Church</b>	<b>14-16</b>
<b>A 'Well in the Week'</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>District Agricultural Chaplain's Report</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Robert Keys</b>	<b>18-19</b>
<b>Rolling out the red carpet</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>An inspiring lady who Transformed lives</b>	<b>20-21</b>
<b>Transformative gathering at Cliff College — "Not Declining But Changing"</b>	<b>22-23</b>
<b>District News</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Rainbow Railings</b>	<b>25-27</b>
<b>Contributions</b>	<b>28</b>

### **The Editorial Team:**

Revd Julian Pursehouse, Susan Eldridge,  
Danielle Gravestock and Aileen Fox

Images:

Front cover Paul Eldridge

Page 2 and 28 Danielle Gravestock

# Introduction

Revd James Bamber



*Dear Friends,*

As a temporary Deputy Chair while Rev'd Andrew King is on sabbatical it is a joy to write the foreword to this issue of grapevine – 'Transformations that inspire'. I wonder what you are anticipating? This past week I was beckoned from elsewhere in our house with the invitation, 'Come and see something we've never had before in our garden!' Stepping outside the new arrival in a large plant dish of water was frog spawn!! A cloche, and some oxygenating pond weed have arrived on the scene now and we wait expectantly for what is to come. All around us at the moment nature is alive with examples of transformations that inspire. Where you are how is nature inspiring you? As Elizabeth Browning expressed it, 'Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God. But only he who sees, takes off his shoes.' (With apologies for the non-inclusive language).

In the pages that follow you'll find accounts of gardens, alleys, buildings, and lives transformed in response to God's invitation. People and places brimming with the Good News embodying hope, serving as living

messages, transforming lives and landscapes one step at a time. As you read and rejoice in what God is doing throughout our District you might like to pray that God would show you what your calling is where you are. How might you become more fully part of God's task of transforming people and places for the better?

What unites each story is they are birthed out of people connecting with our living God – praying, listening and acting. Easter declares afresh the truth that all can be transformed beyond our imagining – undergirding all we seek to be and offer is the self-giving transformational love of God made visible through the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. In the light of God's giving we are called to respond becoming in partnership with God an inspiring transformational presence where we are. As a hymn begins, 'We have a gospel to proclaim...' When people truly encounter Christ amazing things happen. This was brought home to me by a story I read of a man called Joe who discovered that he wasn't beyond God's love while living through a low ebb in his life. The transformation from his reliance on alcohol to faith was inspiring – he became the most caring person in his

faith community – nothing was too much trouble for him. One evening a visiting preacher issued an invitation for anyone present who wanted to receive God’s love personally to come forward. One man came forward praying, ‘Oh God, make me like Joe! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe.’ The preacher whispered, ‘Don’t you mean make me like Jesus?’ The man looked up inquisitively and replied, ‘Is He like Joe?’” May all we read in the following

pages inspire us to live lives signposting people to Jesus trusting that as we do transformation beyond our imagining will happen.

Happy reading and every blessing for the Easter season.

*James Bamber*

Revd James Bamber  
Deputy Chair of the District

## Emmanuel Church, Bungay

Lisa Doubleday



**W**hen I saw the theme for this month’s magazine, I had to write about the transformation of our

The biggest change affecting our garden has been the climate, so our gardening style and choice of planting had to change. The biggest "transformation" of our garden has

garden at Emmanuel Church, Bungay.

Our church garden has always been a beautiful space lovingly cared

for by volunteer members. It has evolved over time from the formal to country cottage and everything in between as different fashions and gardeners came in.



happened during the pandemic.

We wondered, as our churches were shut down and isolation began, how

we could carry on with mission and outreach. Luckily we were allowed to carry on with our work outside as long as we kept to the government restrictions.

For me, personally, this was my sanctuary. I knew I was blessed already as I had my husband, a roof over our heads and our own outside space but after always being busy working full time in a very sociable job I felt like a fish out of water. Being able to go to the church garden and lose myself in just doing was a great therapy.

So, the transformation began.

More benches had been added before lockdown so, as restrictions eased and people could meet with another outside, we noticed more locals were using Emmanuel's garden as a place to stop on their daily walks.

People who had never been inside the church were suddenly comfortable enough to come in to the garden and seek answers to their questions, not only about the names of different plants but about their relationship with God and the church.

Signs were made and attached to our wide open gates to welcome and encourage our community to use the space for rest and reflection (some thought we were taking a risk by being

so open but we had great faith in our mission), a wildlife area was made near our compost bin with a bug hotel, log pile and hedgehog house. More bird boxes and a feeding station were added, a mini pond with a solar powered fountain and the beginnings of 2 mini, perennial wildflower areas under our trees.

