



# the bridge monthly bulletin



January & February 2025

**“They also serve who only sit and wait”** was a favourite phrase of my mothers. I suspect it had its origins in war time when many waited for news of their loved ones serving overseas. It was a phrase that most often came out when we were sitting in church, long after everyone else had left, waiting for Dad to finish counting the collection and complete the other duties of a church steward. I am writing this sitting in the Station Foreman’s building at Pickering station having despatched the 11:10 on its way to Whitby and using the time productively whilst waiting for it to return at around 16:15. A long day but not a wasted one thanks to the convenience of being able to take the office with you in the form of a laptop. Waiting can be frustrating, but it can also be a time to take stock and reflect.

I hope that you found time over Advent and Christmas to stop and breathe. Too often we rush from one thing to the next and never give ourselves time to pause and appreciate the moment, and the moments quickly pass us by. How can it be that I have reached the year in which I will turn seventy whilst in many ways still feeling 18 on the inside?

One of my favourite phrases from the Christmas story is about Mary who “treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart”. This comes in Luke’s gospel after the visit of the shepherds which left people wondering at all the things they had heard and seen. Maybe Mary knew in her heart that the life of her newborn son would not all be glory. Maybe the crowds, caught up in the moment, didn’t stop to think what it might be to carry the weight of being the Messiah, or even the Messiah’s mother.

On Christmas Day, at our morning service in Pickering, we reflected on the gift of Christmas and everyone received a gift, a mini chocolate egg, a reminder that the story of Christmas is just the beginning of a much bigger story which finds its completion in the story of Easter.

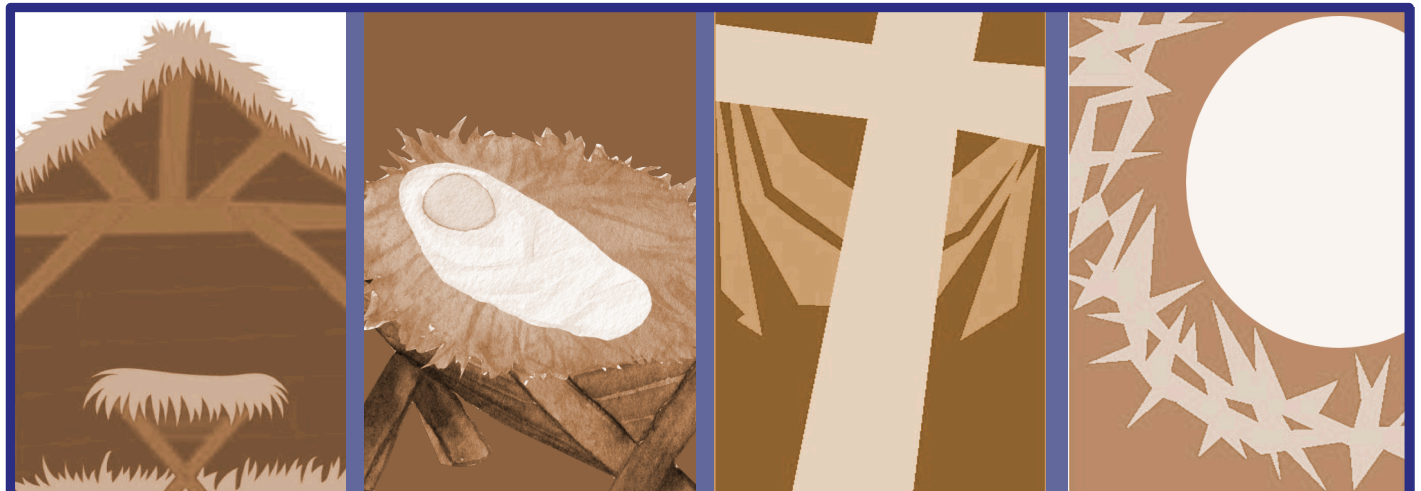
It’s a new year, a new beginning and we are an ‘Easter’ people who believe in resurrection and new beginnings. Let’s take time to ponder these things in our hearts and then be prepared for God to do a new thing amongst us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Blessings,  
Revd Richard

