

# grapevine

Spring 2023  
Issue Number 42

The **Methodist** Church   
EAST ANGLIA DISTRICT



## Pray 2-3





## **Prayer: A Way of Life**

As a child many years ago, I remember having to memorise a verse of Scripture every week for Sunday school. Sometimes I left it until Sunday lunchtime and so looked for a nice short verse. One such was 1 Thessalonians 5:17 – ‘Pray without ceasing’.

Being a thoughtful child, I used to wonder how one could pray all the time when doing all the necessary daily tasks etc. However, as my walk with the Lord continued, I have realised that prayer is – or should be – a way of life – a constant communion with God, although of course, I so often fall short.

I have penned my thoughts in the following three short prayer-poems:

### **A way of life**

May prayer be to me  
The instinct of my soul,  
The atmosphere of my life’s whole,  
A reflex action,  
Like my heartbeat’s action,  
Or each breath I draw.

### **Honeycomb prayer**

Lord, make me like the honeycomb:  
may Your Word of Truth indwell,  
filling with integrity  
and purity  
every cell.  
May Your selfless Life excel,  
filling with goodness  
and sweetness  
every cell.

### **Heart prayer**

Lord, make my heart like a flower  
That lifts, unfurls and opens to fullness  
In response to the warmth and light of your love.  
To share Your Beauty.  
To spread Your Fragrance  
Throughout the World.

© Helen Seeley-Dixon

March 2023

Welcome to the Spring 2023 edition of *grapevine* 'Pray 2-3'

This issue of *grapevine* is packed full with inspiring and creative ways to pray, shared through articles such as the Christian Guided Meditation, Prayer Walking and Prayer through creativity.

We are able to share positive stories and news from around the District with articles from Rev Jacqui Horton, Rev Jonny Bell and Sarah Friswell.

Rev Debbie Caulk shares her Sabbatical journey with us and we get to hear about a very special scarf from Sam Parfitt.

Pray 2-3 is a great opportunity to open up our minds to different ways to approach praying creatively, whether alone or with others.

*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 2023. 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>Prayer: A Way of Life</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction by Revd Julian M Pursehouse</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>West Harare District Visit</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Prayer Initiatives in Central Norfolk</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Prayer</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Beautiful Scarf</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Christian Guided Meditation</b>	<b>9-10</b>
<b>Prayers with the President</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>Prayer through creativity</b>	<b>12-13</b>
<b>Prayer Walking</b>	<b>14-15</b>
<b>District Agricultural Chaplain's Report</b>	<b>15-16</b>
<b>Prayer Journey</b>	<b>16-17</b>
<b>The Sacred Doe Poem</b>	<b>18-19</b>
<b>Sabbatical Report</b>	<b>20-21</b>
<b>Three of Our Early Methodist "Mothers in the Faith"</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>District News</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>East Anglia Methodist Heritage Centre</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Contributions</b>	<b>24</b>

### **The Editorial Team:**

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

### **Images:**

Front cover (bottom image)—Paul Eldridge

Pages 10 and 11—Paul Eldridge

Page 17—Susan Eldridge

Pages 2, 7, 9, 14, 16 and 24—Danielle Gravestock

# Introduction

Revd Julian M Pursehouse



*Dear Friends,*

I am delighted to commend this edition of Grapevine to you which focuses upon the theme of Pray 2-3, our District initiative for this year, that seeks to encourage us all to pray more consistently, creatively and accountably. In this edition you will read of the many and various ways in which our churches and circuits across the District are responding to this idea.

When it comes to considering the place of prayer in our personal and corporate spirituality, we should not neglect the custom and practice of Jesus Christ which is communicated in the pages of the New Testament! On a number of occasions and in a recurring pattern, Jesus is described as withdrawing from the busyness of his ministry and the many demands placed upon him, in order to seek solitude and pray. A good example of this can be found in the very first chapter of the Gospel of Mark, when after a busy schedule of preaching, healing the sick, and teaching, Jesus is described as withdrawing at an early hour to a place of solitude with the express purpose of finding a place for contemplation and prayer! (v.35) This cyclical rhythm of activity and withdrawal, doing and

being, seems to offer an insight into the nature of the praying life of Jesus.

In Luke 6:12, we are told that Jesus withdrew to the mountain and spent a whole night in prayer – and crucially that this extended period of prayer preceded his calling of the first disciples who became his Apostles. Here we find a vital link between prayerful communion with the divine and the practice of discernment when we seek to be responsive to the calling of God upon our life or the lives of those in our care. This indispensable link between the practice of prayer and the practice of discernment is a vital ingredient of Ignatian Spirituality particularly when practitioners seek either the *feeling of consolation or desolation* as factors that determine whether one feels drawn to a particular calling or deed.

Much of the evidence from above indicates that prayer, as a means of grace, was an indispensable and life-giving practice for Christ and his disciples. If Christian discipleship is about embracing the call to follow Christ and allowing our lives to become progressively more Christ-centered - then we have to take seriously the call to pray without ceasing. We might want to begin the day by prayerfully



reading or singing these words:  
***Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
To work, and speak, and think for thee;  
Still let me guard the holy fire,  
And still stir up thy gift in me –***

*(O Thou Who Camest from Above –  
Charles Wesley, STF 564)*

With peace and blessing,



Revd. Julian M Pursehouse  
Chair of the District

## West Harare District Visit

Our friends from the West Harare District visited the East Anglia District at the end of 2022. It was a great chance for the two Districts to strengthen their connection and learn from each other. Below are some photos from the visit.



