

Wantage & Abingdon Circuit

The Methodist Church

# **GROVE & WANTAGE METHODIST NEWS**



October 2025

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Contributions for the **next Newsletter** (November 2025) should be sent to the  
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**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](http://www.wantab.org.uk)

**Wantage web site** [www.wantagemethodist.org.uk](http://www.wantagemethodist.org.uk)

**Circuit web site** [www.wantab.org.uk](http://www.wantab.org.uk)

**Newsletter Contribution deadline dates – 2025/26**

November	Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> October
December / January	Sunday 23 <sup>th</sup> November
February	Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> January
March	Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> February
April	Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> March
May	Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> April
June	Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> May
July/August	Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> June

***The Feeding of the Five Thousand (1958) by John Reilly 1928 - 2010***

Although he was not committed to any single church, John Reilly claimed Christianity was his life. He often created works based on biblical stories not merely to depict them but to dig deeper into their meaning. The Methodist Church is the custodian of two of his paintings, *Cain and Abel*, and, painted in the same year, 1958, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*. The latter, though on a single canvas, is in three distinct parts. To the right of the canvas are four people with loaves and fish; they appear to be lamenting how little they have in their possession. In the centre is Jesus bathed in light; and to the left are the same four people now looking much happier.



The number of loaves in the painting, seven, informs us that the title attributed to the painting, *The Feeding of the Five thousand*, is incorrect. The work actually refers to the feeding of the four thousand (Matthew 16.9-10). Each of the Synoptic Gospels refer to the feeding of the five thousand with the aid of five loaves and two fish. The feeding of the four thousand is achieved with seven loaves, the same number as in Reilly's painting, and an indeterminate number of fish. Whether Reilly got the title wrong or others did so at a later stage I cannot say; in a sense, it matters not as the message is still the same.

The four characters depicted to the right of the painting are clearly in anguish: they have too little at hand to meet the needs of the situation. It is as if they are claustrophobically trapped in a dark enclosed space; no light is getting in. Is it a cave? Is it an impenetrable bubble of some kind? Is it simply the sense of not being adequate to the task at hand, whatever that task is, that makes them feel trapped? In other words, to not have the necessary resources to fulfil one's calling, role, or life? One

character appears to be raising their arms as if attempting to push back the wall or ceiling, whatever it is, to break out from whatever it is that is causing their incarceration. The one to the furthest right appears to be staring at the viewer, pleading for help; whilst the other two are simply glancing at the loaves and fish in despair.

In the centre of the canvas is Jesus. A ray of light is breaking in from above him, from the top of the canvas, from outside of it; its source is not from within the image but elsewhere. An aura surrounds Jesus as this light falls upon him, the halo completely enveloping his head, his jacket or shirt bright yellow from the light. His right arm is outstretched over the same four characters who had been depicted in darkness, but who are now bathed in light. They no longer appear to be anxious and afraid, but joyful and free. Yet, fascinatingly, and I believe this to be very important, in their possession they still have the same number of loaves and fishes. Nothing has been physically added to their possession. The only addition to their lives is the presence and blessing of Jesus. In that blessing their lives are transformed. Whilst they are now enfolded in light, that which surrounds their immediate environment is still darkness; maybe this dark world awaits their arrival bringing with them not only loaves and fish but light too. So it is that the raised arm of Jesus is sending them out to feed others, to take the light with them, to continue the process of transformation. The four characters, once gloomy and despondent are now are now equipped to face whatever is before them, yet nothing other than Jesus has been added to their lives.

The message of the artwork may now be clear: we too are enclosed in darkness, trapped even, until the presence of Jesus becomes known to us; then, and only then are we bathed in light, and better equipped to face the chaos and uncertainty of life. We have all we need. We simply have to use what we already have in our possession to change our world; which is only fully achieved when we acknowledge the presence of Jesus - sufficient to transform our state of being.

It is hoped that John Reilly's *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* will feature in the Circuit's Art Exhibition at Wallingford Methodist Church in May 2027.

Bruce will be writing an article each month over the coming year on works in the collection

## **From Circuit Meeting**

At our Autumn meeting, it was agreed, sadly, that the Chapel at Childrey will have to be sold and the meeting gave approval to start this process. Significant work has been done conferring with the Parish and the village community about the future of the premises and their potential use by the community. At the conclusion of these consultations, it was clear that neither the circuit nor the local community (Parish & secular) had the resources and people to maintain the building for the limited community use that could be envisaged. The Circuit meeting authorized consultation with appropriate professionals regarding the potential for a change of use application prior to it being put on the market. In due course the Circuit will engage with TMCP to commence the process of the sale of the building.

## **Wallingford Methodist Church In Conversation (future dates)**

**October 21<sup>th</sup>** – Rev Sir Ralph Waller – former Principal of [Harris Manchester College, Oxford](#) (1988-2018) and a Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford (2010-2018)

**November 25<sup>th</sup>** – Rev Sonia Hicks – Chair of the Northampton Methodist District and a past President of the Methodist Conference.

## **Sustainable Wantage**

Hopefully you have obtained an idea of the scope of Sustainable Wantage through reading about some of the activities in the past few newsletters. If this has whetted your appetite, then (if you have internet access), why not sign up for the monthly newsletter. Check out the web site at <https://sustainablewantage.org.uk/>. If you scroll down to the bottom you will find the link to sign up to receive the newsletter that comes on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month.

