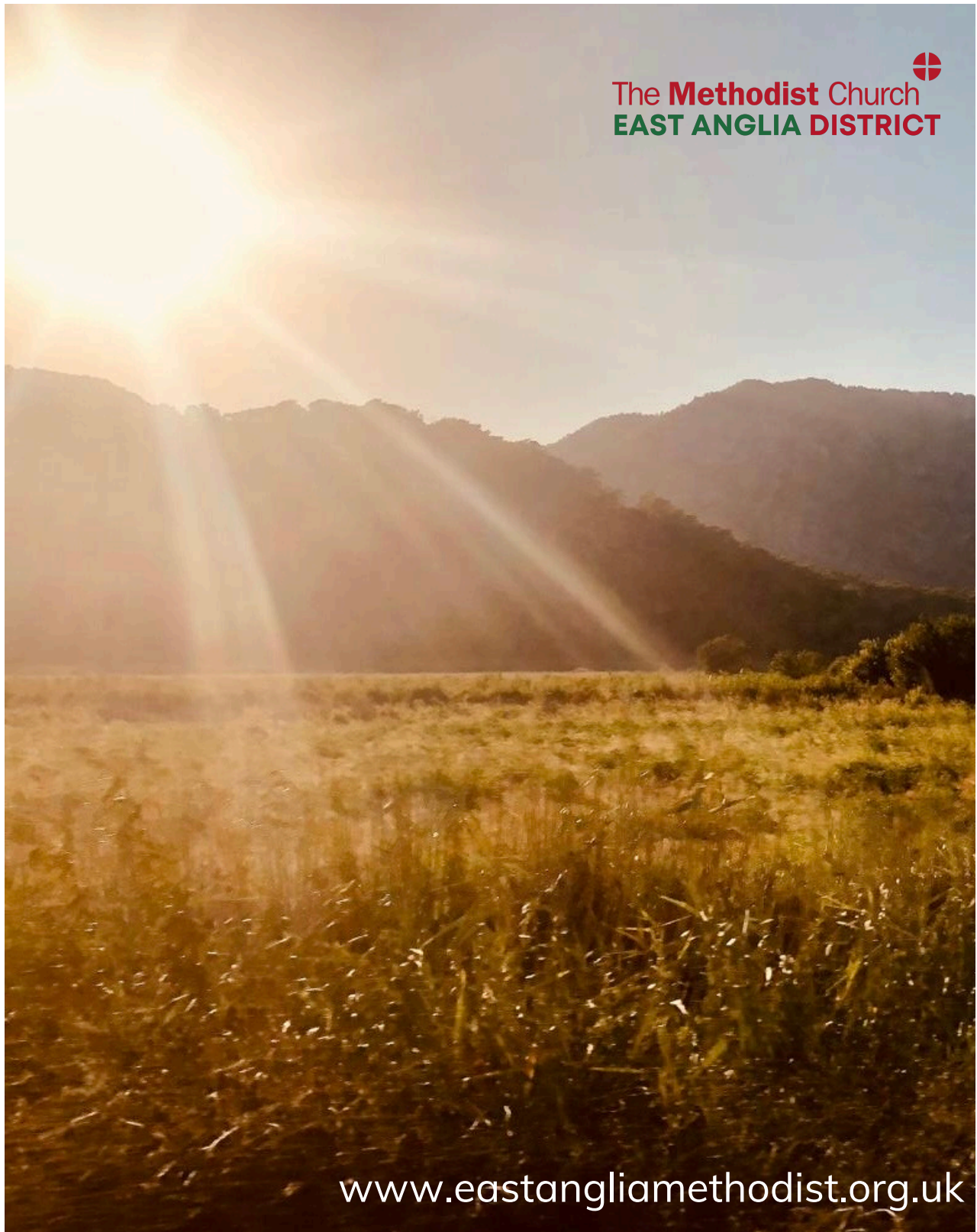


GRAPEVINE

Autumn 2026

Issue Number 49



The **Methodist** Church
EAST ANGLIA DISTRICT

www.eastangliamethodist.org.uk

Seek Peace and Pursue it

The **Methodist** Church
EAST ANGLIA **DISTRICT**



Faith *Fire* festival



10TH JULY 2027



AT

LETTON HALL

Norfolk

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Alive

ENCOUNTER GOD. EXPERIENCE COMMUNITY.
IGNITE PURPOSE.



BOOKING OPENS
19TH SEPTEMBER 2026



MORE DETAILS COMING SOON!



SCAN ME
to book
YOUR PLACE!

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CHAIR'S WELCOME

Dear friends,

Welcome to this edition of Grapevine as we begin this new year.

At our Synod meeting in September, we are spending time reflecting on peace and what it means to be a peacemaker – in our homes, in our hearts, in our communities and in our fractured world. This connects with the connexional focus on the fifth priority of the Walking with Micah report for this year. The report says:

“Peace and justice are tightly woven together. Peace cannot exist without justice. Creation and human community can’t truly flourish unless the world is at peace. Peace requires a cultural shift away from violence. In order to create peace in the world we need to know peace within our own relationships and communities too.”
Walking with Micah, p.174

I have been reflecting a great deal on these themes over the summer. In July, it was a great privilege to represent the Methodist Church on a Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) study tour to Poland, visiting Warsaw, Auschwitz and Kraków.

