

# Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

## Facebook Posts

### August 2025

#### A thought from Rev Derek: Nostalgia

We watched an excellent programme on channel five last Thursday evening about the high street shops that we loved and lost and it was an hour of pure nostalgia as we sat and reminisced about a bygone era when we shopped in places like Woolies, Fine Fare, Timothy Whites and Freeman, Hardy and Willis. I spent my final years before starting my life in Church ministry working for Greenwoods Menswear and can remember them having a shop in every town in Yorkshire and even during my time with the company, we had a shop in King's Lynn and one in Great Yarmouth. We sat for a few minutes of our life and reflected on a world that feels to be gone forever. Those were the days when the pick and mix in Woolies could be purchased with your meagre spending money rather than having to take out a mortgage. Equally, I remember buying electric light bulbs and the woman in the shop would test it on a live socket! Yet, despite the danger that we see today, we never spotted it back then, it was just the way things were done.

My heart warmed when they started talking about the iconic Green Shield stamps. One stamp was issued for every 6d spent (2.5 pence in modern money) and we lovingly collected those stamps whenever my dad went and filled up our three-wheeler Reliant Regal with about three gallons of petrol. Looking back, we possibly were only filling about one page in the book a week, and yet every so often we would pick up the little book of treasures that you could purchase with your books of stamps from tea towels, through exciting kitchen gadgets like liquidizers and the ultimate, a Ford Escort 1 litre, which you could exchange boxes full of books for. If you know of anybody who actually achieved this ultimate goal, please let me know, it was my childhood dream to go into the Green Shield Stamp shop on Eastgate in Leeds, slam down hundreds of full books of stamps and say "we'll take the Ford Escort please in Metallic bronze" that was the colour of car in the catalogue although I believe that if you ever managed to achieve your goal you could actually pick the colour.

I thank God for the gift of nostalgia. There are times when I would love to time travel and experience the sights and sounds, and even the aromas that were around in my formative years. The only problem is that I have a tendency to glorify "the good old days" and remember them as being far better than maybe they were. I guess that like many people I remember the good and try to blot out the bad, but there is a warm glow when I relive some of my childhood memories, but the truth is that the only moment that really counts is the one I live now and I appreciate the fact that I have been shaped by the past to live a better life today.



Please pray for the congregation and community in Stibbard.



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**Rev Anne writes** - This is my final opportunity to write on the Central Norfolk page. I've now cleared the manse and everything is being readied to welcome Rev Neil and his family. All over the country, the Methodist Merry-go-round is taking place - Ministers leaving and arriving. Of course, this is a big upheaval for the ministers and their families but also a huge amount of work for the circuit stewards. Please pray for us all!

Thank you for the lovely gifts and send-off I received at the Songs of Praise service, and around the churches for the last few weeks. It has been a privilege to serve in the circuit and I am so grateful for the fellowship we have shared. I pray that God will continue to bless and guide you all, as I know you will be praying for me. It is this wonderful relationship that we share in God that is so precious. In every church and every community, I have been able to work alongside my 'siblings in Christ'.

As St Paul puts it much more eloquently than I can in 2 Thessalonians 3: 16 "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you."



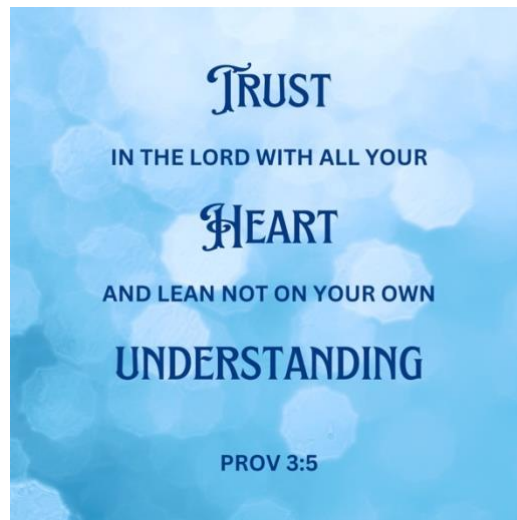
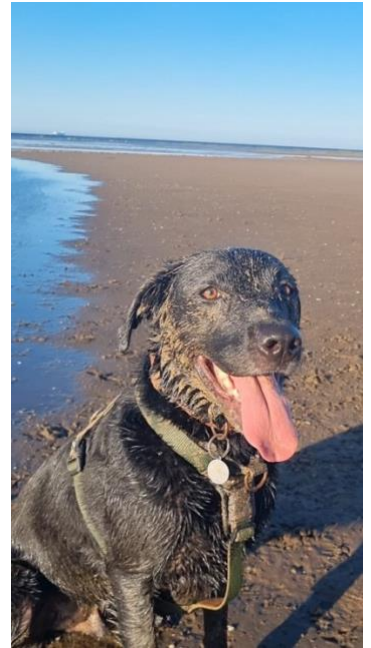
### A thought from Rev Jonny:

Bagel's been having the time of his life! The photo is of a very sandy and very happy doggo!

