

Wantage & Abingdon Circuit

GROVE & WANTAGE METHODIST NEWS

The **Methodist** Church 



September 2026

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Contributions for the **next Newsletter** (October) should be sent to the editor by
email, phone or in writing by **Sunday 20th September**

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Editors : Gill & Gordon Skidmore

Wantage Morning Worship is shared each week on Zoom at 10:30
(for access to this please contact Gordon Skidmore)

Grove web site is found from www.wantab.org.uk

Wantage web site www.wantagemethodist.org.uk

Circuit web site www.wantab.org.uk

Newsletter Contribution deadline dates – 2026

October	Sunday 20 th September
November	Sunday 18 th October
Winter (December/January)	Sunday 22 nd November

“Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.”
Psalm 84: 5

The words pilgrim and pilgrimage are derived from the Latin peregrinus and peregrinatio, from per ager, meaning “across the fields”. In Roman times, these terms referred to foreigners or travellers who, though not Roman citizens, were free to move throughout the Empire within its laws (*Eade and Albera, New Pathways in Pilgrimage Studies*). Originally, the terms were without religious meaning but have gradually acquired spiritual significance through developments in language, church tradition, and lived experience. This has given rise to the diverse meanings and practices associated with Christian pilgrimage today, whether physical, internal or metaphorical.

The concept of life as a pilgrimage is a profound theme woven throughout Scripture, portraying the Christian journey as a temporary sojourn on earth with a heavenly destination. Scripture affirms that we are pilgrims. In the New Testament, Peter reflects the idea when he describes his readers as “elect exiles” (*1 Peter 1:1*); and, the author of Hebrews refers to the faithful believers of the Old Testament as “strangers and exiles” (*Hebrews 11:13*). The Pilgrim Psalms (*Psalms 120-134*), also known as the Songs of Ascent, were traditionally sung by pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem for religious festivals, reflecting both physical and spiritual ascent. This concept has inspired music such as Albert E. Brumley’s “This World Is Not My Home” and literature such as John Bunyan’s “The Pilgrim’s Progress”, both of which emphasise the transient nature of earthly life and our true citizenship in heaven. Their words capture the spirit of the pilgrim, reminding us that the trials, struggles, and sorrows of this world are fleeting when compared with the eternal joy that awaits us in the presence of Christ.

Today, pilgrimage takes many forms. People undertake pilgrimages for faith, healing, reflection, challenge, or personal well-being. In our increasingly digital world, walkers often use digital maps and mobile technology to follow ancient routes, while virtual pilgrimages and online communities create new ways to participate. The Open University, in a programme exploring the evolution of pilgrimage, raises important questions about what it means to journey without physical movement and whether pilgrimage can still foster community when participation shifts into digital spaces. These questions echo those facing the Church today. Since the Covid pandemic, many congregations have embraced a mixture of in-person, online, and hybrid forms of worship, prompting similar reflections on community, presence, and belonging in a digital age. As pilgrimage adapts to digital spaces while seeking to preserve community and meaning, so too the Church continues to ask how we can remain a connected people of God across in-person, online, and hybrid forms of worship. The question is not simply where we gather, but how we journey together in faith.

As a Circuit, we too are fellow pilgrims on this journey of faith. Our pilgrimage is shaped by the particular places and times in which we live, by our longing for a deeper and more meaningful union with our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our daily commitment to walk in faith and obedience as we seek to align our thoughts, actions, and intentions with God's will. Together with Christians across time and throughout the world, we are united by our confession of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (*Eph. 4:5*). We are the body of Christ, and individually members of it (*1 Cor. 12:27*); for in the one Spirit we

were all baptised into one body... and all were made to drink of the one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).

Our pilgrimage together continues as we enter this new Connexional year. From Sunday to Sunday, those who are able will gather in their local churches, whether in person or in hybrid form, to worship, share fellowship, and learn from one another. Together, we will continue to care for one another, as Scripture urges (1 Cor. 12:25). We will rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep in times of joy and sorrow. Though we may at times feel tired, overstretched, or under-resourced, we will continue to offer our gifts, skills, talents, and energies in service to God, our communities, and one another, united by our Lord's commission to make disciples of all nations. And each month, as we gather around the Lord's Table and experience anew the mystery of Christ's presence in Holy Communion, we will be strengthened in faith and drawn ever closer together in him.

Together, let us praise God for the past year and our past travels, trusting in his strength, grace and deliverance for the new year and journey that has just begun.

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore;
feed me now and evermore.

(StF 465 v. 1)

Every blessing,

Georgina

Wantage & Abingdon Circuit Black History Month
Saturday 17 October 2.30 – 5.30
Trinity Church Abingdon
Lord Paul Boateng
Rev Sonia Hicks, Chair Northampton Methodist District
and others

