

Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Facebook Posts

October 2024

A thought from Rev Jonny:

Over the coming month, on Wednesdays, I will be focusing on creating, loving and transforming. Last week, I made some chilli jam for the first time. I used chillis, which I had grown myself, and apples from a church member's own apple tree. It was surprisingly easy (except for turning around for a moment to put something in the dishwasher, and it bubbled over in seconds!) and was good fun to make. Also, much to my surprise, it tastes really nice!

The theology of 'being made in the image of God' (imago Dei if you're feeling fancy) is one that I gravitate towards a lot of the time. It is a beautiful image to think that we all bear God's image – every single one of us, all with a part of God's love and goodness. Making chilli jam relates to this idea in the part of God's image that is about 'creating'.

God created all that is, so a big part of God's being is a creative, generative power. I would say that this is also a part of us. When we create, we tap into that image of God in us. This could be creating artwork, knitting or crocheting, making food (like jam), creating spaces for people to be welcomed and received, and much, much more! Creating is a way to make the world richer and more filled with God's goodness because it is a part of God working in and with us.

So, a question to ponder: how do you 'create' in your life? You may want to comment below on how you do this or even share a photo of what you have created!



A thought from Dee, Local Preacher:

We have recently been on holiday at East Wittering on the South Coast, and we saw some amazing natural sights as we travelled around. Things that man cannot control or invent!

Standing on Wittering beach watching the beautiful sunset brought John Ellerton's hymn to mind "The day thou gavest Lord is ended" He wrote over 80 hymns and based this one on the words from:

Psalm 42 verse 8

"By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life."



His hymn speaks of how when our day is ending, others, as we sleep, are waking and starting a new day. When I see a sunset I always think of this hymn and this 4th verse particularly

"The sun that bids us rest is waking
our brethren 'neath the western sky,
and hour by hour fresh lips are making
thy wondrous doings heard on high"

The world seems to change at an alarming rate, but as in the Psalms to the hymns written many years ago, the word of God remains true and relevant today.

We give thanks to God for all his wonderful creation.

Please pray for the congregation and community in Stibbard



A thought from Aileen: Choices

We make choices every single day whether we realise it or not. Many things we do instinctively. opening the fridge and deciding what to have for breakfast. Occasionally there are alternatives such as mushroom on toast rather than getting the milk and blueberries out for cereal and the orange juice. It can be a conscious choice but occasionally for me it varies, because I have forgotten to buy orange juice or there were no blueberries available when I went shopping. This got me thinking about the choices I have to make each day and the choices others have to make. I am sometimes spoilt for choice whilst many people have to make life changing choices including how to keep their families safe, or if there will be food available.

The photo accompanying this is from Walsingham Methodist. The stairs lead up to the splendid Georgian box pews, but the pews are quite uncomfortable for sitting on, whereas the two doors lead to different places. The varnished door leads to the downstairs Victorian pews with cushions on the seats, whilst the painted door leads under the stairs and into a storage area. If you are not aware you could take the route to the uncomfortable pews, or even end up under the stairs. Seriously though in life we have to make some tough decisions and for many life isn't easy.

We listen or watch the news and see the desperation that faces many people fleeing from fighting. At the moment whilst war is going on in Ukraine and Sudan, we also have the situation in the Middle East especially in Lebanon and the call for UK citizens to leave for their own safety. Then the scramble to find a flight or some other means of leaving. The choices people from Ukraine have had to make as to whether they should stay or move their family to safety. As I said earlier, we all make choices and as I hinted sometimes my choice of breakfast can depend on whether I have been shopping or not. I have freedom, safety and can choose what to eat or buy so I shouldn't feel hard done by if my favourite fruits aren't available. Today we will all make choices, some simple, some harder but let's spare a thought for those who have no choices, and those who have to try and make the right choice for the safety of their loved ones.



A thought from Rev Derek: Testing times

I would have been about ten years old when some folk at the Church decided to have a walk from Malham to Settle in the Yorkshire Dales. The whole thing felt like a gentle saunter through the rolling hills of the Dales and my brother, and I went, while mum and dad followed on in the car. We travelled by coach to Malham and then set off up a picturesque valley, stopping for a short while at Janet's Foss, a beautiful waterfall where some hardy souls were swimming in the crystal-clear water. We head up the valley pictured above with limestone cliffs closing in on either side, I prayed as hard as I could that there would be a nice flat path between the cliffs and that we would be able to pass by to the other side with minimal effort.

