



Bury St Edmunds Methodist Circuit

Newsletter February & March
2025



'Sudbury Water Meadows'

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Dear Friends,



As I write this letter I am only too aware that we are fast approaching the season of Lent. Christmas and all our festivities seem long ago and almost forgotten. Lent, as I am sure you are all aware, begins with Shrove Tuesday.

This moveable feast depends on the timing of Easter. This year Easter Sunday is on the 20th of April making Shrove Tuesday the 5th of March. Lent begins the next day on Ash Wednesday the 6th of March.

We get the expression of Shrove Tuesday from the word *shrive*, which means absolution following confession. Traditionally Christians visited their church on Shrove Tuesday to confess their sins and clean their soul so being *shriven* (absolved) before the start of Lent.

I must say that I quite like the word 'shriven'. It makes me think of what it means to and for us today and as Christians in an increasingly secular world. Are we shriven or do we need to continually be shriven?

The marking of the start of Lent began around 1000 AD. Traditionally Christians would abstain from rich foods and foods containing eggs, meat and alcohol as a way of being penitential during the Lent season. As I enter this season I try to decide what I will give up and what I will take on. In the Bible in the gospel of Matthew it says this:

Concerning Fasting Matthew 6: 16-18

¹⁶ 'And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Holy Bible - New Revised Standard Version)

Not many of us go so far as fasting but we do try and be a bit more mindful about what we do during Lent, especially concerning food.

Even though Shrove Tuesday is observed by most of the country with pancakes being served and enjoyed in many households. The reason this is done has been forgotten. We see very few people in contrast at our Ash Wednesday service the following day. As we stand together to pray, to have our foreheads marked with an ash cross and take part in the feast of Holy Communion we must do so not just for ourselves but for all those who are not there. As we enter into the season of Lent this year we must enjoy our pancakes, come to be shaven and have our foreheads ashed as a way of knowing that we are part of God's family.

Grace and Peace Rev Rita Carr

(Photo taken at the Paupers Graves in Stowmarket by Rev Rita Carr)



It's beyond me

I recently nearly finished '*A Course in Christian Mysticism*' by Thomas Merton. "Thirteen sessions with the famous Trappist monk" was the subtitle. Although very impressed with Thomas Merton's knowledge of Christian mysticism, I was not impressed with my inability to understand very much that was described and explained in the book. That is why I 'nearly' finished the book. The book was beyond me, that is not a pun; there were many chapters I read where I believed I should have had access to an introductory text, or maybe a pretend book 'Christian Mysticism for Dummies'.

So, what is the point of starting an article about a book I did not finish reading and which I did not understand very well at all? I think the point is that in life you have to admit that sometimes you just don't get it.

Dr Stephen Hawking's book '*A Brief History of Time*' is another example where I had (brief) moments of comprehension and then realised I did not have any idea what Dr Hawking was talking about. I understood the analogy presented in the book about space time and the universe being like a rubber sheet where the mass and gravity of planets and stars caused dents in the sheet which represented distortions in time. Then gradually I became less confident that I did understand, to the point that the rubber sheet was the only tangible thing my mind could cope with and remember.

So it is with The Bible, with scripture. I don't always get it or understand what the point is of a particular verse, passage, parable or story. Yes there are commentaries that can help, yes there is your Minister or other knowledgeable people around you, but even with such input I may still not understand or may not agree with the interpretation given.

Jesus acknowledged that sometimes either the disciples or the crowds who came to listen to him did not always understand what he was saying or teaching, especially about spiritual matters or the Kingdom of God. That is why he spoke in parables to help those around him understand the point he

was making; but some of the parables can be a challenge and sometimes the disciples asked him to explain what a parable meant.

For example, in Mark 4:10-13: ***The Purpose of the Parables***

10 When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. **11** And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; **12** in order that

*"they may indeed look, but not perceive,
and may indeed listen, but not understand;
so that they may not turn again and be forgiven."*

13 And he said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable (The parable of the sower)? Then how will you understand all the parables?'

In Luke 18:31-34 on his third attempt to foretell his death and resurrection to the disciples:

A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

31 Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. **32** For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. **33** After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.' **34** But they understood nothing about all these things; in fact, what he said was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

Finally in the following passage you cannot avoid noticing Jesus' frustration expressed at the end of verse 25.