Note: - There will be information in forthcoming church newsletters so as those without internet access won't totally miss out.



## Challenging the Rise of the Far right - Our role as Methodists

16 September 2025

Following last weekend's protests in London, the recent disorder outside the accommodation of those seeking asylum and the 'Raise the Colours' campaign, the Revd Jonathan Hustler shares this vital blog on how the Methodist Church can challenge the growing sense of intimidation across communities and the perceived injustices behind it.



It was Saturday 13 September. My wife and I had been in London to have lunch with our family, and were travelling home on the train. I was reading a novel, Daphne du Maurier's *The King's General*. The story is set in the English Civil War of the 1640s and du Maurier expresses with pathos what it felt like to be caught up in that conflict. I had reached the chapter in which decisive battles had been fought (spoiler alert: the Royalists lost). Du Maurier describes characters who realise late that the battle has been not just between two parties wanting power but between two incompatible understandings of what English society should be; the strength of her writing is such that the sense of loss and desperation of the vanquished is almost palpable, as is the feeling of alienation when the characters find themselves living in a society shaped by a very different set of values from those which they have held.

Then I started to wonder if what I was feeling came from the words on the page before me or from elsewhere. Amongst the many other passengers on the train were some who had clearly been on a demonstration held in the centre of the capital, the so-called 'Unite the Kingdom' rally. There was something triumphalist about the tone of their comments and their demeanour; they clearly felt that they had done a good day's work. I overheard one demonstrator whose clothes were festooned with the cross of St George tell her companion that the scale of the protest meant that it could not be ignored; "They will have to do something now." Who "they" are and what "something" is were not explicit.

From what I saw from news reports and gleaned from other snippets, at least some those who claimed to be 'uniting the kingdom' are motivated by a set of values which are not merely different from those which I (and the Methodist Church) affirm but are diametrically opposite to what I (and the Methodist Church) believe. I am privileged to serve a Church that has emphatically proclaimed itself to be inclusive and justice-seeking, which believes that it has been called into being to proclaim that God's love is indiscriminate and unbounded, and which seeks to become a sign of God's reign from which no one is excluded and in which no one is devalued.

Over the last few years, the Conference has made a number of decisions to reiterate that. We adopted our strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity, giving us concrete measures to make our churches welcoming and inclusive places. The training that has been rolled out as part of that has for some been about unlearning the biases with which we were formed in earlier generations. The culture of my own youth was infected by multiple forms of prejudice and is not a world to which I now want to return. Sadly, I think some of those carrying flags that Saturday in London do want to go back there.

Sadly, also, in making their case they requisition Christian symbols as if the correct response to people of other religions is to weaponise the things of our faith against them. In a church that sees diversity as gift rather than challenge, a generous response to those of other faith and a desire to engage in dialogue are signs not of weakness but of strength. The antipathy to other religions that is apparent in some parts of Britain today is perhaps an instinctive, perhaps even an understandable, reaction to difference, particularly in the wake of global conflicts which have in part been informed by religious extremism, but it is based on a narrow view of God's purposes. The Christian faith that the Methodist Church has taught me is based on a much broader interpretation of those purposes, one which is open to receiving and learning from those other faiths whilst at the same time holding fast to the unique significance of God's saving acts in Christ. That is what we are promoting through our evangelism and growth strategy.

Suspicion of other faiths has gone hand in hand with hostility towards migrants, especially to the putative refugees from conflict. Again, such hostility has no place in Methodist thinking. When the Conference adopted the Justice-seeking church report in 2023, it identified five priorities, one of which was justice for refugees and asylum seekers. The Conference in Telford this year conferred about that priority. We heard stories from those who came to these shores seeking asylum and from churches whose lives have been enriched by welcoming refugees. Some of the material that informed that debate and other resources are shared below. The statistics undermine the false narratives that dominate our news media at the moment but, more pertinently, the stories move us beyond the data to the challenge of truly seeing people as people, made in the image of God and loved to the uttermost by their maker.

As are the people who rallied in Trafalgar Square and part of my response to God's love has to be to ask why they are protesting. Behind the assertions of patriotism and views about immigration there is often a sense that they are or they represent the victims of economic injustice and that the communities from which they come have been deprived of resources and opportunity. As a Church, we have been active in trying to address the needs of those communities. Our associations with food banks and other forms of emergency support have offered help to those in need. Our voluntary-controlled schools and academies are often in places of deprivation. Our strategy to support Church on the Margins has targeted connexional resources into projects that are designed to reach those who feel excluded. One of the foci of JPIT's work has been to campaign with others to end child poverty. Again, there are stories to be shared on our website.

Accounts of the numbers at the rally in London that day vary, but most estimates are something over 100,000. That is about the same as the number of members of the Methodist Church in Britain. I was worried that afternoon on the train by the attitudes I saw displayed and the falsehoods that were being repeated, but I cannot despair because I serve a Church whose calling is to respond to the love of God in Christ. If the woman on the train was right, and 100,000-plus people listening to hate-mongers and spouting nonsense can make a difference, how much more can 100,000-plus people who listen to the gospel and speak words of grace change things for the better?

## Briefing for conferring on justice for refugees and asylum seekers

This is an amended version of the Briefing for members at Conference and Synod.

