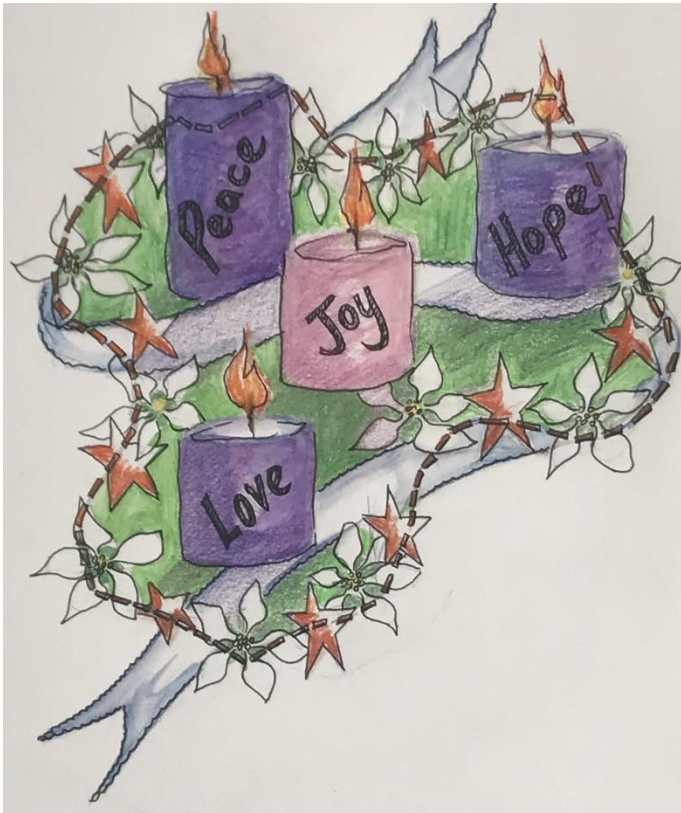




Bury St Edmunds Methodist Circuit

Newsletter December 2023



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I'm Dreaming of

A friend was telling me recently about her recurring dream. She would find herself looking towards the top of a steep flight of stairs where there was a tiny gap, the only way through. It seemed an impossible space through which to squeeze herself. In her dream she recognised the situation, knew that she had been there before but still had no idea how to solve it and was berating herself for not having learned from previous experience. Our minds surely do strange things when we are asleep!!

The questions she had were a) what does it mean? and b) should she take any notice of it?

Knowing that I had been asked to write this piece, it started me thinking about the Christmas story and the people who had dreams.

Matthew's gospel tells us about Joseph – when he was tempted to break off his betrothal to the pregnant Mary, God appeared to him in a dream and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife – the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit and fulfilled Old Testament prophecies. The baby would be a boy to be called Jesus, and he would save his people from their sins. Later, we hear how God appeared again in Joseph's dreams – an instruction to take his young family to Egypt for protection against Herod's murderous acts, and again when it was time to return to Nazareth.

The wise men were warned in a dream not to return to Herod's palace after they had found the Christ Child and they returned home another way.

Joseph must have felt that he was being asked to do an incredibly difficult thing. In order to make his dream a reality, he needed a thick skin to shake off the disapproval and incredulity of neighbours. Joseph was required to have a calmness, strength of character and belief to care for his wife and newborn child on the roads far away from home

and safety. His dream must have helped him to keep steady with strong resolve.

In my friend's case, we concluded that if a dream was helpful in the cool light of day, then it was worth listening to, but otherwise not to dwell on it or be disturbed by her nighttime processing of thoughts. (As a person of great social conscience and a Circuit Steward in Scotland she recognised the dilemma of trying to do impossible or difficult things!) It takes discernment to know when to take action and when to let a dream go. When is something a dream and when is it reality?

Sometimes the bible warns against dreamers and false prophets, (Zechariah 10:2, Deuteronomy 13:1-3). Others benefit from dreams which offer them insight – especially when there is someone to interpret the meaning – the story of Pharaoh and Joseph (Genesis 40 and 41) and the story of Daniel.

One of the most famous verses about dreams is Joel 2:28 “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your children will prophesy, your old will dream dreams, your young will see visions.” The words are repeated in Acts 2:17. Dreams have turned from being something personal and individual into a hope for society as a whole.