John 8:23-25

23 He said to them, 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. **24** I told you that you would die in your sins, for

you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he.'[25 They said to him, 'Who are you?' Jesus said to them, 'Why do I speak to you at all? (or What I told you from the beginning.)

It is frustrating not understanding ideas or text, (or instructions in IKEA flat pack furniture). Our understanding of the world around us changes as we grow older. Over fifty years ago I was pretty good at working out simultaneous and quadratic equations but in the present I have no idea how to complete them or what the practical purpose of such equations are. When we don't understand scripture we pray for guidance and as I said earlier we ask others that are more knowledgeable than us about the meaning of a passage. That is why attending Bible Study sessions is, in my view, so helpful. I have also found that by reading various religious books that occasionally in those books, there is an explanation about a passage in the Bible that I have had difficulty with and suddenly that passage makes sense to me.

So, to conclude, if you do not understand a Bible reading, do not panic, do not judge yourself, there will be many people in the same position as you although they may not admit it. Remember that the disciples did not always understand Jesus' teachings. Attend Bible Study and pray for guidance. Read Christian books on various topics.

For example, I am finding 'God of Surprises' by Gerald W Hughes helpful in understanding certain themes that run through the Bible. Interpreting what Jesus meant calling himself the 'Son of Man' has been difficult for me to get my head round. Gerald Hughes mentions that according to some commentators the translation of 'Son of Man' in Aramaic slang is 'an ordinary bloke'. Whether that translation is accurate or not I can now comprehend Jesus as the Son of God, Divine and an ordinary bloke!

I pray that we are all persistent and persevere in our efforts to understand the Word of God.

Nigel Scarff, Local Preacher

NEWS FROM NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE

On Saturday 30th November we held our Christmas fayre, it was very successful and attracted many our wider church family and our local community.

On Sunday 8th December we welcomed Sam, Rachel and their family and friends for the baptism of baby Alfie. Rev. Canon Jason Vinyard conducted the service. Alfie was very well behaved as was his very proud brother Robin.

On Monday 9th December twenty-six children from the reception class from the local Howard Community Academy school came to visit. Val, Sarah and Susan were there to welcome them and their teacher and assistants. Rev. Jason did a great job in holding their attention and talking through the traditional Christmas story and answering the numerous questions. We also gave them some books which Clare had kindly bought which was about the special star that led to Jesus, the light of the world.



On Sunday the 22nd December we held our Carol service led by Mrs. Josie Keys. During the service we were invited to hang our little knitted donation bags on our decorated Christmas tree. The amount raised was £125 which was donated to the charity Action For Children.

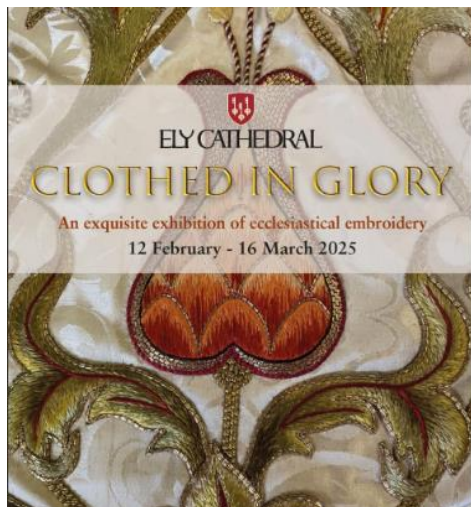
NEWS FROM STOWMARKET

Our usual delivery of over 1300 mince pies, socks and chocs, harvest goods, clothes, and other gifts was taken to Whitechapel Mission early in December. The gift was very much appreciated as the mission serves 450 breakfasts 365 days of the year as well as offering bathroom facilities, clothing, and an advice centre. It was good to renew our friendship with them which has gone on for many years now.

We did Carol singing in the town on the two Thursday nights before Christmas, and were also welcomed in by one of the town centre pubs to sing to their customers. One of our members knits beautiful little angels and we were able to give these out to passing children.

We held our annual covenant service on the first Sunday in January followed by a roast dinner lunch shared with friends from Old Newton. Our pastoral visitors were also recommissioned during the service.

We are hoping to arrange a group outing to this exhibition in Ely Cathedral.
<https://www.elycathedral.org/events/clothed-in-glory-exhibition>



THANK YOU FROM OLD NEWTON METHODIST CHURCH!

