

Rejoice!

February 2018



**The Magazine of the
West Norfolk Methodist Circuit**

Dear friends,

Once again, I am writing hurriedly to meet the deadline. It is early January and we have left Christmas behind. By the time you read this it will be early February. A short time ago I read something about “conversational partners” and I thought I would introduce them to you. Conversational partners are people we have met, people from the past or present, they could be people from books. They are people who influence us and who we do not forget but who we are in constant dialogue with. Let me mention two such people in my own life.

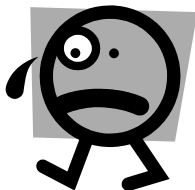
The first is Hosea. Of course, I never got to meet him only the book that bears his name. I began to be influenced by him as a teenager and that influence has never diminished. I would like to ask Hosea about his unusual marriage and children who bear symbolic names. But the key message of Hosea is that the character of God is love and God’s love despite our fickleness does not let us go. This startling truth confronts me all the time. It is there when I do well but also when I fail. When I am sad and when I get into scrapes and make a mess of things (which I do)! To know that God’s love continues to reach out to me and to each person whatever they have done – well it is a game changer. It alters me and my whole attitude when I meet others. Here is someone that God’s love surrounds even though they don’t appear to be aware of it. Hosea should have written ‘O Love that wilt not let me go’ but that was much later.

My second conversation partner is Eric. I first met Eric at a theological conference when I was training to be a minister and he asked me what students did in the summer. I told him I had nothing planned. Next thing I knew a Circuit practice was arranged. So, I went to Cheadle, a small market town in Staffordshire. Eric was the Super and I quickly found myself meeting and visiting all kinds of people. I got sent here, there, and everywhere, for I had no idea this was one of Eric’s passions and priorities. He was ok as a preacher and a leader, but the heart of his ministry was pastoral. He constantly called on folk, met with people, mixed with people, introduced himself to people, he cared for them and they knew it. In the ten years he had in Cheadle, the church grew, because he was there for them, they had someone who cared and through it people saw God at work. Although this was a summer about 35 years ago, I have not forgotten the lessons of it. A ministry of care ought to be a priority of the church for both ordained

and lay. Because of the huge demands put upon clergy, it now has to be a joint endeavour and a shared ministry but important nonetheless. Put negatively, if we come across as not interested or bothered, why should anyone stick with us. But if we call and talk to folk relationships are made. God can be in those conversations.

I have many other conversation partners, and I could write a book telling you about them. Some are reading this message, for you continue to challenge me and inspire me. And I have others who I will meet in the future too. Who are your conversation partners? People who still speak to you, whether from the past or present. Let us travel on together in 2018, with companions from writing, from life and more besides. Let us never think we are on our own, we have each other and we can continue to seek all that God has for us.

Sincerely Maurice



Any items for the **MARCH** edition should be with the editor by **FEBRUARY 12th**, earlier if possible. **If you don't get an acknowledgment of emails PLEASE enquire if I have received them as some articles have found their way into my spam bin which I don't check very often!**

Mrs Barbara Foster
140 Stow Road
Magdalen, King's Lynn
PE34 3BD
Tel. 01553 811867
E mail rabbit1308@btinternet.com

Praying together in the Circuit

God has shown us his love by sending his only Son into the world
so that we could have life through him.

This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us
and sent his Son to be the punishment for our sins.

John 4: 8 10

As we approach Lent we prepare to mark the forty days when
Jesus overcame temptation in the bleak wilderness.

He came to do the will of His father; the opposition was intense.

His communion with and devotion to his father was his passion.

He boldly spoke the word of God against each temptation and was
victorious over all the powers of evil. God's purpose proceeded to
the greatest sacrifice of love ever made – on the cross of Calvary.

God's Agape love. Perfect love.

The current 'Connexion' Magazine reminds us:-

The calling of the Methodist Church
is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ
and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

O Lord our God our desire is to love you with all our heart,
with all our soul, with all our strength, with all our mind.

Loving you with reverence, in response to who you are.

We worship you and want to live to honour you.

Pour your love into our hearts and let it flow through us as we live
out our calling to love our neighbour.

May love be our motivation as we reach out to others
and our hearts be in tune with yours to seek and save the lost.

Our longing is for them to experience and respond to your
redeeming love poured out through Jesus our Saviour.