The delegates visiting Chapel Field Road Methodist Church for lunch with the Chair of the District.



The Delegates at Costessey Methodist Church meeting with members of the Zimbabwe Fellowship



The delegates visiting Wesley Methodist Church Cambridge



The delegates at Rev Saul Tadzaushe's welcome service in Ipswich

# Prayer Initiatives in Central Norfolk

Rev Jacqui Horton



The Central Norfolk Circuit has taken seriously the call to explore prayer in various ways in 2023 and decided, at the outset, to take one prayer initiative each month of the year. So far, we have prayed through the Methodist Prayer Handbook (on zoom in the mornings) in January; lit a candle every day on

Facebook in February; and recommended two books for Lent reading in March: 'How to Pray' by John Pritchard and 'Prayer: Finding the Heart's true Home' by Richard Foster.

For the rest of the year, we plan (amongst other things) to promote prayer-walking, to host a 24/7 Prayer Room, and to encourage reflective prayer through inviting members of the Circuit to submit photographs of their gardens in the Summer.

We are also dedicating our 'Big Sunday' services in July and October to the theme of Prayer. The first one will look

at the Lord's Prayer, and the second at different types of praying. Taking this opportunity to explain the Big Sunday idea, on one Sunday a quarter (the 5<sup>th</sup>) the whole Circuit follows the same theme and material which is prepared, and researched, by the Circuit Staff.

This is multi-format worship because as well as the material (and, if possible,



recordings) being used in churches, there is a zoom and a YouTube version, and the weekly Worship at Home Sheet (which has been prepared and used

throughout the Circuit since March 2020) also carries the talks and prayers. Through this, and through other means and methods, we hope to make this year a memorable one especially in terms of prayer and our relationship with God.

Jacqui Horton  
Superintendent of the Central Norfolk Circuit



# Prayer

Aileen Fox



I have been on retreats and attended morning and evening prayer through them. I've prayed whilst listening to the news and I try and attend my circuit's regular morning zoom prayers, and all are beneficial.

When I was in my last job I had a 54 mile round trip to work each day. I began to pray as I drove along the country roads (with my eyes open!).

Somehow the beauty around me in all the seasons prompted prayer, but also incidents such as an emergency vehicle overtaking, brought my

thoughts and prayers to the incident they were attending. Praying for all involved and especially for the workers who might be faced with very difficult circumstance. It was also the quietness as I contemplated the day and the people I would meet, and the situations I would face. I would also pause in my prayers and listen to the car radio then pray through the news bulletins.

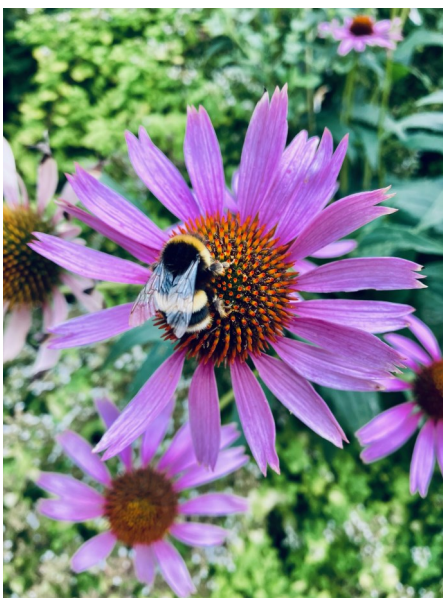
On my way home I would commit the day to God, for the different people I had spent time with, and ongoing

difficulties some would face. The awkward situations, the times when I'd broken bad news to people. That prayer structure for the day I have never yet quite managed to achieve in the same way since retirement. But it has enabled me to send up prayers for

situations I see when I am out and about or travelling on the bus.

Two special opportunities recently presented themselves. In December I was able to attend sung evensong in Canterbury Cathedral and to sit in the choir stalls and think of all who had worshipped there. It was a most

moving experience which I cherish. Then in January I was in Ely for a concert in the Cathedral and had time, before, to attend evensong. Again it was emotional though different. I realise how this has been helpful to me in my spiritual journey, and it's made me focus on prayer in different ways. I always think of prayer being like a telephone conversation, but I am aware that I need to listen as well as speak.



Aileen Fox

Central Norfolk Circuit

# The Beautiful Scarf

Sam Parfitt



I bought this scarf from a charity shop. It was in a big wire basket containing lots of other scarves of all different colours and materials. This one in particular stood out to me because of all of the different colours in each segment.

The lady in the shop was rather pleased that someone wanted to buy it! The next day, I had been wearing it for a little while when I noticed one of the sections had three crosses on it, followed a little later by noticing the section under it was very reminiscent of an empty tomb. The thought started to cross my mind that perhaps this was an Easter themed scarf!

