

Rejoice!

October 2020



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



Hello West Norfolk Circuit !!!

WHAT A WONDERFUL START!!!

There were over 150 people at the Welcome Service on Sunday the 13th of September 2020. Our District Chair, Rev. Julian Pursehouse, presided over our worship service; yet, it was very different.

The Welcome Service was at London Road Methodist Church; however, there were only 40 present in the church because of our restrictions on social distancing due to the pandemic. Another 75 participants were connected to our service via Zoom internet videoconferencing with at least an additional 15 family members dispersed amongst those participants. There was another group of at least 15 people joining-in via WhatsApp on their phones or PCs. Finally, at least another 5 were connected to us by using the 'At-Home' service sheet. And I'm sure there easily could have been a few more.

We used even more technology to bring the service together: some of the speaking and music originated from London Road; however, one song and a portion of our prayers were on YouTube clips and our scripture was read 'live' via Zoom. When it came to time for the new ministers to make their promises, the Rev. Paul Critchley was at London Road and the Rev. Richman Ncube participated via Zoom from his manse due to his recent arrival into the country. Most of our 150 participants were in the circuit area; however, there were a few who joined-in from other parts of the UK and still others who joined-in from Zimbabwe.

In times like these, a safe gathering of 150 people is almost impossible. Yet, with a desire to be inclusive, instead of exclusive and encouragement from those around us and God above, we found the hope to persevere with something new to have a meaningful and memorable 2020 Welcome Service! Praise God, Praise God!!

Blessings, Rev Robert Roberts, Superintendent Minister

What I Found Out During Lockdown...

What's Growing In The Cracks!

First of all, some of you may be wondering what's a guy, who likes fixing cars, doing talking about something that grows in cracks. On the other hand, some might know of my wife's ironic humour of buying me not one, but two, coffee mugs that deal with me being the gardener of our house, which makes this article's title even more ironic. The truth is I've been trying to keep the grass under control in our back Westie garden, but I am losing the battle when it comes to the cracks in the pavement and there were quite a few cracks and lots and lots of stuff coming up thru them.

When I get into the zone of doing gardening [or fixing a car for that mind], I often drift off into the land of theological reflection – a habit I'd never heard of before three years of seminary and a habit I've not wanted to stop since graduating in 2005.

Lockdown, even though it's easing now, gave me time to be, instead of do. In the past, I always considered myself a doer, a result of my Protestant work ethic up-bringing. Before I moved out of my parents' house, if my Mom ever caught me 'resting,' she found me something to do, so I wouldn't get bored (so she said). Are any of you acquainted with this motherly philosophy? The result for me across the years, up until COVID-19 that is, has been the slippery slope of sitting leads to resting, followed by relaxing, culminating in a nap or sleeping. To prevent such being (or sloth-ness) I adopted for much of my life the motto: *"I'll Sleep When I'm Dead."*

Some twelve weeks ago, I conquered those cracks, everything visible had been removed: grass, dandelions, and other odd green growing stuff that I know not what it was. I knew it would grow back but thought it might not (very hopeful but not very realistic). I used no chemicals: I pull it up or slice it off with my gardening knife. This past week I spent a couple of hours tidying it up, again. Yet with each pull, I thought. With each tug on the weed, I wondered. With each clump of green in my fingers, I pondered. With each success, I started gazing down into the crack that was now empty of 'green grass.'

But it wasn't empty. Sometimes there was a sliver of green too small to grasp and pluck. Also, I could see the beginnings of what fascinates entomologists: small, sometimes tiny, bugs busy moving about, ever so fragile, if I should dare to touch and others just might give my finger a bite (one quite clandestinely gave me a bite on the forearm, which included a welt that took 2 days to disappear).

I metaphorically stepped back for a moment and saw God, everywhere: living, persisting, struggling, popping up, waiting to emerge and live. I had entered a Terry Pratchett novel only this one was real, in my backyard, in the cracks of the concrete and God was there, too.

The more I reflected, the more I wanted to reflect. Much of the life I saw in and thru the cracks had been there for who knows how long, waiting to germinate and flourish. There is so much life waiting, patiently. In my waiting during the lockdown, in my choosing to be, just be and not do, I clearly saw God. However, I am but one tiny facet of the image of God. But together, all humanity, all life, everyone and everything reflects the image of God. Lockdown had been transformed for me; encouragement abounded, even from the cracks. God was in the cracks, too.

And as this virus has also made my cracks apparent, God has been there, too – patiently encouraging with such love, God's love.

