

Dear Friends,

I have found this a hard letter to write. I have that sense of being stuck in time! I know things are on the verge of changing, but there is that often-present doubt that lingers.

It is hard to believe that it is now nearly 12 months since Melanie, Wendy and I were last together working for you in the District Office. (We've not stopped working for you, but it has been different!) I think we all knew that it would be a while before we would be back, and maybe in more realistic moments we knew it would be quite a while, but I am not sure we would have expected that a year later it would not have changed. We did make plans many months ago, after the first lockdown, about how we might organise the office to keep each other safe when we returned, but we have not yet needed to implement any of those things. Were we foolish? Possibly. Were we optimistic? We didn't think we were, but it now seems so. Were we realistic? Clearly not realistic enough! Does any of that sound familiar to you?

In the months that have passed, we have had to adapt, learn, re-organise, re-think, and re-imagine how we work, and how we will work when the office is a safe place for us to work in again. What we have accepted is that Covid-19 has changed things; we are trying to resist just going back to how it was, and instead working to embrace the positive changes we can make.

I wonder, do we think that about everything, particularly when it comes to Church?

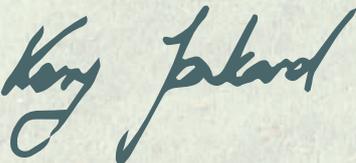
I wonder, how many of our churches have simply seen Covid-19 as an interruption? How many have seen it as a rather long pause before we get back to doing what we did and how we did it? How many have not really engaged with the impact it has had on us, beyond the inconvenience and the finance? You cannot take anyone seriously when they say, "We are having our first child in March, but it won't change anything!" At the same time, we cannot take ourselves seriously if we fail to see that the Church and world that lives with Covid-19 will not be changed also.

I want to suggest that we need to inhabit this important season, rather than ignore it. It is highly likely that we do not know the full extent of changes that are necessary in us, as churches, and that is fine. It is ok to know things have changed, but not yet know how much and what it means. That said, I want to encourage us to embrace the possibility of changes and see them as God given moments.

When Adam and Eve left the garden, they did not yet know what it would mean. When Ruth left Moab with Naomi, her commitment did not explain how she would live in a different world. When Joseph was thrown in a pit, he had no idea what it would lead to with God. When Paul lost his sight on the road to Damascus, how could he have known what would be different. I remind you of all these stories to say, it is ok to embrace change and not yet know what it means. Why?