Studying it further I found what I thought might be bread and wine for the Last Supper, two hearts for the New Commandments, a rainbow for God's promise, stars for God's promise to Abraham and lots of other segments that I was still in the process of 'decoding'. It even made an appearance as the focus of one of my regular reflection slots for the Central Norfolk Circuit's Facebook page, at which point its mystery was solved thanks to a friend who messaged me to say that they had just been encouraged to take part in a Lent activity which involved knitting a

scarf in segments - one for each day of Lent. She was kind enough to send me a picture and sure enough, there was a scarf similar to mine!!

Equipped with this new knowledge, I've been able to follow my scarf through Lent, as it turns out that each day has a verse of scripture to reflect on. Best of all, being warm and colourful, I've worn it a lot lately and it has attracted lots of compliments from people I've seen

when I'm out and about. It's been a great evangelistic tool, starting some fabulous conversations



about faith and it has been very interesting to talk about scripture in this knitted form.

It has also served to remind me of scripture as something so colourful and vibrant, along with the importance of sometimes revisiting something familiar from a different perspective and the freshness and vitality that can bring, which I think is especially true of our prayer life. Especially when things in life seem to be all jumbled together, just like the basket of scarves, it is often possible that in the muddle will be something that brings us just that little closer to the Kingdom.

Sam Parfitt

Central Norfolk Circuit



# Christian Guided Meditation

Deacon Linda Kinchenton

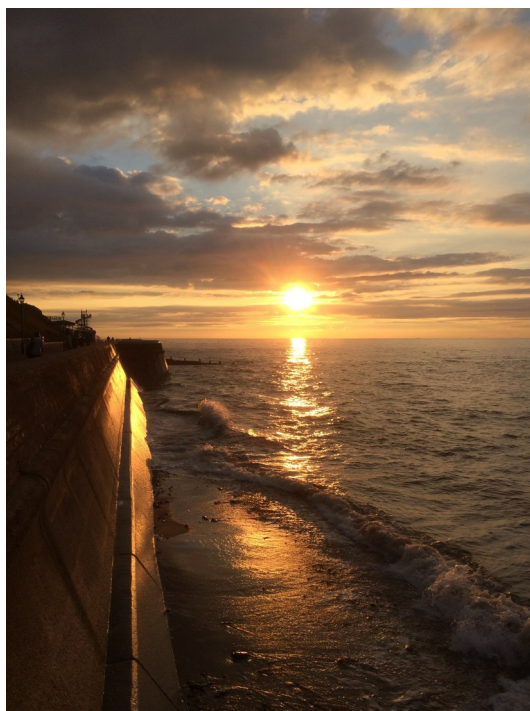
**M**indfulness is a buzz word these days. Although many mindfulness practices originate from Eastern spiritualities, today's focus is on having a healthy mind. Mindfulness is the practice of intentionally focusing our attention on the present. It is a way of separating or distancing from the thoughts that are constantly running through our heads; by clearing the "noise" from our minds. Mindfulness today is characterized by meditation and relaxation techniques.

Christian meditation uses some of the techniques of mindfulness to help aid concentration and alertness to the spirit of God moving in a person's heart and mind. There are many Biblical references promoting meditating on God's word. Psalm 119:97 says, 'Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.' And Psalm 119:148 says, 'My eyes stay open through the watches of the night that I may meditate on your promises.' Paul reminds us that we're called to be

mindful and live with an awareness of the present in Philippians 2:1-5. He goes on to say in 2 Corinthians 10:5 'and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.'

So, in recent services in the Lowestoft and East Suffolk Circuit over the last few

weeks we have been exploring prayer with meditation in 3 of the 8 churches. I introduced the congregations at Hungate Church in Beccles, Kessingland Methodist and Corton Methodist Churches to guided meditations. During the service I talked about the need of being still and ready to listen for God's small voice.



The aim of Christian meditation is to bring people into closer fellowship with God through a deeper listening to God's words. Christian meditation echoes some modes of mindfulness in that it involves relaxing or stilling the body and focusing the mind for a period on the words, character and nature of God, as well as listening for the breath of God's voice. The emphasis is on developing a closer relationship with God through spending time in silence with God.

Towards the end of the services, STF 624 'Calm me, Lord, as you calmed the storm', by David Adam (b. 1936), would be played and sung to. Then the congregation would be invited to make themselves comfortable, close their eyes and relax. Some music by Simeon Woods, the flautist, helps with the relaxation. There would be a short time of words being read out leading everyone to be still before God and before each other. Then there would be 5-10 minutes of silence. The silence is then followed with a time bringing us back to the physical space of worship

and onto praying for others and situations in the world.

Some of the members of these congregations appreciated these times of meditation. Leaving comments included, 'Can we have this every week please?', 'That was just what I needed, a time with God as things are difficult at the moment'. Another found the time of meditation 'very peaceful and uplifting.' Whilst others just enjoyed the time with the music and the silence.

