

Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit
Facebook Posts
January 2025

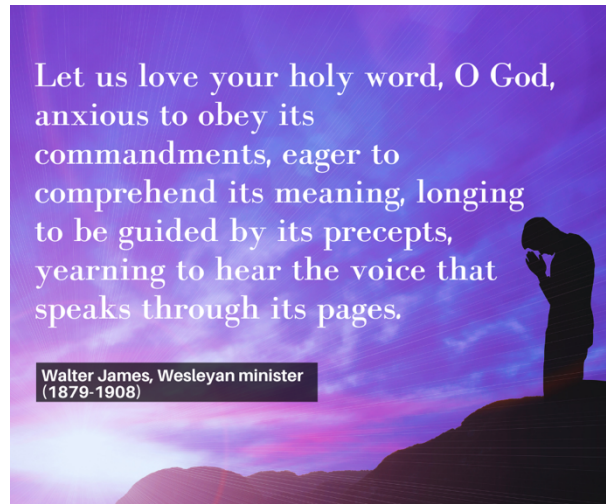


A thought from Rev Jonny:

Revd Dr Munther Isaac is a Lutheran pastor in Bethlehem. In his Christmas address he speaks of the struggles of Palestinians this Christmas. I share this because he offers insights that we can benefit from, both through his Christian witness and through being a Palestinian.

<https://youtu.be/PUYzd2Z1NyE>





Rev Anne writes: There are adverts telling us to join gyms, go on diets or join their programme to become the New You! This year you can be fitter, healthier, slimmer - and all just for a monthly subscription!!

And then there's all the new year sales telling us of their great offers that will never be repeated again!!

They can be very seductive and before you know it, you've clicked buy or join!!
I get it!!

But before you think that you need to change your weight, your hair or clothes; before you get tempted to book that holiday or get something new for your home, just take a breath. When the clock moved and the calendar said we had passed from 2024 - 2025 - it was just a moment in time, like all the other moments. It doesn't mean that anything has really changed or that you need to make any changes.

I think, as in every day, the important things remain. Know how much God loves you and what has been done for you through Christ. Know how blessed you are to receive that love and to be able to share it with family and friends. And know that your prayers - for guidance for yourself and for the needs of the world do make a difference.

This year may you know God's blessing, that God goes before you and is behind you, that God is always under you and above you, that God's presence surrounds you on all sides. May you step out joyfully each day and sleep peacefully each night. Have a happy new year!



A thought from Rev Derek: Last Christmas

I felt so optimistic when I approached my first Christmas as a church minister in 2005, everything was fresh, I had loads of ideas and looked forward to telling the Christmas story in new and creative ways. Nineteen years on, I find it much more difficult to come up with fresh and creative ideas. As I have said over the last few weeks, Christmas films tend to focus on the Dickensian theme of somebody who hates Christmas and through some experience, they are transformed, through the spirit of Christmas. A



A couple of years ago my daughter told me that I would love the 2019 film “Last Christmas” when I saw the picture above, I decided that it wasn’t my kind of thing, it looked like the sort of film that would fall into the category of being a “Rom Com” great for a thirty-year-old woman, not quite so appealing to a bloke in his sixties. However, just to please my daughter and to satisfy my desire to tell her that I didn’t enjoy the film, I watched it. Within minutes of the film starting, I was drawn in and my daughter was right, it is an excellent film, and best of all for a Yorkshireman, it is free on the BBC iPlayer!

I won’t reveal too much about the plot of the film, you need to watch it to understand the story it is telling, but what is worth sharing is that the story centres on Katarina Andrich, a screwed up young Jewish girl who has made a mess of her life. In modern day language, she is sofa surfing, doesn’t get on with her family, works in an all-year-round Christmas shop and messes up everything she touches. The story follows a similar kind of theme to the familiar Dickensian model outlined in A Christmas Carol, Kat meets a handsome young chap called Tom who changes her selfish life and turns her around. The film is loosely set against the Christmas 1984 hit “Last Christmas” performed by the group Wham and is played most Christmases as we wander around supermarkets or listen to the radio. I have a playlist of Christmas songs on my phone which I play around this time of year as I travel through the Norfolk countryside, singing along with George Michael and Andrew Ridgeley. The story is written by the actress Emma Thompson who stars in the film, it is an endearing story, but you need to watch it right through to the end for the big reveal. If you have a couple of hours to spare this Christmas, it is well worth watching.