As we approach the season of Advent and move into Christmas, we are reminded of the candles representing the growing light of Christ in the world. We look forward to Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. In the world we find ourselves today these seem like impossible dreams, there is so much darkness and danger surrounding us. How can we turn them into reality?

Lamentations 3: 21-24 says “But this I call to mind, and therefore I have HOPE; The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God's mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. “The Lord is my portion” says my soul, “therefore I will HOPE in the Lord”

John 14:27 "PEACE I leave with you, my PEACE I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

Psalm 5:11 "But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them for ever sing for JOY"

Matthew 26:40 "LOVE the Lord your God with all your passion, prayer and intelligence, LOVE others as well as you love yourself"

The Methodist Church's recent Walking with Micah project is now appearing in the Justice Seeking Church report. In the introduction we read these words

Where there is God's Justice....

...it is so much bigger than simply "fairness"

...we may be surprised to find our ideas of justice challenged

...people feel heard and their dignity is affirmed

...the bonds between people, communities, nations, generations, and all living things grow in beauty and significance

...power is shared and used to uphold truth and justice

...there is enough for all, no one lives in poverty, in hunger, or is without

...there is liberation from all forms of slavery

...all creation flourishes, all is well

...there is real peace

...we get a sense of God's kingdom and God's purposes

...there is joy and hope for the future

A dream? Or could it be made a reality?

At Christmastime we more easily focus our attention on making the dreams of others come true. We recognise our longing for Hope, Peace, Love and Joy.

As Christmas advertisements paint cosy pictures of the “perfect” tree, family, meal, gift etc – we realise that they are out of the reach of so many and make special efforts to include others. A justice seeking church recognises that if we can do that in December, we can do it all year round, and repeatedly until justice – love, hope, peace and joy - for all is achieved. It’s a dream. Or is it? Certainly a difficult task – but surely one that needs to become reality, through the prayers of many and the actions of those who can. This month’s cover design shows our circuit with stars for each of the churches, and a ribbon wrapping us and flowing out from us.

May the love of God inspire our dreams and lead us towards His wonderful reality.

Blessings to you and yours this Christmastide

Stella

Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Secretary, Eco Circuit lead.



'Visio Divina: Embracing change through contemplative (smartphone) photography'.

I have just returned from a District retreat. There were 25 Presbyters and Deacons on the retreat which was held at Sizewell Hall Suffolk. The retreat was led by Steve Radley an Anglican Priest who lead us through a series of sessions looking at how we see the world around us through a camera lens.

The retreat was titled. 'Visio Divina: Embracing change through contemplative (smartphone) photography'.

We were encouraged to take photos and reflect on them as well as looking at images that Steve provided for us. We were also able to send photos to him which were used as part of our evening prayer time. Steve reminded us that if we have a smartphone we also have a very good camera in our pocket/bag. I have included a few photos which I took to use for reflection and meditation.

The overall idea of Visio Divina came from the ancient practice of lectio Divina. A practice where we read a passage and notice how it speaks to us and then read it again and again as a meditation. In the same way we were encouraged to allow a photo to 'choose us' and meditate on the image and see what it was saying to us.

We were blessed to be in a wonderful setting with the sea just feet away from the Hall and lovely walks and grounds to discover in our quiet time.

The retreat was a real blessing and gift not only from the District but from the Bury St Edmunds circuit who graciously gave us the time away from circuit work to withdraw from our everyday concerns to dwell in God's presence. One phrase Steve kept coming back to was from Psalm 46: 10 'Be still and know that I AM God'.

Grace and Peace, Rev Rita Carr



THANKS FROM NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE: How lovely it was to see all our friends at the recent Circuit Sunday afternoon gathering at Northumberland Avenue Methodist Church. After a very prayerful, reflective service, ending with a rousing, uplifting rendition of 'Love Divine ', we were able to share our fellowship tea. Many thanks to everyone for all the delicious contributions brought to our tea table. Rev Jason has suggested a Summer Picnic Gathering. That is certainly something to think about and look forward to as we approach the winter months. God bless you all, Susan.

INSTALLATION OF REVD CANON JASON VINYARD AT ST EDMUNDSBURY CATHEDRAL EVENSONG

Taken from St Edmundsbury Cathedral Website

On Sunday 19 November we held a special service to honour seven people in Suffolk and bestowed them with the title of 'Canon'. The title of Canon is given to individuals, both clergy and lay, who have given particular service to the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. This year new canons are being recognised for their expertise and contribution to the life of the Diocese and wider county. The installation took place during the 3.30 pm Evensong service for the Festival of St Edmund.