Sometimes in our faith, we forget that joy and play are part of a full spiritual life. But God made laughter and silliness and the sheer joy of rolling in the sand. Jesus welcomed children, told stories that surprised people, and turned water into wine at a party.

Bagel reminds me that fun is not separate from holiness; it is often right at the heart of it.

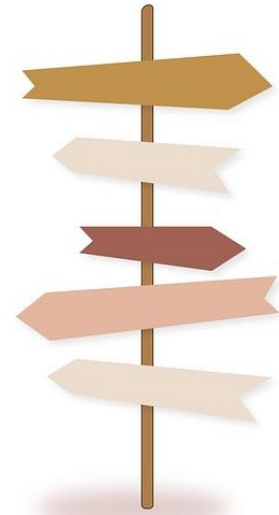
Over the next few weeks, I'll be sharing a few posts from my time away, with the obligatory holiday photos (of course!) But I also hope they'll spark a thought or two about how God is present with us in rest, joy, reflection and beauty.



### **A thought from Dee Moden:**

This is a true thought for the day! My friend from Germany posted this:

A wise man once said:  
Hate has 4 letters but so does Love.  
Enemies has 7 letters but so does Friends.  
Lying has 5 letters but so does Truth.  
Cry has 3 letters but so does Joy.  
Negativity has 10 letters but so does Positivity.  
Life is 2 sided.  
Choose the better side of it.  
There are lots of choices to be made daily.  
Certainly food for thought in today's world.



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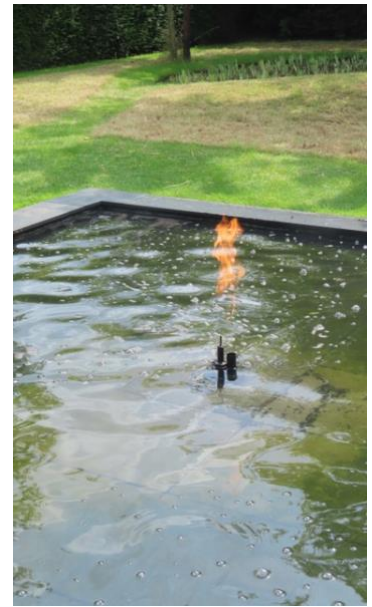
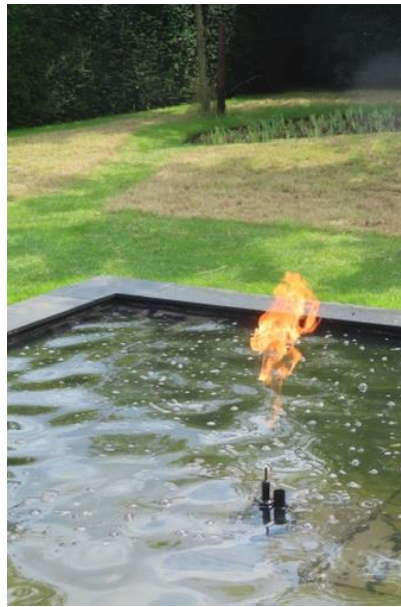
### **A thought from Aileen Fox:**

Having Faith

I recently visited Houghton Hall walled garden as I can get into the gardens during June and July with my RHS membership card. 31st July so it was a last gasp to get in free. The roses as happens in a sheltered walled garden were nearly over but a few specimens and the borders looked good. The dahlias also had some wonderful colours and shape. I know the garden quite well and wandered into the different areas with ponds and statues. The water and fire fountain is different and sometimes the pump has failed and it is not working. This day it was working and a few people had gathered around in anticipation. I came in just as one circuit had finished and the fountain had stopped. A young lad about 8 or 9 was disappointed as he saw just a trickle of water, his grandfather told him to be patient and watch. After a few seconds there was movement and a flame could be seen with the water pushing it higher. The excitement and wonder on the young lad's face. Yes water and fire shouldn't work together and it was exciting and different. He was advised to wait, to be patient and watch. This he reluctantly obeyed and got his reward in seeing everything come together.