That, I believe is the wonder of the Christmas story, secular film makers understand that this age-old story of a baby, born in poverty without even a cot, but is laid in the food trough of animals, changes lives. I love Christmas, I love the films, the stories, the lights, the decorations, the TV programmes, time spent with family and I even love churning out Christmas services each year. Remarkably, even after nineteen years there are always new messages to share, new experiences to enjoy and Christmas is Fresh and new every year. I will never tire of coming back to the stable and reliving the greatest story ever told and I will savour every minute. Last Christmas is the perfect example of somebody taking an age-old story and giving it a fresh twist that is moving and inspiring at the same time. I hope that Christmas 2024 is giving you a fresh perspective on life and the encouragement you need to face the challenges of 2025. Happy New Year from the people of the Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit!

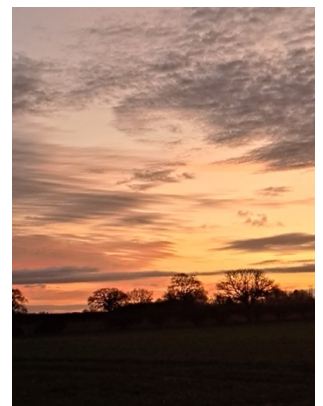
Please pray for the congregation and community in Gressenhall



A thought from Aileen Fox: The shape of trees

I love trees always have, there is something special about the shape, variety and the fact that each has its own characteristics. Whilst I dislike cold weather, what I do enjoy in winter is the ability to see the entire tree without its leaves. Nothing hidden and all shapes and sizes lost sometimes beneath the leaves.

Driving through the countryside I am struck by the wonderful scenes each side of the road. I often want to stop and just memorise the detail and possibly take a photo, this isn't always possible. Coming home from Walsingham just before Christmas the sunset was amazing, it was getting dark and before me trees loomed against the yellow, pink and orange sky. It was one of those moments of stillness, beauty and wonder. Eventually there was a safe space to stop and look and photograph what was before me. It reminded me that beauty and character are sometimes hidden from view and we are probably all a little guilty in not always allowing who we really are to show.




Maybe we are too busy or we don't feel we can show our real selves to others. Perhaps we hide our gifts, or think we need to keep a low profile, hide in the background. Often we feel inadequate but God know us intimately, he knows who we really are. Is 2025 then the year to stop hiding and show our real selves, warts and all? God loves us whatever shape, size, ability or gifts that we have. Let's be like the trees and show our real selves as we strive to spread the Good News of Jesus.





For no word from God will ever fail

Luke 1:37





World Council of Churches




Swaffham

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

UNITED SERVICES

<p style="text-align: center;">Sunday 19th January</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">service of worship</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Fountain of Life The Barn, Sporle Road, Swaffham PE37 7HL <i>(entrance via the Sacred Heart Primary School Car park)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Tuesday 21st January</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Our Lady of Pity Catholic Church Station Street</p> <p style="text-align: center;">12 Prayer service</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1pm meeting for planning and fellowship,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">with soup provided - bring your own sandwich!</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday 22nd January</p> <p style="text-align: center;">St Peter & St Paul Parish Church</p> <p style="text-align: center;">10am Service of Holy Communion</p> <p style="text-align: center;">open to all</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Friday 24th January</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Swaffham Methodist Church</p> <p style="text-align: center;">12.30 - Prayer service - a 'walk' through Swaffham with prayer and worship</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Refreshments to follow</p>
---	---	---	--



A thought from Rev Derek: You can get enough of a good thing

I love a good Pork Pie. With the greatest respect to supermarkets, they don't do the traditional pork pie any favours and there is a trend today of adding spices that I don't really like. I don't want to offend readers in East Anglia or further afield, but in my humble opinion the best pork pies in the world are made in the north and whenever we head north for holidays, we purchase a pork pie each from one of our favourite pie shops (everybody ought to have one!) Unfortunately, we only manage this journey three or four times a year, so you can imagine my delight when I spotted a leaflet a couple of years ago informing me that my favourite shop offers an online service.