As restrictions eased a bit we had socially distanced services in the garden. In the summer we had a service to welcome new elders and to say goodbye to our out-going Minister, on Remembrance Day the garden was covered in poppies made by another member, at Christmas we had a carol service, at Easter we sang and

rejoiced in the open air with passers-by joining in and we had an afternoon tea for Christian aid. All in our beautiful garden.

So, you see, this is why I had to write. Emmanuel Church garden has transformed, has inspired, and has been imaginatively refurbished. It has become a missional space, a place of worship and a place of fellowship. A place of biodiversity and diversity and a place of love. Blessings,

Lisa Doubleday  
Emmanuel Church, Bungay



# Picturing the Passion — The Local Preachers and Worship Leaders' Weekend

Jane Brooker

You may have noticed that Local Preachers in your Circuit were a bit thin on the ground on the first Sunday of March – there were about 30 of us on a weekend retreat at Belsey Bridge, Ditchingham looking at the Passion as it was recorded in the four Gospels. We were ably led by Rev Canon Leo Osborn who in his notes introduced us to *“a deeper appreciation, a fuller understanding and a greater impact.”* We compared and contrasted the differing accounts of

Christ's passion.

New ways of looking at the story were advocated and we looked not only at how the story was told but behind the telling. It was a weekend that enabled us to

explore the Passion in a way that was new to some but encouraged us all to refresh and expand our knowledge and understanding of the Passion as we



journey through Lent and, hopefully, pass on that knowledge and understanding through our preaching.

It was also a weekend to relax as well as work, to take time out from the everyday life and reflect on, not only

what we preach, but how and to greet old friends and meet new ones. There was very good fellowship as we discussed the ideas and questions that were put to us by Leo and as we enjoyed the rest times and superb meals provided by the staff at the retreat centre.

We had 3 questions to answer on each gospel and I will leave you the first one to consider; it applies to each gospel: *“How do you react to Matthew/Mark/Luke/John's picture of Jesus?”*



Jane Brooker

Bury St Edmunds Circuit

# Huntingdon Methodist Church — Here4Huntingdon

Paul Hornsby



**M**embers and friends of Huntingdon Methodist Church celebrated the completion of the

building of their new extension on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> October with a Service of Dedication of the new building which incorporated the Official Opening, complete with a ribbon-cutting across an open doorway.

This new building is the third Phase in an on-going programme of renovation and expansion of a church originally built on the present site at the eastern end of Huntingdon High Street in 1878. An idea to extend and update our premises to better serve our town and surrounding area was first seriously considered around 16 years ago and to underline this objective the scheme was given the name Here4Huntingdon.

The church is situated in a conservation area, so to help with planning and fundraising the scheme was divided into distinct phases. The first Phase was the re-roofing of the

original building, and it was during this stage whilst the old roof was being removed that the front wall of the church was found to be so unstable

that it was in danger of collapsing completely. Thankfully due to the expertise of all involved that didn't happen, the wall was secured and the work of re-roofing was completed.

The second Phase involved the refurbishment of the rear halls and thankfully this work was completed without any major incident.



Phase 3 was the building of the new extension on land to the side of the church on which stood three sheds and an old garage, all used for storage. Many years ago the manse stood on part of what is now the car-park and at that time the garage was used by the minister to house his car. This extension as well as providing a large additional room also incorporated an enlarged and completely refitted kitchen. It didn't take long for us to discover that things were not going to run

smoothly, for it was whilst the builders were still at the groundwork stage that major problems were unearthed that resulted

in delays and an increase in the cost.

Step by step these problems were resolved and the building work was beginning to progress nicely when along came Covid, causing further delays and resulting in the anticipated completion date of May/June 2020 ultimately becoming January 2021.

However at that time the church was closed and so it was not until the summer when the church opened once

again that we were able to start making use of this new facility. In the relatively short time that we have had this new space available groups, both from the church and from the community, are enjoying using this large light and airy space, as well as continuing to use the other rooms that are available.

In total the three phases have cost over £950,000 of which some £200,000 has been raised by church members and friends. We are



indebted to so many people who have all played a vital part in enabling this building to become a reality, providing not only

additional space for church activities, but an additional facility for the benefit of the local community. A part of our grounds that had been rather forgotten and unused has now become the vibrant hub of our outreach work here in Huntingdon, presenting new opportunities for God's love to be revealed in 2022 and hopefully beyond.

Paul Hornsby  
Chair of Here4Huntingdon

# Harare West Partnership

Rev Mary Sachikonye

The East Anglia Harare Partnership programme is to encourage the two Districts to learn and share together. To share experiences of worship, evangelism, the importance of personal discipleship, sharing testimonies, to be outward looking communities of witness as we reflect on our relationship with the wider world. It is about exploring what brings us together as Methodists and as children of God.

The two Districts are both under The Methodist Church though in different conferences

but have a lot in common such as worship, prayer, testimony, equality, gender, social justice, climate

change and personal and community development just to mention a few. It is in such that we learn and share ideas of how to enhance our own worship

and prayer life and vice versa. Besides having common ground, the partnership will encourage both sides to learn new cultures and expectations.

