

# ***LIVING WATERS***



**Whitley Chapel in Spring Sunshine**

***Encouraging    Enabling    Challenging***  
***in the Tynedale Methodist Circuit***

***SPRING 2026***

Dear Friends,

It is amazing, at this time of year, to see how quickly the span of daylight extends, each day gaining around 30 minutes per week. The days of more darkness than light are being ushered away and we have opportunities to take advantage of it. Without wishing to be a spoil sport, the fact is that, as the world keeps turning, we know that the days will shorten again. As Terry Wogan would often be heard to say 'it'll soon be Christmas' (I was brought up listening to Old Tel' on Radio 2).

So, this is it, this is our opportunity, what are we going to do with it? How are we going to make the most and the best of the time and the light which we have? Of course, I'm not just thinking about the daylight. What are we going to do with the 'light' we have in Christ to live with wisdom as the church was advised in Ephesians chapter 5, to live in the light.

Currently I am attending all the church councils to share with you the proposal for us to become a one church circuit. It would mean us having a shared membership but not necessarily worshipping from one building. It is a great opportunity for us to worship across Tynedale in our various communities but being one church would acknowledge our support and shared identity as Methodists, and, hopefully, enable us to consolidate some of the duties and responsibilities the Methodist Church require us to hold. It won't answer all of our challenges but it might give us a renewed Spirit for the work of Christ in our communities and a sense of belonging to the body of Christ.

I offer it for your consideration, dear sisters and brothers in Christ, because it is only together, in the light of Christ that we will discern our way forward.

Blessings,  
Marie



## **Ephesians 5.**

'You used be like people living in the dark, but now you are people of the light because you belong to the Lord. So act light people of the light and make your light shine. Be good honest and truthful as you try to please the Lord.' vv 8-9

'When you meet together, sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, as you praise the Lord with all your heart. Always use the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to thank God the Father for everything.' vv 19-20 CEV (Contemporary English Version)



Last Easter West End Chapel closed and joined Acomb to form a new congregation. As described in the Winter edition of Living Waters we are now called “The Chapel at Acomb”.

John Wilkinson, who alongside Jim Laidlow, founded the choir at Acomb decided to resign as our pianist and narrator in December 2024. Fortunately, Jackie Davison decided she would take on John’s roll as pianist. Jim continued as musical director until Easter 2025, then he retired. Our grateful thanks go to John and Jim for their many years of service. The choir had no musical director and couldn’t continue.

St. Mary’s Catholic Church choir directed by Paul Berry, were looking for somewhere to rehearse and approached our Minister Rev. Gareth Sherwood. He knew we were desperate to continue as a choir to continue singing.

Paul and I got together and Paul agreed alongside his choir to help us out with our Christmas Eve Service. All positive changes guided by God.

The Christmas Eve Service was very successful; the Chapel was full. Because of the success Paul and St Mary’s choir have agreed to assist us for Good Friday’s service (**April 3<sup>rd</sup>**.) which is at Acomb starting 6pm.

Acomb Chapel choir would still like someone to take over as musical director if anyone would like to help us out. We are now a mixed choir, and would welcome new members.

Dorothy Neal

---

Following the closure of the Catton Methodist Chapel last October, the Allen Valley’s Church has continued its mission and witness in the village with a Lessons and Carols Service in the village hall and Christmas Carols on the village green on Christmas Eve, before moving to sing more carols in THE CROWN, the Catton pub.



Our work continues with a marking of the Easter story, from joyful entry into Jerusalem, through the passion and the cross

and the resurrection at an event in the Catton Village Hall on **Friday 20 March**.

With our work taking account of the local context, this Easter event has been brought forward from Holy Week to before lambing time starts in earnest.

For more information, contact Rev’d Michael Holland

## FROM HAYDON BRIDGE



### WORKING WITH THE SALVATION ARMY

Salvation Army Envoy Jason Wearmouth and his wife Jess and two young children Isaac and Eden led our annual toy service alongside Rev Michael Holland.