As we rounded the corner, I was horrified to see that God had completely ignored my pleading and I saw the splendour and challenge of Gordale Scar and the next part of our gentle stroll in the Dales would involve climbing the wet and slippery rocks alongside a waterfall. One of the girls on the walk had brought the family pet, a Yorkshire terrier dog who scrambled fearlessly over the rocks, I clambered up in fear of my life, breathless with the effort, carefully selecting where I was going to place my feet next. I was sure that I was going to die that day, either by tumbling to my death, or as my heart exploded as a protest against the sudden unexpected exertion. I remember the minister, who was walking with us saying as we could see the top of the climb "don't look back, just keep focussing on the top of the climb" The view from the top was amazing, I'm not sure that I thought that it had been worth the effort, but it felt like a huge achievement in my young life. I spent the whole of the rest of the walk praying that we wouldn't have to clamber down anything like that to get down to Settle. God must have thought that I was a right wimp that day.

I can recall many times in my life when I have been faced with much bigger and far more painful challenges than climbing Gordale Scar that day and I often think of that experience when I am leading worship on maundy Thursday when I remember Jesus praying that God will take away the cup of suffering “yet, not my will, but yours be done” he follows up with immediately. I have come to learn over the years that while I walk along the paths of life and the hills are closing in around me and all I can see ahead are the crags getting closer and I pray that the way ahead will be straight, and easy that things are seldom the way I would like them to be. I once heard a preacher say many years ago “I don’t believe that God causes suffering, but I do believe that he helps us to cope with it”

May you feel supported and loved by God as you face your own rocky climbs.



Pray with us today:

God of justice,
open our ears to hear as you do,
open our hearts to care as you do,
open our lips to speak as you do,
that we may offer our voices
for those who are silenced,
whatever their language, land or lot,
and so may your will be done,
on earth as in heaven. Amen.

Find more ways to pray at methodist.org.uk/prayer.



A thought from Rev Jonny:

Autumn is here, and those autumn crops are coming in. Seb and I grow many fruits and vegetables, some of which you can see here. Pumpkins/squash are very easy to grow in our garden; besides tending to the sprouting seeds and planting in good soil, we do very little. Their vines grow to be very long and take up a lot of space, but we get the fruits from the plant's hard work in growing it.

Song of Songs (a.k.a. Song of Solomon) is one of my favourite books in the Bible. It describes two lovers, and it is poetry that expresses their relationship. It was one of the most written about books in the Bible in the medieval period. It has been understood as the relationship between two people, between God and humanity, and more. I think the book speaks to all of these things as well as the generative power of love. Love interacts between different persons and things to generate something that was not before and something good.

The verses from Song of Songs 4:13-16 (NRSVUE) speaks into this:

Your channel is an orchard of pomegranates
with all choicest fruits,
henna with nard
nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,
with all trees of frankincense,
myrrh and aloes,
with all chief spices—
a garden fountain, a well of living water,
and flowing streams from Lebanon.
Awake, O north wind,
and come, O south wind!
Blow upon my garden
that its fragrance may be wafted abroad.
Let my beloved come to his garden
that he may eat its choicest fruits.



The love expressed in this book is not only between the couple, but it also interacts with the world around them. Much like the work Seb and I put into the garden to create fruits and vegetables, so too is the love between the couple, creating an environment that is good. A question to ponder then: how do you love those around you and the world around you, and how does this generate more goodness?

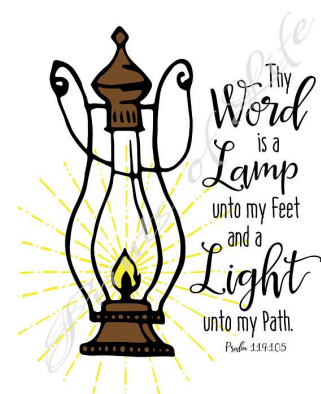
A thought from Dee, Local Preacher:

Have you got a Sat-Nav in the car? Do you use it? Or do you start to use it then think 'I know a better way' and start going down a different road only to find yourself lost!! Sound familiar?