Just before Christmas 2022 I eagerly placed my order for half a dozen regular pies and a stand pie for our Christmas buffet. I confess to being disappointed when I opened the box, in my eagerness to place my order I had grossly underestimated the weights and had six party sized pies and one that might just stretch to six meagre wedges. With the previous years' experience still fresh in my mind I scaled up in 2023, I got the individual pies the right size but the 5lb stand pie was enormous and looked like it had been made in a bucket.

For my third attempt this Christmas I was very careful and when the pies arrived, they were perfect, just the right size and I was delighted, Alleluia right on the third attempt. The following day I was out and when I returned home there was a box on our doorstep from the pie shop, somewhat baffled I thought that I must have mistakenly ordered two lots, when I opened the box, it contained two 4lb pies! My name and address were on the invoice, and it clearly stated that I had paid for the contents, I hadn't! I e-mailed the company who sent me a jaunty reply telling me not to bother either returning them or paying for them and just to enjoy eating them.

What have I learned from this experience? Maybe I'll stick to buying pies when we are on holiday and I can point to what I want in a shop, so I know what I am getting. More importantly, I am reminded of the generous nature of God who doesn't just give to us what we want, or even dare to ask for, but he gives in abundance, more than we could ever realistically need.



Please pray for the congregation and community in Hingham



A thought from Dee Moden:

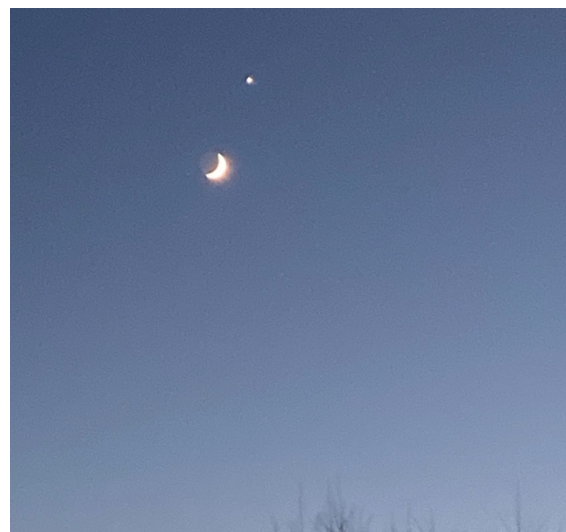
Over the past few weeks, we have been celebrating and thinking about signs and phenomenons in the sky.

Over the last few months, we too here have seen wonderful formations and colours of amazing sunrises and sunsets, and we mustn't forget the spectacular Northern Lights, all visible from out our windows. Last week as I looked out late evening, I saw the crescent moon with Venus shining brightly, what a sight, and I marvelled how clear it was against the dark sky.

As we are still in this 'Season of realisation and revelation', we can understand the awe and wonder of the people who were led to see the baby Jesus by different portents in the sky, from the sounds of angels to a special star.

As we marvel at God's creation and beauty all around us, let us once again, as we follow, relive, and walk through the life of Christ, appreciate the wonderful gift that God has given us and the realisation and revelation it brings.

What an amazing God we have. Praise the Lord



Rev Anne writes: tomorrow is the start of the week of prayer for Christian Unity. Across our circuit, people will be getting together with Christians from other churches in their neighbouring area, to pray and worship together. You can download more information from <https://ctbi.org.uk/.../week-of-prayer-for-christian.../>

Do you believe this?

TOGETHER IN ENGLAND

A prayer for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025

Loving God,
In this fractured world we are called to be instruments of unity.
We are called to be a people of prayer, and during this season we pray for greater unity within and between churches, and between Christians of all traditions.
Bless us with love for each for each other, with a desire to understand our differences and to live in peace and harmony together.
Be with Christians around the world as we pray together that all may be one so that the world may believe.
In the name of your son Jesus, Amen.