Keep us obedient to you, surrendered to your will.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit, engage us in your great commission.

Prayers have been requested for: -

Derek + Viv, Stephanie, Janice, Amy, Trisha, Linda, Andrew, Mavis,
Julia., Rachel, Judy, Dulcie + Neill, Kelly, Kath, Stephen + Victoria,
William, Tom, Ken + Norma, Brian Osborne, Sarah,

Lord, hear our prayers for:-

those we know and those we meet who have health problems,
those who are troubled, confused, overcome with fears
we hold them in your presence, minister your healing and wholeness.

In the Name of Jesus we pray.

For NHS, staff and emergency services

Giving thanks for their commitment and the care they give.
Uphold them in the difficulties and pressures they face at this time.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

CIRCUIT SERVICE

There will be a Circuit service on Sunday 27th May at 3pm as part of the prayer initiative 'Thy Kingdom Come'. The preacher will be the District Chair, the Rev. Julian Pursehouse, and the service will include the Admission of Thomas Smith as a Local Preacher.

SPRING PASTORAL DAY

This is not happening on the original date in February - watch this space for the new date, or contact Phyllis Bowman or Catherine Dixon. The day will be looking at sudden bereavement and our response as individuals and as a church.

--

Rev. Catherine Dixon



Clenchwarton

Every year our members send shoeboxes to deserving children. This year the collection from our second Christmas Tree Festival went towards the boxes. On the Saturday we had The Flukes Ukelele Band and on the Sunday afternoon The Tilden Country and Western Band. On Sunday 17th we had our Nativity and Christingle service, when it was good to have the children.

On 21st The Halcyon Singers, who rehearse in our schoolroom, gave a concert. The schoolroom was full and £50 was sent to the QE wheelchair fund.

Oh yes, we did have a service on Christmas Eve. We had thought we wouldn't be able to. It was an informal service, with favourites chosen from a list from Hymns and Psalms. A Christmas poem was read and we had a mini sermon.

A Happy New Year to all.

Harold Smith

Terrington St Clement

We joined with Clenchwarton for a Christmas tea party. The Halcyon singers performed and led the singing of carols. Thanks to Marjorie Bocking for organising this event.

he Christmas Coffee Morning went well, raising £420 thanks to all who supported us.

Prize winners were "Why is the cuddly dog so sad? " "the kennel was too draughty" won by Janette Hunter, sweets in the jar, Pauline Gadsden, lucky numbers in the sack, Gillian Watson, Frauke Atkins , Marjorie Bocking and Pam Clarke.

We joined with members of the Parish Church to sing carols outside the TSC Coop. The money collected was shared between two charities.

Linda Howling

Downham Market

Ladies Friendship Circle

Happy New Year to you all.

We start our 2018 programme on February 7th with a Bingo evening.

We haven't tried this before but hope you will enjoy it. If you haven't played before it doesn't matter, it is only a bit of fun.

21st February will be our annual Bring and Buy sale for the Deep Sea Fishermen's Mission.

We welcome new members just come along and see what we do, We meet in the Function room at the Methodist Church every other Wednesday.

Best Wishes

Margaret Fox

While we have so far escaped very severe weather, for which we must be grateful, these foggy days with no sign of the sun can be very depressing. I do envy dormice who sleep the Winter through and then wake up in the Spring, slim and trim. But at the moment Canada is having a very severe cold patch and no doubt it will cross the ocean to us although not so severe by the time it arrives. All my plants are hibernating at the moment, like us waiting for Spring, so I just have a table of house plants at the coffee morning each week. They are very important for our health, helping to remove lots of impurities from the air. I remember when cycling round Holland in my youth I was surprised to see small curtains at the tops of all the house windows while tall house plants filled the lower part, giving privacy and fresher

air to those who lived there. Before I was able to live in my refurbished cottage I filled it with house plants to get rid of the paint, plaster and other smells.

Our Saturday coffee mornings recommenced after Christmas on 6th January when seventy-two folk came to enjoy fellowship, refreshments including homemade cakes and a chance to buy some low priced articles from the bric a brac stall. For those who live alone this weekly event is a good opportunity to socialise with their friends in a very comfortable atmosphere so if you haven't dropped in before come and give it a try. As well as the coffee morning, we are now returning to all our regular commitments at Church, hopefully refreshed after the Christmas break and able to tweak or drop some of the things we do to make them more effective as we prepare for the annual Covenant Service when we take up the challenge of the year ahead and the work he would have us do.