Blessings to one and all,



Rev Robert Roberts

Acknowledgement: Thank you to John Miles who sent me his '*grass reflection*' earlier in the lockdown; it planted a seed I was unaware of its presence. Perhaps, a seed will grow in you, too, and you will write a reflection. It only takes a spark, pass it on.

Praying together in the Circuit

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it
The world and all its people belong to Him. Psalm 24:1

Sovereign God, you declared everything you created 'good'.
May we never lose appreciation of the wonders of your world.
Give us wisdom and the resolve to make necessary changes
to protect your creation and the precious gift of life.

Gracious God every person belongs to you and is loved by you.
'All we like sheep have gone astray'
Redeeming God in your love draw all people to yourself
Holy Spirit bring unprecedented response to the gospel.
Let this be the time when your Covenant of Grace
a new heart, a new mind, and Your Spirit within
will bring transformation to the way people love and think and live
when every person will be valued, respected and honoured
and have life in all its fullness which Jesus came to give us.
this is Your desire O Lord.

Father God, all people are known to you, loved by you..
We give thanks for the commitment and care given during the
Covid19 and every act of kindness shown.

We pray for those who have been deeply affected.
Those who have been bereaved and have not been able to
be with their loved ones in their most difficult times.
For those who have become depressed, who have been isolated,
those waiting for appointments which have had to be delayed.
Children and young people who have experienced disruption in
their education, confusion about exams, uncertainty about
their future prospects, separation from their friends.
In all the uncertainties, the concerns which overwhelm
Lord, in your mercy bring healing, hope and peace.

Lord bless our Circuit at this time of new beginnings.
We pray for Rev. Paul and Rev. Richman and their families
for our ministerial team and leadership team
for the ministry of all believers.
for each of our churches in towns, villages, estates.
Lead us every step of the way, teach us to listen to you
unite us in your love and your purposes.

Thank you for the technology which has enabled us to share
in worship and those who have enabled it to happen.
Lord bless us as we begin to return to corporate worship.
May we return adhering to guidelines, coping with a very different
way of worship, but always aware of your presence with us.
When we can't sing your praises may worship increase in our hearts
as we express our love for you
May the fellowship of your Holy Spirit unite us.
Renew us and prepare us for the plans you have for us.
Let this be a time, 'not of survival, but revival'

Prayers have been requested for:
Derek + Viv, Stephanie, Margie, Janice, Trisha, Linda, Andrew,
Mavis & Julia, Judy, Dulcie+ Neil, Kath, Stephen + Victoria, William,
Tom, Sarah. Audrey, Joan,

L - Listen to God's voice and reflect. Let go and let God.
O - Obey his word and his teachings
C - Call on Jesus' name and be calm.
K - Know what is the purpose of all this.
D - Dwell in his presence, do not panic.
O - Offer a prayer for everyone's safety.
W - Wait and be patient. This too shall pass.
N - Nurture our personal relationship with him.

Going on Retreat - a reflection on a new experience – and thank you.....

Going on a retreat was a new experience for me. When the District Chaplain for Lay Workers and Volunteers suggested a retreat (her vision was that this should be fully funded), I jumped at the opportunity.

The participants represented a variety of roles including prison chaplaincy, family workers and administrators, as well as my own: in mission and ecumenical working. Some were experienced and some new to their roles. Apart from one other woman, I was the oldest person present. The retreat was led by two experienced retreat leaders, who were also accredited Spiritual Directors and whom none of the participants knew. The focus scripture was 23rd Psalm.

What were the benefits for me in attending this retreat? How has it impacted me in my day to day role in the church? How has it impacted my personal spiritual journey?

I had some important reminders that impact my role. First, I need always to be consciously aware that a relationship with God is experienced in a myriad of different ways by different people. Secondly, there is real value in hearing and being challenged by different views than your own (or those you are used to in your home church). These provide fresh insights into well-worn discussions. Lastly, that open and honest discussion will only occur in an environment of confidentiality and mutual respect.

At a personal level, forging more meaningful relationships with other participants whom I had previously met only briefly, helped to deal with the sense of isolation felt in my role. This was a common feature among participants, alongside sharing the highs and lows of our ministries. The retreat leaders created a 'safe space' enabling open and honest exchange and it was good to be able to relax into reflective sessions that I had no responsibility for organizing but just focus on being. It was easier to hear God's voice away from everyday distractions and demands. It gave me the opportunity of dedicated time to explore and address a controversial issue with the springboard of someone distant from my own situation. Our own views were completely opposed, but this was not a problem as the conversation was conducted with mutual respect and gave me more clarity of thinking through the insights gained.