**Don’t be afraid,  
I’m here to  
announce a great  
and joyful event  
that is meant  
for everybody,  
worldwide:  
A Saviour has just  
been born...**

*Luke 2: 10-11*

*The Message*



# Lectionary Reflections Graham Thomas - reading from The Message

## 5 January John 1: (1-9), 10-18. Ephesians 1:3-14.

**Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love.** (Ephesians 1:4)

A good rule of thumb, if you're reading John's gospel and come across a passage you can't understand-read the first chapter again. We know John is writing in a more reflective way than the other Gospels. He uses the I-AM sayings and a number of signs, he is more detailed about the final stages of Jesus' life.

I have never bothered with New Year resolutions, mainly because by 12 noon on the First of January I have broken them all, 10 a.m. if I get up early. Reflecting on the last few years of my life, this year I was tempted, to make some. I read Psalm 98 a few days ago and was taken again by the words. **Sing to God a brand-new song** (v 1). I read the footnote in the New English Translation **A new song is appropriate because the Lord is constantly intervening in the world as its just King.** This we need to always keep in our minds and hearts. In the Message John calls Jesus the **Life-Light**, existence and illumination combined. Jesus comes to bring us light and an abundance of life. The Word of God, made flesh, everything about God, in a way we can understand.

The question we need to ask ourselves - is Jesus constantly intervening in our lives?

## 12 January Luke 3:15-17, 21-22. Acts 8:14-17

**Then the apostles laid their hands on them and they did receive the Holy Spirit.** (Acts 8:17)

Luke tells us of the ministry of John the Baptist, the Message has vs 15: **The interest of the people by now was building. They were all beginning to wonder.** The New English Translation says: **While the people were filled with anticipation and they all wondered...** There is a hope within the people, that God is going to deliver them, to save them, to restore them. John the Baptist's listeners thought he was the Messiah, but John says he is not able to do the most menial of tasks for Him. John goes on to say, the Messiah is going to **place everything true in its proper place before God.** Imagine the hope that brings to people, those **poor in spirit.** Jesus says later, **the Kingdom of God belongs to them.**

Jesus is baptised by John, as an outward sign, an identification with John's listeners. Whilst praying afterwards, the Holy Spirit descends like a dove, this is a simile, not a metaphor - a dove gently rests on its perch. The accompanying voice is more powerful **You are my Son, chosen and marked by my love, pride of my life.** The Samaritans who the disciples laid hands on, not only know Jesus but they are accepted by God, **chosen and marked by my love, pride of my life.**

Do we have this hope, this certainty, that we are changed by Jesus, marked by his love?



Wedding in Cana 11 Olga Bakhtina  
<https://olgabakhtina.com/painting/wedding-in-cana-ii/>

The water, now wine, is of the best quality and praised. Jesus shows his exuberant abundance, with much left over.

Although it was **not his time**, his disciples see and trust in him, this was their first glimpse of his glory. What have we seen or heard recently that we can **seek to understand as well as we can**, to increased our faith and trust?

## 19 January

John 2:1-11, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

**God wants us to use our intelligence, to seek to understand as well as we can.** (1 Corinthians 12:3) This is a paraphrase of the Greek, not an actual translation, but it is what we do.

What does the Miracle at Cana tell us about Jesus, his life, his ministry? Some commentators say that the reason they were about to run out of wine, was because Jesus turned up with his disciples. There is some indication that it was a family wedding, as Mary seemed to have a role in catering. Jesus calls his mother "woman", although this seems rude to us, it is a polite way to address a woman. It indicates that Jesus' relationship with his mum has changed with the start of his ministry, he refers to her as "woman" from the cross too.

Jesus knows that getting his mother or family out of a socially awkward situation, is not his mission or responsibility. Yet his mother says to the servants **Whatever he tells you, do it.**

Jesus asks them to fill six massive jars with water, then draw some and take it to the Master of Ceremonies.