Our Boys' Brigade Group is still going strong under the leadership of Ralph Perkins and is looking forward to the arrival of new activity games which have been ordered thanks to a donation of £1,000 from the Masons and will be used by the twelve boys who attend regularly. The over ten-year olds are also looking forward to going to camp soon and we wish them well in their activities, with good weather, as they absorb the training given them week by week by the adult members who give up their time in this special form of outreach.

Messy Church.

Since the last Rejoice was published, we have had 2 Messy Church sessions. In December we were celebrating Christmas, of course, and every family left with a booklet about Christmas suitable for family reading and every child had a small gift.

On January 12th we were thinking about Jacob's ladder and how earth and heaven are connected. During the week we had delivered flyers to the local schools and they brought some new families in.

We tried something quite new to us in early December in that we held what we called a Messy Church CFS on a Sunday morning. Messy Church families were invited and during the service anyone who

wanted to make a Christingle or take part in other activities such as making marshmallow angels was invited to leave to go to the hall for about 20 minutes to share in those activities. While that was happening, those who stayed in church, heard a Bible reading, sang hymns and listened to a reflection. The people from the hall returned, showing what they had made and the service finished with everyone together. It was the day when it snowed all morning, so the attendance was smaller than usual, but there were over a dozen children, including some who would not usually come on a Sunday and they and the 'usual' congregation enjoyed worshipping and sharing together.

At the first meeting of Churches Together this year it was reported that the three nights carol singing at Tesco had raised a total of £233 towards Christmas hampers (this will of course be helping to pay for this year's hampers helped by donations from all the Churches who hold special events in early Autumn). Thirty hampers were sent out, ranging from single people to families of six. Alex reported that some families were in desperate need and had been quite tearful as they accepted the Christmas goodies, while letters of thanks have also been received. Dates for future events were confirmed starting with a service that was here for Christian Unity on 21st January. An ecumenical day of prayer is planned for Saturday 28th April, also here, so watch this space for further details. The Women's World Day of Prayer service will take place on 12th March at 6.30 p.m. at St. Marys, Denver and on 13th May at 6.30 p.m. the annual Christian Aid service will be held at West Dereham. A Songs of Praise service is planned for the beginning of Downham Festival Week, 27th May, at this Church. So, lots to look forward to and lots of work to be done. I am hoping to have more energy when this dull only fit for hibernating weather is over. Crisp, sunny days are fine but the gloom is so depressing. Must be grateful though that we have shelter and food and peace in our land which so many have not. May the sun shine on us all in the weeks ahead.

Joan Macey

Pott Row

All members of Pott Row Methodist Chapel, send a big thank you to all and everyone who made our Christmas tree festival such a big success. We couldn't have managed without you. The trees and arrangements looked amazing.

Also the visitors who had coffee, bought cakes or gifts from our well stocked Christmas stalls.

Finishing with a nearly full chapel at our Carol Service could not have been better, our two young cellists Phoebe and Ezra, The Beaver, and the Readers. We thank you one and all.

Jenny Baker.

Wimbotsham

Since the last edition of Rejoice we celebrated the birth of our Lord with a rousing carol service on Christmas Eve accompanied by The Bowman Ensemble. The service was led by Dudley Pickston with the closing prayer "May the bright light of Christ enlighten our hearts, shine in our minds and direct our journeying, and give light to the world. Come, Lord Jesus".

So we moved into the New Year. Rev. Maurice led our Covenant Service on 7th January. It was a wonderful start to the year with the pews almost full. We are so happy to see our Chapel membership increasing and the numbers in our congregation swelling.

We look forward to discovering the ways our Lord is directing us through this year of 2018.

Mary Davies

I LOVE SURPRISES! On returning to church after a long absence, I had one. Passing through the portals of Wimbotsham Chapel I received a lovely welcome, not OTT but warm and friendly....first hurdle over. As the months have passed I am finding the comfortable feeling of being in a family.