Spiritually, the experience continues to impact me. In a session of free time

I took a walk to clear my head.....there was not another soul about.....

I went down the hill and crossed the bridge over the river.

I talked out loud with myself and God.

I came to a place where I stopped and said,

"This is my current position about this question with what I know and understand.

I will leave it with you, Lord, and ask that you will show me if I need to think differently."

As I walked, on that frosty November day, I had been looking at the ground to avoid the mud and puddles.

But when I came to the place where I stopped, I looked up and found myself standing in front of a fig tree.....

Twisted and gnarled with some figs still hanging on it and a few leaves left.

It made me smile. It made me laugh out loud. This was God speaking to me in that moment.... (see Mark 11:12-14;20-26)

And I was left with the question 'What is this fig tree saying to me?'

It will take a lifetime to explore the full answer but that day I took another giant leap in my understanding.

And Dick France gives a great pointer:

"Verses 22-24 have an unqualified sound which many rightly find uncomfortable. Does Jesus really mean that we can have just whatever we like, so long as we believe it? Why then have so many 'believing' prayers remained unanswered? But this is to treat faith as a magical formula, rather than what it really is, a relationship of trust in a heavenly Father. If that relationship is real, there will be no room for selfish or inappropriate prayers." (84)

(France, R.T. (Dick), *The People's Bible Commentary: Mark*, The Bible Reading Fellowship, Abingdon, 1996, p 158-9.)

So many thanks to the Circuit for the financial contribution enabling me to attend this retreat.

Julia Warnes
Voluntary Lay Worker, Hunstanton Methodist Church.

Hold that thought

Prayer should be the key in the morning and the lock at night.

Farewell

By the time you are reading your copy of Rejoice, Janet and I (and our cat Spike) will have flitted (that is a Yorkshire word for gone away). Our next chapter of our lives begins in South Yorkshire. Our new address is 70 Barnes Hall Road Burncross Chapeltown Sheffield S35 1RF. My new phone number 01142461703 from 6th August

We have enjoyed our 7 years in West Norfolk, lots of hard work but all worthwhile. We have made lots of friends and have lots of good times together. After 38 years and 6 circuits, I am now retired!! This will be a new experience and one that may take a bit of getting used to. I want to continue to preach and assist the churches in whatever way we can. But I think I will leave the business meetings and synods to others. Our nearest Methodist Church is Chapeltown, one we do not know or its minister who arrived when I was in Norfolk. But we are not too far away from my old patch Hillsborough / Stocksbridge. Each year the churches all gather at Greenmoor, a village just outside Stocksbridge on Maundy Thursday to have an open-air service under the night sky. As we sing "When I Survey" we look down on all the lights of Sheffield on one side and all the lights of Barnsley on the other side. Then we retire to the chapel for hot soup. I look forward to being part of that. So, we turn the first page of this new chapter and see what is waiting for us.

If you are planning a stay-cation, this year there is no better place than Yorkshire. It has hills but flat bits too and surprisingly lots of countryside on the outskirts. We would love to see you.

Please support my successor Rev. Paul Critchley, his wife Jo and their family. What is needed now is leadership as we emerge out of lockdown and to look with fresh eyes to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Paul is an experienced minister and will be able to lead you forward.

Thank you for all the ways you have supported us, the gifts, cards and flowers we have received. Thank you for you being with us on the journey, for the friendship, kindness and help we have had while we have been with you. We retain the memories of our times we have spent together with you and they have been enriching to us. We look forward to keeping in touch and eventually returning to see you.

Sincerely

Maurice & Janet

After I wrote these words in our last week we have been overwhelmed by over 60 cards and also the substantial circuit gift. Thank you so much.

From Rev. Anne Richardson

As we haven't been able to be together for so long now, please be assured that the Deaf group who go to Downham Market once a month haven't forgotten you! As so many of us have found, we are missing going to church regularly, but glad of opportunities to worship together using zoom. It took a bit of getting used to, knowing which buttons to click on, but it is helpful. It's good to see each other's faces and to be able to sign to each other. Along with Cambs Deaf Church from Ely Diocese, we have met for Morning Prayer twice a week, and there's been regular Bible groups and worship. Although we would like to join in with the Downham Market Zoom, it's very difficult with the constraints of the technology. Deaf people need to see the signing, which would mean the interpreter is 'spotlit' all the time. This is ok for a Deaf BSL worship service, but mixed with hearing people, it would mean that everyone would have to see the interpreter alone, and not see who was speaking! It just wouldn't work, would it? The other alternative is to have two screens – one logged into the Downham Market service and the other logged into a Deaf group with the interpreter!! Wow! It's just too complicated and most of us are just managing on the ipad!! Everyone is agreed that they will be patient and keep waiting until we can be together again.