The new canons will join the Cathedral's College of Canons. The College is comprised of the Dean, the Residentiary Canons of the Cathedral, the Bishop of Dunwich and the Archdeacons of Rural Mission, Suffolk, Ipswich and Sudbury. In addition, up to 26 Honorary Canons (in holy orders) and up to 12 Lay Canons (not in holy orders), plus up to three Ecumenical Canons, may be appointed by the Bishop. The role of the College of Canons is to act independently to the Cathedral governing bodies and be a forum for reflection, advice and advocacy across the diocese and county. Modelling both the current context and what we aspire to become, the canons represent the breadth of Suffolk life.



The Very Revd Joe Hawes, Dean of St Edmundsbury said, *“With each series of installations the Cathedral moves closer to our goal of strong and outward facing governance. The College of Canons plays an integral part in this as the Bishop’s think tank and as ambassadors connecting Cathedral, diocese and county.”*



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Live later life well The Martins MHA, Vinefields, IP33 1YA is holding a **Christmas Fair on Saturday 9th December** from 10.30am to Noon.

There'll be Stalls, Raffle, Coffee and Mince Pies and Games. This will be our first fund raiser after almost 4 years so do come along and support our efforts to build up the Amenity Fund and support the Home.

Donations of items for the Raffle, Bottle Stall, Cake Stall will all be gladly received.

Your presence on the day will be greatly appreciated. Thanks, Rev Val S.

NEWS FROM ST JOHN'S

We have restarted all of our regular community groups following a break during August. We run three separate clubs aimed at providing something to suit all ages. Our family groups run weekly on Fridays during term time only, however our Saturday morning group for adults runs all year round.

Tea & Tots, Fridays 9.30am-11.30am

Since starting back in September we have seen many of our regular members return and several new families have also begun attending. We see a wide range of ages from 2 weeks to 3 years old. We've continued to offer crafts and messy activities for older tots, alongside stories, singing and free play for all.

Feedback from parents and guardians has been very positive, with comments that the friendly and welcoming attitude of staff, volunteers and attendees creates an environment of safety and nurture, that encourages them to return each week. The parents really support each other, and many find mornings with us a rare chance to relax enough to enjoy a quick cup of coffee and confidently share their worries and joys alike.

Thank Goodness It's Friday (TGIF), Fridays 3.30pm-5.00pm

Our after school club is aimed at 6+ years, though we welcome any younger siblings. In September we began a journey around the world, in which we visit a new country each week and should end up having been to 12 new places before returning to the UK in December. We explore each country through different crafts, games and activities, learning about the wildlife, environment and culture everywhere we go. We've made pizzas in Italy, combined art and science with 'balancing birds' in Egypt, created Savannah puppets in Kenya and celebrated harvest with kolam and rangoli patterns in India.

The children have been very excited by this theme, and eager to discover what animals live in the country we're visiting, some of the food and drink from each country, and where we will be going next. It has been a chance for children who have never been abroad or experienced a wide range of cultures to see and learn a bit more of the world beyond.

Coffee and Chat, Saturdays 10.30am-12.30pm

We continue to offer mornings filled with friendly chat, coffee, cake and games and puzzles available to play each week. As part of Coffee and Chat, we also host a hobbies group on the 2nd Saturday of the month. This provides an opportunity for members to bring along their hobbies to share, so we can learn new skills together, or simply a time to work on their own projects in a communal space. We also continue to have a film screening on the fourth Saturday of each month.

The Community Team contributed to the decoration of the church for Harvest Festival (Sunday 8th October). Our family groups were asked to think about their favourite foods and then create paintings of the different plants and animals that make up their favourite meals. These pictures were then arranged into displays by members of Coffee and Chat which you can see on the windowsills in the church.



STOWMARKET METHODIST CHURCH NEWS

A very Happy Christmas to friends around the Circuit from folk at Stowmarket



We give thanks to God for the growth in our church this year, the new members we have welcomed and the enhancements to our faith and practice that have come with them. As is our tradition we will celebrate Advent and New Year with Church Meals together. We have a Charity Coffee Morning on 9th December (details below). On that day, Clive and Mike leave early to deliver our annual collection of Mince Pies, Socks and Chocs, harvest gifts and other items for Whitechapel mission. They usually make it back in time for a coffee.