It says in Psalm 119 verse 105 "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light my path" speaking of wisdom and guidance.

Sometimes we don't heed God's word or we think he is directing us the wrong way, because it isn't the way we thought we wanted to go!

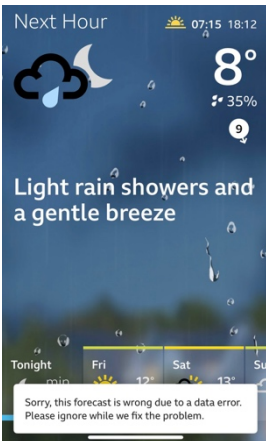
God may recalculate our route, or like the Sat-Nav says "Turn around!"



Looking back on our lives, the routes we have taken, and the past decisions that have been made, or the unexpected things that have happened, we can sometimes see why certain things, which we thought were wrong, or maybe painful, have actually led us to where we are now. So, reflecting on this verse we pray for greater understanding of the importance and wisdom of trusting in the word of the Lord.

God works in mysterious ways.

Rev Anne says:



I often check the weather app on my phone. Yesterday morning it had a hurricane warning!! Later, that had gone but a little error message had appeared. It was a data error. Did you get that message too?

I also make errors! Data ones - when I don't press the right buttons! Memory ones - when I can't quite remember something or come home to find I left the back door open! Every day, life is peppered with little errors.

To err is human - to forgive is divine.

Thank God!

A thought from Rev Derek: The trappings of life

There are many words that people might use to describe me, but I doubt very much that many would call me “trendy”. Indeed, throughout my life I have caught up with fashion as the world has moved onto the next “must have” so, at last, I feel to be in with the in-crowd as the owner of an air fryer! Our splendid new machine has revolutionised my life, and I am a convert to air frying, not for the taste, the speed, or the environmental impact, but because of the simplicity. I have by no means become an expert overnight, I struggle with all the programming that people much younger than I will grapple with, I simply hit the “chips” button and estimate the time food will take to cook and get on with my life while dinner cooks, getting up only when the machine beeps and instructs me to “shake” ... the food of course, not me personally.

We were in a famous Cumbrian store earlier this year, we had only gone in for the loos and a cuppa and cake, but felt duty bound to look around the store and I was staggered by the range of labour-saving devices for the kitchen, they had blenders, coffee machines, food processors, slow cookers, steamers, microwaves, grills, food mixers, soup makers, bread makers, ice cream makers, toasters, pressure cookers, boiling water dispensers, rice cookers, the list went on and on and on. I couldn't help but think back to my mum's kitchen in the 1960s - we had a cooker, washer, a fridge, a kettle, and an electric food mixer and that was about it. I wonder how we ever survived.

Our view of what is essential for living has changed dramatically during my lifetime, I wonder today how I ever coped without a mobile phone or a computer. The idea of taking our holiday photos, then waiting until the film was used up, taking said film to the chemists and waiting until our much looked forward to pictures had been processed and the disappointment when several had a thumb across the lens or somebodies head had been cut off!

A rich man came to Jesus and asked what he must do to find eternal life. Jesus, somewhat harshly, told him to sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor, the man went away sad, because he was very wealthy, and this was just too much for him. I wonder, with all the trappings of modern-day life, what I would be prepared to give up? Let's face it, I lived for the best part of forty years without owning a computer or mobile phone, and in honesty, I never felt the need to own either, I have lived for sixty-five years without owning an air fryer, but it has made my life so much better. I'm not suggesting for a moment that we should all flog the labour-saving devices that make twenty-first century living so much easier and better, why would we?

Maybe what I am saying is that we need to think about our values are, what is important to us? How much are we slaves to the trappings of modern living?



Please pray for the congregation and community in Swaffham



A thought from Rev Jonny:

Mushrooms! We can see them all year round, but with the cooler, damper weather, we see them around a lot more. A mushroom is the fruit of the fungus, so the spores can be dispersed. Most of the fungus is below the ground, with these threads spreading out, a bit like a web of roots, which is called the 'mycelium'. Fungi are amazing and are in most places on land. They connect to each other and communicate with each other, they connect trees to other trees, they turn decaying organic matter into nutrients for plants and animals, and there are thousands upon thousands of species of mushrooms, with something like 23,000 different genders.