The partnership is therefore encouraging the local churches and circuits in our district to link with churches, circuits, and or structures of the church such as women's fellowship, men's fellowship, youth and Sunday School from Harare West and develop a sharing and learning relationship. The partnership has opened a way for individual churches,

even individuals, to link with people in this part of the world and share experiences of their faith and learn together.

The partnership will encourage community exchange, skills to enrich and engage in local projects and exploration of ways of life in both contexts.



We encourage all ages from our churches to engage and learn from each other. Pulpit exchange recognising the priesthood of all believers; sharing worship ideas with all ages; interaction at local and District levels. It is in sharing that we experience the love of God to all despite circumstances and provisions.

In this partnership we will learn how God, relates to us in our different situations and circumstances and to place God's justice at



the centre of our concerns for God's world. Through the partnership we are encouraged to learn how to enlarge and enrich our faith and to understand who God is in our lives despite our differences. Over and above all the partnership encourages unity and love amongst God's people. Amos 3:3 **"How can two walk together unless they are agreed?"** May God guide us as we

embark on this new venture as churches, circuits and district.

Rev Mary Sachikonye  
Norwich Circuit

## Felixstowe Churches working with the Devils Hot refreshments for cold football supporters

Rev Joanna Jacobs

**T**he sound of cheering came from the recreation ground, behind the houses, across the road from the church car park, where we were trying out a new venture – Breakfast in a Bun. This was to replace the very successful Big Breakfasts held in the Church Hall every month, pre-Covid. Sadly, it was a grey, cold, blustery day, and we didn't have the expected number of customers. What were we to do with the left over sausage and bacon

butties? We took them on trays to the football supporters over the road!



They were gone in 5 minutes. Those who had cash with them paid, but we didn't want to waste good food, so we gave them away to those who hadn't.

But that's not the end of the story. A young woman, with a toddler in a push-chair, came over to us and asked if we would like to do this every week! After a couple of meetings and several emails, we established a rota and since November, 3 of us have been cooking and preparing the refreshments early every Saturday morning, followed later by 3 more helpers to carry everything over to the field. Supporters and players alike are very grateful for hot drinks and a bacon buttie on a cold day.

This has really been a transformational answer to prayer. We had been praying for connections with the community –



and this is one. We had been praying for additional church funds – and this provides much needed money. The Trimley Red Devils Football Teams are unable to provide refreshments until a long promised hut has water and electricity connected, so meanwhile, our 2 Go-Pak tables, hot water canisters and thermal bag have to suffice! They also have a slice of the profits, so it is a win-win situation. Our card machine is a great, but welcome, surprise to our customers.

Plus, we helpers, from both Seaton Road and Trinity Methodist Churches in Felixstowe, have great fun together, and are making new friendships with the football supporters, the players and the surrounding community. Transformational!

Rev Joanna Jacobs  
Ipswich Circuit

## Wisbech Trinity Methodist Church — Kitchen Refurbishment

Nicola Warden

**T**he refurbishment of the kitchen at Trinity Methodist Church, Wisbech has been a long overdue transformation. The kitchen, which is now fully installed with professional catering equipment, replaced the outdated kitchen which was very tired, fairly basic and created a

challenging environment when cooking for large numbers. Looking towards the future mission of the Church and its open daily Coffee Bar we needed a transformation that released possibilities for both to be able to engage the people of Wisbech.



Kitchen before the renovation

daily by our Coffee Bar manager Amanda, who prepares a wide variety of cakes, sandwiches and scones to be sold in the coffee bar. The new facilities have enabled Amanda to be able to expand the range of lunchtime meals she can provide throughout the week. A new monthly lunch in the Church Hall has attracted a significant number of people since the kitchen's reopening and provides a space where people from within the Church family, customers of the coffee bar and people from neighbouring villages come

A project planning group was set up to oversee the renovation and in February 2020 BI Services, who were the chosen contractors, began the work. The kitchen was stripped back to a blank canvas, the tired skylight was



Kitchen after the renovation

taken out and replaced by a dropped ceiling, the walls were white rocked, the floor was replaced with a blue safety vinyl floor covering and new electrics were installed as well as a new boiler. In March 2020 the works were complete and the kitchen was ready to be used, or so we thought. The country went into lockdown and it was another 14 months before the Church and its coffee bar would be open again to make full use of the new facilities.

Since reopening, the kitchen is used

together for fellowship over food – all aided by the new Hot-Trolley!

The kitchen is available for use by Church hirers too and has been used for events such as our flower festival and craft fairs.

The renovation of the kitchen has been an unquestionable success for the ongoing mission of the Church – its only by spending time in the coffee bar and with regular customers that you realise what a difference this safe community space makes within Wisbech.