When that happy day comes, we will have another change. From September, I will be a circuit minister in Central Norfolk, and so won't be able to come to Downham Market to interpret the service. Instead, I'm pleased and grateful that my colleague, Rev Jan Smith, the Chaplain for Cambs Deaf Church, will be replacing me.

On a personal note, I shall miss seeing folks at Downham regularly. I shall still be coming when we have the Deaf mid-week Bible fellowship, so won't be gone entirely! Also, feel free to contact me – my new email is anne.richardson@methodist.org.uk

May God continue to bless and uphold each one of you.
Anne Richardson

Returning to Church

Summer in the Hebrides:

Rain and wind

Wind and rain

Again.

But one Sunday comes the sun

Blue skies, no wind;

Sabbath calm; Baa-ing sheep;

No other sound.

We drive to church;

Yes! We drive to church:

(Church of Scotland);

The first time in five months

For Roddie and me,

and for the local congregation.

Park in the car park;

Windows open; hymn sheets given out;

Minister comes to welcome;

The sun still shines;

We wave to one and all;

The service starts;

Led by Rev. Duncan on his guitar;

We sing, yes, we sing!

"Bless the Lord oh my soul, Oh my soul"

(Inside our cars of course)

And I find the tears rolling down my face.

I didn't know how much I missed it

Until I got it back.

Elizabeth MacLeod

8 things to remember when going through tough times.

1/ Everything can -and- will change.

2/ You've overcome challenges before.

3/ It's a learning experience.

4/ Not getting what you want can be a blessing.

5/ Allow yourself to have some fun.

6/ Being kind to yourself is the best medicine.

7/ Other people's negativity isn't worth worrying about.

8/ And there is always, always, always,

Something to be thankful for.

Reading gives us someplace to go

When we have to stay where we are. (Mason Cooley)

"God doesn't stop the bad things from happening;

that's never been part of the promise."

The promise is:

"I am with you.

I am with you Now

Until the end of time."

(Madeleine L'Engle)

When the next edition of Rejoice will be is anybody's guess but I

will inform those who need to know when a decision has been

made. It depends on many things, including how easy it was to

distribute this edition!! Any comments will be gratefully

received.

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Just a thought....

I write this after four weeks of retirement and how strange it feels. The phone does not ring anywhere near as often, emails have slowed down and I wake every morning still thinking as if I am still working; it is so odd! Yet on the plus side, I have seen my grandchildren more in the past few weeks, I have walked Cai and Dudley on Knettishall Heath not having to rush because something needs to be done (other than continue emptying boxes and looking despairingly at a full garage of stuff!) and am able just to be.

Cai and Dudley have settled really well but unfortunately, Betsan our cat did not settle and has disappeared, and so we wait with hope for her safe return.

And so, a new life begins, but that does not preclude the wonderful memories of my time in West Norfolk Circuit and the amazing gifts given before leaving. You were so kind and generous to me and Jill that thank you is not nearly enough and we are still coming to terms with your kindness.

Thank you for some of my best years in my Ministry, and for supporting me through the good times and the bad, and thank you for caring and enabling me to have the privilege of sharing your lives in so many different ways.

What am I going to do from now on? I am waiting for God to guide me into whatever he wishes for me. Every year I say the words of the Covenant service, and though they were important before retirement, it is now that those words truly resonate in my life.

For those of you who know of my gardening skills or lack of, I write to tell you I now have an allotment. I have no idea what I am going to grow, but whatever it is I think weeds will still be my greatest crop and nemesis.

Anyway, enough of my ramblings! Please know that I will miss you all, and will be praying for the Circuit as it too goes through new beginnings. If you support and care for Rev. Richman and Rev. Paul as you did for me then they will be truly blessed in their time in the Circuit.

Steve

Around the churches



Feltwell

ART & CRAFTS EXHIBITION

You are all invited to a celebration of the creative spirit shown during Coronavirus "Lockdown".

During the time we are all social distancing and many of us are housebound, there has been much creativity. Things have been made, fine artwork has



been hitting the canvas/paper and children's imagination has been expressed in some beautiful drawings and paintings. Most of us won't get to see any of this, so we've created an event to give us access to some of this. **The date cannot be decided until Lockdown has been lifted, we have enough contributions to show and everybody is safe to move around.** Hopefully that will be this

year, but.....?