It was a time of deep learning and conversation with a wonderful group of people from across the wide spectrum of

ecumenism. We journeyed and learned together with a Rabbi and other members of the Jewish community. Together, we were devastated and wept as we encountered the terrible destruction that human beings can inflict upon one another.

At the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw there is an extraordinary monument to the victims of the Holocaust, including numerous broken stones at its base. Each stone represents a life lost. Around 90% of Poland’s Jewish population were murdered during those dark days of history.

One remarkable person commemorated there is Janusz Korczak, a Jewish teacher, author and doctor who ran an orphanage in Warsaw. When the children were sent to Treblinka, he went with them, holding the little ones by the hand as they made their way to the train station, seeking to make them feel safe. Despite being offered sanctuary himself, he refused to leave them.

Another moment I will not forget was seeing Jewish teenagers at Auschwitz scrolling through thousands of names in the enormous record books, searching for

connections with their own families. I was also struck by the inscription on the wall quoting Primo Levi, a survivor of Auschwitz, who wrote in 1986:

“It happened, therefore it can happen again: this is the core of what we have to say. It can happen, and it can happen everywhere...”

There were moments of joy too: visiting the rebuilt Jewish community centres, marvelling at the beauty of the cities, receiving generous hospitality and making good friendships. There were moments of personal encounter with people and stories from both the present and the past, many of them deeply moving and inspirational.

The Hebrew word shalom is about much more than simply keeping the peace, shaking hands or breaking up a fight. It speaks of an attitude of peace and generosity towards another person; of an open heart and a willingness to build a right relationship with one another and with God. My colleague, the Revd Kevin Highfield, explores this theme later in this edition.

In the end, peace begins with us. It begins with peace in our own hearts, with generosity of spirit and an attitude of compassion. It is not simply something for world leaders or community leaders to negotiate. It is also found in the everyday

choices we make: to build peaceful relationships, to dispel fear, to offer hope, to act justly, and to respond with mercy and kindness.

As we reflect together on what it means to be peacemakers, may we remember that peace is not simply the absence of conflict. It is the work of building a world in which people and communities can flourish. And that work begins with us. May we be people who, in the words of the Psalmist, **“do good; seek peace, and pursue it” Psalm 34:14.**

Every blessing,

Revd Helen Hollands
Chair of the East Anglia District

“Do good; seek peace, and pursue it.”

Psalm 34:14

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.”

Matthew 5:9

BIBLE GIVEAWAY IN THE FENS CIRCUIT

“Please can we give away Bibles.”

This was what we said at CLT when the annual Rose Fair in Wisbech was approaching. A time when we traditionally celebrate our heritage as flower growers and the Church opens its doors to the community including putting on a spectacular flower festival and serving food from the community café we run as a circuit. Then Yasmin Finch spoke at Synod about the small mission grants and we knew our idea was possible!

So, we shared the seed of our idea with the District. We wanted to offer not just a standard one size fits all Bible, but a Bible that, after conversation, felt right for the person. We were thrilled to receive a £1,000 small mission grant and connected with the local Christian book shop in March who gave us a discount and became prayer partners for us.

Despite the hot weather and the parades not being possible as a result, it was still a real community day and many had worked hard to help get the church ready. We had a large number of people through our doors and engaging positively with the church and community café.

Our Bible table was outside and I sat with one of our local preachers, Diane,



and we had some amazing conversations across the day. One young woman spoke of connecting with faith, but not with Church and wanted to know if she could volunteer as a thank you for receiving the Bible. Another person spoke of having a Bible, but not really using it. We started talking about colouring in and their face lit up. They had no idea there was such a thing as a colouring in Bible and was overjoyed to receive one as a gift. A young actor spoke with us about their hopes and dreams and went away with a Youth Bible. We received feedback later that the conversation had a big impact and it did on us too!

All told, we had over 20 meaningful conversations with those who were not church and were able to give bespoke Bibles to most of them. For 2 people we didn't have quite the right thing and so they gave me contact details and we

followed up with something that was right including one person who wanted something to use with children they were fostering.

An unexpected thing that happened was that a number of church folk engaged in conversation about what Bible might be best for them and why. A few took details of Bibles and were going to look to purchase them. The dyslexic friendly Bible in particular drew a lot of interest.

Over the day we gave away journaling Bibles, colouring in Bibles, Bibles for families to read together, large print Bibles and various different translations. The day was a huge encouragement to both me and the local preacher I was working with and we felt the peace of God had been in the day and the conversations we shared. That peace has sustained us through some difficult times that have happened since then and every time I speak about the day, I feel the joy and peace it brought.

As I write this article, we have been hearing about the word of God being sown in the lectionary readings from Matthew's Gospel. I have also followed plenty of combine

harvesters and tractors as I have travelled around the circuit! As you read this, we will once again be in harvest season. For us as a circuit, this definitely felt like a real time to sow the word of God and listen to how God was working in the lives of people beyond the walls of the Church.

As we celebrate our harvest again this September and October, may we remember how Jesus showed us a different kind of Harvest that is for all people and all seasons. And perhaps you too might be inspired to sow the word of God in your communities and give away Bibles!

Thank you District for seeing our vision and working with us.

