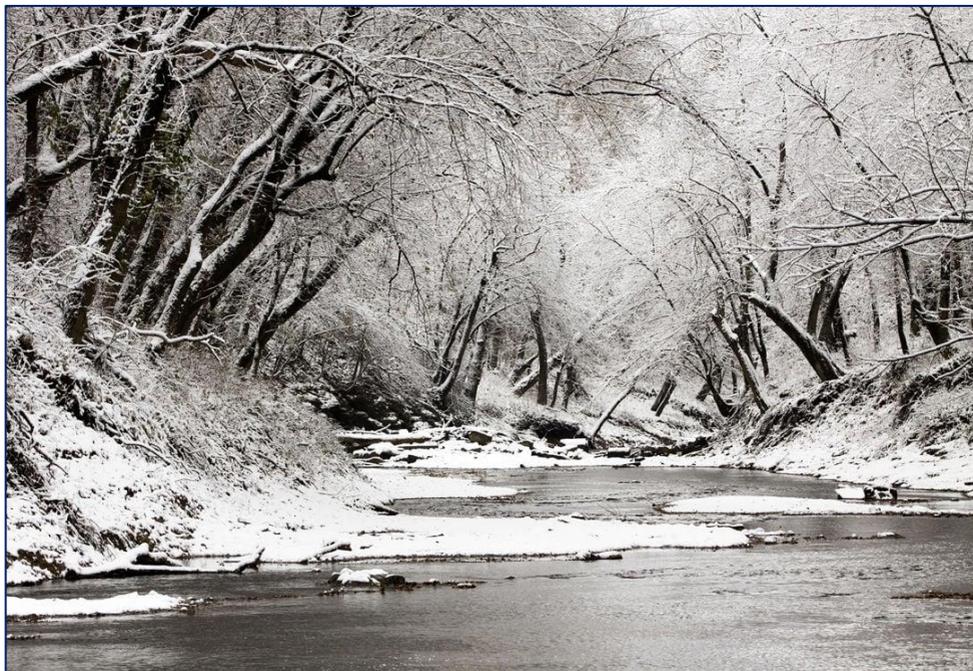


# ***LIVING WATERS***



He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes  
Psalm 147:16

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

***WINTER 2023/2024***

Dear Friends,

Advent is always a significant time of year when I love to observe the different attitudes to preparations for Christmas. There is a whole mixture of traditions and activities which can cross over between the church and the secular world.

Of course, the question of when to begin the shopping for Christmas gifts depends on whether you take seriously the prompt of supermarkets and shops, some of whom would have you begin to shop in September. For many people it can come down to anything from budgeting to their serious search for the perfect gift, for some it can be more ad hoc and some of us resist the call to get ready for Christmas from the beginning of the Christmas adverts on 1<sup>st</sup> November right up until Christmas Eve (the dash to the supermarket for 'something' to give).

Then there are the decorations. When is it too early to put up your Christmas tree for instance?

The funny thing is, that eventually both the secular and the religious converge from their frenetic activity into the season which celebrates the birth of hope and the promise of something new and exciting. There is a sense which Christmas brings that this is a time for good, for generosity, for a change of heart and those from the secular world might dip their toe into the religious, attend a carol service, stop and take a moment to gaze on a manger scene; for those of a religious focus we join in the joy and the mayhem of celebrations, decorations, gift giving.

We acknowledge the human need for hope in our world and we find it in the coming of the Christ Child as the God of Creation, enters the created world, the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us.

And that season of Christmas leaves us all, we pray, with a sense of a new beginning and of hope as we enter a new year.

As we all draw close to the Christ Child this Christmas, may our lives be transformed by God's grace, to take the wonder of faith and hope and bring it to life in our communities and our world in 2024.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

With love and blessings,

Marie

## CHRISTMAS' 'EVERGREEN' SYMBOL.

One of the most pleasing activities of the year is setting up our Christmas tree in the foyer of Haydon Bridge Chapel. It brings cheerfulness and a spirit of optimism in the dark, cold days leading up to Christmas.

The most significant symbol of Christmas is an evergreen tree representing life and when illuminated with lights, represents Jesus, the light of the world and a symbol of hope as we honour his birth.



This tradition has earlier secular origins: ancient Egyptians brought green palm leaves into their homes during their winter solstice and in Roman times houses were decorated with evergreens and laurel wreaths as part of the Saturnalia festival.

In the early 16th century the German theologian Martin Luther began to decorate a small evergreen with candles to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Queen Victoria's German husband Albert is often associated with introducing the Christmas tree to England in 1840. However, King George III's German wife Queen Charlotte set up a decorated tree at Queens Lodge, Windsor in 1800. This tree was decorated with fruit, flowers and candles.