Our new range cooker is installed and working well. We used it for the first time to cook our Christmas lunch!



We are most grateful to the Circuit and the Quentin Trust for enabling us to buy it. If you want to see for yourself how well it is working why not come and join us at our lunches this year.

NEWS FROM TRINITY

In November we were happy to welcome a number of people into membership of the Methodist Church in our congregation, one by confirmation and others by transfer and/or after attending a membership course.

Our Christmas services were well attended, and we were pleased to welcome visitors from the local URC and Northumberland Avenue Methodist Church at some of these. It is heartening to see that our congregations overall are on the increase.

Being a town centre building has the advantage of what might be termed, if we were a commercial business, “passing trade”.

Our church website has recently been updated with information for those seeking a place of worship when visiting or moving into the town. You can visit the website on www.trinitymethodistchurch.org.uk

Another consequence of being situated where we are is that many people - and their empty takeaway packs - walk by our forecourt or across it. We now have CCTV in operation covering our forecourt and surroundings which is helping us to monitor drivers or others misusing that space. We also have a video entry phone when needed which adds to the security of those working in or hiring the church buildings.

We now look forward, with the Circuit, to Lent and Easter along with the better weather which we hope will come along then; we can only hope that “After Winter must come Spring” as the lyrics of a popular song ran some years ago; and of course that is our biblical assurance as well (Genesis 8, 22; Song of Songs 2, 11-13, and more).

Trinity Church Stewards

**St John's
Methodist Church
Sudbury**

Church Anniversary

**Sunday
6th April
2025
At 10.30am**



**Church
ANNIVERSARY**

**Preacher; Revd. John
Boardman**

ALL WELCOME

Thank Goodness It's Friday
Fridays 3.30pm-5.00pm



For ages 6+
accompanied by a
parent or guardian
Suggested donation £1 per family

An Almanac Journal: A Scrapbooker's guide to all things interesting



What we do



- Come along to our afterschool club for an afternoon of crafts and games.
- We're open weekly during school's term time.
- We offer free refreshments for children and adults and a quiet space for those who want to relax at the end of a busy week.



Where we are

St John's Methodist Church
Sudbury
CO10 1ND

For more information please contact our
Community Worker, Elizabeth Lee at:
elizabeth.lee1400@outlook.com

This term...

We'll be creating our own almanac journals to keep our crafty creations in. We'll explore special celebrations and delve deeper into some of our favourite things in and about the world around us.



What's going on in the garden



February's flower is the violet. It is named for its radiant colour - violets signify everlasting love and, of course,

we have St Valentine's Day this month. Violets also represent innocence, creativity, sensitivity and spirituality.

February is often a very cold month. Although the evenings are beginning to lengthen, we still have hard overnight frosts and a lot of rain. Remember not to walk over the grass when it is frosted over; you will not want to find your footprints showing up later as yellow patches where the grass has been damaged

February can be the perfect time to plant bareroot deciduous trees and shrubs, including roses. It is also the time to prune them which will improve their health and shape and according to RHS magazine and gardening books there is a lot of pruning to do! If your hedges such as beech and hawthorn have become just too large, now is the time to take on the job of cutting them back. This is the best time whilst they are dormant and before birds begin making their nests. To avoid causing stress on the hedge, only prune the top or one side.

Shrub roses also need to be pruned now; remove old and leggy branches and cut back repeat flowering roses by one-third to one-half. Make sure you remove damaged and diseased stems and any that are dead. Bare-rooted shrubs, which include roses, can also be planted out now, providing the soil is not frozen or so wet that it is 'sticky'. The soil will soon begin to warm up and the new roots will be able to establish themselves very quickly.

It is also the time to cut back autumn fruiting raspberries; cut the canes down to the ground and then apply a generous layer of mulch. You will all know that I get excited about making compost – wonderful for the garden and so easy to make from vegetable & fruit debris, grass cuttings, leaves and papers and best of all its free! Now's the time to start using it and make sure you get those wonderful raspberries in the autumn. Now is the time to plant raspberry canes and force rhubarb. Add plenty of organic matter when you plant

This is the month to plant snowdrops, winter aconites, wood anemone spring snowflake, and English bluebells. Plant them in the green (i.e. before the foliage has died away) as soon as you can and water them generously to help them settle in. Remove any flower stems that are faded so that the plants will divert their energy into growth and feed the bulbs for the next spring before flowering; add compost or leaf mould to enrich the soil around them before they are planted, and plant them just a little deeper than they have been in their pots. If you already have snowdrops, increase your stock. Carefully dig up large clumps, divide into sections and then replant elsewhere.