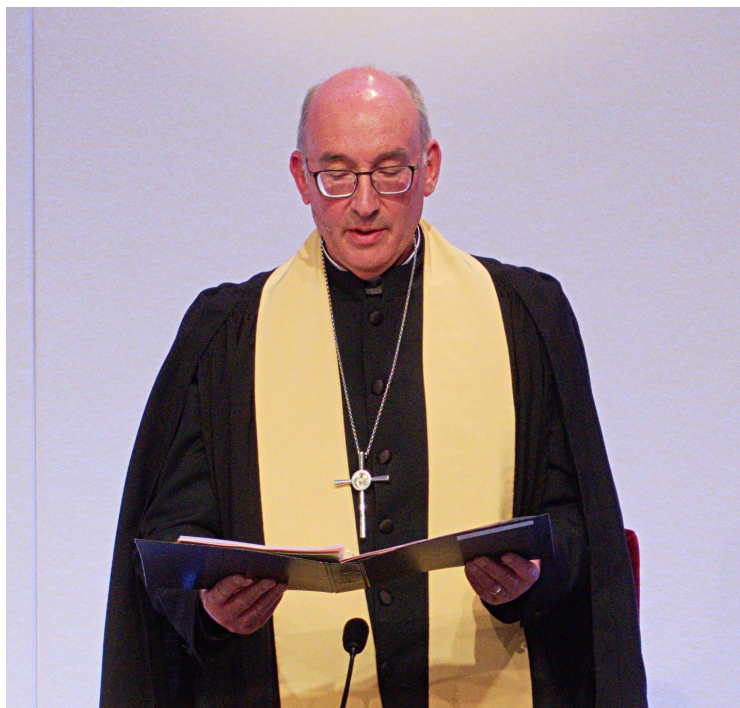
Deacon Linda Kinchenton  
Lowestoft and East Suffolk Circuit

## Prayers with the President

Susan Eldridge



I was not sure what to expect on this Zoom event but it was very good. It was hosted by Dr Yasmin Finch and about 45 of us joined from all over the District. There were a lot of familiar faces, a few who were new to me and some people I had not seen for a while. Yasmin welcomed Rev Graham Thompson as a long-term



friend of the District and Graham is now back living in East Anglia.

Yasmin opened with a video which included "What is God saying to you this year?" and "Where might he be leading you?" It also had references to signs of Spring,

hope and God's presence. Yasmin then handed over to Graham.



Graham said it was lovely to see faces old and new. He told the story of a visit people were making to a large Church in America. They were given a tour and at the end were invited to see the “power room” downstairs.

Wondering why they were being taken to the boiler room, they were invited to look through a window and there was a group of 5 or 6 people praying – the power room indeed!

The call to prayer is strong in the Bible. We have the Methodist Prayer Handbook (*referred to in George Ginn’s article in the last edition of Grapevine*) and the Lord’s Prayer to help us. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 urges us the “pray without ceasing”. Graham encouraged us to breathe our prayers in and out. The parable of the unjust judge shows it is OK to ask for the same things over and over again.

Consider how you pray. Have a discipline about it. Graham suggested the following rhythm (ACTS is a good way to remember it):

- **A**doration – this helps us learn about ourselves
- **C**onfession – remove the barriers between us and God
- **T**hanksgiving
- **S**upplication (or intercession)

Graham led us in a responsive prayer of adoration and a prayer of confession. We were then invited to put our concerns in the chat and reminded that it is OK to pray for ourselves as this helps to change our

perception of our situation. We shared the Lord’s Prayer. For thanksgiving we were invited to unmute and say thank you for one thing. This resulted in a cacophony of thanks for family, creation, Jesus giving his life for us and much more. Graham concluded by thanking us for this time together.

Yasmin put us into breakout groups of 2 or 3 and invited us to pray together for a few minutes. Back together Yasmin asked us to find something yellow and write a one sentence prayer for Graham in the chat. We then held the yellow (to represent God’s light) in front of our camera while Yasmin read out all the prayers to Graham (which were much appreciated).

We closed with a prayer video which referred to God as the gardener calling us anew, nurturing our growth, tending us, helping us blossom and renewing our strength.

I would like to thank Yasmin and Graham for a lovely event – a little oasis in a busy time.

Susan Eldridge  
Norwich Circuit



Rev. Graham and Alison Thompson

# Prayer through creativity

Sue Sherwood

Prayer can be expressed in many different ways: in congregation, a small group, or as an individual; through singing and music, through quiet or silence; maybe as a meditation in a contemplative way, or even through creativity.

My first memory of prayer is singing grace before we sat down for our school dinner and putting our hands together and closing our eyes in Sunday School.

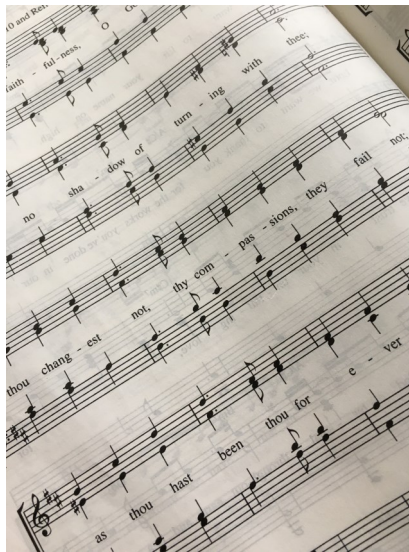
Later we moved into church and read from a prayer book, and sang psalms in the church choir.