Nicola Warden  
Lay Worker, The Fen's Methodist Circuit

# Transforming St Ives Methodist Church

Rev Heather Walker



**A**fter several years of thinking and planning by members and friends, a Project Team was finally set up in 2015 to take forward our dream of having a warm, damp-free, fully accessible, eco-friendly, fully refurbished set of premises. We wanted to create welcoming spaces with as many modern facilities as possible from which to take forward our mission in St Ives.

equipment and storage to keep rooms tidy. We imagined how we could improve welcome areas and honour our heritage whilst creating spaces to try new forms of outreach. Alongside all that, we wanted to include some original creative artwork wherever we could.

- A priority was to remodel the front of the building to include step free access to send out a more welcoming message. We worked with our architect and a blacksmith to provide an attractive new entrance with safety panels which reflect our outlook onto the river and small nature reserve.



Old Church front

We started with £9,000 which had been set aside to replace the old boiler. Seven years later we have spent £600,000! Lots of prayers and trust were needed all the way along as we knew we needed to be bold if we were to make a real difference. We spent some time 'imagining' with members, friends and user groups, under the guidance of an expert facilitator. We looked at provision of Audio Visual



New Church front



Old Church interior

- Our lighter, brighter community entrance gave us space to commission a photographic display for the staircase to bring the community into our premises in a new way. We invited the Friends of the nature reserve opposite us to submit photos and put six on display. There will be a new display each year reflecting different aspects of community life.

- We decided to have matching sanctuary furniture made for us to replace the existing items. We also have matching glass screens to create a prayer space, and a cupboard to store our heritage items.



Staircase gallery



New Church interior

- Having removed the old pulpit, we felt there was space in the worship area for a banner to tell our story.



- Elements of the existing fixtures and fittings were re-used or re-purposed wherever possible. Holding crosses were made by a church member from the old communion rail and given to all members and friends. We had large new store cupboards built and they were fitted with reclaimed handles from redundant doors.



The response from those using the building as we gradually re-opened last year has been overwhelmingly positive and the whole building is well used throughout the week. Importantly, we have welcomed many new families and individuals to worship, and some who were initially attracted by seeing the work that we have done, felt welcome, have stayed with us and are now fully involved in the life and work of the church.

Rev Heather Walker  
St Neots & Huntingdon Circuit

## A 'Well in the Week'

Rev Joanna Jacobs

**T**WO years ago, just before the pandemic struck and all churches were in lockdown along with everywhere else, we had seriously considered closing our Thursday prayer mornings at Seaton Road Methodist Church, Felixstowe. Our regular attendees were becoming frail, or had moved away, and our numbers had reduced to just a handful, even on a good day.

When churches were allowed to open for private prayer, we did just that, and people arrived to pray and light a candle, appreciative of the opportunity to do so.

Gradually, as more restrictions were lifted, in between lockdowns, more people came, even those just passing

by, glad to come into a church again, as some were still closed on Sundays.

It became evident that we were meeting a need for a quiet space, and for spiritual content that fed anxious minds and hearts.

So 'Well in the Week' emerged from that need. A structured series of 'Essentials for Wellness' was devised, such as Joy, Hope, Trust, Study and Obedience in the context of Scripture, prayer and praise. And, now that we can, refreshments and fellowship follow for those who wish to stay.

Our numbers have more than quadrupled! Transformational!

Rev Joanna Jacobs  
Ipswich Circuit

# District Agricultural Chaplain's Report

George Frost



A few weeks ago I was thinking about writing this article, and after a decent harvest, an exceptional Autumn for farmers to get ahead with the land work. Just enough rain to germinate the seeds and a mild winter. What could have been better?

That was the field work. Then came the problems with livestock. Not enough butchers to keep the abattoirs going, until the government decided to relax the licence for workers to come from Europe. This put the pig industry in the worst position I can remember. Pigs were being culled on the farm. Then in the poultry sector foul pest restriction, all poultry to be kept inside, and at the time of writing these are still in place. Not good news for marketing 'free-range eggs'. We don't know for how much longer these restrictions will be in place. Feed prices offer a huge challenge, with wheat over £200 per tonne, Maize being grown for bio-fuel, so not available for feed. I'm afraid the British public will have to pay more for their food in the future to retain a sustainable food chain.

A reduction in the Farm Support Grants

system has caused a few headaches. Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) seem to be setting guidelines for alternative cropping, more green, more trees and more houses being built on first and second class land. How can farming produce more from less and increase production and reduce imports?

This is not a good time with so many prices rising; artificial fertiliser, fuel prices going through the roof, incomes static and the government will want more in taxation to recover after the pandemic. Calls to the farming helpline are making demands on the volunteers. Mental health and finance are the most demanding requests, which are not easy to resolve. We must keep talking and praying that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

Yes God is good, we often sing this so let's keep singing His praises and remember His promise, for seed time and harvest will not cease.