Each Sunday for me is a new experience. We have good worship, good singing. It's good to be in this place. Not to be missed is the frequent "Gates and Co" service, like a posh CFS. Who wants to share, can do. It's good to see people wanting to share so many different things - another way of praising the Lord together and all overseen by Don. With coffee and biscuits to follow, what more can you want? Plus, our Bible Study/Fellowship meetings are going very well. Once again it is a wonderful time to share our thoughts and any worries. Refreshments are provided. It is wonderful to feel God is guiding us all the way.

Mick Banks

Highgate Chapel

On Heritage Sunday in September many historic places of interest in King's Lynn were opened up to the public. As Highgate chapel is one of the oldest in the Circuit we opened the doors at 10 a.m. to welcome people passing by, and those who were really interested in stepping into the chapel for the first time.

The outside of the chapel was decorated with balloons, which gave it a welcoming atmosphere. Several people visited us until our service started at 3 pm. We offered refreshments and a friendly chat. On display were photographs and books charting special events which had taken place in the chapel. People were quite surprised when they entered at how cosy and welcoming it was.

We as a congregation were so pleased to share fellowship with the community and trust that many of our visitors would have sensed God's presence. [Frances Singleterry]

We were pleased to welcome two people on holiday from America, they were married at London Road. A young lady and her family, her grandmother had been a member at Highgate and started the Ladies Fellowship. Someone who had lived next door but never been in the Chapel before. A couple from Yorkshire and another couple from Bishops Stortford, amongst others. [Peter Mason]

In the Autumn we received an invitation from the Mayor to attend a reception as a thank you for those who had been part of the 'very

successful' Heritage Sunday event. June and I attended the reception on 30th November. It was a lovely evening, interesting and very well attended. We were very thankful for the invitation and the tasty buffet!

The mayor was very much in demand with many people queuing to speak with her, but she very kindly made time to speak with us, and even posed for a photo with June. She was very interested to learn from us all about Highgate church because she had not been aware of its existence before. When we mentioned the parking problems we have she directed us to a councillor who was standing nearby. He listened as we explained how it has affected the church especially those who are Blue Badge holders. It has also considerably affected us financially. He will be looking into the parking restrictions for us. Several people I have spoken to lately including three at the heritage reception had never heard of Highgate church. As we prepare to celebrate our church anniversary 1850-2018 it is encouraging to know that God is still providing us with opportunities to tell others about Him and about us as a church, a chance to sow the seeds and pray for a revival!!! [Shirley Evans]

I was born in Kings Lynn, I left in my 20s and returned in my 80s and what a change! When I came back to Lynn I went to a little Chapel called Highgate and as soon as I walked in I was met with love, not just from the people but the Love of God. As a child I had walked past the Chapel but had never been in, we went to London Road Methodist Church at that time. If you are free on a Sunday, our service starts at 3pm so come and join the Christian fellowship. Let us keep remembering one another in prayer and our world in which we live.

[June Wales].

Feltwell

Yes, we're still here. We may be small in number but we're great in spirit. I returned to my dad's old chapel 30 years after he left and received a warm and enthusiastic welcome from everyone here. We

had a good year in 2017, achieving some significant repairs through help from our members and our hedge trimmings helped the Cubs have a bigger bonfire in November! Our coffee mornings on the first Thursday of each month have been an ever-popular event while the Christmas bazaar/craft fair "Hall of Stalls" was a big success raising £300. Some of the stallholders said they would be keen to repeat the event, so..... watch this space! We were delighted to worship in the main chapel three times over Christmas from the candlelit carol service when Jean and Brigitte made a magnificent job of decorating the Chapel. We look forward to an active 2018 spreading The Word through community activities.

Michael Wilkinson

St Faith's

In common with many other churches, St Faith's Anglican and Methodist Church at Gaywood presented a full programme of Christmas services which were well attended by both church members as well as those from within the wider community.

One of the most popular services was the Carols by Candlelight service on the Sunday evening before Christmas Eve.

The church took on a magical appearance with the candles all lit and the Corona, above the chancel, put up and dressed in greenery by Peter and Carol Dexter, looked stunning. As reported in the Lynn News, the wrought-iron candle holders had been restored and repainted by sixth form students from the Churchill Park Complex Needs School on Fairstead Estate. St Faith's Church is most grateful for the work carried out by the students.

Other popular services were the Christingle Service on December 20th and the Crib service on Christmas Eve afternoon.