As a teenager I was fortunate to join the local choral society as a junior member, where we performed some amazing works such as Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, Mendelsohn's *Elijah*, and of course, Handel's *Messiah*. I was aware that the words were from scripture and that they told a story, but were also words of prayer. Although the words were important to me, the music was my main focus. I loved the sound of a large number of people singing and praying in harmony, the

sound reverberating around the Cathedral. I remember the joy of singing together was so uplifting.

After university, I was a music teacher and enjoyed music in my spare time too. But whether it was singing or playing at a large concert or being part of the church music group, I can now see that music is like a prayer. It has been said that singing is God's favourite form of prayer, and it is mentioned four hundred times in the bible, with fifty commands to do so. "Sing to

the Lord a new song." - Psalm 149:1. Later in life, as musical opportunities became less, I discovered journaling. It's a wonderful way to be creative in a prayerful way, so I bought myself a sketch pad and filled it with cuttings, drawings, and prayers I liked, and my own thoughts, joyful or sad.





I went on to join a sewing group that made wall hangings and artwork representing Christian themes including creation, which were made prayerfully and displayed in churches.



When covid came along, we discovered Zoom and many of us were challenged to learn new technology, though today it has become more natural to us. And through Zoom we were able to share our prayer and worship while our churches were closed.

At Potter Heigham, we took some of our services outside, and it was such a joy to be out in the fresh air and sunshine, the wind rustling the leaves, to sing our praises and say our prayers together.



the lighthouse as a symbol to represent how "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness shall not

In January 2021 we went through another lockdown. Our churches were closed again, but we were inspired by January Light to put a candle in our windows in the evening and use

overcome it." - John 1:5.

As a church, we decided to continue the idea of putting prayerful symbols in our chapel windows, and this continued for several months including February Hearts and Pentecost Doves, sending out a message of love and hope during a dark time.



Some of lockdown was spent painting pebbles, with a picture on one side and a prayerful message on the other, which were distributed around the village at Easter.



Pray 2-3 is a great opportunity to come together as a district to focus on prayer, praying in traditional and new ways,

whether it be a prayer meeting, prayer walking, or having a prayer partner. Let's remember to take our prayers out of our church buildings and into the community, by continuing to record our Zoom services to reach those on social media; by taking some of our services outside to be visible and accessible to the community and maybe even creating a prayer tree, with ribbons to tie on as prayers. Let's paint some more pebbles to display around our neighbourhood, or write a Pray 2-3 card for a neighbour needing words of encouragement. As it says in Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing."

Sue Sherwood  
Norfolk Broads Circuit

# Prayer Walking

Rev. Nigel Fox



I first encountered prayer-walking whilst serving on the Isle of Wight, when a visitor from Cornwall walked around the entire coastal road carrying a large cross and praying for us on the Island. The beneficial effect was certainly felt, although that lasted only for a couple of weeks. I then found myself prayer-walking in earnest in my next appointment in Oldham, and again in and around Norwich.

Prayer-walking is all about praying while walking around a particular area or mission patch. This can be in a rural, neighbourhood or urban setting. It involves

praying with eyes open – both to avoid problems and to gain insight for mission and ‘the work of God’.

This prayerful ministry can be offered alone or, more appropriately, in pairs. I’m presently in a group of four prayer-walkers, though this ought to be a maximum group size in order to avoid attracting undue attention.

One basis for prayer-walking is the Lord’s promise to be with us always (Matthew 28:20), and we take His Presence with us, step by step. Mindful

of this, it is simply a means to pray for and bless the neighbourhood. We can pray for local schools, community centres, places of work etc, and for particular need. God loves to bless (Genesis 12:2-3).

Similarly, our prayer-walking is also about re-establishing Christ’s Presence, and this may be useful prior to some advancement. I well remember a former Police Chief telling us that anyone could help minimise local crime simply by walking around our neighbourhood, in pairs, and reclaiming the streets. While it builds on the idea of presence, some

reckon it also echoes the ministry of Joshua in this regard (see Joshua 1:3).

Another strand of prayer-walking seeks further insight by digging deeper for things that may be of spiritual significance. This is akin to a process of ‘spiritual mapping’, and others have written about this in detail. There are places that have suffered from a dreadful history, with bloodshed and much pain. We may not be able to prove what ill-effects linger on after many years but, on the other hand,





many would testify to the real peace that's easily felt in a cathedral, for example, where prayers have been offered over the centuries. So, prayers are offered for release and a healing from ills of the past. In a similar vein, prayers may be offered to dig out and re-release any hidden or stifled Christian heritage. This echoes the work of Isaac, in clearing out the cluttered wells his father had already dug (per Genesis 26:18f, and see also Isaiah 12:3).

Our group of four has covered the locality over several years now, and has engaged in praying over our mission patch from a number of different perspectives. We usually take time to ask what the Lord wants us to focus

upon next and what to pray for in particular. As a result, we've stood at the old city gates, visited a former battle-ground, walked around the ring road and alongside the river. We've prayed at numerous places of specific interest or concern. It is a continuing learning curve for us.

If you've not tried prayer-walking before, please do consider praying around your locality or mission patch. It may prove more beneficial than you first think.

Prayer-walking also comes with the added bonus of some gentle exercise. I recommend it.