You should begin preparing seedbeds, applying an organic fertiliser (compost again!), then rake the seed bed over and cover with a cloche or poly tunnel to keep off the snow and heavy rain. Using a cloche or poly tunnel will also help to warm up the soil. Prepare your trench for runner beans – the better the trench is prepared with organic matter (more compost), the better your crop will be later on in the year. The trench should be the depth of a spade and about 18 ins wide. This year I have covered the area for growing vegetables on my allotment with horse manure, leaving it lying open on the ground to rot down, and also to act as a mulch, preventing (I hope) weeds from coming up.

As soon as I am ready to begin planting, I can simply turn the ground over and get on with just doing that!

Chilli seeds can be sown indoors, shallots can be planted, and you can begin chitting potatoes– it's time to get busy! Did you think this would be a quiet month in the garden? Oh no..... there's plenty to do and keep you busy!

And what about the wildlife in your garden? Birds may still need help – water when there's snow and food such as bird cake, peanuts and seed can make all the difference to their survival. If you have a pile of twig's pruning's that have been left for hedgehogs to use for hibernation, don't throw them out yet! Insects may also be sheltering from winter inside.

Please remember to leave food out for the birds Check your feeders to ensure that they remain clean and well stocked – the birds will come regularly if the feeders are kept stocked and you will have the pleasure of seeing these visitors coming to your garden. Please also make sure that they have water to drink – it is such an easy thing to do when the weather is so cold, and ponds start freezing over. It is also the time to put up bird boxes for nesting – the birds need a little time to get used to the new boxes before they choose one as their home! I still have my friend, the robin, watching me and waiting to grab the worms where I have hoed the borders. And remember that hedgehogs and grass snakes may be hibernating inside your compost heap, all snug and warm, so when turning it over do be careful.

Again if you have a contribution to make to *What's going on in the garden?* Or photos we would love to hear from you. Please send to the editor or to me at jebrooker56@gmail.com

Art Days

Some of you will remember that a few years ago Stella Davis arranged for those who enjoyed painting or another craft to meet together at one of our churches in the Circuit. I am looking to see if there is any interest in revitalising this, perhaps meeting together at Bradfield Church maybe 3 or 4 times a year. We used to have lunch together and it was always a productive day for those attendees and a chance to share with and take inspiration from others.

If you would be interested in having “Art days” again please let me know & I will set up a diary to book the hall at Bradfield, and we could perhaps invite folk from other churches – I remember that a friend of mine (Anglican) came along and very much enjoyed the day. *Jane Brooker*



The postponed Christmas Fair at The Martins MHA held on Saturday 11th Jan was a great success!

£482 was raised.

Sincere thanks to all who gave, helped, came and supported. Your generosity and efforts are greatly appreciated, and it was a happy event too.

Rev Val Spencer, retiring Chair of The Martins VOLUNTEER SUPPORT GROUP, *actively seeking a replacement!*

“Preach” - not just for preachers:

I have a collection of “Preach” magazines, which are published by Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust, from when they were first published 8 years ago; there are 4 per year but a few have been passed on already over the years. I have kept them to refer back to but have now had good use of them and it is time for me to make space in my small flat, and I am happy to give them to anyone who would like to have them.

If anyone would like the whole lot - rather a heavy bundle - or any one or more of them please let me know. Each issue deals with a different topic of quite a wide range of interests. At random, titles have been:- Small Churches, Encountering Jesus, Preaching Today, Disability, The Political Issue, The Words we Use, What is Joy. Although intended mainly for preachers of any denomination or level of interest or experience, they have many interesting articles and plenty of book reviews and artwork which may interest anybody. I am happy to give any or all of them away and we could arrange for a handover at some convenient time and place as we travel across the circuit. (Cost of packing and postage would be very heavy).

You can contact Local Preacher Josie Keys by telephone 01284 489059
or email jkeys@live.co.uk





Circuit Eco Day, Bradfield Methodist Church

March 22nd 2025

This is the first of three days during the year.