The church was full for the 11.15pm Midnight Communion Service and parents took their children to the Family Service on Christmas Day morning.

In addition to these special services, there was a series of Gaywood school Carol services and these were full of pupils, staff and parents. Festive fellowship, food and fun was enjoyed by dozens of people on Christmas Day when we welcomed those in the community who would otherwise have been alone on such a special day.

For the first time, we hosted a three-course traditional Turkey Christmas Day lunch with all the trimmings in the Church Rooms. It was offered totally free to all guests. An enthusiastic team of hard-working volunteers prepared, cooked and served the meal to 45 people from the Gaywood area and others parts of King's Lynn.

Phase Two of the Church Rooms had been transformed with festive decorations and Christmas tree and Rev. Julie Boyd even led a "Blue Peter-style" workshop during which some of the volunteers created table centre pieces using holly and greenery from the Rectory gardens.

Rev. Canon James Nash, of the Church in The Woottons, together with people from these parishes, was also involved. Further support on the day of the Lunch was given by St Faith's Team Vicar, Rev. Karlene Kerr and Methodist Minister, Rev. Catherine Dixon.

The idea behind the lunch was that people, who for various reasons would have spent Christmas Day alone, were brought together to share fellowship, food and fun and it proved to be a great success.

Before sitting down to the meal, guests were able to meet each other informally over a drink and invited to take part in a special Christmas quiz. Before the meal prayers were offered by Rev. Julie Boyd, who also later led some community Carol singing. As they left all the guests were given a gift.

The lunch was generously financially sponsored by Together Norfolk: Dreams and Visions (Together Norfolk is a joint venture between the Norwich Diocese and the Church Urban Fund) and the King's Lynn Methodist Charity Trust.

St Faith's also greatly appreciated generous sponsorship from local retailers included the Coop Funeral Service at Gaywood, Gaywood

Tesco and Aldi stores, B&M Bargains in Lynn town centre and Home Bargains at the town's St Nicholas Retail Park.

Rev. Boyd, who enthusiastically led the Christmas Lunch project with her husband, Matthew, said she was delighted at the success of the event. "Christmas Day in the Gaywood Church Rooms was very special indeed. We were delighted that so many people were able to share in this celebration together. We very much hope that this is something that can be repeated in future years".

The Rev Boyd added: "Caring for people in the community surely has to be at the very heart of Christmas and we are thankful to all those who helped us do just that."

Before the end of the Lunch Rev. Boyd and her husband Matthew were thanked for all the enthusiasm and energy they put into leading the Project. It had been planned with "military precision" with Matthew, daughter Harriet and her boyfriend Joe ensuring that the turkeys were all cooked to perfection.

They were each given a gift and Julie had a Christmas bouquet.

There have already been requests for St Faith's to arrange another Christmas Day lunch this year so watch this space. ,

The month of February this year has a special significance for St Faith's Church, its members and supporters from within the wider community. For it is 20 years since the formation of The Friends of St Faith's Church. This group is a charity founded in 1998 under the chairmanship of church member Dennis Stafford. Over the years, funds raised by the Friends have provided new lighting, heating and an audio system. It has also assisted with the first phase of the church roof repairs. Jackie Pearce is the current chairman.

Often people who do not attend church regularly are prepared to help maintain the church building as a place for family occasions such as baptisms, weddings and funerals. They also like to contribute financially to the upkeep of the church building when they attend special services during the year - Christmas, Easter, Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday.

Every week throughout the year St Faith's Church is open as a place that people can use for prayer and quiet reflection.

Raising funds for the preservation, restoration and repair of our ancient beloved church building is the sole purpose for the Friends. Rev. Julie Boyd, has praised the role of the group and says it is very good for St Faith's Church to have FRIENDS.

She said: "The Friends of St Faith's Church, Gaywood, have achieved so much over the last 20 years and we are very grateful for the Trustees past and present and to all members."

She continued: "Working alongside our Friends, we endeavour to look after our church building so that future generations can benefit from its beauty, its historic significance and all that it offers to us as a House of Prayer."

Later this year it is hoped to stage a concert in St Faith's Church to celebrate the anniversary and all that the group has achieved. Further details will be announced later.

In the near future, further work needs to be carried out on the building and the Friends, as always, will be willing and proud to make their contribution.