*"The war with ISIS was very bad. My family had death threats for saying what we thought was wrong. People were being killed on the street for smoking or listening to music. I came here because I know the language, and we know that the UK has a great tradition of taking care of refugees and I would be welcomed here. I want to be part of UK society and hope to be able to continue my medical training to become a GP."*

Ali, a medical graduate from Iraq, Trinity Safe Space, Widnes, [from [methodist.org.uk](http://methodist.org.uk)]

### Who is a refugee?

1. The definition of a **refugee** according to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention is:

"A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

2. A **person seeking asylum** is someone who has left their country of origin and formally applied for protection in another country. They are awaiting the outcome of their application.
3. A **migrant** is a person who has moved to another country for any other reason, such as to find work or join family abroad.

### The global picture

4. As of the end of June 2024, there were an estimated 122.6 million people around the world who had been forced to flee their homes. Among them are nearly 43.7 million refugees. 71% of the world's refugees and people in need of international protection are hosted in low- and middle-income countries. Children account for 30% of the world's population but 40% of all forcibly displaced people. People flee their homes for many reasons - conflict, violence, persecution and fear of human rights violations – and factors such as poverty and climate change may leave them fewer options.
5. The World Methodist Council's theme for 2024-9, *On the Move*, recognises the broader impact of migration and that most of our global Church Partners experience at first hand the impact of displacement and people on the move in their contexts. In the words of Martin Mujinga of the Africa Methodist Council, people are coming with 'faith seeking a home'. How do we understand and join in the movement of God in migration?

### Refugees and asylum seekers in the UK

6. The espoused focus of government policy efforts continues to be on reducing the numbers of people arriving across the Channel by small boats.



7. People from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran were the most common nationalities claiming asylum in the UK in 2024, together representing 25% of people claiming asylum. Of people who arrived on small boats, six in 10 were from just five nationalities – Afghan, Syrian, Iranian, Vietnamese and Eritrean. These are all countries where people face violence, conflict, persecution and human rights violations.
8. Unless you qualify for a resettlement scheme (eg such as the Ukrainian or Afghan schemes), there are no safe and legal routes through which you can claim asylum in the UK.
9. People claiming asylum experience a significant wait for their claims to be processed – at the end of 2024, there were 91,000 cases awaiting an initial decision, relating to 125,000 people. During this time, they are provided with accommodation and an allowance of just £7 a day and not permitted to work. If they are judged to have no recourse to public funds, they may well find themselves destitute.
10. The increased use of hotels to house people seeking asylum meant that large numbers of people were placed in communities without preparation, support or integration, and liable to be relocated at short notice. These hotels (and the people within them) have become the focus of violence and racist hatred, with an impact on the mental health of refugees and people seeking asylum.
11. 47% of initial decisions on people's asylum claims made in 2024 were grants of protection, meaning they have been awarded refugee status or humanitarian protection. More people are granted protection on appeal.
12. Once people are granted asylum they have 56 days to find a new home. The number of households who became homeless and received help from a local authority after leaving asylum accommodation increased by 250% last year.
13. Migration remains a political issue in much of the UK. Asylum seekers represent less than 10% of long-term migrants to the UK in 2024, but are often at the sharp end of public policy and political rhetoric. In communities where people already feel economically squeezed and politically abandoned, narratives around asylum seekers being given hotel rooms, or perceptions of threat, have in some cases led to increased tensions. Political rhetoric which plays into these tensions and stokes racism is increasingly apparent.

### **How have churches responded?**

14. The story of the people of God is full of experiences of journeying and of exile. Perhaps because of this, a deep ethic develops through the Bible about how travellers and foreigners are to be treated. Repeated instructions to 'love the stranger', respect the rights of foreigners, ensure the fair treatment of those at risk of oppression, and the reminder that 'you were once strangers in Egypt', mean that commandments to protect migrants are the most-repeated injunctions in the Bible. For Christians, added to this imperative is the Gospel

understanding that by welcoming the stranger, we welcome Christ himself (Matthew 25:35).

15. God's people are a wandering people, and the Methodist Church in Britain is made up of many people who have chosen or been forced to leave their place of birth for various reasons. Our churches have been changed and are richer for that. Christians who are fleeing persecution or people who simply experience love expressed by local churches are growing and enriching the Methodist family.
16. Specifically looking at refugees and asylum seekers, some churches have been able to respond to asylum seekers arriving in their communities, opening premises for food and hospitality. Some churches have become Churches of Sanctuary, publicly committing to be welcoming places of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution. Some individuals and churches have participated in community sponsorship schemes or hosting schemes, offering a home to people on resettlement schemes or with no recourse to public funds. Some people and churches join to make communities places of welcome, advice and support for people seeking asylum or resettling as refugees. And refugees and people seeking sanctuary help to enrich and shape their communities in return, with some coming to Christian faith for the first time or finding a new Christian home with local churches.
17. Through the Joint Public Issues Team, the Church has brought its voice to public policy debates around asylum and migration, calling for a fairer and more compassionate approach and defending the right of people to seek safety from war and persecution in the UK. It has enabled advocacy on issues including the Rwanda scheme, for asylum seekers to have the right to work, and the need to create new safe routes for people to come to the UK.

### **Conferring at Synod**

18. Synod members conferred on this justice priority. This involved listening to the realities and experiences of people who have experienced seeking asylum and those who have been alongside them. We were invited to listen, pray and confer together, seeking where God is leading us.
19. Synod members reflected on these questions:
  - a. Reflecting on your own experiences of welcome, what resonates most from the video and the stories that were presented?
  - b. Where do you see God at work - through those seeking refuge or migrating to the UK, or in the efforts of those providing assistance?
  - c. What personal action do you feel God is calling you to take in response to this? It can be a small step.
  - d. What tangible steps will your church or circuit take to become a more effective welcoming community?
20. At the April Synod, circuits will be asked to give two-minute presentations on tangible steps they have underway.