This year our Carol singing outside will be in the town centre, courtesy of Fulchers who are letting us use their premises to gather. We are hoping that this change will mean a wider audience.

You are warmly invited to our Charity Coffee morning in the **Stowmarket Church Hall - 10.00 to noon - Saturday 9th December.**

Proceeds to action for Children and Whitechapel Mission.

There will be cakes, mince pies, tea, coffee and mulled fruit juice as well as a Christmas themed tombola. All are welcome to come along , why not come wearing a Christmas jumper?



**God, with us, As we enter this season of longing and waiting,
bear with us a little longer; be patient with our impatience.**

**You have journeyed alongside us from the beginning of time,
yet still we miss the signs of your presence.**

**When we are blinded by the brashness of this season:
Open our eyes to the glimpses of your glory.**

**When we want simple answers:
Open our minds to the hints of incarnation.**

**When we are deafened by our own shouting:
Open our ears to the whispers of your grace.**

**May we share with you in longing for restoration and renewal
and may we be watchful for the light that breaks through
the darkness of our world. In Christ's name. Amen.**

**God says 'Be patient, watch and wait,
for the time is close at hand.'
Know that you are loved, forgiven and healed.
Amen. Thanks be to God.**

*Advent Prayer by the Revd Michaela Youngson,
Past President of the Methodist Conference*



The poster features a light purple background with a subtle bokeh effect of warm, out-of-focus lights. On the right side, there is a vertical image of a single lit candle in a dark holder, with its flame glowing brightly. The text is centered and reads: "Churches Together in Bury St Edmunds invite you to our" in a small, sans-serif font, followed by "Advent Celebration" in a large, elegant, black script font. Below this, "St. Edmundsbury Cathedral" and "5:15pm Sunday December 10th" are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom, a smaller line of text says "Please come at 4:30pm for seasonal refreshments and meet and mingle".

Churches Together in Bury St Edmunds
invite you to our

Advent Celebration

**St. Edmundsbury Cathedral
5:15pm Sunday December 10th**

Please come at 4:30pm for seasonal refreshments
and meet and mingle

Northumberland Avenue
Methodist Church
Bury St Edmunds, IP32 6NA

Christmas Fayre

Saturday 2nd DECEMBER

10.30 am - 12.30 pm

**REFRESHMENTS - CAKE STALL
TOMBOLA - GIFT STALLS
& MUCH MORE!**





**ST JOHN'S METHODIST
CHURCH**



CHRISTMAS FAMILY FAIR



**At St John's Methodist Church,
York Rd Sudbury
2nd December 2023 10 am – 3 pm**

**Grand Opening by
Father Christmas !**



Café

Try our Hot Drinks,



**Homemade soup, Cakes, & Savouries.
Stalls with Homemade Chutneys, Jams,
& Cakes, Fairtrade Goods, Plants,
Books & Dvds, & Childrens' Activities**



STOWMARKET METHODIST CHURCH,
REGENT STREET, STOWMARKET.

We are planning to hold a Charity Christmas Coffee Morning on Saturday 9th December at Stowmarket Methodist Church from 10.am until 12 noon. All proceeds will go to Action for Children and the Whitechapel Mission.

There will be cakes, mince pies, tea, coffee and mulled fruit juice as well as a Christmas themed tombola. All are welcome to come along.

If you can why not come wearing
a Christmas jumper.

God Bless, Rev Rita and Francis.





CHRISTMAS AT IXWORTH METHODIST CHAPEL

FESTIVE COFFEE MORNINGS

Come and enjoy Coffee, Trees and Mince Pies on Tuesday mornings from 10.00 am. Our Christmas Sales Table also has cards, wrapping paper and stocking fillers at reasonable prices.

Our **CAROL SERVICE** is on **December 10th at 3 pm** and will be led by our minister, Rev Jason Vinyard. We look forward to seeing you there to celebrate a very special birthday.

If you are free as a family, or on your own on **BOXING DAY MORNING**, why not pop into the Chapel – we shall be serving Coffee and Mince Pies as usual from 10. 00 am



OLD NEWTON METHODIST CHURCH

You are invited to our special Christmas events. We'd love to have you with us - the wearing of Christmas hats and jumpers is encouraged!