Every blessing,

Revd Lorna Valentine
Superintendent Minister
The Fens Circuit

Small Grants Fund

A fund for churches and circuits to apply for modest District funding (up to £1,000).

This funding can be issued without waiting for the next committee meeting.

Contact: District Mission Enabler, Dr Yasmin Finch at yrfinch@gmail.com



SEEKING PEACE AND PURSUING IT - PUTTING FAITH INTO ACTION

“Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.” Psalm 34:14

When we think about the words “Seek peace and pursue it”, it is natural to think first of wars and conflicts around the world. But the biblical vision of peace is much wider. It is about the kind of society we create and the way we treat the people around us. Peace is something we can actively pursue, even when the great conflicts of the world seem beyond our influence.

One local example in our District is the work of The Rotary Club of Felixstowe (a part of Rotary in Great Britain) – a service organisation in which a number of Christians, including myself, are also active members. Rotary is not a religious organisation, but its emphasis on “Service Above Self” resonates strongly with the Christian understanding that faith finds expression in practical service to others.

The scale of what The Felixstowe Club achieves is considerable. Our fundraising activities – including the annual Felixstowe Town Fun Run, Santa and Rudolph's Ride around Town, Charity Boxing Dinner, Golf Day and International Night – have enabled us to distribute around £70,000 a year to local, national and international good causes. In the year ending June 2025, its

charitable trust recorded income of more than £88,000 and expenditure of more than £93,000.

But the figures tell only part of the story. The Club has supported organisations including Macmillan Cancer Care, St Elizabeth Hospice, EACH, local food-banks, Suffolk Carers and the Felixstowe Dementia Action Alliance. Its youth work provides local children with opportunities and experiences designed to develop confidence and new skills. In 2026, its Community Cup brought together junior schools in a football tournament, while its Fun Run raised £7,642, principally for Brave Futures. Its International Night raised more than £3,800 for Starehe College in Nairobi.

And there is something significant here specifically for Christians. Jesus said: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9). Peace-making need not always mean resolving an international conflict. It can mean helping a vulnerable family, giving a young person confidence, supporting someone living with dementia, raising money for cancer care, or simply bringing people together in friendship and fellowship.

The Letter of James puts the challenge

rather bluntly: “Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” (James 2:17). Whatever our theology, there is something compelling about a faith which becomes visible through what we actually do. Rotary offers one practical way in which people of different beliefs and backgrounds can work together for the common good. Christians who belong to Rotary do not have to choose between their faith and their commitment to service. Rather, for many, the two complement one another.

Perhaps that is one way of pursuing peace in our own time: not simply praying for a better world but helping to build one – one act of generosity, one friendship and one community project at a time. As the prophet Micah put it: “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

That sounds remarkably like a good description of seeking peace and pursuing it.

If you would like to know more about Rotary, or want to find a Club near you, search online for Rotary East Anglia (or contact me directly).

Mike Cassidy
Ipswich Circuit



Rotary Great Britain and Ireland

Rotary is one of the world's largest and most successful global membership and humanitarian service organisations, with 1.2 million members in over 200 countries.

Rotary's 32,000 members in over 1,500 clubs in Great Britain and Ireland are volunteering their time and talents to tackle challenges at home and abroad in the following cause areas:

- Promoting Peace
- Fighting Disease
- Providing Clean Water
- Supporting Education
- Saving Mothers and Children
- Growing Local Economies
- Supporting the Environment

More information, can be found at
www.rotarygbi.org

THE PATH OF PEACE

I had the privilege in 2014 of working on a multi-media dramatic presentation to mark the 100th Anniversary of the beginning of World War One in conjunction with the Diocese of Blackburn. The presentation, called 'Brothers in Arms', told the story of Noel and Christopher Chavasse – the twin sons of the Bishop of Liverpool – who served as a medic and a chaplain respectively during the war. We toured the presentation around Lancashire and performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival presenting issues of faith and peace from the point of view of those serving in frontline action.

As a result of this, I wanted to do something to mark my involvement in the telling of the story of two remarkable men who both served as Christians in their respective fields. Thus began a decade long association with The Army Benevolent Fund – the national charity of the British Army – and the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of those who had served.

I have walked the WW1 Frontline and the WW2 Normandy Beaches on many different occasions and have always used the opportunity to firstly remember and to pledge not to repeat the past but secondly to walk alongside veterans and serving members of our Armed Forces. It has been a great privilege to act as an unofficial Padre on the treks, walking alongside

and talking with other participants about life in the forces and our shared hopes and dreams for peace within our world – I find it great for the body (except for the blisters) and great for the soul too as I am challenged to think long and hard about what it means to 'seek peace and pursue it' in a world that, at times, seems to wish to divide against itself. And I guess that the beauty of walking it alongside others is a reminder, perhaps, that Jesus Himself ministered to those that he met as he walked the Holy Land during his ministry.

In March 2027, I am aiming to walk 70km of a Prisoner of War March in Borneo – once again alongside others from The Army Benevolent Fund, to fundraise for the charity and its work for soldiers, veterans and their families. If you'd like to help me raise funds you can do so at the following link: <https://bit.ly/3V1NIMJ>.

I would also be happy to visit groups and share my experiences of walking the frontlines and to share the story of two remarkable Christian men in Noel and Christopher Chavasse who walked a far more difficult path than I will ever have to tread.