## From ALL WE CAN



Is it too early to talk about Christmas?

**Christmas is a time of deep love, hope and compassion.** It reminds us of the humble manger, the guiding star, and the promise of peace on earth. It is a time to reflect on God's boundless grace and to share that love with others—especially those most in need.

### **This year, why not give a gift that echoes the true meaning of Christmas?**

The gifts in All We Can's [Extraordinary Gifts](#) catalogue are not just presents. They are powerful tools that can transform lives and bring hope to communities around the world. By choosing to purchase these gifts now, you can ensure that your contribution has an even greater impact. Each gift is a powerful symbol of your compassion—helping families flourish, children learn, and communities rebuild.

Though Christmas may still feel far off, now is the perfect time to plan your giving. By choosing your gifts early, you enable our global partners to plan for the year ahead, allocating resources more effectively so they can reach even more individuals. **Your generosity today becomes the foundation for their transformation tomorrow.**

**Ordering is simple, either:**

- Visit [allwecan.org.uk/gifts](https://allwecan.org.uk/gifts)
- Or call our friendly team on **020 3758 7700**

**Every gift comes with a beautiful card to share with your loved one**, showing the impact of your kindness and you can personalise your message online or write your own heartfelt note.

## From JPIT

### **Homelessness Sunday: 5<sup>th</sup> October**

Homelessness Sunday, initiated by Housing Justice, is on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October.

[Access resources from Housing Justice here.](#)

You may also find it helpful to read [More than Bricks and Mortar?](#) (2019) - a resource from JPIT which gives key information, suggests action, and provides questions for reflection.

### **Good Money Sunday: 12<sup>th</sup> October**

Join a growing movement of Christians and local churches marking Good Money Sunday, as part of Good Money Week.

This year's Good Money Week is 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2025. It's an opportunity to encourage reflection and action in your church and wider community around a good and just use of money.

[Find out more about Good Money Sunday from the Just Money movement.](#)

# Cornerstone News



## Christmas lunches

Our Christmas lunch menu was released in September and dates are booking up very quickly. We will be serving Christmas lunches on **Friday 5<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup>, Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>, Monday 15<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December**. On Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> there is already very limited availability but on the other days there is still quite a lot of space. It would be a good idea to book soon if you want a specific date.

## In the Bookshop

Bookshop day is **11<sup>th</sup> October**, please support your local Christian bookshop. If you are not able to get in on the day Bookshop.org will be running a free delivery promotion which I will advertise nearer the time.

Advent calendars, cards and candles are now on sale in the shop, along with a large range of Christmas cards and some gifts. We also have a new range of Prayer Resources including carved wooden labyrinths to trace as you pray. Hannah Dunnett 2026 Calendars are also now in stock.

## Dreaming of a Green Christmas

A new book out for this year by Olivia Warburton is "Dreaming of a Green Christmas", we are delighted to be hosting an afternoon with Olivia on **22<sup>nd</sup> November at 3.30pm**. Come along for great idea of how to make your Christmas more sustainable.

## Marble Jar

Our jar overflows! The generosity we saw over the summer in paying it forward covered all the vouchers we used over the summer and more, leaving us with a healthy balance and the faith to be even more generous with vouchers for families at half term and to bless people with meals at Christmas. A huge Thank You to everyone!

## 30<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations

As we celebrate 30 years of Cornerstone we look forward to welcoming you to our Thanksgiving Service to be held on **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November at 3 pm** at St John's.

We are hoping to make this a joyful celebration of all 30 years, so if you have any pictures or special memories to share of Cornerstone, do get in touch.

There is also a memory book at the till to write memories, messages and anecdotes in.

## Monthly hot meal special

This will be served on **Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October at 12.30 pm** – please book in advance so that we know how many to cater for.

## Prayer breakfasts

Our monthly prayer breakfasts continue on the second Saturday of each month. The next one will be on **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October at 8.30 am** and I look forward to you joining us for croissants, tea, coffee, prayer and fellowship.

## **GROVE**

You are invited to a **Coffee Morning** on **Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> October** from 10.00 am till 12 noon in the church. Our hosts for the morning are Mirella and her family. Proceeds are for The Brain Tumour Charity in memory of David. We hope you are able to join us for a chat over a cup of tea/coffee and cake. We look forward to seeing you. *Offers of cakes and help would be appreciated. Please see Mirella.*

**Ecumenical “Prayer for Revival”** is held on the first Sunday of each month in our church. The meeting is on **Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> October** from 6.30 pm till 8 pm. You are invited to come and pray with us. All are welcome.

**Our Harvest Festival** is on **Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> October** at 10.30 am and we are delighted to have Rev. Georgina Bondzi-Simpson, our minister, leading our worship. We would like people to bring something from their gardens, hedgerows or something that has grown locally (could be flowers, greenery, fruit, vegetables) on Sunday morning to decorate the church for Harvest Festival please. There are some vases and pots at church or you can bring your own if you wish. Lynda will be on hand to help. Gifts of dried, packet and tinned foods will also be much appreciated and they will be donated to the Wantage & Grove Foodbank.