# Worship Evolving



When we met as local preachers and worship leaders in November, we discussed their preferences for leading worship. Firstly, a question I posed on the plan making, was whether they felt sticking to the lectionary was necessary. One advantage of going off-lectionary in any way is that the worship prepared could be offered to several different churches, over several Sundays, better using the preparation of our preachers. Many, however, found the lectionary helpful, as it ensures both the preacher and congregation wrestle with a breadth of scripture, although it was noted that this approach still omits quite a lot of the bible, especially if we focus predominantly on the gospels. Some preferred to be Spirit led, in their selections. We noted that some churches offered a short series

of themed preaching, i.e., as we will seek to do in Bible month, focused on a biblical book or, for example, a theme such as 'Healthy Relationships' or ways to encounter God, such as the 'Methodist Way of Life'. Such series are often achieved by a combination of preachers associated with a church and some local arrangements. Some preachers have said they would love to offer a similar series in one church, so they can get to know a church more deeply. Similarly, even if not preaching a series, being matched with fewer churches would yield dividends for them in terms of relationships and more focused preaching, others enjoy preaching across all our churches.

I have already acknowledged the creativity of circuit worship. Café services take place at a few churches and some preachers draw on Taizé and Iona materials. Some worship leaders utilise craft as a form of response, or a way to engage with the theme and others seek to offer times of silence. Art and images have also been used as stimulation for reflection and discussion. Some preachers love modern hymns, others to choose from the older books. *[I'd love it if more churches embraced Singing the Faith, as we are missing out on some great new hymns]*. When fewer congregation members are present, some churches opt for a tea, cake and discussion-style time of worship, led by the worship leader or preacher. This, in effect, is opting for something akin to a bible study, class or cell group as an



alternative to led worship. Overall, however, the majority of our preachers, are very happy and content and find great satisfaction with a lectionary-based, hymn - sermon sandwich, and I know this is widely valued too. I'm not saying that is 'traditional' as I think Methodism has its roots in the class, rather than this pattern of led worship, 'typical' might be a better description. What all the above means, however, is that if you, as churches, would like to explore a series or explore a greater breadth of worship styles, then as plan makers, we'd need to try and match you with those preachers, who are also enthusiastic to explore such variety. I would, therefore, love it, either at your church councils, or other gatherings, if you could discuss, your worship preferences, and share them with us, as a circuit.



The above aside, my focus is also to seek new forms of worship that engage not just with existing congregations, but new people. To that end, I will be seeking to explore spiritually focused gatherings that are even more 'out of the box'. If you'd be interested in being involved in 'New Places for New People' opportunities, personally, then do get in touch.

**Revd Andy Lindley**

## 26 January Luke 4:14-21 | Corinthians 12:12-31a.

**You are Christ's body—that's who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your "part" mean anything.** (1 Corinthians 12:27)

Jesus after his Temptations, full of the Holy Spirit, starts his ministry, teaching his disciples, preaching in the synagogues. He comes to his home town, where he had grown up, how does he tell the people who know him best, what God's plan is?

He keeps it simple. He chooses a passage from the scroll of Isaiah that the attendant handed him. It comes from the end of the scroll, but he amalgamates verses to make a coherent statement. This is part of Isaiah that is called "The Book of Comfort", it's about restoration, renewal and revival. The actions of proclaiming good news, releasing the captives, restoring sight and freeing those who are oppressed, have a deeper meaning than the obvious. This is not just about a return, it's about a revolution, turning the world upside down. It's about repentance, facing God, forgiveness of sin, seeing God, being free from the bondage of all that separates us from Him.

What shocked people was the fact that he says in vs 21 **You've just heard Scripture make history. It came true just now in this place.** The question is asked "who does he think he is?"

As a church we wonder what our affect on our communities is, I am convinced it's more than we think. Paul's passage on Spiritual gifts tells us how we are part of Christ's body.