by Doral Hayes

Photo credit: Leo Lintang /Alamy Stock Photo

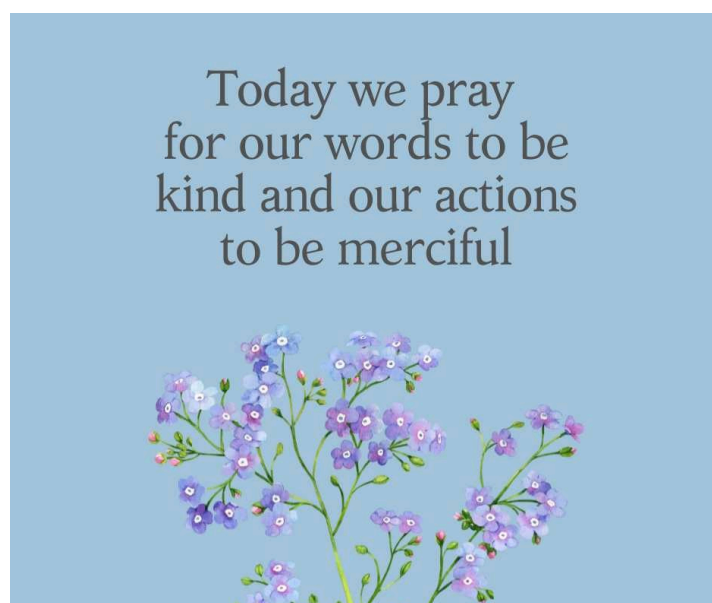
I know that I will never be in full agreement theologically with every single Christian on this planet; I know that there are Christians who look on me and cannot accept the ministry I feel God has called me to because I'm a woman; but despite our differences, there is more that unifies us - and if we can disagree but still hold one another in love and respect, I think that is a wonderful witness to a fractured world.

Thinking about this opportunity, I remembered lines from hymn 416 in Singing the Faith - verse 4 says:

"For the love of God is broader than the measures of the mind;
and the heart of the eternal is most wonderfully kind!"

Look it up and have a read of verses 5 & 6 especially. The hymn was written by Frederick William Faber (1814-1863) and is still as relevant to us today.

May we grow closer to God and closer to our Christian siblings during this week!



The new Hive pop-up at Blakeney ...

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

Thursday 23 January 2.00 - 4.00 | **THOUGHTS ON THURSDAY**

Thursday 27 February 2.00 - 4.00 | **LET'S TALK ABOUT IT - CLIMATE CHANGE**

Thursday 27 March 2.00 - 4.00 | **WALK AND TALK**

Thursday 8 May** 2.00 - 4.00 | **CELTIC JOURNEYS**

Thursday 22 May 2.00 - 4.00 | **LET'S TALK ABOUT IT - NEURODIVERSITY**

Thursday 26 June 2.00 - 4.00 | **THOUGHTS ON THURSDAY**

Thursday 24 July 2.00 - 4.00 | **MUSIC FOR BODY, MIND & SOUL**

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

All our events are free - donations welcomed

All ability access

Light refreshments provided

Methodist Church, 110 High Street, NR25 7NX
Find us with What3Words: ogre.sonic.sulk
E: thehiveplace@gmail.com T: 07976 286 645

Email: thehiveplace@gmail.com

Charity Reg. No.: 1134271

THE HIVE
CREATIVITY - SPIRITUALITY - WELL-BEING

A thought from Rev Derek: Living in a multi-cultural world

I confess that I have always been a bit snobby about where I was born. My early life was spent in the village of Calverley which sits midway between Leeds and Bradford. Checking on Google maps, my home was about six miles from the centre of Leeds and less than four from the centre of Bradford. Officially I was born in the borough of Pudsey, which during my childhood was a separate postal district to Leeds, consequently, I have always told people that I am from Pudsey rather than aligning myself with the City of Bradford. When Karen and I married in the mid-eighties we purchased our first home in the Bolton area of Bradford, less than two miles from the city centre. During the twenty years we lived there I heard all the one-liners from colleagues at work "I hope that you've remembered your passport, so that you can get back home" and "Oh so you're the white man who lives in Bradford" and other derogatory remarks. In honesty, having lived in the city for twenty years, I never gave a great deal of thought to the cultural, social and religious diversities that existed in the city. There had been a significant influx of families from Pakistan during the 1960s and seeing Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs was just a matter of course and a way of life.