So often we are impatient, we pray and expect instant answers. Are we really too impatient to listen and wait for God to prompt us or show us a different route? Are we prepared to change direction or be patient? God loves us and wants the best for us. Sadly we are not always patient and expect instant results!





## A thought from Rev Derek:

### Doing things the right way

We had a holiday in North Cornwall in the summer of 2022 and camped just outside the lovely seaside town of Bude, we had spent holidays in this area when our girls were younger, so it was one of those holidays of revisiting some memorable haunts. We mooched around the shops in Bideford and saw a lovely looking little café who were advertising their cream teas. It seems obligatory to me that when you visit the West Country to eat two local dishes, Cornish Pasties and Cream Teas, so we went in. To be honest, I couldn't remember whether Bideford was in Devon or Cornwall (we passed a sign say that we're back in Cornwall on the way home) the dilemma was the correct cream tea etiquette, so to play it safe I asked the very helpful and pleasant lady behind the counter whether we should put the jam on first, or the cream. She smiled sweetly at me, clearly seeing me as a holiday maker "I'm a Cornish lass, my husband's from Devon, so we put cream on first on one half, and jam on first on the other.

I shared my new wisdom with my wife and we did that, the lady smiled, and winked at me as though she had found the perfect solution to a knotty local problem. Isn't it strange how some things that seem to be of little importance are of paramount importance to some people and irrelevant to others. To be honest, given the choice, I prefer jam first, then a dollop of cream on top and there is something special about having clotted cream when in Cornwall, but that isn't because I have any allegiance to either place, I just prefer it that way. I guess that my lady in the café in Bideford couldn't give two hoots if I had slapped on the jam first, and she wouldn't have chucked me out of the café for offending her.

Whilst I would always do my best to be a law abiding citizen, I wouldn't claim to be somebody who has to play by the rules regardless when it comes to traditions, and to be fair, some of the things we believe that we have always done and ought to religiously keep doing there are some traditions that are not exactly a matter of life and death and compliance is not just about doing the right thing, it is about trying not to cause offence. If my opinions were the only ones in the world, life would be so much easier, but the success in relationships lie in us getting on with each other, and in the grand scheme of things jam or cream doesn't really matter to me, but it does to some and I would always do my best to respect their views.





Please pray for the congregation and community in Swaffham



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**A thought from Rev Jonny:**

There's something sacred about the closing of the day.

The stillness.

The colours that draw us to pause.

The quiet invitation to reflect.

In the Christian tradition, it's often at night that we're asked to look back and notice:

Where did God meet me today? Where did I find joy, or struggle, or peace? A good question to ask as the sun sets is: "What might I be grateful for, even now?"

I encourage you to reflect over your day this evening, and may you notice the glimmers of grace from your day.

This was a photo taken from the window of where we stayed in Lincolnshire at sunset.



## A thought from Aileen Fox:

**What do you see?** Look at the photo what do you see?

A lot will depend on how bright it shows on your screen. The photo is a tree on the Holkham estate and I liked the big hole in it. When I downloaded the photo onto my iPad, below the hole there seemed to me to be a face. Is it a fox or a cat, are they ears or eyes, is that a nose? My imagination ran riot. It's probably just a trick of the light as I pointed the camera at the tree. Probably you all think I am imagining things! Each one of us will see probably see it differently, many will not see any image. I only saw the image from the photo not when I was physically there.

What do people see and make of us? Sadly, first impressions can make a huge difference and that's very true of Christians and the Church. Sometimes we are not very welcoming, we might be having a bad day a lot on our minds. I didn't take in the image on the tree; I had a second opportunity by looking at the photo. God always gives us a second opportunity, he forgives us. Are we willing to try and show someone a true welcome at the first meeting? Because we might not have that second opportunity if they never come near us again.





## **A thought from Rev Derek: Enid Blyton**

A pop up appeared on my screen as I turned my computer on first thing on Monday morning telling me that Monday, 11th August is the birthday of the author Enid Blyton. This prolific children's author managed to write a staggering 762 books (according to Wikipedia) and I am of a generation that grew up adoring the stories of the likes of Noddy in Toytown and the Famous Five. I guess that it is fair to say that it was Enid Blyton books that gave me my first love of stories and almost sixty years later, I still love stories, they are the bedrock of my life and my preaching, I love hearing other people's stories and during my lifetime I can honestly say that I have some amazing people with wonderful and inspiring stories to tell.