Gradually, this custom caught on with the British general public, and in all Christian nations around the globe.

Enjoy your Christmas tree decorating everyone .....

Christine Irwin.

## Church Mice

Karl Zorowski



## A Service of Welcome

for Rev Marie Beard as Superintendent Minister and  
Rev Roberta Ritson (URC) as Minister in the North Tyne

The service led by Rev Michael Holland certainly felt very ecumenical. St. Andrew's Parish Church, Corbridge, was venue for the service of welcome which included a United Reformed Church Minister. Some of St. Andrew's clergy were on hand to help serve a well laden buffet tea afterwards.

Chair of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Methodist District, Rev Dr Stephen Lindridge gave the address and welcomed representatives of all the churches and chapels in the Tynedale Circuit to come forward to give greetings to both Marie, as the newly appointed Circuit Superintendent, and Roberta who was taking responsibility for the Methodist/URC congregations of the North Tyne.



Rev's Stephen, Marie & Roberta

Senior Circuit Steward Millie Robinson made an invitation to all those who attended. "Sisters and brothers, will you welcome Rev Marie in her new role: will you welcome Rev Roberta, and will you offer them your friendship, support and prayers as we join together in the work to which God has called us".

**With God's help we will.**



Marie joined by her husband Andrew and daughter Rebecca with Rev Michael Holland on the right.

---

Christmas church events are full of Bible readings and carols that clearly proclaim (to Christians) why Jesus came. But it's misleading to think that this helps explain the Christmas message to non-Christians.

Christmas tradition can inoculate people. They've heard the readings and songs so often that they don't hear the message contained within them.

Colossians 1:19-20 sums up what God has done through the birth of Jesus. 'For God in all His fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through Him God **reconciled** everything to Himself.....by means of Christ's blood on the cross'.

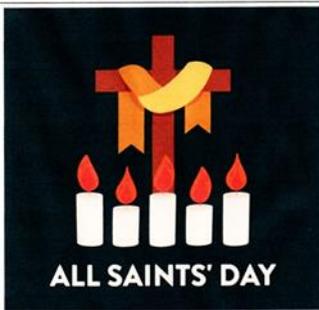
The thought of God coming in the form of man is mind-boggling, even as a baby. No wonder people find it hard to understand when we invite Christ into our lives.

What a great Christmas carol Charles Wesley wrote that embodies the Christian Gospel in '**Hark the Herald Angels Sing**'. .....**"God and sinners reconciled"**.... **"Veiled in flesh - the Godhead see"** .....**"born to give us second birth"**. ....and the heart of the Gospel message... **"born that man no more may die"**.

## NOVEMBER 1<sup>st</sup>.

Some of Stocksfield's businesses may have had visits on All Hallow's Eve but they did get a surprise visit on All Hallow's Day, usually known as the Feast of All Saints or All Saint's Day.

Perhaps not such a surprise as it is becoming an annual event that members of Stocksfield Methodist Church take donations of fruit and made up fruit baskets to deliver round the village to thank some modern day saints for their service to the community.



Stocksfield Methodist Church would like to thank you for the service you give to our community.

As Modern-Day Saints please receive this gift with love.



Stocksfield Surgery

We visited the Community Centre, several care homes in the area, the doctor's surgery and Cafe 7NN at the cricket club.



Rosetree Care Home, Mickley



Residential Care Home  
New Ridley Road



Salutem Care Home



Stocksfield Community Centre



Café 7NN  
at Stocksfield Cricket Club

“Friendly Fridays” at Café 7NN in Stocksfield is hosted by the staff at the cricket club. It is well supported with usually at least 15 people attending. The staff are very welcoming and everyone enjoys the opportunity to meet up in relaxed and friendly surroundings and enjoy coffee and chat.

Colin Cameron

### What is the difference between All Saints and All Souls Day?



**All Saints** is a Christian feast day commemorating all those who have been venerated by the church, both living and the dead. Celebrated by most branches of the Christian Church.

**All Souls** commemorates all the faithful departed.

A time when loved ones who have died are remembered. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches hold services in cemeteries to give thanks to those that have gone before and to also pray for those who may not have professed faith.

# HOPE FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S CHILDREN

*Reg. Charity no 110684*

## Autumn Newsletter 2023

It is some while since we wrote and updated you on our work and the situation in South Africa. Firstly we should say that we have not been able to get back since returning a couple of days prior to lockdown in March 2020. We have however continued our work with our partners, increasing our donations and incorporating new partners.