**Church Council** is on **Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> October** at 7.30 pm in the Meeting Room. All interested in the life and work of Grove Methodist Church are invited to come and be part of the meeting. We look forward to seeing you.

**Film Club** is on **Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> October** at 7.30 pm in the Meeting Room. We will be showing “Bend it like Beckham”. *This is a 2002 sports-comedy drama directed by Gurinder Chadha. In the film Jesminder Bhamra (Parminder Nagra) and Jules Paxton (Keira Knightley) chase careers in professional football despite their parents’ wishes.* All are welcome. Admission is free. A small donation helps to cover costs.

**Tuesday Fellowship** is on **Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> October** at 2.15 pm. We are meeting at 4, Mayfield Avenue, Grove when Kath plans to make up for the August meeting which had to be cancelled because of her fall. She will be giving a talk entitled “A day in the life of Kath”. Do join us if you can. 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 September Coffee Morning for “Cancer Research UK. Donations amounted to £215 to which will be added £44.28 from earlier Gift Aid contributions, making a total of £259.28. Thank you.

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 your 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.

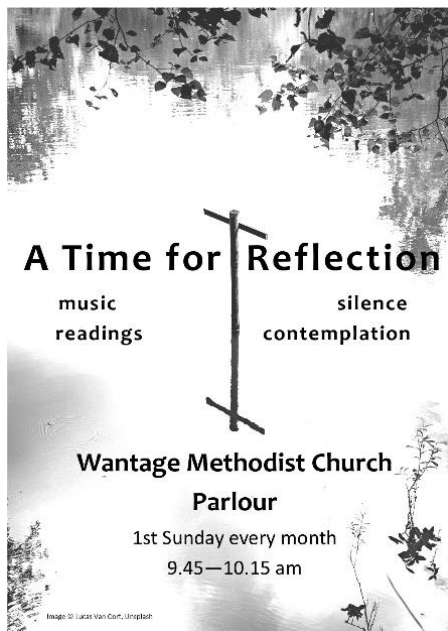
We continue to hold in our prayers all those who are in poor health or have other difficulties and problems. Thank you to everyone who helps in whatever way they are able to. Your support is very much appreciated.



# WANTAGE

## A Time for Reflection

*Jane Kent and Helen Carter*



On **October 5<sup>th</sup>**, the first Sunday of the month, we have a 'Time for Reflection' in the Parlour from 9.45 - 10.15 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!

**Local Arrangement on 12<sup>th</sup> October** - On this occasion we will have a visiting preacher from the organisation Christians Against Poverty. There will be gift aid envelopes available for any contributions you might wish to make to this charity. As it happens this particular Sunday also marks the start of Prisons Week and it is also Homelessness Sunday, which follows on from World Homeless Day on 10<sup>th</sup> October. We therefore will be marking these in a small way during this service.

## Tuesday Afternoon Prayer and Study Group

*Carolyn Roche*

This is an open and friendly group who meet for Bible Study and prayer each Tuesday at 2 pm in the Parlour. Please feel free to join us.

During October we will be continuing with one of the Life-builder Bible Studies entitled Women of the Old Testament.

Dates for October are as follows:

7<sup>th</sup> Naomi – Sadness Swallowed Up by Joy

Reading: Ruth 3 - 4

14<sup>th</sup> Hannah – From Misery to Praise

Reading: 1 Samuel 1:1 - 2:11

21<sup>st</sup> Abigail – A Level-Headed Woman

Reading: 1 Samuel 25:2 - 44

28<sup>th</sup> Esther – Captive in a Strange Land

Reading: Esther 2 - 4

If you have any queries or someone or a situation you would like us to pray for you can contact me (Carolyn Roche) by telephone on 07906 518323 or email:

[ciroche48@hotmail.com](mailto:ciroche48@hotmail.com)

We began our new Methodist Connexional Year on a happy note with the morning service led by Bruce as our new Minister. We were pleased that Karen came too, and to learn that she hopes to always accompany Bruce when he leads our worship. We look forward to sharing fellowship during post-service coffee, and getting to know both of them, as they experience the warmth and love with which we welcome them into our church family.

Our harvest celebrations this year follow a summer including extremes of weather patterns. They have generated the need to deal with variations rarely encountered, such as sustained periods of very high temperatures and long absences of rain. For farmers and gardeners it has brought many serious problems with just a very small offset by enhanced yields at harvest time. We give thanks for the fulfilment of God's promises to provide for our needs at all times, in all circumstances, and in an infinite number of ways. The health and well-being of some of our church family members have been similarly compromised in several different ways. Just as we are thankful for harvest providing food for our physical nourishment, we also praise God's faithfulness to each of us in dealing with illness and incapacity affecting our daily living, and our care for loved ones experiencing these difficulties.

It was disappointing news to learn that Diane Barton has been very ill, raising fears of her being unable to return to her care home, The Rectory in Taunton, on discharge from hospital. It is encouraging to know that she is now in rehabilitative care. Hope remains that she may recover well enough to be accepted back to The Rectory where she had settled well. Our thoughts and prayers are with Diane and family, especially her daughter Claire.

On the last day of July, Jo and John Checketts celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. It was a privilege to spend a little time with them on such a special occasion, especially moments when, with John's loving and gentle prompting, Jo was able to recall some happy memories of their life as a newly married couple. Unfortunately, Jo is currently on the care level at Richmond Village, following a serious fall just a few days before John needed to stay in hospital for some exploratory tests. We pray for them both in the knowledge that they trust God's assurance of care for them.