Revd Paul Critchely
Superintendent Minister
West Norfolk Circuit



Picture taken at Spanbroekmolen Crater in Belgium. The remains of one of the 19 mines detonated by the British Army on the morning of 7th June 1917. The site was acquired by the Christian Charity and International Movement the Toc H (Talbot House) Foundation of Poperinge in 1929 and designated as 'The Pool of Peace' to aid reflection and remembrance.

All your Christmas and birthday present problems solved!

Revd David East (from the Norwich Circuit) reports that his first novel has just been published.

Captured in Amber follows a reserved young English archivist and an intrepid noblewoman as they chase family secrets, buried betrayals, and a hidden traitor across an alternate-history steam-age Europe and North Africa, from the ruins of Carthage to the icy ports of the Baltic, armed only with wit, courage, and the power of the written word. Oh, and a swordstick.

A good family read. You can find it on Amazon now. Look for **'CAPTURED IN AMBER'**.

FROM THE HEART

**There is a place in God's heart
where tears can't stop.
Tears for the broken,
the weary,
the downtrodden.
Tears for those who have
no voices,
no one to care.
Tears for
the hungry,
the empty,
the destitute,
the abused,
the forgotten.
Tears of passion,
of compassion
flow
to us,
and through us,
if we will
receive them
as streams of living water,
flowing in
compelling us to act,
to care,
to open our dry eyes that
we might see
in a new way.**

I am sure that you would all agree that we live in an increasingly troubled world. A world where sanctions are becoming common place as countries jostle for power. A world where the poor and the vulnerable are becoming increasingly marginalised. A world where those who are different to "us", be that due to ethnicity, sexuality or disability of any kind, are to be feared rather than accepted or celebrated. That's without even beginning to mention ecological crisis and climate change. It can become very anxiety inducing and unsettling.

In this world we need to find a centre to live from, to focus ourselves on the heart of the matter, and to catch the heart of God for ourselves, for others and the whole of creation. Perhaps that's where the practice centring prayer comes in. Centring prayer or contemplative prayer gives us space to be and to breathe. There are many books and teachings on the subject so I won't expand on that here, but rather, with all of that in mind, offer you this image and meditation.

**Revd Sally Coleman
Minister
Thetford, Diss and
Mildenhall Circuit**



HOLIDAY AT HOME

What a truly amazing three days!

A seed of an idea 'borrowed' from Huntingdon Methodist Church and developed by a team of volunteers in blind faith, steadfast hope and Christian love; all culminating in three fun-filled days on the theme of 'A Royal Holiday' at North Walsham Methodist Church.

Activities included board games, wordsearches, quizzes and a huge jigsaw, as well as led sessions in creative writing, crown making, flower arranging and making greetings cards.

There was also a Beetle Drive, daily chair exercises, horse racing, a sing-along, a Royal Quiz and a showing of Downton Abbey. We also included a daily time for Christian reflection (the 'God Spot') after

a superb lunch and everything was interspersed with copious cuppas.

It was a wonderful opportunity for people to meet, rekindle old friendships, make new friends and 'mardle' unashamedly!

The only question now is 'what next'?!!! So, . . .watch this space!

Ellie Cant

North Walsham Methodist Church

"Holiday at Home" is a special event - usually 1 to 3 days - run by churches for older adults who can't easily travel, giving them the fun, community, and spiritual encouragement of a holiday without leaving town. The idea is to create a joyful, themed mini-holiday inside the church building, with food, activities, friendship, and a short Christian message.



PEACE AND JUSTICE EMBRACE

(PSALM 85:10)

Wars and rumours of war. Peace seems elusive in the world today. People want world peace. People want inner peace. Many people tend to define peace by what it is not. They say peace is **not** conflict/war, or it is a lack of conflict, an absence of war. The word for “peace” in the Hebrew language of Jewish scriptures is “shalom”, used by first-century Jewish people, like Jesus. “Shalom” does **not** mean the absence of conflict.

Shalom is a positive concept, not defined by negatives such as absence of conflict, but exists on its own merit. It means a positive well-being, wholeness, completeness, health, flourishing, which can stem from a right relationship (a just relationship) with God and others. Shalom blooms in a justice-seeking relationship with self, others, and God. This “peace” mentioned by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament exists in God and through God to us and others, regardless of divisions or conflicts, even in spite of them. The reality is that conflicts happen. Jesus did not contradict himself by saying he would bring divisions and conflict within families and among people (Matthew 10:34-6; Luke 12:51-30), yet promised us peace (John 14:27, 16:33), asking us to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). Because Jesus knew that true peace (shalom) means true justice (right relationships) to allow health and well-being to all.

“No justice, no peace” is a slogan of protesters in the United States. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said, “There can be no justice without peace, and there can be no peace without justice. . .” (speech January 1968). While the protesters are essentially threatening conflict if there is no sense of justice; there is truth that shalom cannot exist without justice (e.g. Isaiah 32:16-7). Notably, in James 3:18, peacemakers who sow “shalom” will reap justice (in right relationships). The peace they must sow is a justice-seeking peace. Methodists strive to be justice-seeking people, allowing real peace or shalom to flourish. Shalom is a just state of well-being available to us.