With the theme of creating and love this month, what do mushrooms have to do with this? I think there are two aspects: first, about being connected, and second, about how they transform their environment to benefit things around them. They are so connected to the world around them. This reminds me a bit of God's Spirit, God's presence is connected to all things and present in all things (indeed, we have types of fungi, yeast, in and on our bodies). The second aspect is the transformative part, of turning waste into nutrients, of taking what is rejected and transforming it. In Acts 4:11, Peter says that "This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.'" (NRSVUE) Another thing that is an analogy for God is that mushrooms transform what is 'rejected', and so too does God.

We use many different metaphors to describe God: Liberator, King, Counsellor, Eagle, and so on. We can also add fungi to that list now! Of being connected to all things and transforming what may be rejected into something that is good. And for us, how does this relate to us? Romans 8:28 (NRSVUE) says this: "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." So is that work and that purpose about us being like mushrooms in our ministries, that is, connected to the world and transforming it?



A thought from Aileen: Look Listen and learn

I can remember the mantra look first, listen and hopefully you will learn. This wasn't something people were doing recently as I returned to Norfolk by train. Not long before Cambridge we were informed that our train supposedly for King's Lynn would terminate at Cambridge as there was no relief crew able to take it on further. Most of us collected our things and started to move towards the door ready to get off at the station. A man then approached me and asked what was going on, I explained and he wondered how he would get to Cambridge North the next station. I told him that the later expected train from London would stop at all the stations to King's Lynn. Then another passenger asked what was going on and several of us explained to him, he was most apologetic but had his headphones on and hadn't heard the announcement which for once was very clear. As the doors opened further announcements were being made as to platforms for different trains and I was listening to this as I stepped into the crowd swarming towards other platforms and the exit. Suddenly a woman thrust her face into mine so thinking she knew me I said hello and she firmly said we are going this way! I managed to lose her quite quickly and listened to the different announcements which kept being changed every few minutes. There was now a train for Cambridge North only, then the train for Ely but seconds later the Ely train was cancelled. And so it continued with there is a platform change for... To add to all this a lot of platform was cordoned off for repairs.



However, my train was actually going to come in on that same platform 1 we had alighted from. I'm sure this person thought she was helping this 'old' white haired woman who seemed to be unsure! Who in fact was

actually listening to all the information, and had herself been helping others. Perhaps a “do you need help” might have been better but her manner was quite off putting almost scary, literally shoving her face into mine.

This got me thinking about assumptions, about listening, and judging people by appearances. Anyone who has known me for a long while will probably have seen my hair getting whiter over the years, like my father it went white quite early and my grandma was white at a very early age (30s) so it is genetic. The thing is people look at me and think old. Yes 70+ but still active. I’m the first to admit it is nice being offered a seat on the underground, or at a station with no lift someone offering to carry my case down the stairs, but the best was a man who I suspected was a lot older than me wanting to help me with my suitcase on a train, I didn’t want to hurt his feelings but then he complained it was heavy!

Isn’t my experience also a reminder that we should not judge people by appearances? We shouldn’t assume things, but look first, ask if necessary if someone needs help. We are all different, often look different, have different abilities and gifts. Yes, ask if someone needs help but don’t muscle in and assume help is needed, just be ready to assist. I’m sure some of us remember the cartoon/sketch of an older person standing near the kerb and someone coming up grabbing them by the arm and marching them across the road and it turned out they didn’t want to cross the road! Look Listen and hopefully learn. Jesus looked at the whole situation whenever people approached him for help.

A thought from Rev Derek: Who is the greatest?

According to Google, footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has the most followers on social media, with over 900 million people reading whatever he publishes, this is equivalent to 10% of the world’s population, which is quite staggering. Since the birth of the smart phone and the expansion of social media, pretty well anybody who has a phone can publish their opinions of social media and with enough people reading whatever they write. There is a relatively new brand of celebrity today, the influencer, who can spout their opinions and crowds of people watch them. I find it somewhat strange that a family films themselves going to do their weekly shop, or some other very basic activity and the world watches in Amazement. As a child my heroes were the Leeds United Football Squad, fictional characters in books like the Famous Five, or the Secret Seven.