Now, to all you budding artists and people with a creative spirit, we'd like to inspire you to engage in your favourite pastime and show us what you have been doing to pass the time during these tough times. There is no age limit and we look forward to seeing the results of all your imagination. **It could be photos of your garden or something special, a model you've created, a sculpture, a painting(s), something you've made, or something else.** PLEASE REGISTER YOUR INTEREST BY emailing mikegw15@gmail.com So get creating and keep it safe, waiting for the date to be announced. If you have any questions call or email Mike.

"FLAG"

We have been playing an active part in the Feltwell Local Action Group which was set up by the Parish Council and supported by both the parish church and us. Along with members of Feltwellbeings we provided the shopping support for housebound villagers. A bonus has been new relationships created and a raised profile for the Methodist Church. Members of the Feltwellbeings continue to shop for some housebound, shielding villagers while also developing strong relationships with the Methodist Church.



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“Old Codgers” meets again in this socially distanced hall, on the last Saturday of the month; it will include our usual fun quiz, and sharing jokes and a bit of comedy when we all have a good laugh. Just what we need after the tough time we’re having. This is just a flavour of what we are missing and it’s an open event with no age limit and its only £3, and that includes some refreshments!

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ELEVENZES – on the 1st Thursday of each month at 10.00am. Meet friends over a tea/coffee and enjoy one (or more) of our cakes and take some home.

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Community Garden – this garden project is moving on for the community, which will, hopefully, produce some fruit and some vegetables for those who help. Spuds appear to be doing very well and will need digging out in the next few weeks. Chives and raspberries are growing slowly. We’re also making some raised beds for those who cannot bend. These will hopefully hold some salad crops, lettuce, radishes, spring onions etc. Some kind folks have given us soil with which to fill these beds. Thank you Adam and family. We are creating a ‘wild flower meadow’ beside the church community hall to encourage bees and other pollinators and insects. This garden will enable villagers who want to potter or who have difficulty with gardening to come and enjoy doing as much or as little as they want while enjoying fresh air. If you would like to potter with us, please get in touch with Mike (details below) or come along to the Thursday coffee mornings and Wellbeing mornings.

WinterTalent Show – to be held on our stage (pictured above)

We are looking for people who have something they would like to share on our stage.....poem, song, short act, dance, comedy (family), mime, musical instrument and more. If you want to be in, call Helen 01842828929, or Verena 01842550347.

The Community Hall - a large bright hall with a stage and sound and lighting system. Celebration red carpet, posts and red ropes for special events from weddings to birthday parties, award ceremonies, concerts, theatre and more. Our small meeting room is closed until further notice while social distancing is in force.

CONTACTLESS HAND SANITISERS AT BOTH ENTRANCES

Our main church, with its magnificent pipe organ, is ideal for infant and adult baptisms, weddings, marriage renewals ceremonies, funerals, memorial and celebration of life ceremonies. Our premises are now prepared for use according to the guidelines and instructions specified by the Government and the Methodist Church of Great Britain. For example, hand sanitisers for use on arrival, socially distanced seating etc.. The church is open for private prayer on Thursday mornings and Sundays when we meet for prayer and listen to hymns and worship songs.

Mike

Heacham

What to write about events at Heacham? Like many, most of us have been separated – isolated – from our Church friends. We have been in contact by telephone but mostly not face-to-face.

We lost one member, Geoff Speed, who was a faithful attender at Heacham. He had been devastated when he was unable to visit his wife in a local care home – a devoted husband and carer for her. Because of the virus, we could not share in a “usual” farewell service for him. However, a few of us were allowed to stand (socially distanced) in the St Mary’s Church car park as the hearse arrived. We were also allowed to observe the interment ceremony from a distance.

Another farewell, a major one, we have had to face was saying goodbye to Steve and Jill. Any such farewell is difficult but to let them go amidst the “distancing” caused much upset. Very kindly, Rev. Veronica and stewards of St Mary’s Church allowed us to use their church for two services (both identical) to two congregations! Each service allowed 30 to participate – suitably masked and hand sanitised). Grateful thanks to Val, Sharon, Mas and Mike for all the preparations and organisation.

We now await the arrival of Richman and his family from Zimbabwe whose delay has at least enabled us to prepare the Manse appropriately. (“We” involving work mainly by Val, Mark and Mike with donations from the Circuit arranged by Sheila.)

The great plans for the year made earlier were swept away but only put on hold. We now have to be patient, prayerfully, and wait to take on the

changes/future ahead.