As we see in the news, there are bullies and abusers in the world trying to achieve their personal or collective goals through violent force or violent conflict, not trying to achieve a state of mutual flourishing in an embrace of justice and peace.

While we may disagree, we may still choose to live in a state of shalom and graceful justice, for mutual flourishing and well-being with each other. We can extend grace towards each other and ourselves, allowing peace and justice to embrace. Sometimes we have to defend

ourselves and others against injustices if we want the wholeness of a just shalom. I find inner peace when I stand up against perpetrators of injustice, knowing I have done all I can to help those being harmed or threatened.

When we pray for peace and offer one another the peace of Christ, we become channels of God's never-ending peace of well-being that reorders the world towards wholeness and towards justice.

When we act in the spirit of Christ, we can 'sow love where there is hatred, can dispense pardon where there is injury, can cast light where there is darkness' (Singing the Faith 707). We ourselves become instruments of God's eternal peace and graceful justice.

As you may know, I spent some time in the military and I believe the use of the military should be a last resort of defence, and only with a just cause (defending life) to achieve a justice-seeking peace. Most military men and women pray that the armed forces will not have to be used, but remain prepared to defend against injustices from those who would harm us.

I pray that the current conflicts will cease, but even more importantly, that God's justice and shalom will flourish in this world, starting with me, starting with each one of us.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

Grace and peace,

**Revd Kevin Highfield
Cambridge Circuit Superintendent
Methodist Forces Board Chair**



The Methodist Forces Board

The Methodist Church has long offered ministry to the Armed Forces. In the mid-19th Century the people of God called Methodists responded to a national appeal to build places of worship for soldiers in the garrison town of Aldershot, Hampshire and the Home Missions Department convened the first meeting of the Army Committee – which continues to this day as the Methodist Forces Board (MFB).

For many years Methodist ministry to the Armed Forces was organized by local congregations and by a valiant group of soldiers and sailors who had trained as local preachers. Building on a history stretching back to 1881, the Church continues to send ordained Methodist ministers to serve as Armed Forces Chaplains, whether in a full-time or reservist capacity (allowing for continuing ministry in the local church). The aim is to offer critical pastoral care and help individuals to address the ethical issues raised by military service. There are also opportunities for lay and ordained ministry in local contexts with the Cadet Forces.

REFLECT - METHODIST SPIRITUALITY AND RETREATS

Have you heard of this organisation? I have recently joined as a full member but have been attending their Quiet Mornings, which are held four times a year on Zoom, for over three years now.

Individual membership costs £22 per year, with £17 the concessionary rate and £25 for membership as a couple.

You receive a copy of the Retreats Association handbook containing various interesting articles plus details of retreat centres across the UK.

You also receive an occasional magazine which includes reports from residential retreats that have been held or advertising future ones. These may be held in silence with a programme of themed sessions facilitated by the leader, as was the one held in February this year at Launde Abbey. I am not sure if a silent retreat would be for me! It would certainly be very different from a Methodist Women in Britain residential (the next one of these being at Swanwick from 9-11 April 2027).

There is a residential Reflect retreat planned at Launde Abbey from 26-28 February 2027 based on "The Woman at the Well".

The Quiet Mornings start at 9.30am with a welcome and a chance to find out

where people are joining from. There are usually others from East Anglia and a lady from as far away as Shetland.

We have a short introduction to the subject for the morning followed by 15 minutes of input and then 45 minutes of quiet to reflect on what was said and do one of the suggested activities or one of your own (I like to fit in a bit of scriptural colouring).

This pattern is repeated for the second session, then the speaker concludes the morning and we finish by 12.15pm.

There is a suggested donation of £12 for the Quiet Mornings.

Several of the mornings have been led by Revd Judith Jessop, Methodist Presbyter and current Chair of Reflect. Our Deputy Chair, Revd James Bamber, has led some of the sessions. Subjects covered have included:

- Exploring life with Hildegard of Bingen
- Exploring life with Brigid of Kildare
- Putting out to sea with God
- Offering hospitality – openness to others and to God
- Christian contemplation
- Preparing for Holy Week by "entering into Christ's passion"
- Spirituality of Brother Lawrence

Several of the Quiet Mornings have been at very busy times for me but I have made the effort to attend (two dates are offered each time). They have proved to be a real oasis of peace for me and a time to intentionally spend focussing on God.

Revd Judith Jessop is planning to run on Zoom a short course on prayer in January/February 2027. The Quiet Morning on 16 or 17 October will be on "Growing in prayer and compassion with Julian of Norwich".

If you would like to learn more please contact me or Deacon Lynne Sylvester-Tonge (contact details in District Directory). Reflect would love to attract more people to their events. With most being on Zoom they are accessible to many people.

Susan Eldridge
EA District MWiB President

Lady Julian of Norwich

In 14th century Norwich a young woman fell under a life-threatening illness, during which she experienced a series of extraordinary visions. These revelations transformed her life, and after an unexpected recovery she took vows to live as an anchoress, locking herself away in a small cell attached to a church in Norwich. In this cell, she wrote an account of the revelations she had received and in so doing became the first woman to write a book in English...