Thank you to Kathleen Armstrong for organising the huge collection of toys, and to all in the chapel and village who donated the toys.

These were received into the Salvation Army Citadel in Hexham for distribution to families

Jason emphasised how giving is deeply spiritual, for God so loved, and restores dignity and joy to parents who feel they are letting their kids down because they cannot afford to buy something to give to their child or children on Christmas morning

Jason was opening the window of the Salvation Army Citadel as I happened to pass by two days later, and summoned me in to 'Santa's workshop' where I had the pleasure of seeing three grateful mothers accompanied by social workers selecting from tables of toys set up in ages, from infant to teenager.



---

### WORKING WITH ANGLICANS AND CATHOLICS IN UNITED WITNESS



Rev Ollie Dempsey (priest in charge at St Cuthbert's) and Rev Michael Holland led the village Christmas Carol Singing on a crisp December evening on the street corner at the top of Church Street.

We gave a rousing and joyous rendition of almost all the carols on the Bethlehem Carol Sheet, with musical accompaniment from a boom box, finishing off in the GENERAL HAVELOCK with the 'jingle bell rock' and 'bring us some figgy pudding'.

Father Paul Kilduff (assistant priest at St John of Beverley) and Rev Michael Holland led prayers and welcomes at the Village Crib Service at St John's which involved a huge number of children enacting the nativity story with narrative read by the children between the nine sung carols.



The Crib Service brought proud parents and grandparents in to the church to again marvel at our God who made himself vulnerable by coming to us as a helpless baby, and we pray many were moved closer to faith in God. The collection was sent to West Northumberland Food Bank.



#### **ADORING THE BABY JESUS RIGHT UP TO CANDLEMASS**

Thank you to Christine Irwin who decorated our eye-catching Christmas Tree standing in the foyer and visible to all who passed by, topped by an angel bringing 'tidings of comfort and joy', right up to Candlemass on 2<sup>nd</sup> February.

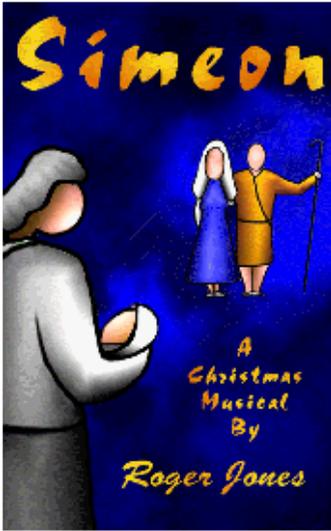
Rev Michael Holland led our Candlemass service on Sunday February 1<sup>st</sup> celebrating the presentation of Jesus and purification of Mary at Herod's Temple in Jerusalem as recorded in Luke's gospel.

The sacrifice of two doves demonstrated not so much the poverty of Joseph and Mary, for most people were poor at that time, but rather God using ordinary people, like us, for his mission.

Clearly the work of the Holy Spirit was highlighted, being upon Simeon and taking him to the temple, much as the Holy Spirit has her hand upon our lives today.

Luke emphasised God using Simeon who was righteous and devout, and Anna who was always fasting and praying in the temple. Michael urged we Christians in our endeavour to be spiritual not to neglect our daily bible study, prayer and worship with other Christians.

Jane Dixon



After Easter 2025, when praying, I had the idea of putting on a Roger Jones musical at **Prudhoe Methodist Church**. I had done some many years ago but we were all older and I wasn't sure! However, I found 'Simeon the Musical' and thought this might be suitable, so I ran it past others who agreed that we should give it a try.

So we started practices in October and were pleased to discover that we had a great team of both men and ladies. There were weekly practices and people practiced at home using CD's or YouTube.

There were just 4 main parts and I just knew who they should be. The Lord prompted me concerning this.

As the musical was about the presentation of Jesus at the temple it was decided to perform it after Christmas.