I was delighted when I heard that Bradford had been chosen to be the 2025 city of culture and during the first week of the new year, I witnessed broadcasts coming from the city hailing the rich diversity of the community. Life hasn't always been harmonious and without its problems, but there is a spirit in the place and the people always seem to be able to pull together and support each other in times of need. It seems to me that throughout history people have been defined by the colour of their skin, the place of their birth, their culture, their lifestyle choices, and their religious beliefs. For some reason, regardless of our history, human beings have a tendency to focus on what marks us out as being different, and over the years those differences have been the cause of wars and some of the worst atrocities known to man. We even witness cultural differences in the bible reaching back through millennia and I find myself wondering if humankind is even capable of living in harmony welcoming and treasuring our differences.



Reflecting on the last sixty odd years of my life, I now realise how privileged I feel to have spent a significant part of my life living in Bradford, the city of culture, it had been an education working with people of other cultures learning about some of the things they believe, understanding something of their work ethic and understanding how much we have in common, rather than how different we are. There is something beautiful in seeing a city celebrating how different cultures can come together and live in harmony, treasuring each other and I am proud to align myself with the city.

Please pray for the congregation and community in Holt



A thought from Rev Jonny:

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." (John 11:21, NRSVUE)

Jesus, while he was on earth, could not be all things to all people. This verse is a part of the reading used this week for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. I preached on it on Sunday at Fakenham Parish Church and mulled over it yesterday on the way back from Wells Primary School after doing an assembly. This January has proven to be very busy, as well as several people dying in the churches I serve. As a result, I have been unable to do everything that is needed. As I drove home, I realised that this passage shows us that Jesus could not be all things to all people while he was on earth. If Jesus cannot do this, why then would we think that we could do likewise?

A sobering thought to realise that the Incarnate God was still limited, and I suppose this is very much a part of being human. I wonder, what do we expect of ourselves and each other? Is it being like Martha at the beginning saying, 'If only you had...'? Or do we accept that Jesus Christ is the 'resurrection and the life'? Despite our limitations, God's love endures and will transform all things. So let us rest in this assurance, knowing that even in our limitations, we are embraced by the love of God, which will transform all things and restore it back to Godself.



*Image: Julia Stankova (Bulgarian, 1954–), Resurrection of Lazarus, 2006.
Painting on wooden panel, 30 × 40 cm.*

A thought from Aileen Fox: Trust

A relatively small word but it carries a lot of weight. To trust is to allow ourselves to accept the actions or goodwill of a person or authority. Do we for instance trust politicians? Do we trust the tradesperson we have asked to do a specific job for us in our homes?

The disciples trusted Jesus but it didn't stop them asking questions. I am away at the moment looking after someone following an operation who cannot lift heavy things for 6 weeks. I am doing the bending and sorting out for the owner's beautiful indoor cat, feeding her and clearing litter trays. Holly is an elderly rescue cat who trusts her owner implicitly but is more reticent with others. I have therefore had to treat her with respect and allow her to realise that I am currently the one looking after her wellbeing for a couple of weeks. She is not a cat who will sit on your lap but will indicate her needs such as meowing for food or wanting to have a fuss or to be played with. It's an interesting situation ... sometimes she is fine, other times she will still go to her owner. Getting her into the kitchen at night is a work in progress, at 6kg she is too heavy to pick up I tried and nearly dropped her! It's back to making a fuss of her and encouraging her to retire for the night, allowing her to trust me again.

Do we trust in God even when the going is tough? Sometimes we cannot see his hand in the situation we find ourselves in. Often when we look back, we can see that he was indeed with us, sending people to support us, guide us and just be alongside us. He is patient with us, allows us choice and is there for us always even if it seems unclear.



Please pray for the congregation and community in Litcham



A thought from Rev Derek:

It's official, I'm now eligible to travel for free!