Reflections at Swanwick, Derbyshire

To find out further information or to visit the The Julian Shrine, please visit

www.julianshrine.org

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS JUSTICE, PEACE AND JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT (ROMANS 14 V 17)

This was the theme for the recent meeting of the World Methodist Council in El Salvador, the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America. I had the privilege of attending the meeting to represent Epworth Old Rectory, the home of the Wesleys in North Lincolnshire. I share here a snapshot of how the theme of 'justice, peace and joy' was explored.

In a world where many countries face injustices and a lack of peace, this was a theme which resonated with many of the delegates, all Methodists from across the world, representing countries such as Uruguay, South Africa, Hong Kong and Samoa.

As part of its work, the World Methodist Council awards a Peace prize to recognise the work of an individual or organisation who has demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice themselves and their resources in the pursuit of justice and peace. To be eligible for the award the recipient must show courage, creativity and consistency in their work. This year the award was presented to Dr Humberto Shikiya, a member of the Methodist Church in Argentina, at a special ceremony in El Salvador.

Dr Shikiya has been working since 2022 with the World Council of Churches as its

special envoy for the peace process in Colombia. He has worked alongside the Colombian government to establish policies on religious freedom and accompanied discussions between the government and the guerilla group FARC-EP. This humble man spoke passionately of this work. It was clear that his enormous capacity for patient negotiation has enabled huge steps forward in this country's peace process. Earlier this year, a group of young adults from the World Methodist Council went on a pilgrimage of peace to learn firsthand of the impact of Dr Shikiya's work on the Colombian people. They too shared stories of seeing for themselves the work of peace makers.

In the country of El Salvador itself, they have moved from being the most dangerous country in the world to one of the safest. Up to six years ago, gang warfare was rife and life was unbearable. Due to a crackdown by the current President and his government, the gang members have been imprisoned and there is a totally different atmosphere in the country – one of freedom. We kept being asked, 'Do you feel safe?' and our answer was yes. There are still many issues in the country, but from speaking to local people it is clear that peace has been restored.

It was profoundly moving to hear of the outstanding work being done in very difficult and high-risk situations to bring people together to work towards peace. There is so much to pray for.

If you want to know more about the World Methodist Council and its work across the world, focussing on education, social justice, interreligious dialogue and evangelism, do look at <https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/> or I would be pleased to share my experiences.

Sarah Friswell

In one of the local parks there is a memorial which lists the names of all those who lost their lives or simply disappeared in the years of violence.

Shown in the photo below.



‘PEACE CANDLE’ MINISTRY

Maggie Roffe (pictured on left of photo), a member at St Andrew’s Methodist Church, Sheringham in the North Norfolk Circuit writes:

It is some years now that I have been making ‘Peace candles’ at St Andrew’s. I was given a ‘Peace candle’ by way of the Zion Methodist Church, Boston, Lincolnshire. I showed the candle to the new Minister who had arrived at St Andrew’s and asked if I could share the idea with our congregation with a view of offering a ‘Peace candle’ to visitors to St Andrew’s. This was eagerly allowed.

Within each candle (a tealight in a glass holder, wrapped in cellophane and tied with a ribbon), the story is shared of how this tradition started. It evolved when a Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church from York, USA, visited the Soviet Union in 1985. It was in the small town of Vorenezh that an old woman approached him and presented a small sum of money into his hand, asking that he do something for world peace. He recognised a deep desire and a strong devotion in her eyes and such yearning in her voice that he determined he would do something special when he returned to the United States.

What could he do with three rubles? After much thought, he purchased a small votive



candle, placed it on the communion table and lit it. After hearing his story, the congregation agreed to make it a permanent accessory of the chancel, and purchased a supply of votive candles so they could make a ‘peace’ available to any visitor to take back to their sanctuary. Today these candles burn in the United States, England, Canada, Australia, Ireland, Kuwait, South Africa, Denmark and other countries.

The visitors to St Andrew’s love to take a ‘Peace candle’ back to their Church, share the story, then light the candle. We have, over the years, received lovely

'thank you' letters, from as far away as Africa, Norway and New Zealand, to name just a few.

Our letter enclosed with the 'Peace candle' ends by asking that the candle be accepted with our best wishes and stating the hope that 'your congregation will join us in spreading this reminder of peace with the

prayer "May peace prevail".

Perhaps you might like to start giving your Church visitors a 'Peace candle' that peace may prevail in many more places around the world.

Love in Jesus,

Maggie Roffe

A WONDERFUL DAY IN EPWORTH

What a wonderful day we had on our trip to Epworth! Blessed with good company, plenty of laughter and beautiful weather, we enjoyed a fascinating journey into the life and legacy of John and Charles Wesley.

Our day began with a private tour of the Old Rectory, where we learnt so much about the Wesley family and what daily life would have been like in the eighteenth century. The house itself is full of stories, none more dramatic than the famous fire in 1709. We stood in the very place where young John Wesley was rescued from the upstairs window, an event that shaped his understanding of God's calling on his life. John would later describe himself as "a brand plucked from the burning", believing that God had spared him for a purpose.

The visit was wonderfully hands-on too. We discovered how soap was made in the eighteenth century and all had the opportunity to have a go ourselves.

Around the house were living history interpreters bringing the past to life. One of the highlights was watching food being cooked over an open fire. It smelt absolutely delicious and, even better, it tasted wonderful!