I learned 60 years ago that each new edition of Ordnance Survey maps, (paper copies of course), were 7 years out of date on publication. It therefore felt somewhat ironic finding that our 2025 Church Directory was out of date before many people had received their copy of it! There's a problem about correcting errors via the newsletter because of data protection regulations. I will, therefore, email the updates securely to everyone for whom I have an address. For others I will insert a slip of paper with the corrected information into hard copies of the newsletter.

## **A prayer that we might reflect God's love**

All loving and all-embracing God, our hearts overflow with gratitude when we think and feel your love, manifested in Jesus Christ and poured into our hearts by your Holy Spirit. Let our response be spontaneous praise, praying fervently, reading your words passionately and welcoming the strangers genuinely. Give us charismatic smiles, courteous words and sacrificial hearts when we approach others with your love. Help us to overcome the temptation of being engaged in pious acts to win your favour and instead teach us to live in solidarity with you and with the needy and suffering. Let us and our churches reflect your love in a love-hungry world, now and always. Amen.

*Israel Selvanayagam, supernumerary presbyter, Birmingham*

## **Please pray for**

Adrian, Alison C & family, Alyson, Caroline, Carol Mackinder,  
Doug & Anne Hatto, Edwina, Eileen, Emma Wright & family, Findley,  
Geoff, Gill, Gloria Smith, Hunter, Jade, Jane Robinson,  
Jane & Emma Soffe & family, John & Jo, June G, June Hartle,  
Ken and Grace Wright, Lucas & family, Mary Spalding, Meriel, Norma, Peter,  
Richard & Anne, Richard in York, Sharon, Sue, Terry & Deborah, Sonia, Tony G,  
Trudy, John Broadbent, Vic Press, Geoffrey & Marianne Maunder,  
Vicky, Robin and Becky Legge and the Legge family grandchildren.  
All at Bullingdon Prison, staff, prisoners and visitors,  
Our Ministers, Community Chaplains, Local Preachers & Worship Leaders,  
kids@church and 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](mailto:ciroche48@hotmail.com)

## **WMC Prayer WhatsApp group**

We have set up a prayer WhatsApp group so that we can share requests for prayers that can't wait until they appear in the weekly notices or the monthly newsletter. It would be so good if we could add others to this group which currently has 7 of us in it. 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. No tags are taken off the tree unless circumstances for the person or situation being prayed for change or the tree is full. 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.

### Prayer initiative by the Parish Church

On the **first Thursday of each month** at 8 pm, via Zoom, there will be a contemplative prayer time of up to an hour. Anyone is welcome to join in with this time and if you would like to know more, then please get in touch with Helen Carter who will put you in touch with the person organising these sessions. If you would prefer a face-to-face contemplative prayer time based on Julian of Norwich, then please let Helen Carter know.

### Bible Study at Elmbrook Care Home

*June Grunwald*

This Bible Study is held at the care home on Grove Road. It is held on the second Monday of the month at 2.30pm, lasting between 30-45 mins. In September our theme was Harvest and we looked at the Parable of the Sower. In October we will look at Psalm 66. In November we will have more of a service to mark Remembrance.

I am thankful for the folk at church who regularly come to the bible study. Attendance from residents at the care home can be patchy and if there is only one resident present we can always have a good discussion about the bible study and enjoy some fellowship over coffee afterwards.

### Kids@church

*Jane, Dave, Cath*

It was great to be back meeting again in September and we started our story by shutting our eyes and imagining a black sky with lots of stars. Cath continued to tell us the story of Abraham and when God told Abraham to get up and move to a nomadic lifestyle we moved into a tent and listened to the rest of the story there! We thought and talked about how God spoke to Abraham and still speaks to people today. The children had fun making glitter stars, reminding us that we are all God's children. In October we will be learning about Moses and how God spoke to him.

All children and their families are so welcome to join us - we meet at 9.30 am until 10.15 am in the church hall on the **3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month**. We always finish with a simple breakfast.

Any questions - please call Jane on 01235 765421.

### Knit & Chat

*Carolyn Roche*



We are now well into autumn and as the evenings get longer there is a little more time for knitting. This month I will be ordering and collecting the angel labels from the printer.

In October the 1st and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays of the month are on **Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October** and **Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October**. Do come and join us in the hall at 2 pm. Bring your knitting, crocheting, needlework, etc. and enjoy time relaxing and chatting with others – there is a tea and 'nice' biscuit break.

If you need wool, have any other queries or just fancy a chat do please call me.

## Community Café

*Carolyn Roche*

Much to the delight of some of our regulars, September has seen the return of toast to our Monday menu. This can be enjoyed with marmalade, jam or marmite. Cheese scones and cake continue to be available to go with tea or coffee. We are just coming to the end of the cakes that we froze following the summer Circuit teas and so would be grateful to anyone who would like to bake a cake for us. Thank you to the volunteers who help in the kitchen or on welcome duties. Please let me know if you feel you could occasionally take a turn on the rota. We will be open as usual each Monday from 9 am to 12 noon, providing a warm and welcoming space for our regulars and occasional visitors. Thank you for all the donations given between June and August that helped us to raise £472.76 for Wantage Methodist Church. Donations in October will be for Macmillan Cancer Support. Do come and join us and bring a friend.