**Because God is in it all.**

Peace,



Revd Kerry Tankard  
Chair of District



# ONLINE COURSES

## AT CLIFF COLLEGE

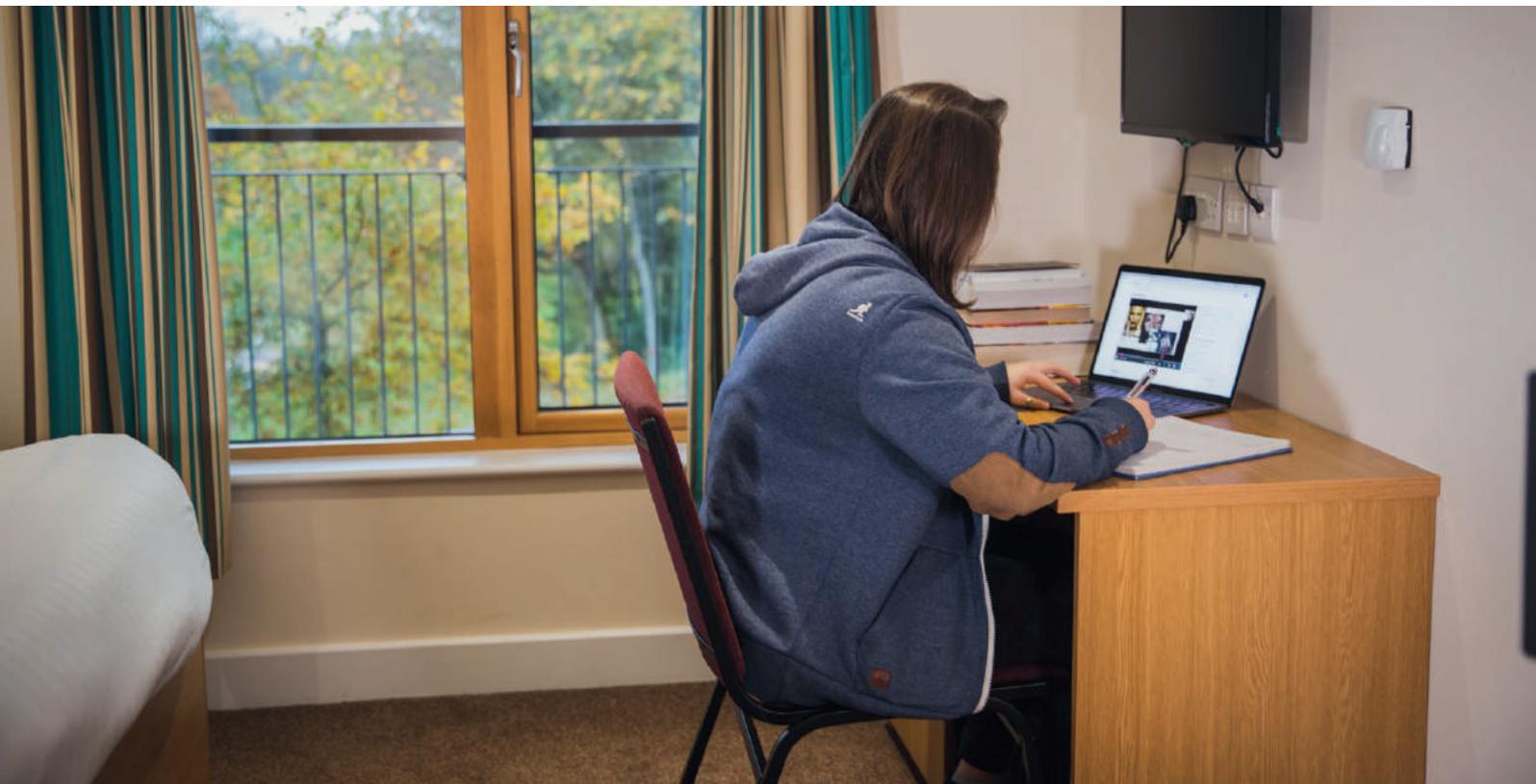
'[Through *Women in the Bible*] I have been inspired to look at the difficult issues with fresh eyes and a better understanding. I have been encouraged to look again at those passages in the Bible which seem to criticise women and look down on them, and find they do nothing of the kind.'

'I've just finished *Studies in Ephesians*, and I must say WOW! I listened to each section at least three times, there was just so much in it.'

If you haven't checked out Cliff College's online courses yet, what are you waiting for? We have a variety of courses available, all self-paced so you can work through the teaching in your own time. See a full list of available and upcoming courses on our website:

<https://cliffcollege.ac.uk/courses/cliff-college-online>

For more information, email [enquiries@cliffcollege.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@cliffcollege.ac.uk)



# CHAPLAINCY SUPPORT

Are you a chaplain, or interested in chaplaincy? Whatever your focus, or context, there is support for you.

**Who chaplains the chaplains, after all?** Take a look at the Methodist Church website for details of monthly 'coffee', Take Time sessions and quarterly learning & sharing opportunities. There's also a Facebook page if that's your bag. Details here: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/connecting-chaplains/>

Why not subscribe to the newsletter? You'll be kept up to date with all things chaplain-ey:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/chaplaincy-newsletters/>

You can access previous editions of the newsletter here too.

Want to get involved, or have a few questions? Get in touch with Gary Hopkins:

[hopkinsg@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:hopkinsg@methodistchurch.org.uk)

# LEEDS METHODIST MISSION

## TIME FOR GOD

Time is the most precious thing we have. People often say the way we spend time says a lot about who we are and what is important to us. I find this a slightly terrifying prospect, given the amount of time I have spent watching Netflix in recent months. I do think, without this becoming another stick with which we can beat ourselves, it is an interesting thing to ponder once in a while.