The pandemic may have kept us physically apart but many links and contacts have been made and continued. Time to consider and contact others where previously our busy lives did not leave the space. Have others noticed that greetings between strangers, when out on walks, have been more automatic and frequent?

Our greetings and love to all in the Circuit from Heacham

Dersingham

The last Methodist year seemed to get hijacked in the middle and here we are at the beginning of another Methodist year having not been able to worship or even meet together, or say a proper goodbye to one minister, the Rev. Steve Oliver, or to properly welcome our new minister, the Rev. Richman Ncube! Elizabeth Batstone has kept us all in touch with a fortnightly Newsletter which was either emailed or hand-delivered to every member or adherent and we are all very grateful to her for that. Pastoral leaders have also phoned the people in their groups from time to time to make sure everyone was alright. The stewards have been very busy collecting and delivering items to furnish and equip the manse. Then, when it looked as though we were going to be able to meet for worship again, albeit in small groups, a tremendous amount of work was undertaken to make the church as safe as possible from Covid 19, cleaning, signing and transferring the comfortable chairs to the hall and the more easily cleanable plastic chairs from the hall to the church, finding out who felt safe enough to come to church and placing them in suitably-sized groups on a rota basis. The first Sunday opening was approaching, but new restrictions resulted in a decision not to open just yet. However, everything is prepared and ready for the appropriate time and we are very grateful to those who laboured in hope, masked and no doubt socially distanced!

Meanwhile Richman Ncube has arrived and isolated himself for the requisite 14 days and we wait to hear that his wife and children have at last received visas for them to join him. A big welcome to them all awaits from Dersingham Methodist Church.

Rosemary Caink

Downham Market

JAM (Junior and Messy) Church

During lockdown the young people from our Junior Church and Messy Church have been receiving weekly updates via email. We may not have been able to meet face to face but the children have sent through some brilliant photos showing what they have been up to.

The weekly update included a Bible story (to be read or watched on a video) with activities, crafts, colouring sheets, games and puzzles. From Old Testament favourites such as Daniel and Jonah, via the Easter Story and onto various healing miracles, the youngsters had much to keep them occupied in the long months without a chance of coming to church. They made glove puppets (Paul's missionary journey), took part in an egg and spoon race (the Good Shepherd story), made a 'flying' balloon rocket (Ascension!) and went on picnics (feeding the 5000). Each week they were encouraged to pray using many different methods, including blowing bubbles, making a prayer cube and floating flower prayers which open up on water.

Even though our churches are re-opening, there is much to consider before we can start our children's work again. In the meantime, we hope to continue our weekly engagement with our young people and help them to develop their understanding of the Bible and in particular to grow to know Jesus better.

Sarah

In other news, our regular correspondent, Joan Macey, is undergoing treatment at the moment so cannot contribute. We wish her well. Services have restarted, with markers on the pews to say where we can sit, ushers to guide us in and out and we must book our place! The Social Centre meals have also restarted, although some customers are still getting theirs delivered. Our Zoom services are well attended and the hope is that these will continue into the normal, whenever and however that happens to be.

I think we all want to come out of this is one piece. Meg Cooper has sent me some interesting quotes on happiness.

If you want others to be happy, practise compassion. If you want to be happy, practise compassion. Dalai lama

A table, a chair, a bowl of fruit and a violin; what else does a man need to be happy? Albert Einstein

Be happy with what you have and are and be generous with both and you won't have to hunt for happiness. William E. Gladstone Love one another and you will be happy. It's as simple and as difficult as that. Michael Leunig

Ed.

Pott Row

"On Sunday 16th August we held our first service since lockdown in March. It was a joy to meet together. We were well spaced, with chairs two metres apart, and the meeting was different. Methodists love to sing, but there was no singing. So we read the hymns together, the tune for the hymn was played on the organ. Yes, it was different but we all felt Jesus was with us. We were blessed having met with Him. We shall meet again in chapel in September. September 13th Mr Terry Martin from Heacham at 10.30 am. September 27th Rev Robert Roberts at 10.30am Harvest Festival."

During our service, led by Robert, we were able to share concerns and joys... the joys of new grandchildren and great grandchildren, surprise birthday celebrations with family, and thanks were expressed to Stephen and Beryl Watts for their regular phone calls which have helped to keep us all in touch while we have been unable to worship in the chapel together.

Alison

HILGAY

In July, when we were allowed to, we held an extraordinary church council meeting in a Member's garden. We spent time working through all Covid 19 rules for social distancing, cleanliness, hand sanitising stations and sprays, tissues, wipes, extra waste bins (lined). And using our plastic chairs instead of the fabric covered ones.