Rev. Nigel Fox  
Norwich Circuit

## District Agricultural Chaplain's Report

George Frost



“Through all the changing scenes of life, in trouble and in joy” - This hymn was written in the sixteenth/seventeenth century and could be applied to the agricultural scene today; with so many changes being introduced, it's very difficult to keep up and then wonder what is round the corner to come next.

There has been a mixed reaction to the SFI (Sustainable Farming Incentive) scheme, with only 200 farmers signing up to take part, but since the revised payments there are now 100's applying. Since DEFRA, (Department for

farming and rural affairs) introduced the scheme it is hoped for an uptake of 70%. We are not there yet. The other scheme introduced by DEFRA is the ELMS (Environment Land Management Scheme) which some farmers are saying they are already farming to the principles in the guidelines, what they consider best practice. The objectors are the upland farmers who suggest a reduction in income by some 50%. £98/ha for uplands and £151/ha for lowlands. A Professor asks why flowers in upland are worth less than lowland.

Moving on to cereal growers, which there are a lot of in the East Anglia region, a year ago wheat was £212 per tonne this year £304 until this week down to £212. Fertiliser price rose to over £700 per tonne, and now a huge reduction, just when farmers have purchased for this season.

There appears to be enough malting barley available. Perhaps people are not drinking as much with money needed to pay for the rise in fuel. Oil Seed Rape is still holding on as a break crop and profitable, which makes a change. The dry spell last year affected sugar beet and maize, but by delaying harvesting things recovered. The early sugar beet contract for the Bury St Edmunds factory was taken up by March 6th, guaranteed £3k per hectare.

There is a surprising increase in demand for pork, where pigs have been losing money for over 2 years. I have wondered how they have kept going, especially with feed prices so high. Beef and lamb are enjoying better prices but milk is in a difficult period, especially if



you have not got a contract. Poultry are suffering with restrictions, where free range laying hens have to be kept inside, so there are not free range eggs available at present. Research into producing a vaccine might be available soon. Demand for table birds is still quite high.

Seeing empty shelves in supermarkets is something we are not used to, but with a shortfall in labour, this could go on for some time. The government has issued licence for some migrants to come here to help with harvesting vegetables, but the farmers will have to guarantee a minimum of a 32 hour week. We must address food waste and if it's grown every effort should be made to harvest it.

On a brighter note the countryside is looking green again and if you see a field of flowers it will probably be diversification rather than for harvesting pretty flowers. The Genesis quote of "seed time and harvest shall not cease" is still applicable today.

George Frost  
District Agricultural Chaplain

## Prayer Journey

Steve Acklam

Being a Christian is neither comfortable nor straightforward. I am not convinced I will ever be able to: *"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the*

*times you can, to all the people you can"*.

I do not know if I have the capacity to *"Go and make disciples of all nations"*. And the first time I understood the enormity of the Covenant Prayer



committing me to *“Be no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be put to work for you ...”* I was genuinely scared.

Strangely, the area of my Christian Journey I find most difficult is extempore prayer. I am comfortable with reading a prayer to the Minister in the Vestry on a Sunday morning, often from a wonderfully helpful little book called *“The One Year Book of Personal Prayer”*. I have no issues with joining in the congregational prayers, though perhaps I am not always the most focused of participants. I love the prayers of Eddie Askew whose words really speak to me *“Lord it takes my breath away sometimes when I realise I am part of your plan ..”* and leaves me with that strangely heart warmed feeling that Wesley felt. And I do my very best to commune with God, and ask for his care and support in my own very private, silent, unseen and unheard way; as age becomes a more challenging factor, so the prayer list grows ever longer.

I was even put on a very challenging spot quite recently, as I stood in front of some 60 eight-year-old pupils at the Vine School in Cambourne to answer their questions about being a Methodist. Fairly, but quite unexpectedly, I was asked if and how I prayed. From the heart I could only explain that while I no longer knelt by my bed, I did pray for those I loved but

internally, at all sorts of unexpected times; in the car, at the cooker, even sitting at my computer.

Only once was I able to create a prayer for public sharing, when at the service to celebrate our completing the Disciple Course we were each asked to write one. I can no longer find it, but I remember at least parts of it. It read something like *“Dear God, I don’t imagine that when we set off on the Disciple journey, any of us expected to be standing here today, prayers in hand...”*. So I am wholeheartedly committed to the benefits of, and the need for, prayer as part of being a Christian. Since Disciple I have no reservations about sharing my beliefs. I just can’t easily find the words to share with others without props. *“It’s not easy, but I’ll (still) try. I know you are with me. I know your hand will guide me”*.

Steve Acklam  
Senior Steward, Cambridge Circuit



Cambourne Church (LEP)

## DISTRICT MANSE VISITING

Do you have an eye for detail?

Would you like to support our ministers and their circuits?

It is Methodist Connexional policy that a District arranges a visit to each manse, generally every 5 years, and I work with a small team who visit and submit a report to me and to the circuit. Travel expenses are paid by the District and there is a standard report that is completed.

I'm very grateful for the small team who have been offering their assistance over the past few years, but their number is diminishing and there isn't a geographical balance, with the result that I'm needing to ask some people to travel a significant distance.