South Africa continues to have high levels of Covid infections but perhaps more worryingly increased unemployment, and a lack of utilities which includes scheduled electricity blackouts sometimes 12 hours a day, and water shortages. There have recently been a lot of strikes protesting at the lack of basic facilities. HFSAC has been able to increase its support this year particularly increasing our food programmes with our partners who are working in the rural areas.

We have just concluded another year. Income in 2022/23 was £ 62,094 compared with £42,086 the year before; this large increase was due to a legacy from a long-term supporter and two anonymous donations. We made grants totaling £59,630 continuing our policy of not holding any significant reserves. Our only Expenses were £150 for our Web costs. Since we registered the charity in 2004 we have, through our supporters, raised more than £850,000.

## Rehoboth

A recently received newsletter from Rehoboth (if you are not getting it and would like a regular copy please let me know) updating us on their work. There are changes in the way that they operate in that the village is no longer a home for life but a short-term care facility. The children are not now expected to stay more than 2 years. The expectation is that they will be reunified or fostered/adopted. Should a sponsored child leave the village there will be an invitation to sponsor a house rather than an individual. The village continues to run at full capacity. Donations to Rehoboth, including the Sponsorship programme, were nearly £21,000

## Christmas Present Fund

Many very kindly give to our Christmas Present fund at this time of year. Should you wish to make a donation, please be aware that all donations are pooled together and transferred to Rehoboth where they are used to provide all the children in the village with presents and parties at Christmas.



**Queuing for food parcels**

## **Outreach into the Community**

Our Outreach fund has supported an increasing number of rural Crèches and other projects with our partners. We increased our support for feeding programmes helping to combat poverty due to high unemployment. (Khula Crèche is feeding 350/400 children twice a week)

Another feature of our work has been the continuing development of our Education & Training programmes to support young adults both leaving Rehoboth Care (we are currently building a room in Granny's complex for one leaver) We have also had referrals from our other projects for support.

We have once again been able to provide a full bursary to Cornerstone Learning Centre a school for children with learning difficulties and donated £5000 for Cornerstone to open a Skills Centre for their older children. This will open in January within the Genesis Trust complex.

### **Safe place feeding and teaching in squatter camps**



The legacy also enabled us to donate £5000 to Greensparks Education to update their 4x4 to continue their work in rural crèches, which we also support with Education equipment and Crèche refurbishment. Our Website has more detail of our partners and the support we are providing. [www.hopesachildren.org.uk](http://www.hopesachildren.org.uk)

Should you wish to support our Outreach projects, our Bank Account details are. HFSAC. Sort Code 53 50 46 Account No 55512194 Ref: Outreach.

The Trustees would like to thank those who continue to support HFSAC. It is greatly appreciated. We continue to appreciate your **Prayers & Support** both for us as a family and Hope for South Africa's Children.

David Smith. Prudhoe.



## FOCUS ON

### Hexham West End Church

Our Ladies Group meet on a Tuesday night and is growing in numbers!

This isn't what you would describe as a typical or traditional ladies fellowship meeting.

Our members include Methodists, Catholics, Anglicans, URC members and some who don't attend any church at all. I think many regard room 1 in West End church as **their** church.

We begin our time together with prayer and hymn singing and we are blessed with many excellent visiting speakers, to name but a few and most recently, Robin Charlton spoke about prison chaplaincy, Rev. Fiona spoke on ministry in South Africa, Joe and Anna Beswick spoke on the Eden Project in Hexham, our group found all of these topics a real eye opener and more importantly a call to action, how can we lend our support? We have many more interesting talks and speakers to look forward to.

Our Ladies Group pay both annual and fortnightly subscriptions, which creates the opportunity to support many needy charities. At this time of year it is customary for us to support CRISIS, a charity which for as little as £29.73 per person provides a bed and Christmas dinner for the homeless, for many this opens the door to a life beyond homelessness.

Another perk our group get to enjoy is Hexham Brass practicing in the church on a Tuesday night, we get hear their concerts in advance!

A long-time favourite for many in and outside of our church is **CAMEO** (Come And Meet Each Other) and has been much appreciated by many. CAMEO is held on the third Thursday of every month and provides the opportunity for people to meet for a cuppa and a chat, the meeting opens with devotions and usually a speaker will give a short talk. Once again, not all who enjoy Cameo attend church; many come along to share the friendship, love and support of this safe and friendly gathering. Also the home baking is pretty special!

Recognising that traditional worship is not everyone's preferred style and that Sunday morning is for some families the busiest day of the week, West End hold a monthly, weekday evening service. "ENCOUNTER" offers a great alternative. Many come along to enjoy the informal worship, bible references and readings, testimonies and some inspiring, spirit filled familiar and new songs with music provided by a group of very talented musicians from both West End and Trinity churches.