Just seeing the name Enid Blyton conjures up memories for me; I can remember getting the latest Famous Five book and mum, dad, my brother and I would sit and read a page each before going to bed. I always went to sleep longing to know the next bit of the story.

In May 1988 (if I remember rightly) the young people from the Woodhouse Grove Methodist Circuit in Bradford travelled to London with a group from Brighouse for the Methodist Association of Youth Clubs London weekend. This was just five months after our eldest daughter had died and I never thought that I would ever smile again. We were performing in the show at the Royal Albert Hall and I had been cast as PC Plod from the Noddy stories penned by Enid Blyton, this was the second occasion that we had performed in the show and the story went about the people from Toytown trying to get to London for the weekend and the highpoint of our performance was boarding Thomas the Tank Engine and setting off. That weekend was perhaps the best tonic that we could have wished for as we came to terms with what had just happened in our lives and I was reminded just how powerful stories can be.

It saddens me that in recent years Enid Blyton has come under continued criticism that her writing is racist and misogynistic. In fairness, reading the books today, the critics are possible right and there are a whole host of books that resonate far better with the modern age. It is perhaps important to note that Enid Blyton was born in 1897 and wrote "Five on a Treasure Island" in 1942 when the second world war was at its peak, the world was viewed in a very different light back then. I'm not for a second suggesting that put right any hurt caused by people who read the books and are offended by their content, maybe if Enid Blyton was writing today some of these stories might be completely different in their content. She had written seventeen of the twenty-one Famous Five stories before I was even born.

The greatest gift this lady ever gave to me was the love of storytelling and even now, I sit and listen to people telling me their stories. I frequently find myself either listening to eulogies in funeral services, or I read the words penned by the family and I have learned that there are two important duties in life.

- Tell our stories. Make sure that people know something about our lives, our loves and those precious memories. The sad fact is that unless we tell others, our stories die with us.
- Secondly, and perhaps most importantly - listen to the stories of people that have built up a lifetime of experiences, listen to their stories of a bygone age lost for ever and treasure their memories in your hearts.



Please pray for the congregation and community in Tittleshall



On Thursday 28th August, 2.00 - 4.00pm, The Hive will be popping-up at **Blakeney** for the final time this year when we will be sitting down to read a dramatised version of Kenneth Grahame's, *The Wind in the Willows*. Come and be the voice of excitable Mole, practical Ratty, wise old Badger or mad-cap Toad! It has been lovely to bring The Hive's programme of creativity, spirituality and well-being to Blakeney and to share with people from the local community as well as around the Circuit. All are welcome.

**THE HIVE AT BLAKENEY**  
METHODIST CHURCH, 110 HIGH STREET, NR25 7NX  
FOURTH THURSDAYS 2.00 – 4.00PM

**Thursday 28 August 2.00 - 4.00**  
**OPEN PLAY-READING**

Sit down with Ratty, Mole, Toad and Badger to read Kenneth Grahame's 'Wind in the Willows'.



**ALL ARE WELCOME**

All our events are free - donations welcomed  
All ability access

Light refreshments provided

Methodist Church, 110 High Street, NR25 7NX  
Find us with What3Words: ocre.sonic.sulk  
E: thehiveplace@gmail.com T: 07976 286 645  
Email: [thehiveplace@gmail.com](mailto:thehiveplace@gmail.com)



**THE HIVE**  
CREATIVITY - SPIRITUALITY - WELL BEING

Charity Reg. No.: 1134271

**A thought from Rev Jonny:**

There's something about the shore, where sea meets land and light floods everything, which invites us into stillness. Into awe. Into breath.

Even on busy beaches, the sea has its rhythm. The light has its language.

Perhaps today you can take a moment, even a short one, to step into silence. To breathe.

To let the world be wide again.

To feel the light of the Spirit on your face.



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**A thought from Aileen Fox:**

The whole picture

I love visiting Churches and Cathedrals and many friends have had to put up with me badgering them to join me. There is something awe inspiring as you take in the age and the structure and realise the skill and design that has gone into it. There is the realisation that many people have sat or walked in these spaces long, long ago.