Blessings to All

George Frost  
District Agricultural Chaplain

# Robert Keys

Norma Virgo

**A**s a young man, Robert Key toiled as a coal porter on Yarmouth dockside. The work was gruelling, filthy, and brutalizing. Key gained a reputation as a drunkard and a fighter. Then hearing Primitive Methodist singing as he walked along the street one day, his curiosity was aroused, and he began attending their meetings. He experienced conversion on Easter Sunday 1825.

To the amazement of his former colleagues, he was accepted as a local preacher less than two years later, although his lack of education meant he could hardly string two sentences together. Yet he showed such promise that the Fakenham Circuit engaged him to work there for six months for a small wage. Moving to North Walsham, he found that many were attracted to his preaching, but his request to become a travelling preacher [minister] was declined as the circuit officials felt him to be too rough for the task. Key persisted, steadfast in his mission, and so was sent to mission central Norfolk. No Primitive Methodist preachers had visited the area and the people were, Key stated, 'Exceedingly ignorant and proverbially wicked'.

He began preaching in the open air and found multitudes flocking to hear him,

but some came to attack. Sometimes his opponents were backed by the magistrates and clergy. At Watton, the vicar urged the mob on as Key was repeatedly knocked to the ground whilst at Reepham, Key wrote, 'a stone was thrown at me which broke my head...thrown by the hand of the clerk of the parish church'. Yet support grew and congregations were gathered.

The first chapel built by Key was at Cawston. He dug the foundations and sawed the wood himself. Then he found a ruined Wesleyan chapel at Mattishall, repaired it and immediately it was filled to overflowing.

The Keys lived in poverty. Their income was lower than the poorest paid agricultural labourer and only survived with the support of friends. When required to attend a meeting in London and not having the fare, Robert Key walked the whole way in both directions. When he missioned Hadleigh and Newmarket, he walked so many miles that the blood oozed above his shoes, and he was forced to tear off the bottoms of his trousers to bind his bleeding feet. People streamed in from miles around when he was holding camp meetings. He would preach and pray all day until late at night.

Significant improvements in behaviour were seen - setting ricks on fire and

stealing were halted whilst gambling and drunkenness declined.

Key worked in Ipswich, Cambridge, Lynn, Stowmarket, Downham Market, Fakenham, Yarmouth and Norwich, adding 2257 members to the Primitive Methodist Connexion. Stationed in Norwich in 1849, he oversaw the building of a chapel on Dereham Road. By the time he was again in Norwich in 1862, this chapel had become far too small so, with his accustomed energy, he raised money for a new building, contributing liberally from his own pocket.

Robert Key was a magnificent

preacher; His biographer and fellow minister, Thomas Lowe, wrote, 'he moved the excited crowd as the hurricane does the trees of the forest. He was like the dashing torrent which sweeps with the force and thundering rush of an avalanche from the mountain crags and steeps, impetuous and irresistible.'

When congregations were told of his death in September 1876, they wept openly. Hundreds attended his funeral at Dereham Road chapel and his burial at Norwich City cemetery.

Norma Virgoe  
District Archivist

## Rolling out the red carpet

Pat Dorrington



The dramatic highlight of the 30th anniversary celebration service at Trinity Church, Thorpe Marriot was the "rolling out of the red carpet for the Lord" by Revd Paul Wood, interim Director of the Ministries team at Methodist Church House, who was our guest Minister for the celebration. The celebration landed on the same day as the lectionary which marks "Christ the king". With this in mind, Paul surprised everybody by suddenly rushing up the aisle with the red carpet saying "this is for the Lord". We had all been looking forward to the service for some time as due to lockdown and the church being



closed, it was over 2 years wait, and by then it was our 30th anniversary which we celebrated. Originally our invitation was for the 28th anniversary but due to lockdown it was a nice coincidence that it was our 30th. A few of our members saw Paul and heard him preach at the Spring Synod held at Lowestoft, but it was really appropriate that he should be our guest for such a special year for us. It was really great for us all to meet him before the service and have an informal chat with him afterwards with refreshments.

Pat Dorrington

Member of Trinity Church, Thorpe Marriott

# An inspiring lady who transformed lives

Rev Nigel D Fox



**M**argaret  
Hardingham  
(29 May  
1930—8  
January 2022)



Margaret Hardingham's life was not only shaped by remarkable achievement but also by a real breadth of dedicated Christian ministry, which was outworked in both the local community and through her local church.

Margaret hailed from Lowestoft, daughter of Alice and Percy Harvey, and was educated as a weekly boarder in St John Leman school in Beccles. Although the prospect of university was denied her, Margaret set to work in banking. She rose to become Assistant Manager – a major achievement in itself for those days and an early indication that Margaret would accomplish much in her fruitful Christian life.