Lunch in the gardens gave us time to relax together, chat and enjoy one another's company. Some of us even had a go at traditional games, which brought out our competitive sides more than we might care to admit!

We also explored the fascinating Physick Garden, where medicinal plants were grown based on remedies recommended by John Wesley in his book *Primitive Physick*. Some of the suggestions seemed surprisingly sensible, while others were rather more unusual. One remedy for an upset stomach involved lying with a puppy on your tummy. Sadly, there were no puppies available for us to test the

effectiveness of this particular treatment, much to everyone's disappointment!

In the afternoon we explored the village itself on a guided walking tour. We stood on the famous steps outside the Red Lion where John Wesley preached regularly and where he stayed. Eventually John Wesley was refused permission to preach inside the parish church where his father, Samuel Wesley, had served faithfully as rector for almost forty years. The new Rector declared that there was nowhere in Epworth under his authority that he permitted Wesley to preach. The reaction? The family owned the grave of his father so, standing on his father's grave, John declared that he was taking his father's pulpit, and from there preached to the crowds who gathered in the churchyard. It was a powerful reminder that sometimes God opens unexpected doors when others close them.

Of course, no visit would have been complete without a little humour. Revd Jenny definitely "did not climb onto the grave to pose for a photograph pretending to be John Wesley"... and any photographic evidence suggesting otherwise should be treated with the greatest suspicion!

Our tour also took us to Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, where we enjoyed looking around and reflecting on the remarkable movement that began in places just like these and continues to shape the Church today.

As Steve Acklam reflected afterwards:

"This was a truly memorable visit. Among many things, two that stood out for me were the variety and quality of the



pictures, and the wonderful knowledge of our guide."

Reuben Baldwin who is on trial as a Local Preacher added:

'The staff at Epworth Old Rectory have done a great deal of work to turn the building into a living museum, vividly illustrating daily life for the Wesley family. Above all, they have highlighted the person of Susanna Wesley, her personality, her ethic, and her historic contribution to the Methodist movement, along with the turbulent lives of her children. It presents a fuller portrait of John and Charles Wesley than the somewhat heroic stories we are often told on a Sunday morning. Well worth visiting!'

It really was a rich and memorable day. We learnt so much about our Methodist heritage, but perhaps even more importantly, we spent precious time together in fellowship, conversation and laughter. Days like these remind us that our shared story is not just about history but about the people we journey alongside today. Thank you to everyone who came and helped make it such a special occasion.

Revd Jenny Pathmarajah
Minister
Cambridge Circuit



ARISE AND SHINE: THE 15TH WORLD ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF METHODIST AND UNITING CHURCH WOMEN

There is something extraordinary about arriving at a World Assembly and finding the world waiting to greet you. Different languages, cultures, clothes, music, traditions and ways of worshipping are not barriers to overcome, but gifts to enjoy. Everyone comes ready to share something of themselves, to discover something about others and, above all, to learn from one another.

Forty women from Britain and Ireland travelled to Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, to join nearly 700 women for the 15th World Assembly of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW).

Women came from across the globe: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Ghana and South Africa; Brazil, Peru and Argentina; St Kitts and Nevis, the US Virgin Islands and Trinidad and Tobago; Germany, Estonia, France and Norway; India and Sri Lanka; Malaysia, Taiwan, Korea and Japan; Australia, New Zealand and islands across the Pacific — to name just a few.

For several days, the Assembly became a wonderful mixture of languages, accents, colours and cultures, with friendships forming across continents and conversations beginning between people whose lives might look very different, but whose faith and hopes for the

world have so much in common.

Together they gathered around the theme

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.”

Isaiah 60:1

Arise and Shine

An inspiring group of speakers explored what it means for women to recognise their God-given light and have the courage to let it shine. They included Revd Charissa Suli, President of the Uniting Church in Australia; Revd Tara Tuatari, President of the Methodist Church of New Zealand; Bishop Pumla Nzimande, Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa; and Britain and Ireland’s own Revd Jenny Pathmarajah.

Again and again, the Assembly returned to a powerful image. Light does not ask permission to shine. Neither does it choose which parts of the darkness it is prepared to illuminate. It simply shines.

For the women gathered in Auckland, “Arise and Shine” therefore became much more than an uplifting slogan. It was a challenge to recognise the light God has already placed within each of us and to have the courage to allow it to be seen.

There was also an important reminder that one woman shining does not diminish another. Quite the opposite. When women encourage, support and amplify one another, the light becomes brighter.

Nearly 700 women shining together can illuminate an extraordinary amount of darkness.

That image became particularly powerful

as the Assembly explored colonialism and decolonisation. Across the world, communities have experienced invasion and dominating powers which suppressed languages, traditions and indigenous cultures. In some places the Church was itself entangled with colonial power, leaving a complicated legacy which Christians today have a responsibility to acknowledge.

Finding women’s voices in Scripture

Rev Jenny Pathmarajah led the keynote Bible study and invited the Assembly to look again at one of the Bible’s most notorious women: Delilah.

For centuries, Delilah has been portrayed as the manipulative temptress who brought about the downfall of the mighty Samson. But what happens when the story is read through a different lens? What happens when women are encouraged to ask questions of Samson as well as Delilah?