In May I visited Rochester Cathedral, the second oldest Cathedral in England, and enjoyed sitting listening to a choir for a few minutes, then strolling around and viewing the interior and how Rochester fits into English History. (A place of Christian Worship since AD604)

Sometimes we cannot take it all in because of its size and where we are standing. I took the plunge and climbed up the very steep steps of Rochester Castle almost next door. It was a steep climb and the steps uneven but it was worth it to look over and see the Cathedral in its entirety seeing the bigger picture. There was a Festival going on and I could see people enjoying themselves and yes, I had watched the Morris dancers earlier, listened to some of the music stage performers but from the castle walls I could see the whole area and all the activity. Sometimes we need to stand back, take a breath, and see the whole picture. We can get intimately involved in something and be too close. Standing back can give us a different perspective and helps us take stock and return; sometimes to resolve something, or just to move on with a clearer mind and purpose.






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### **A thought from Rev Derek:**

#### *It's a small world*

In the Autumn of 2005, shortly after we had left West Yorkshire to live in Norfolk where I was to take up my first appointment as a minister, my brother and sister-in-law, and us, decided to spend a week in France during 2006 visiting Paris and then spending a few days in Disneyland. I had been warned about one particular ride in the park, not Thunder Mountain, although I was either brave enough, or daft enough to scare myself to death by going on with my two daughters, one loved it, the other was scarred for life. No, the ride I had been warned about was the much tamer "it's a small world" where you coast around a magical kingdom in a boat with a song playing all the way around, that once you have heard it, you can never get the blessed thing out of your head and even now I can hear it playing as I write this. Even so, just to make sure that it would consume us for life, we went on the ride more than once, every day.

As I get older, that theme of it being a small world is one that keeps popping into my mind. On Sunday 9th June 2024 we went to Brooke Methodist Church to celebrate the centenary anniversary. This little chapel will always hold a special place in my heart, I was the minister there for eight years and it was my first taste of rural ministry, something that I have come to adore. What makes my relationship with Brooke Methodist Church is that when I did some research into my maternal family tree, my great grandmother Edith Owen, the daughter of a Methodist Local Preacher and the granddaughter of a

Methodist minister lived in Brooke, she died in 1928, four years after that little chapel opened, and it may be that she was at the opening and a hundred years on, I spoke in the centenary service. It's a small world!

On Sunday 20th July this year, it was my honour to preach in the small village chapel at Sporle near Swaffham at their final act of worship as they prepared to cease to worship after a hundred and sixty-three years of worship in that building. As part of that service, I read an excerpt from the minutes of the Methodist Conference 1896 which read:

"Horatio Hall was born at Sporle, July 12th, 1812, and died at Erpingham, March the 9th 1896, in the 84th year of his age. When about sixteen he was saved in his native village. After a while he became a Local Preacher, and at the age of twenty he entered the itinerant ministry in the Lynn circuit"  
Horatio Hall was my great, great, great grandfather. He would never have preached in that little chapel, or indeed attended a service there, but as I walked in the street outside, I may well have been standing on the very ground that he had stood on two hundred years ago, even though I grew up over 125 miles away. It's a small world!

During my ministry I have come across people who lived in the same village where I grew up, I was speaking to somebody last week who had attended Woodhouse Grove School just over a mile away from where I grew up, I met somebody who had actually been in some of the Churches in our Circuit in Bradford over twenty years ago and had been in the same room that I had been in. I treasure these encounters, these little miracles in my life, and hear over and over again, that little tune from Disneyland Paris. It's a small world!



## A thought from Rev Jonny:

Sometimes it's good to freshen things up.

We repainted one of our walls a couple of weeks ago, with a layered ombre effect that brings light and beauty into the dining room. And it reminded me of something simple but important: making beauty in our spaces, even small ones, is a holy act.

God doesn't only care about justice and prayer (though they matter deeply!), God also delights when we delight. When we enjoy the homes we live in; when we create places of rest, comfort, and colour. So, this is your permission: to make your space a little more joyful, a little more yours. Rearrange, repaint, or simply light a candle.

God's goodness is found in beauty. And you deserve some, too.





Please pray for the congregation and community in Toftwood.





# ACCREDITATION SERVICE FOR **SEB BELL**

**31st August at 6 pm**

at

**Holt Methodist Church** 

Come and join a joyous service  
where Seb will be accredited as a  
Local Preacher.

Refreshments will be served after  
the service.

All are welcome!

*The church car park will be  
available, as well as other parking  
nearby.*

# WELCOME SERVICE FOR **Rev Neil Vels**



**4th September, 6pm**  
**at**

**Swaffham Methodist Church** 

Please come and welcome Rev Neil and his family to the Central Norfolk Circuit.

Refreshments will be served after the service.

All are welcome!