She met her future husband, Trevor, at a youth group at London Road Baptist Church. They were married there on Thursday 14 February 1957, so beginning their 64 year journey together in faithful marriage, and providing such a loving family home for Jane and Jeremy, for her 7 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren.

They settled in Norwich, and remained so active through their 'local', the Methodist Church on Wroxham Road in Sprowston. While Trevor's work was coupled with active ministry that involved, for example, helping take Bibles

behind the (then) Iron Curtain, Margaret's own discipleship covered a different range of dedicated ministries, both in the community and in the church.

Besides involvement in the Sprowston Nursery Playgroup, Margaret also ran the Nursery at St Christopher's school for many years. Whilst there, she applied for and gained a Winston Churchill Fellowship award for the study of development of the Under 5s. Reporting on her studies in the Netherlands, she reinvested her learning in lecturing at Norwich City College.

Margaret served the wider community as a parish counsellor and as a district counsellor for Broadland D C. She also served on and chaired the Wherry Housing Committee as well as governor in five nearby schools. With experience gained in looking after her own mother, Margaret was actively involved with Age UK (formerly Age Concern, as Chair

of Norfolk A.C). Over the years, many people have turned to her for practical information when in need and been grateful for her help.

Margaret is also remembered for so much work in her local church. Besides the mid-week fellowships and regular activities such as the Bright Hour (recently 'Cameo'), she led a House Group and was active as a Pastoral Visitor. She trained and became accredited as a Local Preacher, offering many years of loyal service from the pulpit throughout the Norwich Circuit and beyond.

involved throughout its rapid growth towards formation as a local church with full-time Pastor in 2014 and then to its re-establishment in new premises at Bowthorpe Road in 2018.

Without fail on Sundays and Mondays every week, Margaret was always on hand to offer active support and advocacy, even offering some useful English lessons for those needing some basic English. Her love for and care of the Chinese congregation was tireless, even when walking around the corner to meetings became difficult. Such loving support made her more than a



Together with Trevor, she was active in special projects such as Mission England in 1984, with J John's "Just 10" mission to Norwich and with the running of local Alpha courses.

Margaret's unflagging dedication is perhaps best highlighted in her work with Chinese friends in Norwich. From the very first request that the fledgling fellowship should settle at Wroxham Road in 2003, she remained actively

mother or grandmother figure to her beloved Chinese friends and their deep affection is perhaps best summarised by Pastor Edmond Tsui (now retired), who said, "I always say that Margaret is an angel to us!"

Margaret loved the Lord Jesus and, as a dedicated Christian disciple, she has been a blessing. Many have been blessed through her ministries.

Rev Nigel Fox  
Norwich Circuit

# Transformative gathering at Cliff College - “Not Declining but Changing”

Geraldine Allen and Sarah Rodgers



the church is not about decline but about change.

“Not Declining but Changing”, brings to mind the Stevie Smith Poem “Not Waving but Drowning” –

*Nobody heard him, the dead man,  
But still he lay moaning:  
I was much further out than you  
thought  
And not waving but drowning.*

The central conflict in the poem surrounds a lack of communication and misinterpretation between the main character and the rest of society. This disconnect was highlighted during our Pioneer discussions and we were challenged as to how much we and the wider church are observant of where and how we are simply not communicating with society at large.

“Not declining but changing” are the words that are ringing through our ears following an inspiring Residential Course at Cliff College at the beginning of February this year. The Course was called Church Planting Intensive but it is difficult to put everything the Pioneers on the course were discussing into one labelled box. Sharing, as we did, many different people’s vision for transformative projects nationwide, perhaps New Places for New People expresses the purpose and intention more clearly.

Ensuing from the pandemic, there is much talk about declining numbers and closing churches but what came over so strongly from the Evangelism and Growth Team, Rev Matt Finch and Deacon Eunice Attwood, and from the pioneers gathered for this Pioneering Pathways event is what is happening to



The Residential Course was the beginning of a period of study and collaborative purpose which will now continue monthly on Zoom with Pioneers across the country. We are able to share our dreams and visions for our local settings with connecting and building community as a core priority. We are also exploring the values and theology behind New Places for New People.

At **The Hive**, in Great Cressingham, Norfolk, we see this as our purpose and focus and we seek to do this by offering opportunities and insights that draw people in and provide a context for questioning, exploring and connecting to their spiritual selves and thereby find pathways to God.

Launched at the beginning of the second lockdown and continuing, as guidelines permitted, through the intervening lockdowns, we have been able to welcome over 100 new people, most of whom do not go, would not go and have no interest in going to what they see today as church.

We describe **The Hive** as a place of

creativity, spirituality and well-being, all of which are terms which communicate their meanings to a wide base. Under these three complementary paths, the founding team of four bring their own skills, interests and contacts to a varied programme.