West End work closely with Churches Together in Hexham, and are privileged to be involved with many group initiatives and activities. Most recently we were introduced by our minister Rev. Gareth to Hexham's **Eden Project**. Eden is a ministry which is planted in areas which have been identified as the most deprived areas of the UK, and can you believe it? The east end of Hexham is one of those!!!



**The Eden Project** mainly based at the Eden Lounge at 1 Wanless Lane provides:

- A community shop, providing needy families with groceries at much reduced prices.

Eden ministries will be preparing 70 hampers to support families this Christmas and Rev. Fiona has found a charitable source to supply new toys to support them, they are overwhelmed by this kindness.

- A drop in centre where families can enjoy a cuppa, seek advice or just find a listening ear.
- A kid's ministry every Friday night, this ministry works to bring the children of east end families together. The early stages of the children's work has been very successful in creating a group culture of , playing together, caring for each other and understanding each other's needs and sticking to the rules.

Working with the children is very rewarding if sometimes chaotic and it's definitely not 'Sunday School' but it's a real joy. Our next venture is to start introducing the OTB bible stories and a good time to start this will be with the nativity story.

The Eden kids ministry's greatest need at the moment is for volunteers, it's hasn't always been possible to find the number of volunteers required to fulfil the safeguarding rules of adults to children ratio and the some sessions have had to be cancelled. If you're up for a joyful challenge please get in touch.

**This year West End will hold our annual Christmas in the Car Park event. This will be held on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December from 4.30pm – 7pm**

**This will be a really fun event for both children and adults and will include a choice of Christmas crafts, a Nativity scene photo booth with costumes, fun games in what we plan will be a magical setting. Even Father Christmas will be paying a visit with a gift for everyone.**

**A variety of refreshments will be served including the seasonal mulled wine and mince pies.**

We at West End Church are very fortunate in many ways, and one of those is the blessing we have in the folks who use our building. They are not necessarily church members, or Methodists or church goers, but they are our friends.

Introduced by Rev. Gareth, Board Games Group meet Tuesday evenings - a great space for enthusiasts to meet, get to know us and become our friends.

**Hexham Brass:** band practice Tuesday evenings – Also generously support our fundraising with free concerts.

**Hexham Male Voice Choir** practice Thursday evenings – Old friends of West End hold concerts in our church attracting many visitors.

**Girl Guides** – long term users and old friends - Support our church activities i.e. Christmas in the Car Park.

We have much to thank the people who use our building, not only for the much needed income they provide.

Millie Robinson

---



## **ROBIN CHARLTON'S Local Preacher Recognition Service**

Robin shared a powerful testimony as to how the Lord led him to become a chaplain at HMP Northumberland after volunteering with the Christian prison charity 'Junction 42' which, in turn, determined that he should study to become a Methodist Local Preacher.

The service was conducted by Circuit Superintendent Rev Marie Beard at Hexham Trinity Methodist Church on 10<sup>th</sup>. September. He is seen here in the middle, with Marie supported by colleagues from HMP Northumberland.

## **CIRCUIT MEETING SEPTEMBER 2023**

### **Summary**

On 14 September 2023, Rev Marie Beard chaired the Autumn Circuit Meeting at Fourstones with Warden Methodist Church for the first time as Superintendent Minister.

After devotions and hymn singing led by Rev Marie, the meeting continued with the business at hand. Copies of the Methodist Digest, highlighting matters brought before Conference in June 2023 were recommended to the meeting and for sharing in churches.

The Circuit Safeguarding Policy for 2023/24 was adopted and Ruth Johnson was appointed as Circuit Safeguarding Officer for Adults. Each church was reminded that they need to adopt the latest Church Safeguarding Policy each year.

David Kilner presented a financial report which included details of monies drawn down from the Circuit Model Trust Fund over recent years, a summary of how the assessment is calculated for each church, and the proposed budget. It has been a difficult year financially for the Circuit and a short term loan from the District has been requested whilst the Circuit waits for the sale of properties at Bellingham, Barrasford and Ebenezer.

A summary of the current Circuit property situation was given by George Charlton. The sale of Ebenezer (West Wylam) to Karbon Homes has encountered a set back and amended plans are now back with the Planning Department and the sale of Barrasford is still awaiting guidance from the solicitors. Circuit Meeting approved the sale of the Bellingham Manse as this property is now surplus to requirements.

The bi-annual inspections of the burial grounds at Limestone Brae, High House and Keenley were carried out in September 2023 with the only items being noted were the possible trimming of some trees and the updating of contact details on the gate at Limestone Brae.