In my teenage years, I could name almost every Formula 1 racing driver or rally driver, I was car-mad and dreamed of being one of the fastest drivers to cross the finish line. Sadly, when I learned to drive in my dad’s Reliant Regal Supervan 3, like the one driven by Del Boy Trotter in Only Fools and Horses there was little chance of me winning in many races. I used to love to watch Roger Moore and Tony Curtis as Lord Brett Sinclair and Danny Wild as “the Persuaders” looking back, I find it quite comedic that every time they had a call out, they would each drive in their own cars and race to the scene, what a waste of fuel and can you imagine the

hole in Ozone layer?

It seems to me that since the beginning of time human beings have been fighting for supremacy and there has been a continuing struggle to be top dog and come first, in the set Bible reading for today Mark 10: 35-45, two of Jesus’s disciples James and John want to have the best place in eternal life alongside Jesus. It feels as though they want a free pass to become the most supreme human beings, and Jesus reminds them that to attain what they are asking, they must be prepared to pay the price.

My question would be “is there a shortcut to being the greatest” these days. My heroes in the old days spent hours developing skills and knowledge to be the best that they could be. I am wary of people who suddenly become extremely wealthy and famous and are influencing millions of people. The style of Jesus was to put the needs of others way above his own fame. He is the sort of role model I want to build my life upon.

Please pray for the congregation and community in Tittleshall



A thought from Rev Jonny:

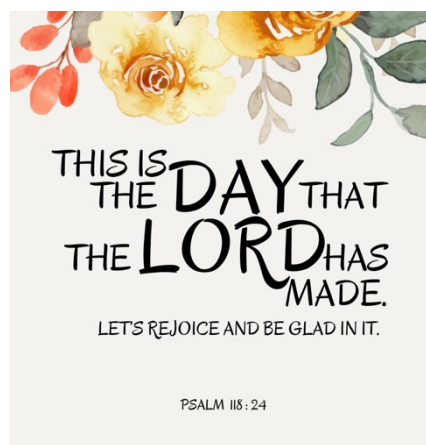
Our dog, Bagel, is a slipper thief. When I come home, and my slippers are by the door, he grabs them and runs off. When I get ready for the day and take them off, without missing a step, he sneakily grabs them and runs off. He doesn't destroy them; he simply wants to be chased and looks so proud when he takes them, with his tail quickly wagging.

This month has had a focus on creating and generating goodness; Bagel's example is one about play and joy. These two things are essential to my life. Being playful is a part of that image of God, which I wrote a bit about on the 2nd of October. To create can often involve the playful part of ourselves. It is also a part of us that comes from our younger self – it is a child-like quality. I often find that those who struggle to be playful also find it difficult to access that free child part of themselves. So, how can we be playful? I think that we



need to allow ourselves to be curious, to smile and laugh, to wonder about the world and allow it to amaze us. It is to connect to the world around us, including those around us, in a way that is open and wonder-filled. When we are stressed or anxious, this can be a challenge and understandably so. What good is it to be playful? Being playful can afford for us to be more open to new experiences and to joy. Think of a child playing and laughing, how open they are to the moment and how much joy they experience, especially when they are laughing.

How can we incorporate playfulness into our lives and remain open to joy and new experiences? Bagel's example may allow us to move forward – he connects with me and does so with spontaneity. We can find opportunities to connect with others and share in joy. This allows us to cultivate an openness that enables us to connect with others and the world in a curious and wonder-filled manner, leading to smiles and laughter. By doing so, we can cultivate greater joy.



Rev Anne writes: this has been my week!! I have been extremely fortunate never to have had Covid before. I've been feeling poorly, but nothing like it must have been in the pandemic. I'm grateful to be on the mend.

Whenever I've had bad colds, I've always debated on whether I need to cancel things and go sick, or soldier on. Usually I've dosed up and done the latter. Having a little plastic stick with two lines on it feels like I have had permission to rest! Silly, isn't it? We should always do the best for our own health, but I have frequently ignored my own needs to avoid letting others down.