Over the past year we have shared, studied and taken part in music and singing, yoga and walking, nature connections, local history, map-reading,

well-being topics, Celtic spirituality, reflective retreats, labyrinths and carols by candlelight.

We have inspired one another and with conversations in and around the activities have become aware of small but significant transformations. We drink a lot of properly brewed real coffee and keep refreshing the question as to why

we feel called to do this. The answer is constantly evolving, particularly as we talk to others on Pioneering Pathways. One of us recently expressed an answer to the *why* which will be our touchstone for this year: we are **living our faith**.



Geraldine Allen & Sarah Rodgers  
The Hive, Great Cressingham

## District News

### **An introduction to our new District Administrator, Danielle Gravestock ...**

Greetings from your new District Administrator.

I have lived in Norfolk my whole life and absolutely love everything about East Anglia, from the architecture in the cities, to the wonderful people and community spirit.

I am therefore delighted to be able to support the East Anglia District as the new District Administrator.

Previously I worked as a Senior Fundraising Officer for local charity, Break. My role at Break was to raise awareness and funds to support the work of the charity, this included giving talks to community groups and schools, organising events, and supporting charity of the year partnerships.

I am a Mum to a wonderful 9-year-old son, called Jacob.

Jacob and I live on the outskirts of Norwich and are both Christians.

Jacob and I love to kayak on local rivers, our favourite paddle is Mayton Bridge to Buxton. My son and I also enjoy bike rides, and we are very lucky to live near Marriott's

Way, which offers some very beautiful cycle routes.

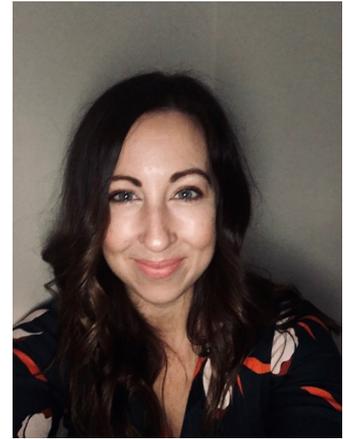
In my free time (when not undertaking DIY on the house that I bought last year) I volunteer at the NNUH as a Feeding Peer Supporter on the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. I have been doing this for over 6 years.

I like to keep a good balance in life and enjoy regular yoga, acupuncture, reading and going for walks in the countryside.

I also have a passion for flower arranging and the joy that flowers can bring and am currently completing an online Floristry course.

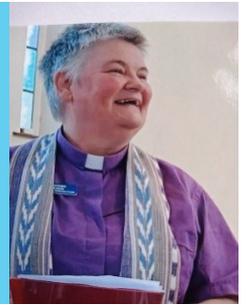
I am absolutely thrilled to work for The Methodist Church East Anglia District. I have received such a kind and warm welcome from everyone, and I am incredibly grateful for that. I look forward to speaking and meeting with many of you in the future.

**Danielle Gravestock**



# Rainbow railings

Rev Donna Dodson



## BEFORE

It was a rather sad back alley. A short cut to the shops and sometimes a site of vandalism. The path beside our church and the local authority flats often felt depressing. The church had put tall railings up some years ago, to deter stone throwing young people and keep people using the building safe. Someone even said the industrial style railings made the back of the church buildings look like a prison yard.

## AFTER

Now a joyful rolling rainbow has made this alley and our church car park a symbol of hope and community.

The transformation of our railings is also part of other transformations:

- Of our church family,
- Of the morale of our community, and
- Of our role as partners with other local people and groups who want to make a difference.

Lots of different people are part of this transformation. An arts charity called “Freshly Greated” were looking for people to work with on our estate. We got a group of local people together to talk about how to brighten things up using art. A gifted young spray paint artist who was looking for opportunities to use his skills. A church willing to risk it and waiting to see what would happen.

So, last October half-term, we put the word out that a rainbow was going to

be painted on our railings and did anyone want to come and join in. They did and it happened. It didn't cost us anything and we weren't

sure what to expect. We didn't expect this:

- A veteran member of our church posed for pictures with the rainbow.



- A young teenage mum with her baby (and her mother) stopped to look at the rainbow. I asked if they liked it. Then had a conversation about how isolated they have been and they hope to join in with the Messy Tots baby and toddler group.
- Several families posed for pictures with the railings and sent wonderful messages.
- A friend of one of the groups involved was shown the video of the rainbow on the railings. He and his husband have been very hurt and alienated from churches in the past and over the COVID lockdown he has been unable to face going out. Having seen the rainbow he and his husband plan to have their marriage blessed in church.
- A neighbour of the church pulled up in the car when she saw me to say how much the rainbow cheered up the area.



- A dog walker, a middle aged gentleman, walked up and down twice admiring the rainbow and said it was brilliant. He said it reminded him of his hippy days.
- A young lad (about 10) came and joined in some painting we were doing in the hall at the time. He sidled over to me and whispered; "I've never been in a church before."
- A mum emailed to say that her two boys had come along and had a brilliant time and she really hoped they could be engaged in something like this to help them build their confidence.