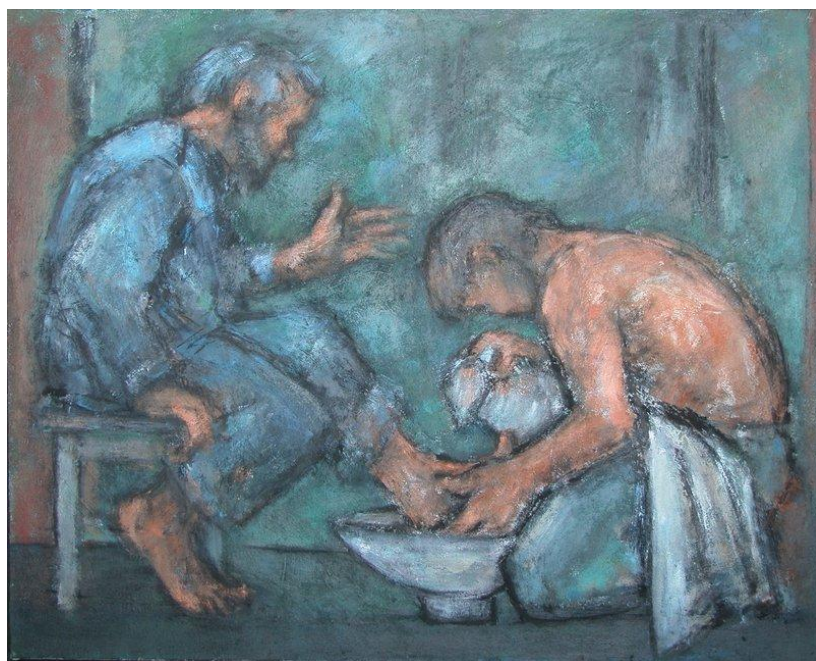


Works in the Methodist Modern Art Collection: 10

Ghislaine Howard (b.1953) *The Washing of the Feet* (2004)

One of the most popular works in the collection is Ghislaine Howard's *The Washing of the Feet*. It is one of the more recent acquisitions. Born in Eccles, Greater Manchester, Ghislaine Howard lives in Glossop, Derbyshire. She has exhibited work for over thirty years and her self-portrait whilst pregnant is a truly significant piece. Howard has produced extraordinarily evocative stations of the cross which were exhibited at both Liverpool cathedrals as well as at Canterbury and other venues. She has also produced several other works of religious art.

The popularity of *Washing of the Feet* is in part likely to be its accessibility. It can be readily appreciated. However, there is more to it than mere approach, there is a tenderness about it that many can relate to. This is typical of Howard's work, especially in her depiction of women and motherhood.



Interestingly, Jesus appears to be much younger than Peter – this is typical of art featuring these two characters. So much so that it has become embedded within our psyche - but who is to say that Peter is older than Jesus? Sure, he is married because Jesus eats and heals in the home of Peter's mother-in-law; but this isn't conclusive evidence of an age gap between the two. What I think this depiction does is play on the mind of the viewer, especially the older viewer. Maybe we have sat where Peter sits. Maybe we relate to

Peter and the care shown to him by a younger person.

We believe Peter was reluctant that his teacher should bathe his feet and those of the other disciples. There may be something of that reluctance in Peter's body language in Howard's painting, but to me it somehow seems more submissive than admonishment. The raised hand appears to be one of affection.

There is a strength in Jesus, stripped to the waist his body well-toned. His upper arm and forearm look as if they could indeed carry a cross through the streets of Jerusalem. Yet his left hand is almost caressing the foot of Peter whilst his right hand lightly holds the pitcher.

There is a clear message within this wonderful work of art. The strong Jesus that is about to face immense torture and come through it, is the same Jesus who can be tender and caring. Maybe we can see within the actions of those who care for us, those who meet our needs, those who hold us in our need, are revealing the love God has for us in their Christ-like manner.

Every blessing

Rev Bruce

Dear Friends,

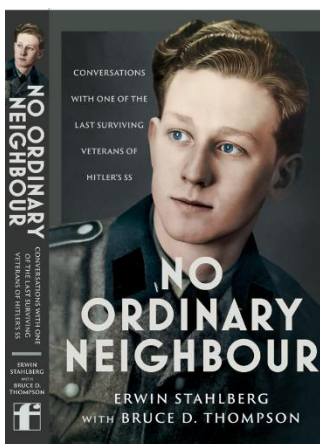
A new Methodist year heralds a new series of articles for us. Each month I am planning to share my memories and reflections on people I have known. Few of them will have made headlines, or had books written about them, though one or two may have, but each has influenced me and inspired me, or their story captivated me.

In Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer Prize winning novel from 1927, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, there is an exploration of the lives of five victims of a rope bridge collapse. It is in an attempt to discern why they died as and when they did. The conclusion of the investigator, Franciscan friar Brother Juniper, suggests that there appeared to be quantifiable reason. It is a fascinating work and the closing paragraph is an extraordinary piece of writing and philosophical thought:

'Soon we shall all die and all memory of those five will have left the earth, and we ourselves shall be loved for a while and forgotten. But the love will have been enough; all those impulses of love return to the love that made them. Even memory is not necessary for love. There is a land of the living and a land of the dead, and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning.'

I never intended to record people's stories; the interest I have in the lives of others was noticeably inherent within me from an early age. Over the course of my ministry, I have had the extraordinary privilege of meeting thousands of people and on occasion ministering alongside them. However, many of the stories I have heard could be lost as I may be the only recipient alive to remember them. Thornton Wilder was right when he stated that 'soon we shall all die and all memory of those five will have left the earth.'

Yet, I have cherished their stories because I have loved those who told them to me. I believe some were entrusted to me, and on occasions to no one else. Some told me episodes and experiences from their lives in order that they be repeated at a funeral, and the family and friends heard them there for the first time. Many have looked in wonder, appreciation, and not with a little understanding gained, when commenting that it was the first they had heard of a particular incident in their late loved one's life.