As people of faith we have often been told what a life dedicated to God 'should' look like. This is problematic as it can often make us all feel we are failing to measure up: we don't pray enough, we don't read our Bible enough, we don't do enough charitable work. We can all end up feeling that 'we are not enough'. I think looking at the life and death of Jesus, this is the opposite of the message we are meant to receive.

I want to reframe all of this a little. Rather than us doing these things out of guilt or duty, what if we found things that really feed us?

Perhaps you are already well ahead of me on this, but during lockdown, with a life looking so different, I have discovered new ways of engaging with my faith and wider interpretations of what that means. For example, my daily walks or runs have become a vital part of my spiritual pattern. I would not necessarily need to be actively praying to feel connection to God, as it happens through my enjoyment of the natural world. I have also found an app where I can listen to people reading the Bible rather than reluctantly reading the Bible myself occasionally. I have explored different types of prayer and meditation to discover what works best for me. Some would call this finding a personal rule of life that works for me.

If we believe in a God of love who wants us to flourish, then I believe God rejoices in our explorations and discoveries. So, I wonder what your spiritual practices have been over lockdown? Have you made any new discoveries about ways of connecting with God?

**Anna Bland**

**Leeds Methodist Mission Development Worker**

*LMM is a Yorkshire West District project in Leeds city centre which focuses on wellbeing, contemplation and gentler forms of activism.*

*Find out more: [www.leedsmethodistmission.co.uk](http://www.leedsmethodistmission.co.uk)*

*or search for them on social media: **Facebook:** @LeedsMethodistMission & **Twitter:** @LMMinthecity*



# AROUND THE DISTRICT

## AIREDALE CIRCUIT

### Good News Stories from Airedale Circuit

It is almost a year since Covid-19 hit. Here in the Airedale circuit, like everyone else, we never imagined that we would still be under lockdown 12 months on. Like many across the District, here in the Bradford area we have been under heavy restrictions for most of that period. At the beginning we were concerned at how Covid might impact upon our churches. The good news is that so far, other than not being able to open for worship, we want to report that we are all in good heart.

The good news story from the Airedale circuit is that, whilst our churches are presently closed for worship, our churches are alive and well. We have learnt new ways to communicate. Technology has played a large part in that with our regular Zoom service and active YouTube Channel. Our social media presence has increased and we have a regular prayer gathering on Facebook - 'So to Pray' - Monday to Friday, that has seen the answer to prayer in so many different ways. We have offered worship every Sunday to those housebound or unable to access technology, something we didn't do before - why had it not occurred to us?

We have an army of volunteers willing to deliver worship sheets and Advent and Lent activity sheets. Messy Church has continued, delivered in a bag and posted on social media. Coffee Mornings have taken place virtually, with regular attendance from our 90 year olds. Study groups have met. Food banks have been supplied with regular contributions from churches that had never collected before, but now see it as a means of offering something to the community.

Churches have been festooned with bunting, hearts, flowers and crosses to brighten up the community - one church even made a large cross out of the knitted flowers, with left over flowers given to the other churches in town to do the same. A memorial tree was filled with names after one church window was painted by a local artist and the community wanted to offer their loved ones' names to the memorial, advertised through social media - over 150 names have appeared. We know many churches are doing similar things across the District, but the Airedale Circuit want to say to our fellow travellers, "Well done." Covid may have closed our doors, but the good news is we are still here. Going forward we now need to ask the question, "What now God? We are listening."

*Revd Ruth Crompton and Peter Howarth*



## AIRE & CALDER CIRCUIT

### Hearts and Angels

'How do we share our faith during a pandemic?' - That is a question we have been grappling with in the Aire and Calder circuit recently.

We began with a circuit wide initiative during Advent, based on those familiar words of the angel: "Do not be afraid." And so, throughout the circuit, hundreds of angels were knitted or cut out, and either hand delivered (in a Covid secure way) or left for people to find on their daily walks.