Other dates are:

Saturday 19th July

Saturday 4th October

10:30 to 3:30pm please bring a packed lunch.

Programme for March 22nd:

- Eco Bible study
- Considering the results of the Net Zero survey.
- Crafting a response

A Rocha revised the standards for eco church last October. The criticism I would make of the new criteria is that you cannot see “at a glance” the scope of the award. There are 5 categories to consider with sometimes more than 30 sections, and these are split into further tasks. I am working on typing the standards into a more user-friendly format. Please contact me artwisestella@gmail.com if you would like to have a copy when it is finished.



It is a slow and frustrating process!! So...

...It had been a difficult morning, and I finally threw down the new A



Rocha eco standards (which were the last straw of several) and my laptop, replaced them with coat and wellies and tearfully stomped off into the woods nearby. I felt overwhelmed. After a while, I was stopped in my tracks by this silvery twisting beauty, I seemed spirit-like, and I considered all the branches that made up the shape. Peace crept over me.



I moved back to look at it from a distance and met this huge tree. I gratefully leaned my weary and confused head against its age and solidity and enjoyed the stillness. Sometimes we just can't see the wood for the trees! Space, sunshine,

fresh air, solitude did their work and calm and perspective returned.



The new Eco church standards still use 5 categories. These are:

Worship and Teaching, Buildings, Land and Nature, Community and Global engagement, Lifestyle.

It feels impossible to tackle them all at once. Net Zero has a target date of 2030 so actually focussing on one section at a time – even if it was one section a year, we would get there. (Remembering all the while though, that Climate Change needs urgent action and an immediate response from us to reduce our collective and personal carbon emissions). Church Life calls us to so much – pastoral care, safeguarding, equality, diversity, inclusivity, property and finance management etc etc alongside the foundational purpose which is our desire to know the love of God and to love God in return through our Worship and following of Christ's teaching. The dilemma I was feeling was that the Eco church standards make us feel like an environmental organisation – caring for the planet is easily a full-time occupation.

The question then is... How do we go about everything else that we do, without having a detrimental effect on creation, without damaging people or nature further, and finding a way of being that heals and repairs not only our planet but also our souls?

Earlier in the morning, I heard a radio programme about a group of students who had been asked to live without their smartphones for a week. Not all of them managed it, but many of them discovered a new way of being, they took up art and music, discovered that the world did not end if they did not know everything now this minute, they talked to their parents more and enjoyed learning new things about their past, slept better. In short, life was more simple and better for it.

We have heard the phrase “Live simple (so that others may simply live)” for many decades now. Living simply will go a long way towards helping and healing creation.

These questions are a good starting point:

- 1 How often do you take time to remember that air, food, water, warmth, shelter are all natural products and processes? The natural world sustains your life.
- 2 Consider the “life story” of the items and services you buy and use. Where did they come from? What are they made of? What impact have they had on people and the planet in order to reach you? Do you really need it? Can you reduce your consumption?
- 3 How can you maximise your use of this thing? Have you used its full potential, can it be reused, repaired?
- 4 What is the end life of this item? Will it be recycled? Where will it end up? What impact will it have on people and the planet? Have you made the best decision you can about this item or are there better choices?
- 5 What is your Carbon footprint? Can you reduce it or offset it?
- 6 Are you helping or hindering the planet and nature in the way you live your life?
- 7 Can you share your climate actions with others and encourage them to join in.

PLEASE CONTACT ME: artwisestella@gmail.com 07599 398866

72 Forest Road, Onehouse, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 3EP

- If you feel able to take a lead on one of the Eco Church standard areas. This would mean learning about what is required, sharing information, possibly help organise an event or activity, and encouraging folk to think about what they could do.
- If you have a story to share about living simply? What things were part of your youth that now seem over complicated or wasteful. What changes have you made and how has it worked out. Share your wisdom!
- If you would like a copy of the easier to read format of the eco church standards when I have completed it.
- If you have kids that would enjoy a circuit eco kids event.