On 11 January 2026 the performance took place to a full church. The "choir" numbered 20 people plus main characters who were Bob McAlpin as Simeon, Fiona Calverey as Anna, Ray Moore as Joseph and Christine Little as Mary. Ruth Johnson conducted. The tech desk with Martyn Johnson was manned well and efficiently.



A huge thank you to all involved as well as to those who served refreshments following the presentation. A retiring collection was taken and over £300 was divided between two charities; Christian Music Ministries and the Macular Society.



Ray Moore as Joseph and Christine Little as Mary with some of the supporting choir.



Bob McAlpin as Simeon with Ian Warburton and Glen Smith in support.



The conductor Ruth Johnson and Fiona Calverey as Anna

### A NOTE FOR YOUR DIARIES



Roger Jones is leading an evening of praise and worship at **Prudhoe Methodist Church on Tuesday 17th. MARCH** at 7.00 pm. We would love to see you then especially if you can play an instrument

Julie Woodford

### FREE EVENT



Hosted by Welcome Network CIO in partnership with Tynedale Christian Ministries Contact: Bob Bain 07988564299



### Who is it for?

Anyone from any church or fellowship however traditional or informal your gatherings are. You can also bring your team, if you have one.

### What should you expect?

The morning has three main sessions which will cover some of the **why, what** and **how** for mission, what the Bible has to say, and how **Village Hope** can help you.

IN PARTNERSHIP  
**welcome network**

# Mission Network Event

Mission isn't a tag-on or optional extra, it is central to discipleship and our love for Jesus. This event is an opportunity to explore a natural and sustainable way of mission, and meet others from your area on the same path.

Our aim is to help you establish a lifestyle of mission that both energises you and fulfils the commission we all have for the Gospel.

**9.30am - 12.30pm**  
**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2026**  
**Acomb Methodist Church**  
**2 The Orchard, Acomb, Hexham NE46 4QB**

This event is free and refreshments will be made available throughout.

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March. 9.30 am to 12.30 pm. The Chapel @ Acomb**

**To express interest; email [explore@villagehope.org.uk](mailto:explore@villagehope.org.uk) or call 07729 257935**

---



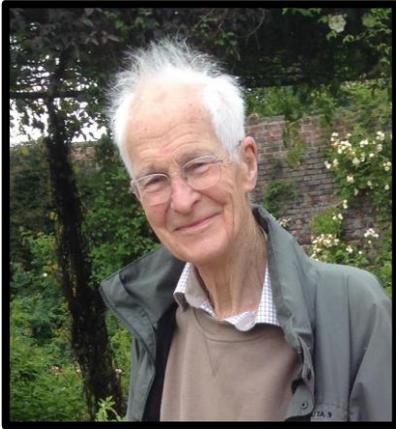
The North Tyne folks are having a retreat at Holy Rood House, Thirsk, in late July.

**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> July**, Holy Rood House, Thirsk, Yorkshire. Roberta invites you to a retreat, with plenty of free time for exploration, prayer and companionship. She will lead 3-4 optional sessions

Places are filling up fast and several ecumenical friends are keen to join in. Please do get in touch with Roberta if you would like to join them.

**'Jesus Choosing To Be With Us'**, at least one will be outdoors and one in the Art room. The whole experience will be nurturing. We'll enjoy wholesome, locally sourced meals, delicious home baking, extensive gardens, livestock, a large library and two beautiful chapels on site.

**Please register soon.** [revrobertamary@gmail.com](mailto:revrobertamary@gmail.com)



## OBITUARY

### Frank Russell Hilborne

Born in Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire on 20 September 1931. He attended The Leys School in Cambridge and then studied medicine at Clare College Cambridge and Guy's Hospital, after which he and his wife Mary spent five years as Methodist Missionaries in Kenya.

Russell then spent thirty years as a GP in Goole,

Five years from retirement, he responded to a need and was accepted to train as a Methodist Minister. He served in the circuit of Newcastle West before his final retirement to Corbridge, Northumberland where he continued as an active supernumerary in the Hexham then Tynedale Circuit.