The Bible study explored power, entitlement and masculinity and drew connections with the modern “manosphere” and the disturbing growth of misogynistic ideas being promoted, particularly to boys and young men, online.

It became a call to women to refuse to surrender their voices in the face of toxic masculinity, and a challenge to the Church to take seriously the messages about women, men and power which are being absorbed by a new generation.

If the Church is to speak into this darkness, it must offer a different vision:

relationships based not upon domination, entitlement or power over another person, but upon dignity, equality, mutuality and love.

Once again, the call was simple:

Arise. Speak. Shine.

The sound of a worldwide Church

One of the greatest joys of the Assembly was worship. Each of the Federation's nine World Areas was given an opportunity to lead, bringing something of its own spirituality, culture and traditions to the whole gathering. There is something deeply moving about standing amongst hundreds of women, singing words you may not completely understand, and nevertheless knowing exactly what is being expressed.

The worldwide Church can sometimes feel like an abstract idea. In Auckland it became wonderfully real. It had faces, it had voices and accents, it had laughter and it sang in many languages.

Faith that changes the world

Behind all the celebration of a World Assembly lies serious work. The World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women is a global movement committed to putting Christian faith into action. The Federation has Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and has a long history of advocating for women and girls within the international community, working with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Across the Federation's nine World Areas, women are addressing poverty, hunger, access to education, gender inequality, violence against women and girls,

climate change, health, peace and justice.

This is where the Federation has such extraordinary potential: women of faith, rooted in local communities, connected together across continents and determined to make a difference and hearing the reports of the real work and life changing action taking place around the world was inspiring.



Carrying the light home

Perhaps the greatest gift of the Assembly was simply being surrounded by so many extraordinary women: women of faith and courage, women with remarkable stories, women working for justice in circumstances very different from our own, and women willing both to teach and to learn. Across differences of nationality, language, culture and generation, there was a wonderful sense of discovering how much we have to offer one another and how deeply we belong to one another as part of this worldwide family.

Forty women have now returned to Britain and Ireland carrying some of those stories, friendships and experiences with them. But “Arise and Shine” was never intended to remain in Auckland. The real test of a World Assembly begins when everyone goes home and asks what difference those few extraordinary days will make in their own churches and communities.

The call is to carry that light home: to challenge injustice, to speak into uncomfortable places, to amplify voices which are not being heard, to learn from people whose experiences are different from our own, and to recognise and celebrate the gifts of women of every age and culture. Above all, it is to remember that nobody needs to make their light smaller so that somebody else can shine. When we encourage one another to shine, the whole world becomes a little brighter.

Nearly 700 women brought their individual lights to Aotearoa New Zealand and, together, they were dazzling. Now the challenge is to carry that light out into

the world, to arise and shine, trusting that the glory of God is upon us.

Revd Jenny Pathmarajah
Minister
Cambridge Circuit



Photos:-

- 1 - The assembly hall
- 2 – Britain, Ireland and Europe areas giving their presentation
- 3 – Helen Kim Scholars with our British scholar Izzy Solomon from Castle Street Cambridge Circuit
- 4 – Revd Jenny with Revd Charissa Suli from Australia
- 5 – Revd Jenny with Bishop Pumla from MCSA

THE NEED FOR HEADS ABOVE THE PARAPET!

Did you have a good summer? It was hot, wasn't it?

At least we escaped some of the passions of last summer, when demonstrations around the hotels housing asylum seekers made nasty and worrying headlines in our local and national news. Thank God, there has been slightly less of that this year but the vilification of those who seek sanctuary among us has not gone away. Indeed, it is making bigger waves in many directions.

The mantra from City of Sanctuary UK is that concerned people need to **change the conversation**.

The best way to do that is to speak out loud and be unafraid to put our heads above the parapet. The Bishop of Kirkstall boldly did just that at an event at Lambeth Palace recently, supported by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally. Where are the voices shouting in agreement?

The Revd Arun Arora said:

"The biggest threat to England's fabric today is to be found in the tidal wave of nationalism that threatens to destroy the foundations of community, to devastate social cohesion and threaten any sense of unity within the UK."

He continued that the Church has to challenge:

"The sinful idolatry and twisted theology of so-called Christian nationalists", saying that they were using the cross of Christ as a fashion accessory, with no understanding of Jesus' message of love.

Indeed, we must, as Christians, do just that. Shout above the parapet! There is "no national flag that sits above the cross."

The Revd Sarah Mullally commented at the same event:

"We are all becoming aware that we have created a society where people feel that it is acceptable to intimidate others. I think there is an increasing responsibility on Christian leaders to speak up and not be silent, because silence itself encourages a society in which people think it is all right to intimidate in this way."

The Revd Rosemarie Mallett, co-lead bishop for racial justice in the Church of England, rightly added:

"The Church can tell the truth about history...and offer a theological vision of belonging that lives out Jesus' call to welcome the stranger."

So, let's all do that – calmly and bravely. Let's speak out when we see or hear the prejudice and intolerance that Jesus would have abhorred.

Not easy, of course, but we have to try – now, in today's unkind world.

May God grant us the vision and courage to put our heads above that parapet.

**Frances Middleton
Norwich Circuit**

Quotations from The Guardian, Friday 11 September. And I have just realised the significance of the date...



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