At the end of September my new book will be published. It is a record of conversations I held with Erwin Stahlberg, a former member of Hitler's SS, over the last twenty-one years of his life. We had agreed some years ago that I should seek to publish an account of our relationship but only after, as Erwin put it, he had 'closed his eyes for the last time.' He died a little over a year ago. Those who thought they knew him well, but were not privy to his wartime years, are awaiting the publication. This had been the longest pastoral relationship of my entire ministry and there is much to recall. However, there were some pastoral relationships that were very brief. Nevertheless, they too have made a

significant impact upon me. Their stories were important to the teller and they remain important to me. I very much want to pass on to others something of those lives I have loved and lost in order that their stories continue to inspire and encourage.

In Conversation

Monawar Hussain, Imam Eton College, founder of the Oxford Foundation, and leading voice in inter faith dialogue

Tuesday 8 September
12 noon – 1.00 pm

Admission free -
donations welcome



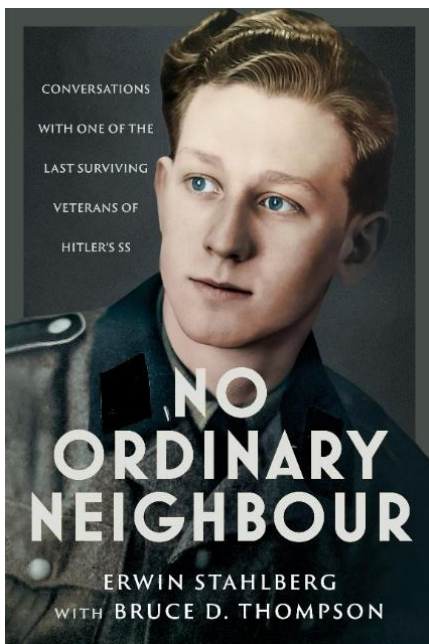
Book Launch at Wallingford Methodist Church

In partnership with The Wallingford Bookshop

Tuesday 20 October 12 noon

Free Admission

NO ORDINARY NEIGHBOUR – Conversations with one of the last surviving veterans of Hitler's SS By Bruce Thompson Frontline Books 2026



This account will shock and disturb, but not necessarily in the way many would expect or imagine.

This is no conventional memoir, it is a deep examination of how one young man could so readily become immersed in a brutal military unit, one of the most feared of the Nazi regime, and explores the lessons we must learn afresh today.

Skilfully written and with great personal insight, this is a courageous and disturbingly relevant book. Jonathan Wittenberg, Senior Rabbi Masorti Judaism UK



Conference Business Digest

A report for local churches about the business of the 2026 Methodist Conference held at Telford International Centre: Presbyteral Session 25th – 26th June; Representative Session 27th June – 1st July.

Induction of the President and Vice-President for 2026/2027

On Saturday 27th June, the Rev Mark Slaney was elected and inducted as President of the Conference, and Caroline Stead as Vice-President.

Their addresses were on the theme of 'Sorrow and Joy' and are available to read here:

methodist.org.uk/about/structure-and-governance/the-methodist-conference/conference-2026/presidency/

Reception into Full Connexion and Ordination Services

During the Sunday worship, 13 presbyters and two deacons were received into Full Connexion with the Conference, along with three presbyters by transfer, and one presbyter by reinstatement.

Connexional Council

The Council presented reports from the Ministries, Mission, and Resourcing Committees, along with other matters of report or for decision.

The Council also brought an update on the Economic Justice Working Group, which was established in 2024 to develop a process by which ministry and mission can be funded where the need is greatest, to practise the connexional principle and to tackle inequality and poverty.

The Council brought a report on the Missional Use of Property, emphasising the need for clarity about the relationship between a Local Church as an entity, its trusteeship and any building/s associated with it. The Law and Polity Committee was directed to produce detailed proposals for how models of trusteeship might work in practice.

The Council brought its reflections on the strategic direction of the Church, flowing from the strategies already adopted by the Conference. The Council has identified two key strategic objectives for the wider Church as key to fulfilling *Our Calling*: to increase the number of accountable disciples, by making members, and to enrich the fidelity of those disciples to God through excellence in worship.

Review of the Conference

The Law and Polity Committee brought a report setting out its concerns about the length of the Conference.

3Generate and the Voices of Children and Young People

3Generate 2025 was the largest yet, with over 1,700 young attendees. Young people expressed to the Conference how much they value worship, community and faith development, but shared their concerns that church practices do not fully meet their needs, desiring more accessible and age-appropriate worship, greater involvement in leading services and clearer teaching of the Bible. The Conference encouraged

Circuits and Districts to enable those involved in ministry with children and young people to support them in biblical exploration and explore more frequent opportunities for local gatherings.

Assisted Dying

The Conference considered a report on assisted dying, which had been requested by last year's Conference following the long-standing public debate of this issue.

The Conference agreed to remove the status of Conference Statement from its previous statement which dated from 1974. It agreed to maintain its historic position of opposition to assisted dying, noting that this does not place any restriction on resolutions that may be brought to the Conference as part of future work.

Budget

The Conference adopted the Connexional central services budget for 2026/2027. Despite some progress in addressing the deficit over the last year, decisive action will be required to reduce the deficit between now and 2029.

Triennial Membership Returns

The Conference received the membership returns, alongside data that had been collected on attendance at worship and other forms of engagement. The total membership figure stands at 129,697 with total attendance (including online) at 99,813.

Action for Hope

The Conference received an update on the aspiration to become net zero. With regret, the Conference agreed to the refocusing of the work to an ongoing carbon reduction plan, with the removal of the 2030 target date.