Russell was described by a circuit colleague as “a very unassuming man and not one to blow his own trumpet. He often was involved with matters in a very effective yet modest manner.” Russell and Mary moved to Acomb Court Care Home in Hexham in November 2024 but not long after, in January 2025, Mary died. Russell is survived by their 4 children, Andrew, Joy, Tim and Sarah. He died on 18 January 2026 in the ninety-fifth year of his age and the thirty-fourth year of his presbyteral ministry.

This is the formal style of an obituary of a Methodist Minister that will be read out by the Superintendent Minister at a Ministerial Synod.

**Did you know?** 2<sup>nd</sup>. March 1791, Methodist founder John Wesley aged 88 died after five days of illness. His final hymn was Isaac Watts' "I'll praise my maker while I have breath". His last words were "the best of all is God is with us."

## Church Mice

Karl Zorowski



## OPEN CHURCH DAYS AT TRINITY

During 2025 Trinity has hosted a number of Open Church days.

The suggestion to open the church and invite the townsfolk in to join us was made during a meeting to try to discern how we could get to know God better and make him known to our community too. We have held events approximately quarterly, to coincide with Farmers' Market days when the town is busy.

Our last Open Day of the year was a Nativity Festival, which ran alongside the Christmas Market in the town.



Members of the congregation, groups who use our buildings and others with whom we have links were invited to send nativity sets for us to display. Shoppers were invited in for free hot drinks and mince pies and to view the nativity displays.

Volunteers served drinks, baked, mingled and chatted with visitors. We had lots of nativity set contributions from various church members, Trinity user groups as well as other local organisations and other churches and we had lots of interest from others who'd like to be involved next time! It was a blessing to hear people tell us what a peaceful and welcoming atmosphere they found in our Church.



We will be continuing with the Open Church sessions during this year and look forward to seeing how God uses these opportunities.

Liz Brittlebank

The Baby and Toddler Group at Hexham Methodist Church has been running for over 25 years and now has the pleasure of welcoming a second generation of children. Grandparents coming to the sessions with grandchildren share their memories of bringing their own children in the early days.

Sessions run every Monday morning during term time and cater for newborn babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers. The children are accompanied by a mixture of mothers, fathers, grandparents and other family members. Some arrive at 9am, having dropped older children at school. Others turn up later in the morning after they have had time to sort out the many needs of their children. Most arrive ready for a warm cup of tea or coffee and a chance to unwind. Some choose to spend the whole morning at the group while others call in for an hour or so to catch up with friends and the latest events. During a busy session there can be over 80 adults and children coming and going.

We aim to provide a welcoming, relaxed environment where adults can find support and friendship. Toddlers and pre-schoolers can enjoy a variety of play equipment and also learn to socialise and gain confidence. There is an adjacent quiet area for babies to play and rest. The local midwives encourage new parents to come along to the group knowing they will be mixing with other new parents who will be going through similar experiences and who are very willing to share practical suggestions and offer reassurance.

The sessions are staffed by a small group of volunteers (more are always needed!) who want to share God's love and also provide much appreciated drinks and snacks throughout the sessions!

Libby Hinson



## **PROFILE**                      **Becky Beard** **Youth and Community Worker – Hexham Trinity**

I am so excited to introduce myself as the new Youth and Community Outreach Worker at Hexham Trinity. I'm thrilled to be stepping into this role and sharing a bit more about my journey with you all.

Born and raised in the North East, you may have seen me around Tynedale before - enjoying a coffee morning in Corbridge, hanging out with the youth group at Stocksfield, or just following Rev Marie around the Circuit!

As a “child of the manse,” church has always been a big part of my life, but like many young people, my faith hasn't always been a straight road.

During the uncertainty of the pandemic, I struggled to find peace. But, with a bit of a nudge from mum, it was the youth leaders at Stocksfield Methodist who helped me rediscover the hope that Jesus gives us. Their support led me to be confirmed as a member of the Methodist Church and ignited a passion in me to provide that same safe, encouraging space for other young people to discover God's love.