New volunteers would be welcome - particularly from the south and east of the District.

**If it's a group you would be interested in joining –  
please contact Rev. Barbara Garwood  
[barbara.garwood@methodist.org.uk](mailto:barbara.garwood@methodist.org.uk) 07973 550350**

## Sacred Doe Poem

Rev. Jonny Bell



At the end of February, I went on the Eastern Region Probationer's Retreat at Launde Abbey, which was such a joy! I had never been on a retreat before and it was a space where I could be fed – plied with the really good food, teachings on Julian of Norwich and also the opportunity to not do much and just be with God. It was also a lovely opportunity to spend some good time with some of those I trained with before Circuit ministry and have a good laugh.

During the taught sessions, led by our District Chair, Julian Pursehouse, we

explored some of the theology found in Julian of Norwich's writings. A part of Julian of Norwich's theology involved seeing Jesus Christ as our Mother, and a deep, earnest desire to be, not a *follower* of Christ, but a *lover* of Christ. In thinking about feminine metaphors for God and desire, I wrote a prayer-poem called *Sacred Doe*. It was inspired by Julian's writings, the images we find within Scripture and of the many deer found where I live in Norfolk.

Rev Jonny Bell  
Central Norfolk Circuit



## **Sacred Doe**

**Sacred Doe,  
whose delight leaps through the dells and sunbows of each day;  
your swift strength dances through time,  
whose spirit hovers over the chaotic waters;  
your presence ripples across life's streams;  
you reverberate throughout all and in all.**

**As you rest in us, we rest in you.  
Your love reclines in the deepest parts of us  
and stretches out to the furthest spans of the cosmos.  
Your compassion touches the darkest pits of our core  
and encompasses the pinnacles of our pleasure.  
Your being is with our being in our lowest points  
and to our most vibrant moments.**

**Let us nestle in your pinions  
to feel the gentle feathers against our cheeks,  
to sense those vanes soothe our lethargy.**

**Let us be comforted in your body  
to hold the softness of your voice,  
to keep your warmth in our chest.**

**You formed us from soil and wind,  
plucked like the chords on a harp  
we pulse and ring with your breath.**

**You showed us your heart,  
living water to enliven and impassion,  
we drink to be filled with desire.**

**You held us on your chest,  
singing to ponder what will be  
we dance in anticipation.**

**Sacred Doe,  
whose presence is in all and with all;  
your being is in our being,  
your breath is in our breath;  
beyond all that we are  
yet so intimate with all that we are;  
weave us tightly with you  
as light laces life from the ground  
as air wefts water into the rivers.**

**You are and we are in you.  
Entwined, you are fastened to us.  
Enwrapped, you press in on us.  
Enfolded, you abide in us.  
Enveloped, you are a part of us.**

**Rev Jonny Bell  
Central Norfolk Circuit**



# Sabbatical Report

## 23 October 2022— 4 February 2023

Rev. Debbie Caulk

**T**hank you for granting my request for a Sabbatical at the time of year I needed. Doing so made it possible for me to be with my mother and my sisters again during two very family-oriented holidays for Americans – Thanksgiving and Christmas – something I haven't been able to do since December 2013. My Sabbatical focus theme was "the goodness of darkness". I explored that theme with theological reflection in many ways, including with body, soul, mind, and spirit:

- I planned my Sabbatical with the mid point being the Winter Solstice, so I could daily pay attention to the awesomeness of the dark growing daily until 21 December, and then the awesomeness of the light taking a turn to grow daily. Whenever possible, I was outside to be in the midst of creation with the sunsets and sunrises.
- I completed the new mandatory Methodist Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) course. I did every single bit – read every document, watched every video, engaged with all the supplementary materials – because I sadly know I still have too many prejudices left in me because

of the environments in which I lived for the first 50 years of my life. It's good to be aware of our unconscious biases. This course was very helpful to me – please all of you do this course as soon as possible, especially all church leaders for whom this course is now required, so we can best encourage each other.

- I worked on my PhD research in early Methodist women's history and poetry, staying three weeks at Wesley House Cambridge, digging into their "Rare Book Room" to focus on the main chapter of my research into the life and writings of Agnes Collinson Bulmer (1775-1836).
- I travelled to Laurel, Maryland, USA, staying six precious weeks with my mother, who's 86 and still works fulltime! My mother's home is in the midst of Maryland, USA National Park land, so surrounded by forest, deer, owls, foxes, and many other lovely creatures. It was wonderful to hike through the woods again with my mum.
- I stayed on a farm in Suffolk for a week, in an amazing area with "Darkest Night" status.

- And, while exploring "the goodness of darkness" throughout my Sabbatical, I collected poetry, art, songs, scripture and old folk stories about the goodness of darkness, then I created an art project to focus on one of those stories, based

on the winter night-time heroism of one of our early Methodist Mothers – Harriet Tubman.

God bless you all for this gift of a Sabbatical and many thanks to the District Sabbatical Committee for their guidance as I worked on planning.

## Three of Our Early Methodist “Mothers in the Faith”

During part of my Sabbatical I studied the lives of three of our early Methodist “mothers in the faith” – Phillis Wheatley, Jarena Lee, and Harriet Tubman. I chose these three women because they lived in areas of the US where I used to live: Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.