Online celebrations of Holy Communion

The Conference, following a period of discernment since 2021, provisionally decided that online celebrations of Holy Communion should be generally permitted in the Methodist Church; the views of the Synods will be sought and a final decision will be made by the 2027 Conference.

Revision of Authorised Liturgies

The Conference adopted principles for liturgical style and language to guide the work in the revision of its authorised liturgies. These principles emphasise the need for language that seeks to be inclusive and expansive, recognises a variety of traditions, and uses different registers where appropriate. The new collection will be called *Praying the Faith: Authorised Liturgies for Methodist Worship*.

Kairos II A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide

The Conference asked for a study resource to be produced for churches. It also asked the President to write to the UK Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, and the governing bodies of other jurisdictions in which the Methodist Church in Great Britain has a presence, urging them to uphold international law and to take the actions outlined in the Time to Act campaign.

Safeguarding Committee

The Conference agreed to a possible change in how often refresher sessions of advanced safeguarding training are required, from every four years to three.

Ecumenical

The Conference adopted a formal response to the eleventh report of the Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church. The Conference commended the report – *God in Christ Reconciling: On the Way to Full Communion in Faith, Sacraments, and Mission* – to the Methodist people for study and discussion.

A report from the Life in Covenant Group reviewed the progress and future direction of the shared work of the Methodist Church and the Church of England to advance the commitments of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant (2003). Work is now underway towards drafting a formal declaration of communion, liturgies for an inaugural joint service, an ordination rite for a President-bishop, and guidelines for ministers serving across traditions. The Conference recommended renewal of the Life in Covenant Group for a further five years.

The Conference received a report from the Methodist-United Reformed Church Liaison Group, welcomed the proposed consultative meeting between District Chairs and Synod Moderators.

Report of the Chairs' and Warden's Meeting

The District Chairs and Warden of the Diaconal Order asked the Conference to make an urgent response to hate crime, harassment, discrimination and malicious conduct directed towards ministers.

Memorials

Memorials are requests from Circuit Meetings and District Synods to the Conference. The Conference replied to 16 memorials on topics including the training of local preachers and worship leaders, delivery of offline and online training, governance for Circuits and Churches, Standing Order 943, supernumeraries chairing Circuit Meetings, Church Treasurer membership of Circuit Meetings, denomination of sanctuary, Israel-Palestine and Kairos II, the JTC group (as it relates to the Central Finance Board), menopause policy and guidance, maternity policy.

President and Vice-President designated for 2027/2028

The Conference designated the Rev Dr Jennifer Smith to be President and Daniel Keen to be Vice-President of the Conference 2027/2028.

Appointments

The Conference made a number of appointments and reappointments, including:

- the Rev Romeo Pedro as Chair for the Yorkshire North and East District.
- Deacon Claire Gill as Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order.
- the Rev Dr Janet Corlett as Chair of the Isle of Man District.
- the Rev Faith Nyota as Chair for the London District.



A to Z of Mindfulness for Christians

Local Author David Harper

Saturday 26th September 2026
3.30pm

Come and hear about mindfulness in a Christian context, expect this to be interactive and practical, with the opportunity to try a meditation



David Harper

Christian Resources Together Bookshop of the Year 2023

10 Savile Way, Grove, OX12 0PT Tel: 01235 772280

Sign up to our "Friends" mailing list here:

<https://www.cornerstonegrove.org.uk/contact-us>



July 2026

Maybe it's something about being Street Pastors and giving that inspires us to even more giving! At our AGM earlier in July, our Trustees gave everyone a tube of Smarties as a small gift to thank us for coming to the AGM and for supporting the work of Wantage & Grove Street Pastors (despite the heat!)

Smarties come in 7 colours: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, pink and brown - all jumbled up in a little cardboard tube. It's a simple picture of what it's like in Wantage & Grove Street Pastors - lots of different individuals working together to do something really rather good on the streets of Wantage and Grove. It's that sense of teamwork that really does make the dream work. Not everyone is a Street Pastor, not everyone patrols at night, not everyone is a Trustee or a Prayer Support Volunteer. Not everyone is full of confidence and daring, not everyone is serving in their comfort zone! But we're here, together, serving God through serving people. Encouraging each other to be the hands and feet of Jesus on the street. It's easy to think, "I couldn't do that!", but as part of a team, you probably can - whatever it is!

One other thing! When you open your tube of Smarties, you'll probably notice... there's room for a few more! *Nigel Watt Coordinator*

How we helped on our streets

Our afternoon patrol team have been chatting to lots of young people - especially about exams and a recent essay on the work of Street Pastors! One young person spoke to our team about his life and a recent diagnosis which will likely scupper his career plans.

One night we became aware of a group of young people who were engaged in a heated argument in Wantage. One of them was particularly upset as it was alleged that they had someone else's phone. The group asked us to come over and assist. We went over and immediately the phone was returned to the rightful owner and the situation resolved.

We found three men, one of whom had fallen over - having had too much to drink. We made sure that he was ok and was able to get a taxi home.

Another of our teams cared for a lady who was unsteady on her feet and waited for the bus with her - making sure she got on the right bus. They also gave lollies to a group of rowdy lads who said they were heading home. A lolly is a great way to quieten things down a little

We were pleased to welcome Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner, Matthew Barber, to join us for a patrol in June. Matthew had asked to come out with us in recognition of National Volunteers' Week at the beginning of June. He had a fun time and was recognised by a few people. Matthew says he'll definitely come out with us again.