For further information about the Friends, or to find out how you can become a member, please call the Church Office on 01553 774916 or speak to the Rector or to Jackie Pearce.

The first Saturday in February....Saturday, February 3rd, sees the latest in the popular monthly St Faith's Church Coffee Mornings at Gaywood Church Rooms. As usual, the session starts at 10am and admission is free. In addition to coffee and tea and home-made cakes and savouries, it is hoped there will be stalls run by a butcher, a baker and a card-maker. There will also be a raffle with a selection of good prizes. Everyone is welcome to the coffee morning so do come along and enjoy a couple of hours of friendly fellowship and fun. All proceeds are for church funds.

It hardly seems possible, but St Faith's fund-raising team has already met to plan the 2018 Spring Fayre which will be held in the Church

Rooms on Saturday, March 17th. Admission is free to the event which opens at 2pm.

As usual, a variety of colourful stall and games of chance stalls will be set up for people to browse and hopefully spend their money. All proceeds go towards the day-to-day running costs of the church. There is usually a happy, family atmosphere at the event. As well as the range of stalls there is also a refreshment area where there is an opportunity sit and relax and chat with friends over a cup of tea or coffee and a delicious slice of home-made cake.

The Spring Fayre, together with the Summer Fair and Christmas Fair, are the three-major fund-raising events held to raise funds for the ministry and mission of St Faith's Church.

Following the departure of St Faith's Office manager Michaela Ranger, in December, to take up a new post at the Churchill Park Complex Needs School on Fairstead Estate, the Office will now only be open on three mornings each week. It will be open from 9am until 12 noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Richard Parr

Hilgay

Thanks to everyone who has held me in their thoughts and prayers during my recent stays in hospital. Hopefully by the time you read this I shall be feeling much better.

Pauline

Our Guild Programme for February/March is as follows:

6th February-Lesley Dent on Tea
20th February-Rev. Catherine Dixon
6th March-Gwen Dearsley on Floods
20th March-AGM and Tea
30th March-Good Friday Service

A " letter from Jesus poem " which Meg Cooper came across whilst searching for something over Christmas.

If you look for me at Christmas
You won't need a special star.....
I am no longer just in Bethlehem,
I and right there where you are.
You may not be aware of Me
Amid the celebrations.....
You'll have to look beyond the stores
And all the decorations.
But if you take a moment
From your list of things to do
And listen to your heart, you'll find
I'm waiting there for you.
You're the one I want to be with,
You're the reason that I came,
And you'll find Me in the stillness
As I'm whispering your name.
Love,
Jesus.

More words

Johnny's mother had three children. The first child was named April.
The second child was named May. What was the third child's name?

There is an assistant at the butcher's, he is five feet ten inches tall and he wears size 13 shoes. What does he weigh?

Before Mt. Everest was discovered, what was the highest mountain in the world?

How much dirt is there in a hole that measures two feet by three feet by four feet?

LENT GROUP

The Rev. Catherine Dixon will be organising a weekly reflection group during Lent. This year we will be following Stephen Cottrell's book *The Things He Carried*. Sessions are from 10am – 11ish am at South Wootton Methodist Church, beginning on Tuesday 20th February for six weeks. All are welcome to drop in for one session or all.

Lent groups will also be held in Downham Market on Monday mornings at 10am at the Chapel and at the Manse on Monday evenings at 7pm. For more details contact Rev. Maurice Stafford

ECO-FRIENDLY CHURCHES

How can the Church be more environmentally friendly?

A talk by David Chandler organised by Churches Together in King's Lynn, at London Road Methodist Church, on **Wednesday 7th February at 7.30pm**

QUIZ NIGHT

Following the success of last year, Churches Together are organizing another Quiz Night on **Friday 23rd February at 7.30pm** at London Road Methodist Church. The Quiz is free and all are welcome. Teams can be formed on the night. Light refreshments will be served during which Julian Bryant from the Norwich Christian Aid Office will give a brief talk. This fun Quiz will cover a range of general knowledge.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

This year the service for WWDP has been put together by Christian women of Suriname, and is titled **All God's Creation is Very Good!** This year the service for the King's Lynn area will be hosted by **St Faith's**, Gaywood, on **Friday 2nd March at 11am**. The service will be led by the Rev. Catherine Dixon, and the reflection will be given by Mrs Daphne Sampson. There will also be a service at Denver Parish Church at 2 pm.