We found that people were really grateful to receive an angel. One person commented: "Truly a magical and very special gesture. Loved spotting them and will cherish ours." Another person (who is housebound) remarked that it really cheered her up every morning when she saw the angels as it reminded her that she wasn't alone because Jesus was with her!



Our Advent initiative culminated in three drive-in carol services (all held on the same day) at Wakefield Trinity RLFC where people were able to listen to the service from the comfort, and safety, of their own cars. One person who attended said: "It provided a welcome release from the isolation many people are currently experiencing."

Building on this, we have adopted the theme of 'Real Love' for Lent, Easter and Pentecost as we share the wonderful message that "We love because Jesus first loved us."

This launched on Valentine's weekend in partnership with 'Firefest' ([www.firefestlive.co.uk](http://www.firefestlive.co.uk)) for which one of our ministers, Revd Rob Cotton, is a trustee.

As part of our 'Real Love' campaign, we are aiming to make and deliver hundreds of hearts. These will be made in a variety of ways, with some even being baked, but all designed to share that same message of love with those who will receive them.

Several churches, and one of our Boys' Brigades, are planning on running art competitions based on the theme of love and done in the style of Grayson Perry's 'Art Club'. We are also hoping to have a love inspired art installation outside Lakeside Chapel in Newmillerdam.

Other things we have planned are the delivery of cards (some of which have been made by local schools), short daily videos on our YouTube channel throughout Lent and Holy Week (each sharing a different story of love from the Bible), and Easter trails using mobile phone technology.

*Matt Burland*

## BRADFORD SOUTH CIRCUIT

### Getting ready – our online Jesse Tree!

'It was an innovative way to hear again about the people involved in the lineage of Jesus and I was able to build it into my daily devotions during Advent. I enjoyed researching the symbols for each day, some of which I was able to colour whilst listening to the readings and prayers. It was lovely to have the voices of the young people reading the scriptures and prayers together with the adults giving the comments. A truly collaborative project, not least the technical input.' - *Christine*

During Advent 2020, we prepared to welcome the Christ-child, using the ancient Christian tradition of decorating a Jesse Tree, (Isaiah 11:1). Christian symbols are hung on branches to remind Christians of the stories in the Jewish Scriptures which revealed God's love and faithfulness.

Each morning, a symbol, linked to a Bible passage, was placed on our Jesse Tree. There were prayers, reflections and an invitation for folk to create their own tree and symbols. It was a way of preparing together, and supporting 'Embrace the Middle East'.

'I made a commitment at the beginning of each day to log on, following the Bible verses with interest as to where the ancestry all followed through to the birth of Jesus. The prayer, thought and challenge certainly made me think.' - *Jean*

'It really was one of the highlights of Christmas 2020 for me! Participating in the Jesse Tree project proved to be an ideal Bible-based activity for Advent; informative, thought-provoking and an opportunity for creativity in preparation for Christmas 2020!' - *Sue*

*Revd Sarah Jemison*



# AROUND THE DISTRICT

## LEEDS NORTH & EAST CIRCUIT

### Advent done differently

#### Reflecting on Advent

In October last year we became aware that Advent and Christmas were going to be quite different to anything we had previously experienced. One of the big challenges, which was shared by everyone, was how to connect people across the circuit to journey together through Advent. We decided to produce a book of reflections for every day throughout Advent and asked the Local Preachers and Worship Leaders, as well as Presbyters and Deacons, to write a short reflection based around one of five themes - Hope, Faith, Joy, Peace and Light. Each week contained some liturgy that was used in church services and on our online weekly circuit service, as well as within individual homes. Many of the reflections were made available online, either as a video or as a digitized version of the page from the book.

Whilst it was hard work sourcing reflections, as well as producing and designing the booklet in time for the beginning of Advent, we had an amazing response from around the circuit. The book helped to connect people worshipping in different ways from across the circuit, including people who had not been able to attend a physical service since before the start of the pandemic. It helped to make use of the talents of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders as well as Presbyters and Deacons, as the reflections produced were often more meaningful to readers due to them knowing the authors.