It was decided we should begin holding services monthly to see how things worked out, the first two were led by our own people, Pauline Driver and Lesley Dent offered to lead the July and August services.

Pauline Driver

Wimbotsham

After the recent past months of the challenges of lockdown what a joy it was to open our doors to gather together again on Sunday 30th August for a brief form of service whilst, of course, heeding the current measures in re-opening for worship. This was a fore-runner to resuming our regular weekly Sunday morning services from 13th September, as per the West Norfolk Circuit Plan. In the meantime the opportunity to share recent Sunday evening services on Zoom with others from the Circuit and beyond, recognising familiar faces and opportunities to chat online is a lovely way to keep in touch.

It is with great pleasure to be welcoming Rev. Paul Critchley and Rev. Richman Ncube and their families to the Circuit and we look forward to meeting them all in due course.

We are delighted with the very recent alterations which have been carried out in our schoolroom which have included redesign of the kitchen and serving areas with the installation of all new units. This has brought these up-to-date with hygiene regulations and created more space in the seating area – ideal for group meetings as and when Covid restrictions allow. A huge thank you to those of our members who have worked so hard and spent countless hours in bringing about these improvements.

It is not yet possible to arrange dates to restart our monthly Saturday Coffee Mornings nor for other planned Group activities and fellowship but with "faith and vision" we will keep you all informed.

Methodists have been worshipping in Wimbotsham for over 200 years. In those early times as licences had to be obtained for buildings in which Religious Worship was to be held people would meet in temporary places before they were able to find enough money to build a Chapel. It is recorded that William Suesdell (labourer) applied for a licence for Wesleyan Methodists to worship in "My House" which was granted on 1 June 1812. Application for a later license was granted on 7 November 1821 to Joseph Suesdell (thatcher) for worship in "My own dwelling house, my property". We are trying to locate these houses or the spot where they once stood. Methodism in Wimbotsham has witnessed many changes in the village since then as have the places of worship. We thank God for all those who through the years have maintained witness, love and service so that our little Chapel today continues to flourish and be "in good heart".

Mary Davies

Stanhoe

For once, being a tiny congregation has its advantages. Although, sadly, we cannot join with Burnham Market because of social distancing, we can just about fit in our seven members, seated 2 metres apart. So, on 13th and 27th September, we shall be worshipping together for the first time since March.

We shan't be singing, of course (not allowed), but we've bought musical triangles for everyone, and invited them to bring wooden spoons to tap if they like, so that we can have a rhythmical accompaniment to the spoken words of the hymns. We're not sure how this is going to work, but we hope be joyful, as we worship the Lord. Cymbals and tambourines would have been even more fun, but possibly rather too noisy.

We are so thankful that we have all survived the pandemic so far, although we lost dear Betty Holmes from our number last May, from other causes.

We are looking forward to meeting with our new minister, Rev. Richman Ncube, very soon. For me, it will be a re-union, as Rich and I studied for our Master's degree in Mission and Evangelism at Cliff College on the same

course from 2008 to 2011. Small world.

Elizabeth MacLeod

Hello!

I thought I would take the opportunity to write a little bit about myself so that even in these times of limited face-to-face meetings, it might feel like you've met me and got to know me a little bit!!

I am originally from Helsby in Cheshire – so am a Cheshire-boy through and through! A good and studious school boy, although I managed to miss much of my early primary education as my Dad worked in Saudi Arabia and the Head teacher thought it was a great idea for me to get life experience in another country! So we would go to Saudi for quite a bit of the time which developed my love of flying and airplanes!!

I can pinpoint one evening in youth group – on a weekend away in the Lake District – when I decided that I was going to follow Jesus. We were studying Jesus' declaration of being the 'Light of the World' (at midnight, as you do when you're on a youth weekend!) and each of us was holding a lit candle... We were invited to blow them out and were plunged into darkness, when the light of a solitary candle pierced the gloom to demonstrate the strength of light.

Following A-Levels when, despite all the correct results and experience, I didn't get into University to study Physiotherapy, I ended up at Cliff College – a Methodist Bible College in Derbyshire – after hearing very clearly from God that that was where I was meant to be! I studied there for three years and worked as part of the Evangelistic staff for a further four years after graduating. Cliff was a wonderful experience giving me the opportunities to work with church and Christians the length and breadth of the UK as well as in Ireland, France, Romania and Kenya.

I met Jo whilst I was at Cliff and we married in 2002 – Jo worked for The Girls' Brigade as their Missions Coordinator and I then worked with a group of Churches in and around Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire. During this time I felt a call into Presbyterian Ministry and explored it, I was accepted into training at Sarum College, Salisbury and was eventually ordained in St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury in 2009.