## Christmas Tree Festival – a date for your diary

*Carolyn Roche*

Just a reminder that we will be holding a Christmas Tree Festival to coincide with Dickensian Evening. The dates this year are **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December**. Please can you put the dates in your diary and be thinking if you can help in anyway. I am now contacting possible groups to provide a tree for the display. Please let me know if you have heard of anyone who would be interested in participating. The charity we are supporting this year is the Alzheimer's Society. Please get in touch with me if you need more information or are available to help. (Tel: 07906 518323 Email: [ciroche48@hotmail.com](mailto:ciroche48@hotmail.com))

## Food Bank

*Helen Carter*

As ever, many thanks for all the donations given to the food bank. If you have passed the King's Centre shop recently you will have seen their lovely window display promoting donations for the food bank. There are many places where your contributions can be left which might be more convenient than bringing them to church, but the box will remain in the church foyer. Any financial contributions should be given to Helen Carter who will pass them on appropriately via our treasurer.

## Sustainable Wantage

*Helen Carter*

Hopefully you have obtained an idea of the scope of Sustainable Wantage through reading about some of the activities in the past few newsletters. If this has whetted your appetite, then (if you have internet access), why not sign up for the monthly newsletter. Check out the web site at <https://sustainablewantage.org.uk/>. If you scroll down to the bottom you will find the link to sign up to receive the newsletter that comes on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. Note:- There will be information in forthcoming church newsletters so that those without internet access won't totally miss out.

## **The Oxfordshire Ride and Stride for Historic Churches 2025**

*Clive & Alison Phillips*

Many thanks to all the kind volunteers who gave part of their Saturday to welcome visitors to our church. It makes a huge difference to be welcomed in person, and that your offers of help were made so willingly was a great help to us in organising the rota. The number of visitors has been in decline for the past few years, but those who sign in are assured of a warm welcome, refreshments and encouragement as they continue on their way. This year about 22 visitors came, two as early as 9.30, and the last ones were Clive and I on our return from Oxford about 4.30 pm.

We were able to visit eight churches in Oxford and, as always, were struck by the variety of buildings and the styles of worship that take place within them. Two of the churches we visited were closed, one due to a wedding, but it was still possible to sign in. This allowed us time to spend longer in churches that were open. Those on duty were always keen to tell us about their activities or projects and also interested to hear where we had come from.

We visited St. Michael at the North Gate where Clive was interested in the Welsh Aisle and the connections with Jesus College. My eye was caught by a homeless man who was stretched out at the back of the church having a good sleep in a safe place. I am sure he was able to enjoy some of the refreshments provided when he woke up. From there we went to Mary Magdalene and then to the peace of the Society of Friends' Garden. Our next stop was St. Giles, and we always enjoy this one as they have many students who come for lessons on the organ. We were not disappointed as there was a young boy having his lesson and his proud parents sitting nearby. They deserved to be proud as he was obviously very talented, and we were able to see what he was doing as the organ had been taken out of its loft and was on the floor! Due to the increased interest in learning to play the organ, the church has embarked on having a replacement organ which is being made abroad, and when the old organ was moved they exposed a window that had not been seen since the organ was installed years ago. All very exciting but they have to raise thousands of pounds which is a daunting prospect, so I encouraged them by telling them of our refurbishment project and that one gets there in the end, often as a stronger church as a result. Following this we visited the Oratory which is almost a cathedral and has beautiful artwork and several side chapels, including one with a large collection of Holy relics. We could not leave Oxford without a visit to Wesley Memorial church where a pop up choir were preparing for a concert, but we couldn't wait for that as it was time to get back to Wantage and pay a quick visit to the churches there.

A final word of thanks to those who gave us money for having a lovely day out! We had not asked for sponsorship, so we were very surprised when we were given money by various people, and at this time have £70.00 to send to OHCT of which £35.00 will be returned to our church. Clive has not yet sent off the money, so there is still time if you would like to donate to this worthwhile trust which has contributed to Wantage Methodist Church in the past. Certainly we ended our day with a feeling of hope and encouragement that God's work is never ceasing, always moving on and challenging us to take part in whatever way we can. Thank you again for the part you played on this special occasion.



## **Hall vestibule noticeboard**

*Gill Skidmore*

We are attempting to keep the noticeboard in the hall as tidy and up-to-date as possible. To assist in this, it would be really helpful if anybody with notices to put up would hand them to me please, rather than putting them up themselves.

This is not me trying to be bossy, but trying to organise the board in such a way that you can know roughly where to find what. It is designed to keep separate areas of the board for 1) directly Wantage-Methodist-Church-related things, 2) church (not necessarily WMC) activities, 3) activities taking place on our premises and 4) community-related things that we wish to support. At times this requires fairly major rearrangement to maintain order. I try to review the board at least once a week.

Obviously, if something is very urgent and I am not around, please feel free to put something up in a free spot, using the spare drawing pins rather than taking them out of other notices. Thank you in advance for your support in keeping our communication channels orderly.

## **Using the Premises – Discipline**

*Gordon Skidmore*

The following note has gone out to third party users of our premises. The disciplines I am reminding our users of apply equally to our own people. Please make sure the premises are clean, tidy and secure when each activity is finished. If someone else is in the building at the same time as your own group, please ensure they know that you have left the premises if you finish before them.