*Paul Coleman*

#### Christmas 2020 in Harehills

For us at The Meeting Point Café in Harehills, Christmas 2020 will humbly be remembered as a time when God unexpectedly opened up opportunities for us to serve our community, in ways we never would have thought possible, especially at such an extremely difficult time for so many.

We found that a pot of finance from one of our larger funders, needed to be spent by 31st December. Our benefactors did not mind that we could no longer use the money for the project it was intended for - they were very happy for us to use it in our community to address needs, and to help where help was needed. We decided that it provided a great opportunity for us to help families enjoy Christmas at a time when many were stretched.

What followed were three weeks of intense shopping and wrapping, partnering with others in our circuit and other agencies in the area, to discover where we could make the greatest impact.

It was a joy beyond description to be able to make *specific* Christmas wishes come true for children from a kids' club in the area; to distribute hampers filled with lovely Christmas treats and goodies; and to also have those hampers backed up by a separate, substantial food parcel. A minivan filled with nappies found its way to various drop offs where they were desperately needed and with some of the left-over monies, we managed to provide a few families with some laptops to assist with schooling - something we are really glad we did, considering the lockdown which then followed in January.

Christmas 2020 was *not cancelled!* We were blessed to experience the truth of that and to witness God in Jesus break through the hardship and bleakness of these difficult times to bring joy and hope.

*Deacon Liesl Warren*



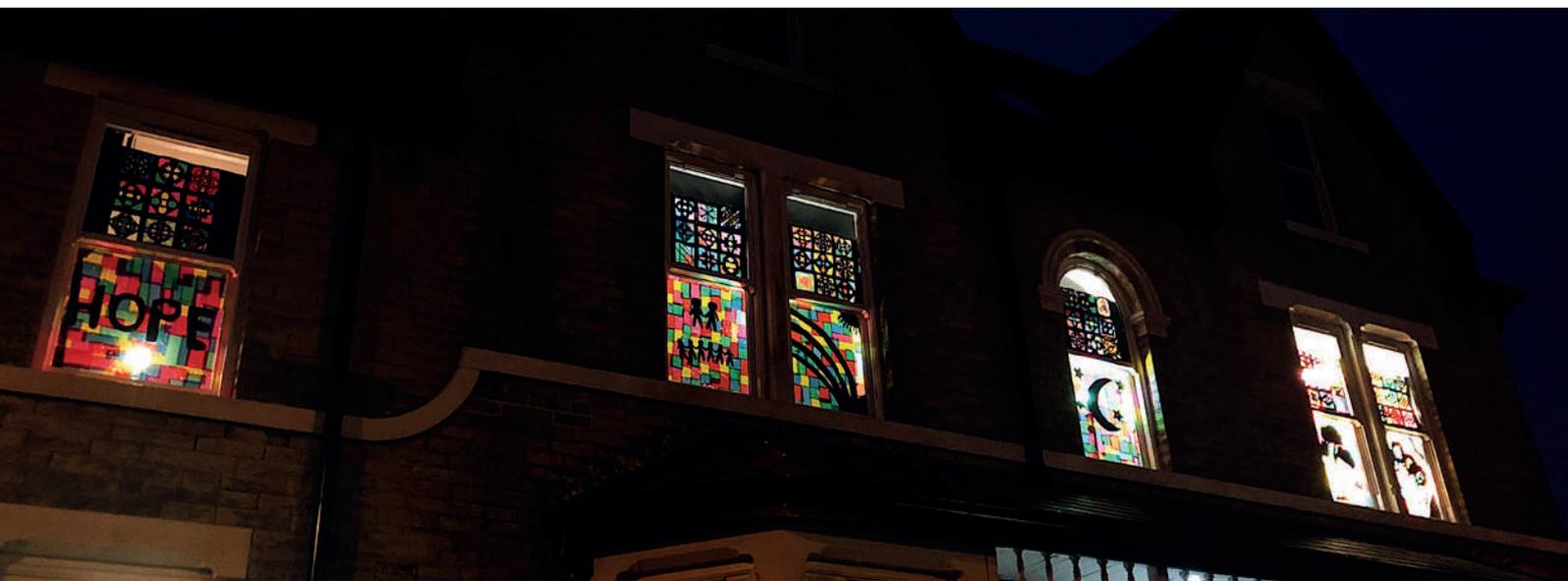
Throughout February Touchstone brought a splash of colour to Easby Road through a light art installation which passers-by and locals viewed. The installation was part of Bradford City Council's 'LiT' programme, on the theme of 'Winter Wonderland'.