**Hooray!! A good thing to come out
of feeling overwhelmed!**

I started looking for help and found these two links

Methodist Church Eco Page

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/action/climate/>

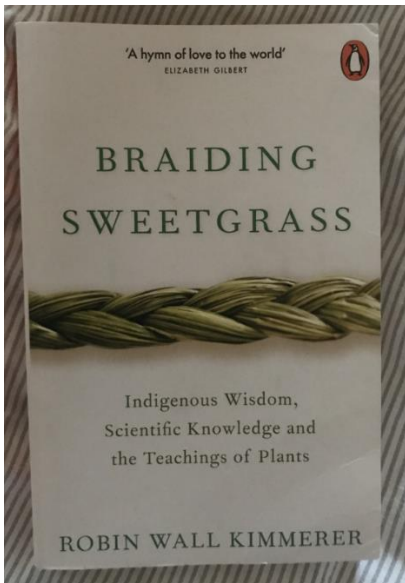
There is a Methodist Eco Community Network! They hold 3 zoom meetings per year, free on Eventbrite. Ian Rutherford seems to be the main force behind it, he may be known to some of you.

The next one is 10th February at 7pm zoom and I have booked my place. The link is below for anyone else who would like to come along.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/methodist-church-eco-community-network-tickets-1097644828229?aff=oddtcreator>

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

If you haven't already found it, the **BBC Radio 4 programme "Rare Earth"** is a weekly round-up of news on the environment, and is a great way of keeping informed. The first episode of 2025 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00268w9> looked at reasons to be cheerful. It's important to keep an eye on the positives although this month has brought news of the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles and the arrival of Mr Trump in the Whitehouse is a cause for prayer on many fronts.



Much healing has also come about from reading this book. I bought it on the strength of good reviews which made me feel it was something I "ought to read" although I was anticipating it might be a bit dry.

Far from it! I'm loving it. The author is a scientist by education, a lecturer in Botany by trade, and a granddaughter of native American Indian culture with an inherited love and respect for the voice and activity of nature, plants especially.

I'm still mid book, but with a renewed gratitude for the gift of the earth sustaining every human activity.

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer

CRAFT CIRCLE



Our Craft Club meets in the Chapel Hall on the third Tuesday of each month. It is a very friendly group of folk who enjoy meeting together to practise familiar crafts and learn new ones.

There is also plenty of time for chat and tea drinking. You would be most welcome to join us. You don't need to be expert at any craft – it's all for fun and friendship!

Our next meeting will be on
Wednesdays, 19th February & 19th March
from 2.00pm till 4.00pm

Just turn up at Old Newton Chapel hall
or phone Liz Kearsley 01359 272617
if you'd like to know more.



MONDAY MEETUP



**Mondays 10th February & 10th March
between 11 and 3, Old Newton**

**Meet up for coffee and chat,
food and friendship, welcome and warmth.**

contact: Joy Wood 673433

**There will be coffee or tea and biscuits and a soup and
roll,**

coffee and cake lunch.

Let Joy know if you would like a lift.



on Tuesdays, 18th February & 18th March

10.45 – 12.00, Old Newton Chapel

**Do come and join us in the hall for coffee and nibbles
and a chance to meet up with friends**

old and new. You'll be most welcome.

FRIDAY LUNCH



The first lunch of 2025 will be on
Friday, 14th February
and the next one on **14th March**
at 12.15, Old Newton Chapel.

Thank you to everyone who supported our lunches in 2024.

We're having a Big Breakfast



on Saturday, 22nd February,
in the Chapel Hall, 9.00 – 1.00
£8.00

Please contact Neil Martin to book a time.
neil.martin@tiscali.co.uk

01449774245

07749863230

GUARDIANS & TIDDLERS

Baby & Toddler Group
Newborn - Preschool

£1
PER
FAMILY

THURSDAYS
1PM - 3PM
(TERM TIME ONLY)

The Methodist Church
Northumberland Avenue
Bury St Edmunds
IP32 6NA



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2025

Friday 7 March

A service for everyone!

Please join us at the Services:

**10.30am St Mary's Church,
Honey Hill, Bury St Edmunds
IP33 1RT**

**7.30pm St Edmunds Catholic Church,
Westgate Street, Bury St Edmunds
IP33 1QG**

Cook Islands *I made you wonderful*



INFORMED PRAYER PRAYERFUL ACTION

24-7 365 Days a year Prayer movement Ecumenical International Women-led

wwdp.org.uk

Registered Charity Number 233242



**WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
(A WOMEN LED, GLOBAL, ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT)**

“I made you wonderful”

Kia Orana!