AGM 2026

Andy Smith retires

We held our 2026 AGM on Tuesday 7 July at Cornerstone in Grove. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend. After the business of the AGM, we celebrated the completion of our transfer to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with a glass of Nozeco!

Sky Shoemark, our Online Networker, presented a social media update in video form. Thank you Sky.

We also spent some time thinking about what we love about Wantage & Grove Street Pastors, we played a few silly games and thanked Andy Smith for his service and Nigel Watt for 15 years as our Coordinator (so far).

Andy Smith has been a Trustee for 3 years but retired at our 2026 AGM. Andy has served in Wantage & Grove Street Pastors from it's beginning back in 2009 and was one of the original Street Pastors in Team 6 (together with Marj, Andrea and Nigel). Thank you for all your hard work and encouragement over the years Andy.

We'll miss you!

Recruit, recruit, recruit!

Recruitment is vital to our ongoing success and now is a great time to apply to be a Street Pastor, Prayer Support Volunteer or even a Trustee.

In September and October we will be running two key training sessions:

Roles & Responsibilities - Saturday 26th September

Safeguarding - Saturday 10th October

These are two courses that new Street Pastors must complete prior to their first patrol... so get the dates in your diary and get in touch for a SP application form!

Pasties on Patrol

We had such fun in June giving out pasties in the Market Place on a warm, dry Saturday night. We started with prayer and a briefing at Wantage Methodist Church. With the oven warming up, some of us headed off to set up the gazebo that we had borrowed from Abingdon Street Pastors.

Pasties soon arrived from the church and we gave them out to anyone who wanted one. Several people were really touched by our kindness and at least one person managed to get several pasties out of us - haha! We gave out nearly 100 pasties, plenty of lollies and a few bottles of water.

They say it is better to give than to receive - I think they may be right. We were so blessed from start to finish with great weather, lots of willing volunteers and such a lovely response from members of the public. Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers, and to Wantage Methodist Church, Wantage Baptist Church and Abingdon Street Pastors.

Street Pastors is an initiative of Ascension Trust, a Christian, inter-denominational organisation with a passion to empower individuals to work together within their local community and nation.

GROVE

You are invited to a **Coffee morning** on **Saturday, 5th September** from 10 am till 12 noon in the church. The charity benefitting will be Cancer Research UK.

Rachel and Morgan are our hosts for the morning and they would appreciate offers of help with cakes. We hope you are able to join us for a chat and tea/coffee and cake.

It is really good to see you all. Thank you to all who support us so well and to those who help by providing cakes and/or help on the day. It is all much appreciated.

Ecumenical Prayer for Revival will be on **Sunday 6th September** from 6.30 to 8 pm. You are invited to come and pray with us. All are welcome.

Film Club planning is still on-going. Peter needs names of suitable films which you think people might enjoy. Please get in touch with him by telephone – 01235 762504 or by email peterjhemmings@btinternet.com if you have any suggestions.

Tuesday Fellowship in August was on **Tuesday, 25th August** at 2.15 pm. John and Sue Stead invited us to visit them at 17, Woodgate Close, Grove. We hope you were able to join us there.

Tuesday Fellowship in September is on **Tuesday, 29th September** at 2.15 pm. We have been invited by Veronica and Graham to their home, 17 Cowslip Road, Wantage, OX12 7FX, for a “Visit to Japan”. They will be showing pictures and telling us about their recent trip. All are welcome.

Craft Group meets at the Cornerstone Coffee Shop on **Monday afternoons** from 2 to 4 pm. All are welcome. Bring your own craft to do and enjoy a chat and exchange of ideas with other crafters while you work. We each give a donation of £1 to Cornerstone and buy a drink of our choice.

Thank you to everyone who supported the Coffee Morning in July for Helen and Douglas House. Donations amounted to £150. Gift Aid money from last year had already been forwarded to them. Thank you.

The Coffee Morning in August was in aid of MHA (Methodist Homes for the Aged). Donations amounted to £230 to which has been added £59.65 from past Gift Aid.

Thank you to everyone for your support for both the Coffee Mornings.

Thank you to all those who generously continue to support the Foodbank by putting contributions in the box in the entrance hall week by week. Thank you. All donations are very much appreciated. The need is still great. There is a list above the box of the things that are most useful to them at the moment.

We continue to hold in our prayers all those who are in poor health or have other difficulties and problems. Thank you to everyone who helps in whatever way they are able to. Your prayers and support are very much appreciated.

Date for your diary: We will be celebrating **Harvest** on Sunday, 4th October.

Cornerstone news: Auction of Promises

The List of Promises – 30 lots in all – is available for you to see at Cornerstone, at Grove Methodist Church, from Lynda Culley or on-line.

Bids will be accepted up to Saturday, 5th September.

The Auction Dinner is on **Saturday, 5th September** when the winning bids will be announced. The menu for the Auction Dinner is available from Cornerstone, two courses, price £30. **Bookings and payment** for the dinner need to be made by 28th August. The dinner will either be hosted at St John's Church or at Cornerstone depending on numbers.

Safeguarding

The Methodist Church is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of its life and ministry.

Safeguarding is about the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture.

This means we will:

- promote the welfare of children, young people and adults
- work to prevent abuse from occurring
- seek to protect and respond well to those that have been abused

If you have, or become aware of any concern, you must contact your Church's Safeguarding Officer :-

Grove :

Lynda Culley 07759 085336 or Rev Georgina on 01235 219070

Wantage :

Ken Smith 01235 767545 or Rev Bruce on 01235 813242

You must not speak to others about your concerns or investigate them yourself.