**Jarena Lee**, born 1783 in New Jersey; became a house-servant at age 7; moved to Pennsylvania as a teen and attended a Methodist chapel, where she made a profession of faith, then later became the first

woman preacher for the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Jarena was also the first African American woman to publish an autobiography in the US, still available today.



**Phillis Wheatley**, born c. 1753, in the area of what’s now Senegal or the Republic of The Gambia; kidnapped into slavery as a child; lived in Boston,

Massachusetts, with the Wheatley family who freed her, raised her as a Methodist, and, recognising her great intellect, encouraged her to write, especially poetry. Phillis visited the UK with the Wheatleys and was supported by their friends – the Countess of Huntingdon and John Wesley – who published her poetry in the UK and the US in 1784, and still available today.



**Harriet Tubman**, born into slavery, c. 1822, in Maryland; raised as a Methodist; escaped to freedom, then returned many times to rescue nearly 800 other slaves

via “The Underground Railroad”, at night, mainly in the winter, following the North Star. In 2019 an internationally acclaimed film was made about Harriet’s life.

Rev. Debbie Caulk  
Fens Circuit



## District News

### **An introduction to Lynne Youngs, District Safeguarding Administrator...**

Hello everyone. My name is Lynne Youngs, and I joined the Methodist Church as District Safeguarding Administrator in May last year. Born in Birmingham, I started my working life at the Norwich Union where I met my husband, Brian. We were married in 1979. Brian's career led to frequent relocations, which meant we were on the move for many years. This led to a varied working life for me, which eventually resulted in me becoming a School Business Manager. When Brian eventually retired, I decided to retire too, and he kindly asked where I would like to live. I chose Norfolk – Brian is a Norfolk boy after all. We moved



here in 2016 to what I hope is our forever home, and I absolutely love it. When I saw this job advertised, I thought the part time hours would suit me perfectly and still allow me to enjoy my semi-retirement. When I'm not working (which in all fairness, is most of the time), I'm a volunteer seal warden at Horsey, and enjoy walking, reading, photography and generally messing about with my grandchildren. We've been blessed with two wonderful daughters and 4 incredible grandchildren. I take delight in spending as much time with them as I can. I'd like to say they keep me young, but I certainly feel my age by the time they've finished with me! I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for making me so welcome.

---

Haverhill Methodist Church welcomed nine new members into fellowship in February 2023.

Our congregation is constantly growing with new faces almost every week and all are encouraged to consider membership when they are ready to do so.



Kathy Cohen

Circuit Steward and Communications Team  
Leader, Haverhill Methodist Church

# East Anglia Methodist Heritage Centre

Sarah Friswell



We are delighted to share the plans for the creation of the East Anglia Methodist Heritage Centre. Wighton Methodist Chapel will be the location of the Heritage Centre, thanks to the generosity of the Central Norfolk Circuit, which has loaned the building. It is located between the medieval pilgrimage centre, Walsingham, and the ever popular seaside resort of Wells-next-the-Sea.

This is an initiative of the East Anglia

Methodist Historical Society. A small team is busy preparing this classic former Primitive Methodist Chapel - getting it decorated, fitted out with display and book cases, ensuring that there is adequate heating to safeguard historic items and getting a ramp installed so that the Heritage Centre can be easily accessed. The hope is to open in early May.

This will be a welcoming place for visitors, who want to come and find out more about the influence the Methodist Church has had on communities across East Anglia over the past two centuries and how that influence still impacts on our society today.

There will be exhibits and artefacts from churches and chapels across the District, each with its own story to tell. A range of books and magazines will form a research library for people wanting to

look more deeply into our history. Friendly volunteers will be on hand to show visitors around and refreshments will be available.

## WE NEED YOUR HELP

In order to make this possible, we need your help in a number of ways:

If you or your church have items of East Anglian Methodist history which you would consider donating please contact

[sarah.friswell@btinternet.com](mailto:sarah.friswell@btinternet.com) or tel 01366 500671.

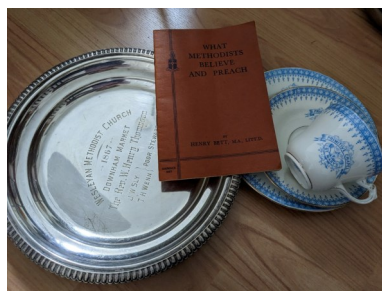
We are applying for grants, and have already raised a considerable amount through the generosity of many people, especially members of the Methodist Historical Society.

If you can help with a donation, please contact the treasurer [ejbellamy451@yahoo.com](mailto:ejbellamy451@yahoo.com) or tel 07546 732092

If you would be willing to volunteer to steward at the Heritage Centre for one day a month (or more, if you are able), please contact

[sarah.friswell@btinternet.com](mailto:sarah.friswell@btinternet.com) or tel 01366 500671.

Get ready to visit! Perhaps your church group would like to come on a summer outing. Full details of opening times will be available soon. There will be no charge to visit – donations will be welcome.



Sarah Friswell

Methodist Historical Society



# 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.*

Registered Charity No. 1129451