Since leaving college a couple of years ago, I've been asking myself, “How can I use my skills for God?” And while I'm still answering that, I know one thing for certain: I want to live out the love of Jesus in my everyday life and in every connection I make.

My background is in the creative arts, I completed a Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, specializing in Visual Communication. I love blending creativity with mission - whether that was helping with a charity fashion show at Stocksfield or serving as a Youth Representative for 3Generate. I'm a firm believer that we should take the message of God's love to wherever children and young people are, using every creative tool we have!

In my new role, I'm especially excited about the DISH project (Dinners in School Holidays), which is a wonderful way to nourish and support our local community. I'm also looking forward to starting some training with Cliff College soon to help grow our youth and family ministries even further. It is such a privilege to witness the growing faith and discipleship of our young people here in Hexham.

When I'm not in the church office, you'll probably find me working on a poster design at home with my cats or enjoying the beautiful Northumberland countryside near my home in Corbridge. Please do come and say hello if you see me! Your prayers and warm welcomes have already been such a blessing as I navigate this new chapter.

God Bless,

## Tynedale Circuit Methodist Women in Britain

### Ladies Lunch at 'THE COUNTY'

The day after our Superintendent Minister took down the Christmas tree in her own house, Rev Marie Beard (District MWiB President 2019-2022) joined nine Tynedale ladies from Acomb, Fourstones, Haydon Bridge and Prudhoe churches and four guests from Ponteland Methodist Church for a



relaxed time of joyous conversation, good cheer and laughter at THE COUNTY HOTEL, Hexham on Tuesday 3rd February.



Lynne Graham (District MWiB President 2022-2024) tested our grey cells with fun picture quizzes of celebrities and TV shows, flower and dingbats, all pitched at an easy level so as not to unduly tax our minds, which created an excited buzz. We sang grace before The County served us our delicious midweek lunch menu mains, with some opting for desserts as well.

Rosemary Gray (District MWiB President 2024-2026) told us of her enjoyment and delight going round over 22 ladies fellowship groups (which she named, all very interesting) meeting midweek in our chapels in the District, and received donations for 'Transform Trade', her international fairtrade charity this year, from the notelets she sold.

Although a small gathering (it was advertised to all in the Last Living Waters and emails were sent out to all churches), it was a very happy occasion mingling with our fellow Methodist friends around the Circuit and District.

Jane Dixon (District MWiB President 2007-2009)

---

The lady of the house invited some people to dinner. At the table, she turned to their six-year-old daughter and said, "Would you like to say the blessing?" "I wouldn't know what to say," the girl replied. "Just say what you hear Mummy say," her mother suggested.

The girl bowed her head and said, "Lord, did we really invite all these people to dinner?"

## Service for Methodist Church World Mission Fund.

Easter Offering envelopes will be distributed to all Church Treasurers at the **Circuit Finance Meeting** at Stocksfield Methodist Church **2 pm Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March** for distribution to all who wish to make a donation this Easter for the work of our partner churches overseas.



Please return envelopes to the collection plates on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March, Easter Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April or Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April.

We are delighted Rev Marie Beard will be the speaker at the Easter Offering Dedication Service to be held at Haydon Bridge Methodist Church **6 pm on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April** (date for everyone's diary) where all your donations sent in by the Church Treasurers will be blessed before all being sent to the World Mission Fund. Please note, that although MWiB write the service and produce the envelopes, NO money goes to MWIB, ALL money goes to the WMF.

We hope that lots of representatives, men and women, from our twelve chapels in the Circuit will join us for this service, all are most welcome, which will be followed by a faith (pooled/shared) supper, tea and coffee, with an opportunity to mingle and get to know each other better, all the more important as the Circuit considers proposals for a 'One Church Circuit'.