Oberammergau 2020 Extension

Mary Cumbers has been given permission by Rev. Andrew Maguire to organise a CIRCUIT TRIP to the next Passion Play in Oberammergau in 2020.

She has managed to get a booking extension until March.

It will be from 13th to 20th May 2020. 8 days, 7 nights.

It is impossible to get tickets for the play without it being part of a holiday

The holiday part will be spent in a hotel beside Lake Garda, single and double rooms available. There will be a coach and boat trip around the Lake, a day trip to Venice, and a day in Verona. There will be a free day from the hotel OR at extra cost a day trip to the Dolomites. On our way to Oberammergau we will visit Innsbruck.

We are in Oberammergau for 2 nights; there are NO single rooms only twin rooms, so be sure you have some one to share your room with.

The cost should be about £ 1,500 per person. Single room supplement at Lake Garda will be £100 p.p.

Travel insurance is not included, you MUST have repatriation insurance. The company will arrange it for £44.00.

If you are interested will you please ask for a booking form a.s.a.p.

Phone number 01366 727929 or

by email mary_cumbers@hotmail.co.uk

The trip is open to all comers and WILL go ahead.

Mary Cumbers



REV STEVE OLIVER

JOIN ME
IN THE GOSPEL HOUR EVERY SUNDAY FROM 9PM
FOR THE BEST IN HYMN AND SONG
and
THE CHRISTIAN ROCK SHOW
FOR THE BEST IN HEAVY METAL AND ROCK
EVERY WEDNESDAY 7.30AM – 8.00AM
FIND ME ON
radioheacham.org.uk
(email
revoliver@radioheacham.org.uk)

MY FINAL SERMON

As I grew older I often used to wonder when I ought to give up preaching. Would it be announced as a special occasion with some of my friends turning up specially? What should I choose for my subject? Would it be an emotional occasion after preaching for 73 years? As it happened I need not have bothered. Just five years ago, on 8th January 2012, I was planned at St Germans, a village chapel in our circuit. There was a congregation of just 14. I did not know it at the time but that was the last service I would ever take. So, what was my final sermon after all?

My text was Luke iii 2 “The word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.”

What a strange thing that the word of God should come to someone in the wilderness! You could imagine the word of God coming to someone while they were reading the Bible, or when attending an inspiring service in church, but in the wilderness! Yet that is what the gospel says ...The word of God came to Zechariah in the wilderness. I have been in the wilderness, seeing something of the Western Desert during the war and there is nothing but heat, sand and flies. Desert rats was the name which said it all. And Palestine was just about surrounded by desert...Sinai, the Arabian desert, stretching to what are now the newly rich oil countries. Before you got to the untracked open desert you would get miles of desolate scrub land where some scanty grazing might be found. It was the place where wild animals roamed, or outlaws hid among its twisted stones and boulders. Even the names of some of these tracts sound creepy and forbidding.... the wildernesses of Ziu, Shur, Padan, Kadesh, Ziph, Tekoa, such was the place where the word of God came and Jesus would be tempted to turn the stones into bread

Have you ever seen a desert? Have you ever been in a wilderness? It is not so unlikely a question. I don't mean one of those package tours to Tunisia where you can return to your air-conditioned hotel each evening. Perhaps you have never left England and still have been there. It is possible to experience the wilderness in a crowded city or a little village. It is possible to know the thorns and sand of the desert on thick fitted carpets. Is there anyone here who does not know what it is like to live in a hollow world? The house or bungalow seems empty. The world seems desolate, life seems barren. Bereavement can bring a wilderness. Worrying family problems when you can't see the end of the tunnel. Loneliness can bring a wilderness. And then nothing grows, not even faith, or hope, or love. There is no peace of mind. “My heart was a desert” the old song goes. Then taking up the Bible I read that the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness, it has happened so often in this old book. Think of the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness. Forty years it lasted and how desolate and forsaken they felt. The hardships and deprivation of this

experience made them wish they had never come. They rounded upon Moses but worst of all their complaints turned them against God. They lapsed into nothing short of pagan worship. It could have been the end of true religion for all humanity, but here in the desert came God's word for them and for all mankind: “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. You shall have no other gods before me.” Yes, the word of God had come in the wilderness David knew all about the wilderness. As a mere lad he took his father's flock out there in search of scant pasture. He fought against lion and bear. Later in his tumultuous life the caves of this no-man's land became his hiding place from human terrors. “Be not silent to me” he prayed. Psalm 28 is one of many which echo his desperation. But in the next psalm comes God's answer: “The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness.” There in the wilderness God spoke to him and he could say “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