“In the past few weeks we have had a number of serious instances where the premises have been left in an unsatisfactory state:

- the patio doors in the hall were left unlocked.
- the main doors were not locked, lights were left on in the kitchen and toilets.
- the water boiler in the kitchen had not been turned off.
- washing up has not been done.
- the windows in the kitchen were left open.
- the link door was forced shut.

It is essential, if we are to allow the use of the building at reasonable rates, that each group clears up properly after themselves, ensures everything is turned off, and the premises are safe and secure before you leave.

I understand the pressure people are under at the end of a session, but there is no caretaker to visit the premises at the end of the day. What you leave is what the next user will find when they arrive to set up for their session.

Where others are on the premises at the same time as your session, please ensure they know when you finish your session and check whether you are last to leave.”

## **Possible Emergency Cooperation with Wantage Nursery**

*Gordon Skidmore*

Wantage Nursery (in the warehouse and Church Street) have identified that they have no emergency exit for the open play area between the Beacon car park and our Hall. Subject to agreement by the Methodist Trustees, it is possible that there will be a gate created in the fence border between the play area and the area by the hut behind the Hall and the nursery have a key for use in emergency to open the patio doors in the Hall so that the children can be escorted through our building and the hall or link doors

(not the fire doors) to a place of safety. In the case of bad weather, they may need to stay in our building until they can be collected or moved on.

The probability of this occurring is very low and I am sure, should there be an emergency at the Nursery, you will be only too pleased to help keep everyone safe.

### What is happening on the Wantage premises at present?

Sunday	9:30 am	Kids@Church		3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday
	10:30 am	Morning Worship	In person and on Zoom	Weekly
	5:00 pm	WCC Prayer Fellowship	in the Chapel/Hall	Last Sunday
Monday	Morning	Drop-in Café	in the Hall	Weekly
	Afternoon	Knit & Chat	in the Hall	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday
Tuesday	Afternoon	Prayer & Study Group	in the Parlour	Weekly
Friday	Afternoon	Caritas Children's Choir		Weekly in term

### Users

Sunday	5:00 pm	WCC Prayer Fellowship	Chapel/Hall	Last Sunday
Monday	Evening	Slimming World	Hall	Weekly
		CA Meeting	Parlour	Weekly
Tuesday	Morning	MIND	Hall	Weekly
	Evening	Wantage Camera Club	Hall	Weekly
	Evening	My Life My Choice	Parlour	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday
Wednesday	Midday	OCC Family Support Group	Hall	Weekly
	Evening	Wantage Sings	Hall	Weekly
Thursday	Midday	KAWI	Hall	3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday
Friday	Morning	Mothers & Toddlers	Hall & Parlour	Weekly in term
Saturday	Morning	Dads Out	Hall & Parlour	1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday
	Midday	NA Meeting	Parlour	Weekly

### Other Bookings

#### October

Saturday 4 <sup>th</sup>	Wantage Sings	afternoon in the Hall
Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup>	Music Makers	evening in the Hall or Chapel
Saturday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Wantage Sings	afternoon in the Hall
Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup>	Wantage Sings	afternoon in the Hall

#### November

Saturday 8 <sup>th</sup>	WCC Crafts Matters	morning in the Hall
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## SERVICES during OCTOBER

### Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October

Ordinary 27

Habakkuk 1:1-4,2:1-4; Psalm 37:1-9; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10

10:30 am Wantage

Belinda Kaur

10:30 am Grove

Daphne Savage

6:30 pm Grove Praying for Revival

### Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> October Homeless Sunday – Prisons Week

Ordinary 28

2 Kings 5:1-3,7-15b; Psalm 111: 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19

10:30 am Wantage

Local Arrangements

10:30 am Grove Harvest Festival Rev Georgina Bondzi-Simpson  
This service will include the sacrament of Holy Communion

### Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October

Freedom Sunday

Ordinary 29

Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 121; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8

9:30 am Wantage

Kids@Church

10:30 am Wantage

Rev Nigel Ogley

10:30 am Grove

Libby Hawkness-Smith

***NOTE that the clocks go back early on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct. so the following times are GMT***

### Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October

Bible Sunday – One World Week

Ordinary 30

Jeremiah 14:7-10; Psalm 84:1-7; 2 Timothy 4:6-8,16-18; Luke 18:9-14

10:30 am Wantage

Stephen Atkinson

10:30 am Grove

Rev Carol Hamilton-Foy

# DIARY FOR OCTOBER

## OCTOBER

Saturday 4 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am	Coffee Morning at Grove	p13
<b>Sunday 5<sup>th</sup></b>	9:45 am	Time for Reflection	p15
	6:30 pm	Prayer for Revival at Grove	p13
Monday 6 <sup>th</sup>	2:00 pm	Knit & Chat at Wantage	p18
<b>Sunday 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>Grove Harvest Festival</b>	<b>p13</b>
Monday 13 <sup>th</sup>	2:30 pm	Bible Study at Elmbrook Care Home	p18
Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup>	7:30 pm	Grove Church Council	p13
Friday 17 <sup>th</sup>	7:30 pm	Grove Film Club	p13
<b>Sunday 19<sup>th</sup></b>	9:30 am	Kids@Church at Wantage	p18

### Deadline for November Newsletter

Monday 20 <sup>th</sup>	2:00 pm	Knit & Chat at Wantage	p18
Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup>	12 noon	In Conversation at Wallingford	p5
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	7:30 pm	Wantage Church Council	
Tuesday 28 <sup>th</sup>	2:15 pm	Grove Tuesday Fellowship	p13