The display included stunning geometric panels in the windows, which were made at home by individuals and families in our community. We pieced them together to symbolise the joining together of the different members of our community.

The images on the windows arose from both online discussions we had with participants, and reflections we received via social media and through the post, on the theme of 'wonder'. These were particularly in response to the question, "In what has been a very difficult year, what has made you 'wonder'?" (*def: wonder - a feeling of amazement and admiration, caused by something beautiful, remarkable or unfamiliar*). So there were images of nature, flowers, trees, rainbows, the moon and stars, people joining together, the word 'Care' depicting the care people have shown for each other, and the word 'Hope', which we still have, in spite of everything.

With huge thanks to Bradford Council for the project funding and of course to everyone who participated - our neighbours, friends of Touchstone, and members of the Bradford South Circuit - in whichever way. Look at what you made!!

*Jenny Ramsden*  
Faith to Faith Worker at Touchstone



# MEET THE PEOPLE



**Name:** Liz Vere

**Role Title:** District Lay Employment Advisor

**What does your role involve?:**

My part-time consultancy role involves supporting employing bodies across the District by providing advice and guidance on lay employment matters. The aim is to assist churches, circuits and the District to comply with employment law, as well as promoting the lay employment policies of the Methodist Church which encourage the highest standards of management and support for lay employees. I began advising the District in June 2020, working closely with Melanie Walsh, the District Lay Employment Contact.

**How can you be contacted?:**

Email: [layemployment@ywmethodist.org.uk](mailto:layemployment@ywmethodist.org.uk)

Telephone: 07713 997952

**Which church do you attend?:**

I've attended Lindley Methodist Church in Huddersfield since 2007. Before that, I was a member at Brighthouse Central Methodist Church for 11 years. Other churches I've attended in the past are Trinity Methodist Churches in Bramley, Harrogate, Cheadle and Heywood. I'm a 'daughter of the manse', hence the number of churches!

**Tell us a bit about yourself:**

A Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, I've run my own human resources consultancy business since 2000, providing HR services to various clients including businesses, schools and charities. Previously, I'd worked as HR Manager in a number of organisations. I got into HR after being thanked by a former employee for terminating their employment contract, due to gross misconduct, 'very nicely' whilst working as a manager in a petrol station! This led to me completing a Postgraduate Diploma in Personnel Management at Leeds Metropolitan University after initially having studied Modern European History at Warwick University.

Whilst living in Leeds, I met Gifford Brown and we married just over 20 years ago. We have two children: Alexander (16) and William (14). Work keeps me busy but in my spare time, I enjoy entertaining family and friends, keeping fit through walking and Pilates, as well as skiing on an annual trip to Austria where we have relatives.

**Tell us something that few people know about you:**

I was Bible Brain of Harrogate in 1984 - hopefully not the peak of my knowledge as a Bible student!

## SPECIAL DAYS

**14th March**  
Mothering Sunday

**4th April**  
Easter Sunday

**13th May**  
Ascension Day

**28th March**  
Palm Sunday

**4th - 7th May**  
Diaconal Order Convocation

**23rd May**  
Aldersgate Sunday

**1st April**  
Maundy Thursday

**9th - 15th May**  
Christian Aid Week

**24th May**  
Wesley Day

**2nd April**  
Good Friday

**10th - 16th May**  
Mental Health Awareness Week

**30th May**  
Trinity Sunday

Items for inclusion in the Summer 2021 issue of the District Newsletter should reach us by 12 noon on 15th May 2021

  
The **Methodist Church**  
Yorkshire West District



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