- An older gentleman said it was great and good to see the community doing something positive.
- Loads of thank you messages were left on our church Facebook group.
- Kellie—one of the group—set-up a 'We love Magdalen Estate' Facebook group that has about 450 members.

The rainbow is painted on the outside of the railings, facing the community around us. In many ways it has become a sign. A sign that has many different meanings. It tells people that we are an inclusive and affirming community. It says there is hope and fun to be had. It reminds us that we are part of a wider community, where there are wonderful creative and positive people who it's a blessing to work alongside.

church. There are still loads of issues with our buildings and struggles in our community, but now, we are the 'rainbow' church and our 'prison yard' is a bright and bold symbol of hope. It has been a wonderful experience to find that the rainbow railings have touched a rainbow of different types of people.

Rev Donna Dodson

Associate Minister at Magdalen Way Gorleston,  
Broads Circuit A.K.A MAG WAY and Rainbow church



Here are two of our rainbow crew. Lottie and Kellie really got stuck in. Lottie joined in painting the

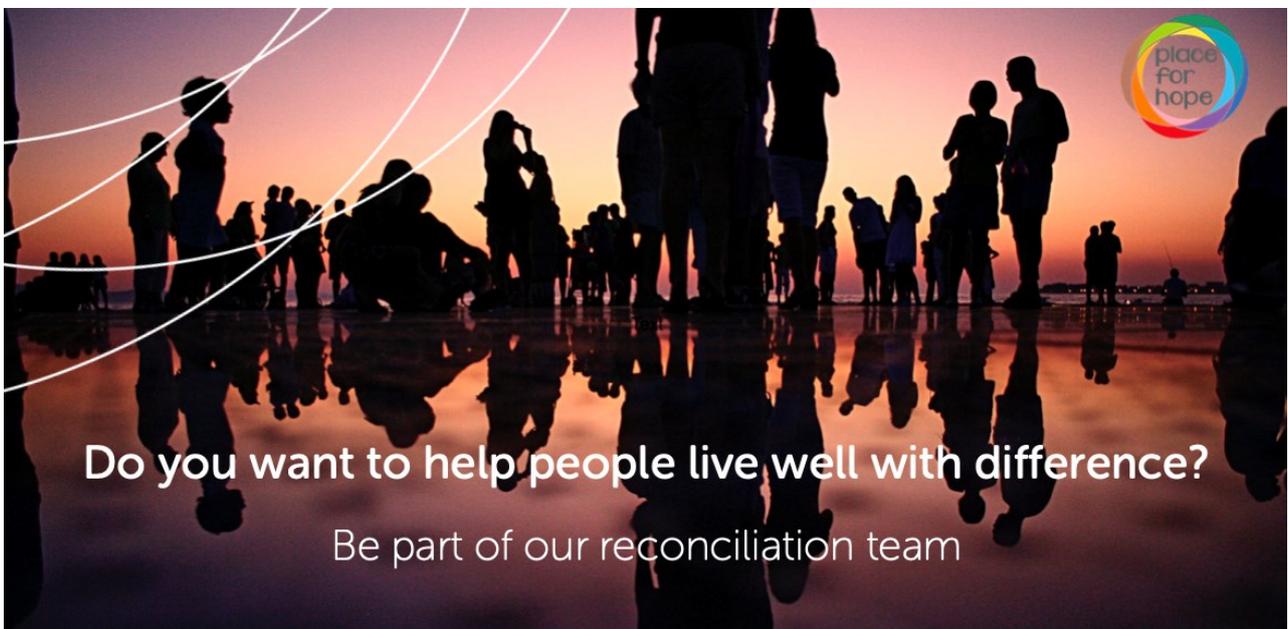
railing and Kellie has started our local Facebook group. They are a joy to have around and great friends of the



**We are looking for more people to join the reconciliation and mediation team being piloted by the Methodist Church in partnership with Place for Hope. It would be great to hear from you!**

**If you are within reach of the Eastern, London or North West and Mann Learning Network Regions and would like to find out more please get in touch with**

**Katie Bradley: [katie.bradley@placeforhope.org.uk](mailto:katie.bradley@placeforhope.org.uk)**



# Contributions

We hope you have been inspired by the articles  
in this edition of *grapevine*.

If you would like to make a contribution to  
the next edition, we would love to hear from you.

Please send any news items, letters and photographs,  
which you would like to share with others in the  
district to:

[eagrapevine@gmail.com](mailto:eagrapevine@gmail.com)

*or post to 'grapevine'*

District Office,  
Chapel Field Road Methodist Church  
Norwich, NR2 1SD

For further information, please contact  
the District Office on 01603 625765

*Unfortunately we cannot guarantee  
inclusion of all contributions.*