WANTAGE

A Time for Reflection

Jane Kent and Helen Carter

On the first Sunday of the month, we have a 'Time for Reflection' in the Godfrey Room from 9:30 - 10 am.

There will be some music, a reading from the lectionary for that day, some questions to ponder individually and the opportunity to share any thoughts briefly if you wish before finishing with some music. Everyone welcome!



Harvest festival

Our harvest celebration will be on **Sunday 20th September** and will be led by Rev Bruce.

- We welcome contributions of non perishable and perishable foods which can be brought to the church either on Saturday 19th September in the morning, or to the service on Sunday 20th. The non perishable donations will be given to the Food Bank, and perishable items will be taken to Down to Earth or the Community Fridge at the Mix, or both.
- Jan Abrahall would be pleased to receive contributions of foliage or flowers from your gardens for the harvest arrangements before 10 am on Saturday 19th September (someone will be at the church from 9 am).
- After the Harvest service on Sunday there will be a bring and share lunch. All are invited. There will be a list for people to indicate if they are thinking of attending - just to get an idea of numbers. There will be a space on that list for what you might be bringing. The different parts of the list will just give an idea of how many tables to put out and maybe what is needed to "fill the gap" on the food front. Food can be brought to the kitchen or hall on your way into church that day. We won't turn anyone away!

Community Café

Carolyn Roche

Despite the heatwaves, Community Café opened every Monday throughout the summer. Some mornings saw lower numbers as people stayed at home, trying to keep cool. Thank you to the helpers and cake makers who have made it possible for us to provide a welcoming space for regulars and visitors no matter what the temperature. Occasionally it has been difficult to fill the helper rota so if you are someone who feels you could offer the occasional Monday we would love to hear from you. You could either help in the kitchen or as a welcomer out in the hall. Community Café will be open from 9 am – 12 noon every Monday morning throughout September. From March to May, the Community Café donations were for Treloar's. This is a charity that provides outstanding education, therapy and care to physically disabled young people, and empowers them to live more independent and fulfilling lives. We raised £495.45 and have recently received thank-you emails from their fundraising team and from one of the students. Donations from September to November will be for Changing Lives.

Do come and join us for coffee, cake, cheese scones and good company..

We will start again after the Summer break on **Sunday 20th September**, meeting on the **3rd Sunday of the month**.

Kids@Church is an informal, monthly get-together for children and their families, where we explore a Bible story, engage in an activity and finish with a shared breakfast. New friends always welcome!

(For more information, please feel free to give Jane a call /text on 07443 420205)

Bible Study at Elmbrook Care Home*June Grunwald*

In July we looked at the Parable of the Sower and enjoyed a short film of the parable. In August our theme was Jesus walking on the water. The studies for the next few months are: September 14th (Psalm 65:9-13); October 12th (Psalm 23); November 9th (Remembrance).

Elmbrook Bible Study is held at the care home on Grove Road, on the second Monday of the month at 2.30 pm, lasting between 30 and 45 minutes. After the bible study we usually have a drink in the Bistro area in the care home which is appreciated by residents.

As well as the bible study I visit the care home at other times. During the summer a couple of our Monday café regulars have spent some respite care at Elmbrook and it has been good to have a chat with them during their stay.

Tuesday Afternoon Prayer and Study Group*Carolyn Roche*

This is an open and friendly group who meet for Prayer and Bible Study each Tuesday at 2 pm in the Parlour. Please feel free to join us. If you have someone or a situation you would like us to pray for please let me know.

In September, we will be completing the Sermon on the Mount Study and then moving on to the Fruit of the Spirit Study. Both are part of the Life Builder Study Guides.

Dates for September are as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1 st September | Sermon on the Mount - Week 12 – Making the Choice of a Lifetime (Matthew 7:21-29) |
| 8 th September | NO BIBLE STUDY |
| 15 th September | Fruit of the Spirit - Week 1 – Love (1 John 4:7-16) |
| 22 nd September | Fruit of the Spirit - Week 2 – Joy (Luke 24:33-53) |
| 29 th September | Fruit of the Spirit – Week 3 – Peace (Isaiah 43:1-7) |

If you have any queries or prayer requests you can contact me (Carolyn Roche) by telephone on 07906 518323 or email: ciroche48@hotmail.com

Our meetings in September continue at 2 pm in the Hall on the first and third Mondays of the month. The dates are **Monday 7th** and **Monday 21st September**. We always have a break for tea and cake/biscuits.

As well as angels knitted in a variety of colours, we are also knitting and crocheting stars in yellow and/or white wool. These stars, plus any angels in yellow/white will be used for our tree at the Christmas Tree Festival. If you would like wool, patterns or needles please let me know. Some people are unable to come to the meetings but like to knit at home. If you have any queries or just fancy a chat do please call me.

Please pray for:

Adrian, Alison C & family, Alyson, Caroline, Carol M, Carole R,
Dave, Doug & Anne Hatto, Edwina, Emma Wright & family, Findley,
Mark, Angela & family, Gary R, Geoff, Gillian B, Gill & Gordon S, Gloria S,
Jane R, Jo, June G, Jane & Emma S & family, Jo A, June H,
Kelvin, Ken & Grace W, Mary S, Meriel, Peter, Rachel & her family,
Sharon, Tony G, Trudy, Val & John B, Zack

Our Ministers, Local Preachers & Worship Leaders,
kids@church, Street Pastors, Cornerstone
and those members of our church family
who, through frailty or ill health, can no longer worship with us.