CHRISTMAS LUNCH



Tuesday, 5th December

12.15 - 1.30

Come and enjoy a festive lunch
in good company.



CHRISTMAS



MONDAY MEET UP

Monday, 11th December

We're open 11-3

This is a group to meet up with old
and new friends

to enjoy each other's company
and share a simple meal together.

It is a drop in session so come when you
can and stay as long as you like.

Let Joy Wood (01449673433) know
if you would like a lift.

Coffee, Cake and Carols

Saturday, 16th December

10.00 Old Newton

Come and enjoy familiar carols
in our decorated Chapel
with the Chrismon tree,
decorations and candles.

There will be coffee, tea and
plenty of Christmas nibbles.



CHRISTMAS COFFEE MORNING



Tuesday, 19th DECEMBER

10.45 – 12.00 at Old Newton

in aid of Action for Children.

Everyone welcome

First Aid Course

Gryphon First Aid will be running a first aid course which will cover both paediatric and adult aspects of first aid. It will be run at St John's Methodist Church in Sudbury as two sessions on Saturday afternoons 3.00 – 6.00 pm on January 13th and January 20th 2024. Those participating will be issued with a certificate. The cost will be £60 per person. The maximum number of people who can take part is 12.

If you, or someone you know wishes to attend, please let Gill Phillips gillian.phillips@gmx.co.uk know as soon as possible.

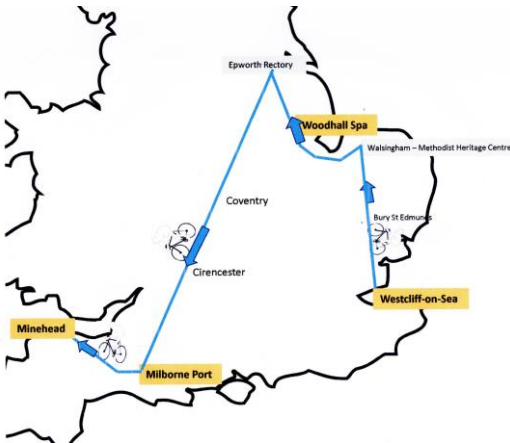


'In 2024 the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Homes (LWPHomes) formerly LPMA Homes will celebrate 75 years since the opening of the first Home in Westcliff in 1949, so Robert has decided to help them celebrate this milestone by cycling to each of the 4 Homes, beginning in Westcliff and ending in Minehead, travelling via Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire and Milborne Port near Sherborne in Dorset. It is likely to take around 6 weeks. He will start at Westcliff on April 16th 2024 and pass through Bury on his way to the newly opened Methodist Heritage Centre at Wighton in Norfolk, and then on to Epworth.

We very much hope that we can count on your support to publicise the ride as widely as possible. The poster shows roughly the route he will be following. He is keen to call in at Coffee Mornings and places of Methodist interest on the way, so if you know of anywhere he might be welcome, please let us know.

Thank you, Jenny.'

Why cycle 550 miles?



In Celebration of 75 Years of Christian Care!

LWPHomes (formerly LPMA Homes) has been supporting Leaders of Worship and Preachers in need for 75 years – the first Home was opened at Westcliff-on-Sea in 1949. Our celebrations for this special anniversary include a 550+ mile cycle ride to visit each of the LWPHomes, starting at Westcliff on Tuesday April 16, 2024.

Our cyclist, Robert Davie, is asking for your support to make people aware of the care given to our residents in LWPHomes.

To read more, and to donate if you wish, please go to JustGiving and search Robert Davie, LWPH or scan the QR code below.



Thank you to everyone who has submitted articles, sent in their news or told us about their events. We really would like this to be a newsletter written and enjoyed by all across the circuit, we'd love you to share your news, prayers, events, tips for life, vegetable gardens or even a joke with us.

We welcome your feedback on the content, format and distribution of the newsletter. Please let us know your thoughts.



Anyone wishing to submit articles for the January Newsletter please send through to the circuit office circuit.admin@hotmail.com by 16th December, we look forward to hearing your news. If you no longer wish to receive the newsletter or information from Bury St Edmunds Methodist Circuit please ring 01284 731082 or email circuit.admin@hotmail.com

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