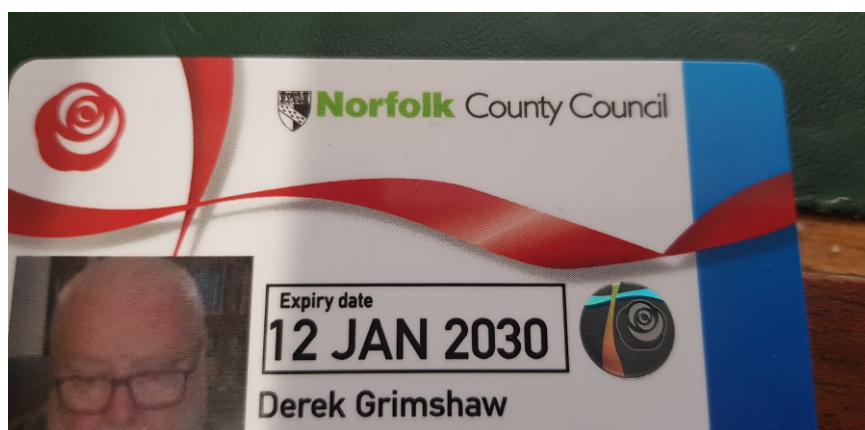
As an eleven-year-old when I first started at high school, I wasn't entitled to a free school bus pass, because my parents' house was just yards short of the boundary where we would have been eligible and while every other child in our village to get on the bus and travel for free, my brother and I had to pay. My parents would cough up the 50 pence a week to cover the bus fare (those were the days!) and I would pocket the money and walk to and from school, thus being allowed to pocket the money and spend it on treats for myself. I used to feel that the system was unfair particularly as some people put down the address of relatives living further down in the village so their children could travel for free, but we were good chapel folk and honest, no matter how Christian it felt meant that my brother and I missed out and felt ever so slightly miffed.

I official reached pensionable age in October 2024 and eventually got around to applying for my free bus pass and fifty-five years after starting high school as an eleven-year-old, I received my first ever concessionary bus pass last Saturday. I had a meeting in the centre of Norwich on Monday 20th January and rather than jostling with all the traffic and paying through the nose to park, I simply travelled by bus for the first time in years, scanning my shiny new bus pass and feeling ever so "Green" as I travelled on one of Norfolk's nice shiny new electric buses, you could almost have been dazzled by my halo as I did my bit for the planet.

Speaking to a Scots man some years ago, he asked me what the difference was between a Scots man and a Yorkshireman and then grinned smugly as he told me that Yorkshiremen have deeper pockets! I would never claim to be mean, but I do like a bargain and am particularly thrilled if I can get something for nothing, it makes my day, so I will treasure my bus pass. As I travelled into the city, I started to reflect a little on how many different things I have in life that don't come with a price tag attached. I looked at the scenery as we travelled along, and even in the midst of winter, the trees lining the road had a beauty, that I don't always see as I concentrate on driving my car.

I became aware of the other people on the bus, the young mum with two adorable little children. I became aware of the conversations going on around me and enjoyed sharing the space with other people. I was grateful to the modern technology on the bus with helpful plasm screen listing the next three stops and the woman's voice who told us what the next stop was. Simply because I wasn't driving and feeling anxious about finding somewhere to park the car, I was able to sit and relax and arrived at my meeting feeling ready for what lay ahead.

- Maybe we would all benefit from reflecting on all the things we have in life that we just take for granted.
- Maybe we are so busy dealing with all the things that fill our days, that we need to make a bit of space to appreciate what we have, rather than striving all the time for the things we don't have.



A thought from Rev Jonny:

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21, NIV)

Today is Tony Hey’s funeral, a day to say goodbye and to celebrate the life of a person who lived his life to its fullest in all he did. For our Facebook reflection, I encourage you to meditate on the words that he lived his life by with the painting and the reflection below:

Take a deep breath, and let the words from Philippians settle in your heart: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Now, look at the painting: an old, well-used Bible lies open, a testament to a life steeped in faith. On top of it stands a simple vase, holding a fresh branch with new leaves. The title, *New Life*, invites you to consider its meaning.

Close your eyes and reflect:

The worn Bible speaks of wisdom gained through a life of devotion; a life rooted in Christ. The new leaves tell of growth, renewal, and hope—of life continuing, even after the seasons change.

Ask yourself:

- How does the life I live now reflect the fullness of living in Christ?
- Where do I see new growth in my spiritual journey, even in the midst of challenges?
- How does this truth—to live is Christ, to die is gain—reshape my view of life, death, and eternity?

Breathe in and out deeply. Imagine yourself holding that branch. Feel the life within it, the promise of renewal. Let your heart rest in the assurance that, in Christ, both living and dying hold profound meaning.

Carry this reflection with you today, and let it guide your steps.



Image: Henk Helmantel (Dutch, 1945–), *Nieuw Leven II* (New Life II), 1999 (after the 1972 original that was stolen). Oil on canvas, 27 × 24 cm.