If you have any queries or prayer requests you can contact me (Carolyn Roche) by telephone on 01235 764310 or email: ciroche48@hotmail.com

WMC Prayer WhatsApp group

Please let Helen Carter know if you would like to be involved in responding to urgent prayer requests. Thank you.

Prayer tree

Anyone can leave a prayer request on the tree. It is appreciated if a date is written on the tag somewhere. Please take time to check the tree and choose someone or a situation to pray for or about. Also, if any of the prayer cards on the table feel relevant to you please do take one.

September marks our transition from summer to autumn, and heralds the beginning of our new Methodist year. Rarely since 1976 have we experienced such a dry and hot summer, or spent so much time outside with watering cans, trying to keep everything in our gardens alive.

We have many biblical references to the importance of water to sustain life, and contemporary media reports from conflict areas in which so many lives have been lost through lack of water.

Our gratitude for all that we enjoy and of which we have an abundant supply – water, food, shelter, medical provision and so much more, highlights our concern for the millions of God's children struggling for survival through a lack of these essential provisions. We have so much for which to thank God.

On 20th September, when Bruce will lead our Harvest Festival Service, one of the hymns may possibly be "Now thank we all Our God." If that's so, all of the words of the first verse express how blessed we are, in so many ways, and in turn how much we pray and long for those blessings for our sisters and brothers across God's world.

There is much to report on events involving our church family members. On 12th July, Joan and Ed Clipsham celebrated their Platinum Wedding Anniversary in our Hall after the Morning Service. Their message of appreciation confirms how much they enjoyed sharing their special day with the church family. Joan writes:

"Thank you to Ann and her helpers for making our 70th Wedding Anniversary such a wonderful occasion. The food, decorated School room and band made a lovely atmosphere, and big surprise! We also thank Andrew, Heather and Mick for playing our favourite music, everyone for joining in the singing, the book of messages, the special cake. The good wishes and love made me feel God was smiling down at us all. Thank you also for all the beautiful cards we received. We have such lovely memories." *Joan and Ed.*

Congratulations to James Kent, who graduated this summer from Bristol UWE with a 2:1 in Practical Film Making. James now has an internship with a company in Bristol, and we wish him well in this next stage of his career.

After a year of patiently and painfully waiting, Kelvin Rose's hip replacement operation finally went ahead at the beginning of July. Kelvin has appreciated support from church folk, and he particularly wants to thank everyone for their prayers. It was a joy to welcome him back to church on 16th August - proudly stickless and pain-free.

There was a pleasant surprise for guests at Alan Grunwald's birthday celebration on 8th August. Martin and Judith Smithson were the 'secret' guests, and it was a happy occasion for catching up with all of their news. They have renewed their membership with Bingham Methodist Church. It was to there that he moved on leaving Wantage, and from there that Martin retired at the end of his lifetime career as a Methodist Minister. It is no surprise that he now leads services again in that Circuit as a much in demand Supernumerary Minister.

It continues to be an anxious and difficult time health-wise for Gill and Gordon Skidmore, but we give thanks that Gill's surgery, the first stage of her treatment, has

been successfully completed. We pray for both Gill and Gordon, asking God to hold and sustain them both in the medical journeys that will, hopefully, restore them to better health. It was a great joy for us that, on Gill's birthday, she was able to resume her usual seat in church – at the piano where her amazing musical skills enhance our worship before, during and at the end of every service for which she plays.

We have been extremely grateful to Carolyn Roche and David Worth, who have been excellent accompanists during Gill's absence, adding that responsibility to the others they already hold in other roles.

It was regrettable that Carole Robbins was unable to worship with us for several weeks during July on account of having shingles, - a painful and contagious infection. It was aggravated by the fact that Carole's and Keith's son Gary became worryingly ill at the same time. In normal circumstances they would have gone to look after Gary, but Carole's enforced isolation made that impossible. We give thanks to God that Carole now feels better and is back with us in church, and Gary's health has also improved.

It has been a distressing time for Sonia Wilkie and for Victor following two close family bereavements. Victor's brother, Andrew, died on 19th July, and Sonia's brother-in-law, Robert, died on 9th August. In addition, Sonia's 50-year-old daughter-in-law suffered a heart attack through being struck in the chest with a golf ball, and there is continuing concern for her wellbeing. We hold Sonia and Victor in our thoughts, praying that God will comfort them in their loss and sustain them during their continuing anxiety.

In our May newsletter much was written about GDPR and safeguarding. Both are relevant to every aspect of our church life. The objective of each set of regulations is to ensure the safety of all who participate in every activity that our church organises and offers, from Sunday Worship to each of the weekly groups that are part of our total ministry and outreach to the local community and beyond. We will always do our utmost to provide safety and protection as a vital and valid part of our pastoral care commitment.

However, there is general agreement within leadership teams across our Circuit and District, that to legally fulfil this requirement sometimes necessitates excessive administration, which could be judged as beyond what is necessary and reasonable in order to look after everyone adequately.