## 2 February Luke 4:21-30. | Corinthians 13:1-13.

**So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.** (1 Corinthians 13:3)

Carrying on from last week's readings in Luke, Jesus has upset his friends and relatives, they've asked the question, who does he think he is? These were the people who had known Jesus since he was a child. I suppose at a distance they would have been proud of the person Jesus had become. The people of Capernaum had been changed by what Jesus said, but he's asking the people of Nazareth to examine their faith and belief now. As a local preacher, it's always harder to preach when your listeners know you, warts and all.

The people of Nazareth wanted proof that Jesus had been chosen **to preach the Message of good news to the poor.** First they doubted that God had chosen him, he was Joseph's son, second, that he thought they were poor in spirit, in need of salvation. They thought he was no different from them, they disregarded that he had been anointed by **God's Spirit.** The fruit of that Spirit is love. When love is our motivation, all we say, do and believe, is from God. Make sure we know what love is and isn't.



*The Disciples Catch Fish 1962*  
Watanabe Sadao, 1913 - 1996)  
Copyright © 2025 Asian Art Museum

## 9 February

Luke 5:1-11. | Corinthians 15:1-11.

**But because God was so gracious, so very generous, here I am. And I'm not about to let his grace go to waste.** (1 Corinthians 15:10)

What are you good at? I mean really good at? How do you respond to people telling you, there is a better way of doing something? Even worse, telling you, you're doing it wrong?

Jesus' disciples had fished all night and caught nothing, yet Jesus tells them to push out into deep water and let down their nets. He wasn't telling them how to fish, he was giving them a chance to trust him, an opportunity to live by faith. Paul telling the people of Corinth about his "thorn in the flesh" (in his second letter) says God tells him "My grace is sufficient", meaning it was a chance to trust God. We are saved by Grace, through faith. Grace is the space Jesus gives us to get good at what he wants us to do. He gives us a space for us to trust him, to develop and grow, to live in the wide open space of his grace. Like Peter we may think **Master, leave. I'm a sinner and can't handle this holiness. Leave me to myself.** But Jesus walks with us, he trusts us to trust him. Can we say **I'm not about to let his grace go to waste?**

*grace*

# 16 February

**Luke 6:17-26. | Corinthians 15:12-20.**

**If there's no resurrection, there's no living Christ.**  
(1 Corinthians 15:14)

Luke's Beatitudes differ from Matthew's, He presents us first with three reasons we are blessed. These all seem negative - lost, hungry and sad, but he promises finding God's kingdom, being fed with **the Messianic meal** and the Joy of resurrection. He then tells us to **Count yourself blessed** when people react negatively to our sharing the gospel, when they try to discredit Jesus. He says it's because we are telling the truth, hitting the mark and they don't like it.

He then addressed how we react to what we do, the antithesis of the Beatitudes, the woes. Beware if you think you've made it, you're satisfied or if you think of life irreverently. Trouble is ahead if we look to be popular and try to please people. Jesus says **Your task is to be true, not popular.**

Jesus was under no illusions what the Kingdom would cost him, he asks us to follow him. **If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot.** (1 Corinthians 15:19) Jesus can only be alive if he lives in us - are you ready to take up your cross?

<p>You're blest when you've lost it all.</p> <p>God's kingdom is there for the finding.</p>	<p>But it's trouble ahead if you think you have made it.</p> <p>What you have is all you'll ever get.</p>
<p>You're blest when you're ravenously hungry.</p> <p>Then you're ready for the Messianic meal</p>	<p>And it's trouble ahead if you're satisfied with yourself.</p> <p>Your self will not satisfy you for long</p>
<p>You're blest when the tears flow freely.</p> <p>Joy comes in the morning</p>	<p>And it's trouble ahead if you think life's all fun and games.</p> <p>There's suffering to be met, and you're going to meet it</p>

# 23 February Luke 6:27- 38. | Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50.38.

**I need to emphasise, friends, that our natural, earthly lives don't in themselves lead us by their very nature into the kingdom of God.** (1 Corinthians 15:50)

Let the Holy Spirit work within your life and let that **privilege of intimate conversation with God make it plain that you are not a slave,** (Galatians 4:7), you are a Child of God, an heir of the Father.