Jo is an Ordained Deacon within the Methodist Church, and works as an RAF Chaplain at Honington following much fitness training, sweat, tears

and joys! We have three boys – Jacob, Samuel and Benjamin – who are all settling well into their new schools.

Outside of the Church my interest is mainly in theatre – I was part of the National Youth Theatre and have performed twice at the Edinburgh Fringe just recently. ! I love visiting the theatre too and am looking forward to the West End being back open – especially as I am now so close to London and there is a late train home so I can see an evening show!!!! That wasn't a possibility before living in Lancashire!!!

I also enjoy walking and have taken part in The Frontline Walk for the past four years, raising over £12,000 for ABF The Soldier's Charity. The Frontline Walk is a 100km route through the battlefields of the Somme and Passchendaele. It is an incredible experience and one that I am hoping to repeat – so keep an eye for the inevitable sponsorship forms!!!!

I think I have probably rambled on for far too long but I hope that gives you a little glimpse into who I am and what makes me tick! I look forward to meeting you when it is safe to do so and as I gradually make my way around Norfolk!!

Rev. Paul



And a second Hello!

God of Surprises

Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. (Amos 7:14)

These were Amos’ words in response to Amaziah who had challenged him not to preach, prophecy tended to be hereditary, you needed to come from a house of prophets or a school of prophets to qualify. Yet Amos, was bred in a different context, he was a farmer. Isn’t it the same for today that expectation is that prophets must come from certain spaces? Yet God does his ways in a different way. He surprises us over and over.



My story of encounter with God is not exactly like that of Amos, but in a similar way my family did not expect to raise a minister of religion, nor did the society expect a family like mine to bring out a minister. I came to faith through interaction with friends at school, and that faith became strong that as early as I was 18, I made a decision to serve as a minister in the Methodist church. This decision was a disappointment to many including my parents who had their expectation of their first born. Still further no one was a

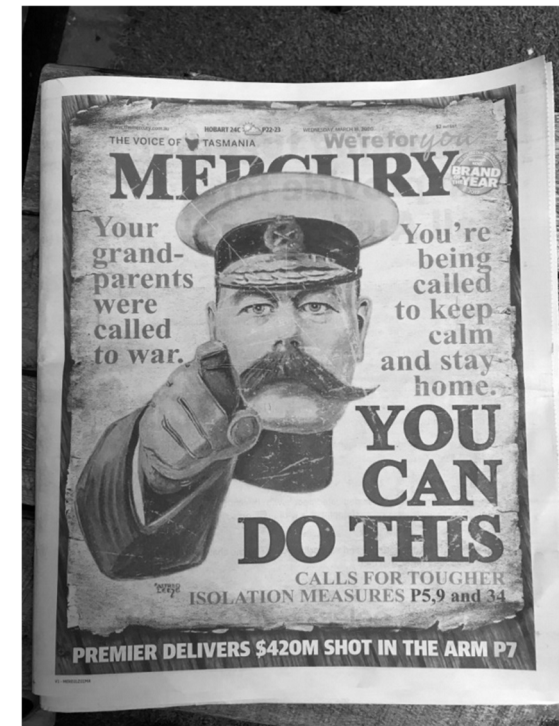
practising Christian, let alone a career in the ministry before. My grandfather was a traditional healer, my two uncles as a result became traditional healers. We all grew up under a traditional African upbringing. Secondly, we were a poor family, my bother being a double orphan, my father had tried to find work in south African mines, but the advent of war of the 1970s frustrated his plans, to add to that our home and everything in it was completely burnt by fire by government soldiers during the war. Yet God guided me to a different direction, to serve him from an early age. I am happy that my family later accepted my call and supported my ministry. My journey to Heacham West Norfolk, has been long. I trained as a minister at United Theological College in Harare, Zimbabwe between 1994 and 1998, graduating with a Diploma in Theology and a Diploma in Religious Studies with the University of Zimbabwe. I got married to my

wife Sikhangezile on the 22nd December 1999, the same year I got ordained. God has blessed us with three Children, Sindisiwe (18), Sibusiso Rich Jnr (13) and Ephraim Sibonginkosi (3). Together we have served God in rural and urban settings, at once we served as Chaplain in a Mission school, and before we came to West Norfolk I served as Bishop (Equivalent of District Chair) of Harare East District of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe.

Rev. Richman

We look forward to getting to know you all.

And finally!



Sent from down under!! Thanks Audrey.