Our sisters in The Cook Islands welcome us and lead us for the Day of Prayer 2025. This group of 15 islands in the South Pacific Ocean has a rich and colourful Māori heritage and a deep connection to nature. Join with us as we pray together and reflect on the theme ‘I made you wonderful’.

World Day of Prayer is an international, ecumenical organisation which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world: their hopes, concerns and prayers. The preparation for the day is vast, the service begins with the writing country and theme being chosen a number of years earlier. Once written it goes to the International Committee in New York for translation and dissemination to the National Committee in each participating country. The service is then discussed and edited before being presented nationally, regionally and then locally for branches to make their plans. Finally, at a church near you, on Friday 7 March 2025, people will gather to celebrate the service prepared by the women of The Cook Islands.

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 120 countries. It begins in Samoa and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world — through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 38 hours later. A worldwide wave of prayer...

For further information and resources, together with details of services in your area, see the WDP website: www.wwdp.org.uk

WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AFTER THE FESTIVE PERIOD IS OVER



Many of us celebrated Christmas with friends and family. Here at the drop in, we served a home cooked meal of turkey with all the trimmings on Christmas eve, with the generosity of the Buckingham Emergency Food Appeal. The response to our winter donations appeal has been generous; receiving donations from churches, local businesses, and individuals. But what happens after the festive period is over.

Public concern naturally occurs when the weather is cold, and people are thinking about Christmas goodwill. However, homelessness doesn't just happen once a year. In the summer, periods of hot weather affect people sleeping on the street increasing their risk of developing heat-related illnesses.

In the last year, we have been providing vital services to 150+ guests, with around 40-50 people attending a typical session. With the right intervention, homelessness can be effectively addressed. Acting as a first point for agencies including the West Suffolk Council rough sleeper service and NHS Health Outreach, we provide emergency provisions, support and services. Imagine moving into temporary accommodation without a bed and mattress, a fridge to store fresh food and no means of cooking. By donating regularly to Bury Drop In, you can make a difference, supporting people experiencing homelessness across West Suffolk 365 days of the year, for as long as it takes for them to rebuild their lives.

Visit our website now to find out how your donations make an impact and to make a regular contribution: www.burydropin.org/donate.

Statement on the announcement of a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, 17 January 2025

The commencement of a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel will come as an enormous relief for all living in Gaza and for those waiting for the release of hostages held by Hamas. The UN reports that 70% of those killed in Gaza are women and children and, even in the last few days, schools and hospitals sheltering those displaced have been bombed. Our churches deeply mourn the loss of life. Each person lost is uniquely and equally precious in the eyes of God.

We long for a halt to the violence in Gaza and for the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners. The ceasefire announced today is only a first phase lasting six weeks. As church leaders we call for the ceasefire to be permanent and unconditional so that humanitarian aid can be rolled out unimpeded in Gaza. The UN agency, UNRWA, has unparalleled capacity to deliver desperately needed support. Israel's ban of UNRWA jeopardises vital life-saving assistance. We ask the UK government to make clear that the restriction of humanitarian aid in this way would have consequences for bilateral relations.

We urge the UK government to uphold standards of International Humanitarian Law. Our government and the international community must fully support the International Criminal Court in its investigations regarding grave breaches of international law.

While a ceasefire is being negotiated in Gaza, there are escalations elsewhere in Palestine, as evidenced by the Israeli drone attack this week on the refugee camp in Jenin, killing at least six people. This takes place against the backdrop of a continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank and the destruction of the homes and property of Palestinians. Our churches will continue to pray for a redoubling of efforts to bring an end to Israel's occupation in order that all Israelis and Palestinians might live in peace, harmony, and friendship.

We pray for a just, equitable, and lasting peace in the region that goes beyond simply the absence of violence. Our churches will continue to work closely with Israeli and Palestinian partners, agonising with them in their current sufferings yet confident that God's grace and deliverance offers hope for the future for all.

Revd Lynn Green, General Secretary, the Baptist Union of Great Britain

Revd Helen Cameron, President of the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain

Carolyn Godfrey, Vice-President of the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain

Revd Philip Brooks, Deputy General Secretary (Mission), the United Reformed Church

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