Appreciation to Cath Worth cannot be over-expressed for dealing with a dauntingly complicated task which involved gathering vast amounts of detailed information, then analysing and applying it all to a checklist and report covering every heading within GDPR. Ways in which this will impact on all that we do are many and complicated. Within the Church Leadership Team, we will try to establish the simplest way forward in terms of adhering to legislation without becoming overburdened by it. It will definitely necessitate acquiring individual permission for every situation in which our names, and possibly other contact details, are demanded. More to follow in next month's Newsletter!

Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust - Ride & Stride

Clive & Alison Phillips

As September approaches and the weather is cooling down a bit, it is time to think about the annual Ride and Stride for The Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust. This event is a major source of funds to support the Trust's grants to the country's churches, and our church benefitted from such a grant when refurbishing the chapel.

The idea is to visit as many churches as possible on **Saturday, 12th September**, either by foot, bicycle or horse! At each church you sign in and your visit is recorded on your sponsor form, and at the same time you may be offered refreshment and the use of the loo if necessary.

Clearly to allow this to happen your church needs to be open and ideally someone to **welcome** you, so if you are free on Saturday 12th September and would be willing to give an hour or two of your time between 10 am and 5 pm, please let Alison Phillips know and she will construct a **rota**.

However, you may feel more adventurous and wish to get out and about to visit some local churches yourself, (there are 5 in Wantage alone!) in which case, have a word with Clive and he will give you the necessary form to record your visits. There are some suggested routes on the website including a category of townwalks which may be worth a look; ohct.org.uk/ride-and-stride/

Finally, if you are not available to be at church to welcome or feel up to travelling about, it would be great if you would like to **sponsor** someone for the number of churches they have visited or the time spent church sitting, every little helps.

With many thanks and look forward to seeing you on Sunday.

Sustainable Wantage

Helen Carter

Sustainable Wantage together with many other organisations are hosting a special event at the Beacon on **Thursday October 1st** at 7 pm. There will be a special community showing of the People's Emergency Briefing, followed by a discussion exploring the climate emergency, how it affects us and what we can do in response. It is free but you need to **book** for it.

Sustainable Wantage has so many different projects within it. There is something for everyone. You can find out more using the link <https://sustainablewantage.org.uk/> to take you to the website where you can check just what Sustainable Wantage is offering to the community. Do check it out. And check out the events too.

A date for your diary - Christmas Tree Festival

Just a reminder that we will be holding a Christmas Tree Festival to coincide with Dickensian Evening. The dates this year are **Friday 4th - Sunday 6th December**. Please can you put the dates in your diary and be thinking if you can help in anyway. I will soon be contacting possible groups to provide a tree for the display or have a stall in the hall. Please let me know if you have heard of anyone who would be interested in participating. The charity we are supporting this year is Cancer Research UK. Please get in touch with me if you need more information or are available to help.

Carolyn Roche 07906 518323 ciroche48@hotmail.com

What is happening on the Wantage premises at present?

Monday	Morning	Community Café	Hall	1 st /3 rd Weeks
	Afternoon	Knit & Chat	Hall	
	Evening	CA	Hall	
Tuesday	Morning	MIND	Hall	
	Afternoon	Tuesday Prayer & Bible Study	Parlour	
	Evening	Wantage Camera Club	Hall	
Wednesday				
	Evening	Wantage Sings	Hall	
Thursday	Midday	KAWI	Hall	3 rd Week
Friday	Morning	WCC Mother & Toddlers	All	Term time
Saturday	Morning	WCC Dads Out	All	1 st Week
	Midday	NA	Parlour	

One off Bookings

September

Saturday 19th Morning WCC Craft Matters

October

Thursday 8th Evening Music Makers

SERVICES during SEPTEMBER

Sunday 6th September

Ordinary 23

Ezekial 33:7-11; Psalm 119:33-40; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20

10:30 am Wantage

Stephen Atkinson

10:30 am Grove

Daphne Savage

6:30 pm Prayer for Revival at Grove

Sunday 13th September

Education Sunday

Ordinary 24

Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 103:8-13; Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35

10:30 am Wantage

Rev Nigel Ogley

This service will include the sacrament of Holy Communion

10:30 am Grove

Rev. Carol Hamilton-Foyn

Sunday 20th September

Peace Sunday

Ordinary 25

Jonah 3:10-4:11; Psalm 145:1-8; Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-16

9:30 am Wantage

Kids@Church

10:30 am Wantage

Harvest Festival

Rev Bruce Thompson

10:30 am Grove

Rev Georgina Bondzi-Simpson

This service will include the sacrament of Holy Communion

Sunday 27th September

Ordinary 26

Ezekial 18:1-4,25-32; Psalm 25:1-9; Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:23-32

10:30 am Wantage

Local Arrangements

10:30 am Grove

Libby Bolton

DIARY FOR SEPTEMBER

September

Saturday 5 th	10:00 am	Coffee Morning at Grove	p14
Sunday, 6 th	6:30 pm	Prayer for Revival at Grove	p14
Tuesday 8 th	7:30 pm	Circuit Meeting	
Monday 12 th	2:30 pm	Bible Study at Elmbrook Care Home	p17
Wednesday 16 th	7:30 pm	Wantage Property & Finance Committee	
Sunday 20 th	9:30 am	Kids@Church	p17
	10:30 am	Wantage Harvest Festival	p16
DEADLINE for October Newsletter			
Tuesday 29 th	2:15 pm	Grove Tuesday Fellowship	p14

October

Sunday, 4 th	10:30 am	Grove Harvest Festival	p15
Monday 12 th	2:30 pm	Bible Study at Elmbrook Care Home	p17
Sunday 18th	Deadline for November Newsletter		