The Local Preachers' Meeting report, presented by Tom Dodds, shared the progress being made in improving communication between the ten active Local Preachers and the uncertainty of what facilities are available for worship at churches. Tom Dodds and Laura Wolfe agreed to put together a simple document listing facilities at each church. Robin Charlton's Local Preacher Accreditation Service took place at Hexham Trinity on 10 September.

Current Circuit vacancies include the role of Connexional Funds Treasurer and Circuit Archivist. These vacancies are to be advertised more widely to encourage other people outside of Circuit Meeting to become involved in Circuit life. Jacqui Cameron was appointed as Circuit representative to Hexham Trinity Church Council.

A varied discussion took place on worship and service times. Rev Marie discussed the Circuit context and asked that as well as considering individual church needs that the question of what others in the Circuit need is also considered. Feedback about this from Church Councils is to be sent to Rev Marie.

Circuit Meeting expressed thanks to Tara Barrick and Isaac Webb (from Hexham Trinity) and Ruth Lindridge (from Prudhoe), who have all left their roles at these churches.

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday, 7 December 2023, 7.30pm at Stocksfield Methodist Church.**

---

An item from the November/December issue of Prudhoe Methodist Church's **PMC InterMISSION.**

**Renew Wellbeing** centres are springing up all around the country, open to all members of the community, a place where it is 'Okay not to be Okay'.

Renew Wellbeing Oasis or simply **Oasis** has been run by volunteers from the local churches in Prudhoe and Stocksfield for over a year to provide a safe welcoming space where people can 'just be' whether they may feel isolated, lonely, anxious, struggling with finances or looking for a warm space to reduce their fuel bills.

Every Tuesday in Prudhoe Parish Hall from 1pm to 3.30pm there is a warm welcome to chat, have a cuppa, read magazines or a newspaper, bring a hobby, paint, do jigsaws or simply sit quietly reading or colouring in. There is also an invitation to everyone to listen to a short quiet time of reflection. It is anticipated that the centre will grow organically as we identify what will best serve the Prudhoe community where additional sessions may be tailored and facilitated to meet specific challenges. Meanwhile, all are welcome. Pass the word around particularly as winter approaches.

Anne Chapman

## A GOD OF MIRACLES?

Tragically in February we lost our much loved daughter Lara. We continue to grieve but we have been so loved by family & friends.

In April we picked a leaflet up in church about a Meditative & Reflective walk around Holy Island on July 1<sup>st</sup> which happened to be David's birthday. Our daughter Emma saw it and suggested we make a weekend of it with her and her husband Rob.

Having checked with the Rev Caroline Friswell, a retired Anglian priest, who was organising the walk, we decided to sign up. Glen set about finding a B & B - too late for anything on Holy Island, but she booked something within reasonable travelling distance for 2 nights.

We stayed in a lovely house and Rachel, the owner, was very welcoming & chatty. On the Sunday morning over breakfast Rachel talked about her son, Jack, who has Autism/ADHD. Rachel mentioned that Jack is adopted. Glen asked his age [almost 14] and what her husband's name was. "Dan" came the answer.

Glen was overwhelmed as she realised that Rachel & Dan are the adoptive parents of Lara's son who was adopted before she turned her life around. We were all ecstatic, great joy and much hugging. Dan was called from the shower, and we got to greet Jack, who of course was not told who we were.

The Social Services Letterbox Contact system, which entailed a yearly letter and response, had failed despite complaints, and it was about 5 years since we were last in touch. Glen had thought recently that she should get in touch with Northumberland SSD and try to communicate the sad news of Lara's death.

Rachel and Dan very much want to stay in touch and just the following morning we received 60 plus photos of Jack at various ages.

Rachel & Dan told Jack during the school summer holidays and have kept us up to date as he settles into Senior School. We, and our family, look forward to getting to know Jack and his lovely parents in the not too distant future.

Was this just a pure coincidence or, as we believe, a real miracle from God.

David & Glen Smith, Prudhoe Methodist Church



**Tynedale**  
Methodist Circuit

Bellingham and North Tyne MURC  
Wark Joint Partnership

***Rev Roberta Ritson***

Hexham Trinity  
Hexham West End  
Acomb

***Rev Gareth Sherwood***

Riding Mill  
Corbridge with Slaley JP  
Haltwhistle

***Rev Marie Beard***

Wylam  
Prudhoe  
Stocksfield

***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 Spring 2024 edition, please send to: -

**John Martin,**

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

'phone 01434 674425

**By Friday 16<sup>th</sup>. February 2024 please**