---

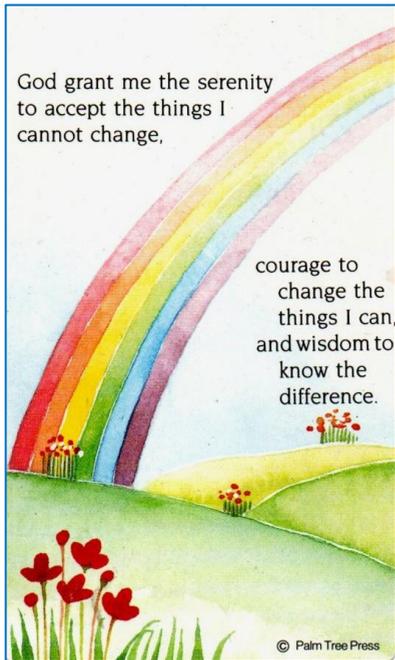
YOU MAY HAVE SEEN THE SMALL LOGO ON THE BACK EACH EDITION OF LIVING WATERS OVER THE PREVIOUS SEVEN EDITIONS.



I was surprised to get a message from Diane Whitfield, PA to the Chair of the Newcastle Methodist District in 2024 saying that Stephen Lindridge was asking if LIVING WATERS was being submitted for an award for the annual competition of the Association of Church Editors.

Feeling rather flattered that the Chairman of the District should make this suggestion, and being given the contact details, I made enquiries, became a member and subsequently sent four copies of LIVING WATERS (two copies of two editions over the previous twelve months). The magazine did not win a prize but there was feedback, mainly on its layout. Some of which I noted, but in the main ignored as impractical. Last year the competition was for Black & White church magazines and news sheets. Membership allows the use of the logo and we do get updates on 'fillers', like jokes (as at the bottom of the previous page) and straplines. I shall try again for the 2026 competition, but there are many of us out there.

JsM



It is surprising how many people with no church background can quote the ‘Serenity Prayer’ attributed to the German theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr; “God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other”

So much is beyond our control. This prayer helps us to concentrate on what really matters, and how we can find peace in a crisis. Yet the heart of that prayer can also work for anyone, even an atheist, in fact it is the first principle of a system of thought called Stoicism.

You may remember that the apostle Paul met and debated with Stoic philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:16-21).

After this encounter, Christians would compete with Stoics for the affections of the Roman people for the next three centuries. Christian faith won out, but why?

On a quick comparison, Christian faith and Stoicism look very similar, both are concerned with virtuous living and peace in turbulent times. But go a little deeper and they tell two very different stories. Stoics say, “You are on your own, but through a lifetime of struggle you may nurture the virtues that lead to peace”. The gospel says, “You are not alone, you have a brother, a saviour, the Lord of life and love – trust him, he will help you, he is our peace!”

I’m pretty sure that Christian faith triumphed in the ancient world because the friendship of a gracious God appealed more than the austere solitude of the Stoics. We have a better story to tell, beautifully expressed in the whole of Reinhold Niebuhr’s prayer – not Stoic but Christian:

“God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, Courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, accepting hardship as a pathway to peace. Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it. Trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will, so that I may be reasonably happy in this life,  
And supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.”

Dave Burke – Haydon Bridge



**Tynedale**  
Methodist Circuit

Bellingham and North Tyne MURC  
Wark Joint Partnership

***Rev Roberta Ritson***

Hexham Trinity  
Acomb

***Rev Gareth Sherwood***

Riding Mill  
Corbridge with Slaley JP  
Haltwhistle

Wylam  
Prudhoe  
Stocksfield

***Rev Marie Beard***

***Rev Fiona Calverey***

Allen Valley  
Haydon Bridge  
Fourstones with Warden

***Rev Michael Holland***

[www.tynedalemethcircuit.org](http://www.tynedalemethcircuit.org)

Living Waters is co-ordinated by John Martin & Team for Tynedale Circuit. If you have any comments / suggestions / contributions / ideas / photos for the Summer 2026 edition, please send to: -

**John Martin,**

email: [john\\_martin\\_sb@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:john_martin_sb@yahoo.co.uk)

**By Monday 18<sup>th</sup>. May please**



Member Editor 2025  
Association for Church Editors