**To you who are ready for the truth,** love your enemies, let them bring out the best in you. Be constant in prayer, turn the other cheek, walk the second mile. Be a servant to all, even if taken advantage of, live with kindness and generosity. Ask yourself how you would like people to treat you, then take the initiative and love them. If we only love the nice people, what more are we doing than anyone, love the "unlovely". We can't do this ourselves, we need help, Jesus walks with us every step of the way, we love because he loved us first.

It is Jesus living in each of our lives, that leads us to his Kingdom. As it always has been, it is here and now, it is in the future. It is close to us, it is far off, it is a worldly reality, it is spiritual, but the most important thing, Jesus is King, he is Lord. We are only asked to love as Jesus loves us, his love is constant, always intervening in all we do. Have you been singing a New Song in praise of that, so far this year?

## A Weekend Introductory Course to FAITH-ROOTED COMMUNITY ORGANISING

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/evangelism-growth/discover-church-at-the-margins/community-organising/>

**What's it about?**

Faith-Rooted Organising offers a way to resource and enable people to find out where God is at work in their communities, and join in. The weekend course at Cliff College, Calver, begins with dinner at 6pm on Friday and ends after lunch at 1pm on Sunday. Full attendance is

essential as the course builds on each session. The sessions are highly interactive and participatory.

Some from our circuit plan to attend the course at Cliff College on 4-6 April 2025. If there are those who would like to join them, please let Revd Andy know.




**MWiB MEETINGS 2025**


**7 February:** District meeting at Haxby when we will be celebrating Valentine's Day, a week early! Gathering at 10:00 for refreshments and the programme will start at 10:30. Janice will be sending out a poster in the next couple of weeks.

**7 May:** We will meet at Norton Trinity Methodist Church, Malton.


The topic has yet to be decided - details later



**EVERY STORY MATTERS**  
Join us for our online Safeguarding Conference



**Monday 3rd - Thursday 6th February 2025**



<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/our-stories-2025-safeguarding-conference-registration-911464253117?aff=oddtcreator>

**Stories of Journeys - 3 Feb at 1:30pm**  
Where have we come from as a church? Who have been the pioneers, what lessons have been learned from where it went wrong. Led by Revd Helen Cameron.

**Stories of Justice - 4 Feb at 7:30pm**  
Coordinated by the young people from our districts, sharing stores that have come from 3Generate and the church priorities

**Stories of Dignity - 5 Feb at 10am**  
The lived reality of inclusion in the church. What a safe space feels like and what it feels like when church is not safe. Led by Pauline Jackson

**Stories of Solidarity - 6 Feb at 1:30pm**  
Examples of good practice, stories of where things are working well and the positive impact of finding a safe space in church. Led by Revd Mark Rowland

**Contacts**

**Revd Andy Lindley:** 01653 692173  
superintendent@ryedalemethodist.org.uk  
**Revd Graham Ransom:** 01751 471501  
graham.ransom@methodist.org.uk  
**Revd Melanie Burnside:** 01439 741282  
revmelburnside@gmail.com

**EDI TRAINING COURSE**  
with Revd Graham at  
**PICKERING MC**  
**29 JANUARY FROM 19:30**  
Those who especially need the training are -  
**Ministers, Local Preachers  
Safeguarding Officers  
Circuit stewards, Church stewards  
Lay Workers, Worship Leaders  
Village Pastors. Class Leaders**  
**Book via Ann at Circuit admin.**

**Sleep Out 4 Homelessness**  
Everyone should have a home  
Can you support Sleep Out for Homlessness this year?  
**18th January 2025**  
Homelessness can affect anyone so the Yorkshire North and East Methodist District are fundraising for 3 charities that work across North Yorkshire to help tackle homelessness.




<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/sleepout2025>

**SINNINGTON CHAPEL**  
Church services will be held at  
**MARTON MISSION ROOM**  
until further notice  
First Sundays in the month will be at  
**SINNINGTON PC**