Take another example. Reaction set in for Elijah after those stirring events on Mount Carmel when single-handed he had challenged all the prophets of Baal. He lost heart when threatened by Jezebel and ran away. People have all forsaken him and he is the only one left. So he thinks. He leaves his servant and goes on alone into the desert ready to die. Then we read: “After the wind the earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice” God had spoken again in the wilderness his word of encouragement.

Jesus had his wilderness experience. Forty days and forty nights it lasted. As well as the physical torment of that hostile environment, he agonised in his mind as to the methods he should adopt to fulfil the task to which God was calling him; but then God's word came to him loud and clear: “Man shall not live by bread alone... You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve... You shall not tempt the Lord your God.” The word of God came to Jesus in the wilderness.

I wonder sometimes if we realise what a wilderness the world was in those days. It was Luke's characteristic to date everything meticulously and he spells it out for us here:” In the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea... Annas and Caiaphas high priests”

Tiberius. Tiberius Caesar, a man of many twisted vices. High up on the Isle of Capri was one of his summer palaces. From that vantage point you look down a cliff to the sea far below. They call it the salto di Tiberio, the leap of Tiberius. He would invite his friends to stay and when he got tired of them would throw them over the edge. And he was god and emperor of the civilised world. He ruled through agents like Pontius Pilate, a man who was prepared to sentence an innocent man to death rather than have his position threatened. Herod of Galilee living with his brother Philip's wife and then through lust for his step-daughter

trapped into the murder of John the Baptist in prison. So much for the policies and politicians of the time. And what of religion? Annas and Caiaphas being high priests. They were Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection. The gospels tell us a lot more about that world. There was a crime wave; it wasn't safe to travel along the Jerusalem Jericho road. There was no help for the sick or disabled who could only sit begging at the roadsides. Unemployment rate was high, with men hanging about the market place looking for work. But God's word came to John the son of Zechariah in that wilderness, a word of promise and hope with the coming of a Saviour.

I have spent some time speaking of that world of long ago but I could just as easily have been referring to our world, our wilderness. It will all be in the Sunday papers or the television news. Do you worry about it all? Or do you worry about the desert way along which you may be treading? Do you worry about yourself, what the doctor might tell you or how you are going to manage, all the things that have happened or could happen to you or your family? Does it cause sleepless nights or does it shake your faith?

Long ago the word of God came. He was born in a stable. He was cradled in straw. Make no mistake he comes to our particular wilderness to speak to our every need.

John Garfoot.

Start Lent with a

Quiet Day using the beautiful San Damiano cross and St John's Gospel.

Saturday February 17th 10 - 3.30pm.

This is the cross that St Francis was praying in front of in a ruined church when he felt he heard Jesus saying, 'Francis, build my church,' something he started by taking literally! Its painting is full of wonderful material for our reflection.

Bring a packed lunch and a Bible. Drinks and biscuits provided. (We're hoping the weather may allow some walking for those who wish so you may want to bring suitable shoes.)

To be held at Pott Row Methodist Church. No charge- but a small donation to Pott Row church funds for heating etc. would be appreciated.

For more details and booking please call quiet day leader **Daphne Sampson** on (01553) 772798

Email: daphne.sampson@btinternet.com



West Norfolk Methodist Circuit Diary February 2018 onwards

Saturday 3rd February Coffee Mornings at Gaywood Church Rooms.

Wednesday 7th February A talk by David Chandler at 7.30pm at London Road

Saturday 17th February Quiet Day at Pott Row 10am

Tuesday 20th February **Start of Lent Group at South Wootton 10am**

Friday 23rd February Quiz Night at 7.30pm at London Road

Friday 2nd March Women's World Day of Prayer St Faith's, Gaywood, 11am. And at Denver 2pm

Wednesday 7th February Eco Friendly Talk at London Road at 7.30pm

Friday 23rd February Quiz at London Road at 7.30pm

Sunday 27th May Circuit service at 3pm