Is this the Christian way? Or does it say more about fear? Jesus says, love others AS you love yourself. Surely self-care is part of that love? What's your view?

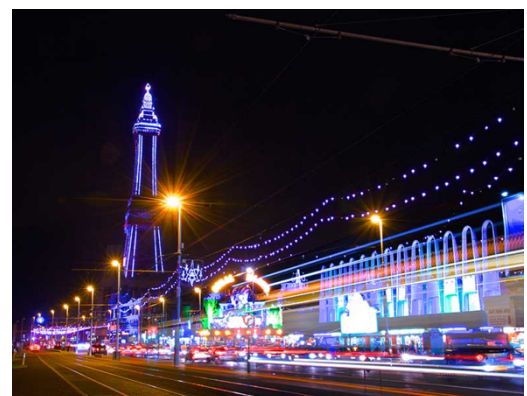


Please pray for the congregation and community in Toftwood



A thought from Rev Derek: Light in the darkness

Karen and I are planning to spend a few days in Blackpool next week and I am hoping to get onto a tram and travel down from Bispham where we are staying, right down to Star Gate in the south and back up to Bispham, all after nightfall so that we get the best of the illuminations. My hope is that we might even walk through sections, weather permitting and if I have the energy to push the wheelchair. This year will mark the 145th year of the illuminations, they normally run for sixty-six days, but this year they will run for a hundred days until Sunday 5th January 2025. The very first Blackpool illuminations back in 1879 were described as "artificial light" and comprised of eight carbon arc lamps.



Today, there are over a million lightbulbs and more than a hundred miles of cabling and the whole thing costs around £2.5 million pounds a year to stage. The display is expected to attract around 3.5 million visitors to the resort who it is anticipated will bring over £275 million pounds to the resort.

I have been to Sizewell Hall this week for a meeting of superintendent ministers. The hall is a wonderful place and stands right on the cliff top looking out at the mighty North Sea to the east. I was looking forward to getting up early on the one morning that I was there and standing on the beach and watching the sun rise. I stood, phone in hand, ready to take some stunning pictures to include in my thought for the day today, but it wasn't to be. It was one of the murkiest mornings we've had for a while and as I stood waiting to be impressed, all that happened was that the sky went from darkness and shifted through various shades of grey until it reached somewhere between "surrendered skies" and "Misty Mirror" on the Dulux colour chart. Yes, I am sad enough to have looked it up!

The Bible reading this Sunday is the healing of blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10: 46-52) I have done some research recently about blindness and as a sighted person, I have always assumed that people have no sight can only see darkness, I now believe that is not true and some people see flashing lights even with their eyes closed. Either way, after meeting with Jesus, Bartimaeus is granted both physical and spiritual sight.

In our modern, stress-filled world there are an increasing number of people who find themselves walking in the darkness and I believe that part of our role as friends, colleagues and family members is to share some light with them. I am looking forward to Blackpool illuminations and being thrilled at seeing the glorious display of lights once again. Light really does make a huge difference to life.

A thought from Rev Jonny:

To summarise this past month's posts on a Wednesday, with the themes of creating, loving and transforming.

On 2nd October, I reflected on the concept of creating and being made in the image of God while making chilli jam. I emphasised the idea that creating is a way to express God's goodness and love in the world.

On 9th October, I discussed the autumn crops I grew and my love for the Song of Songs, relating it to the generative power of love. I wondered about how we love those around us and the world, and how this generates goodness.

On 16th October, I used mushrooms as a metaphor for us and God. I drew parallels between mushrooms and God's presence, as well as the concept of transforming what is rejected into something good.

On 23rd October, I wrote about our dog, Bagel, who is a slipper thief. I wrote about Bagel's playfulness and the importance of incorporating play and joy into human life. I emphasised the significance of being open to new experiences, cultivating joy, and connecting with others in a curious and wonder-filled manner.

As I reflect on this past month, I am reminded of the beauty of creation, of love, and how it transforms and leads to joy. It's a reminder that we are all connected to each other, to creation and to God through the Spirit. We also have the power to create goodness and love in the world through that same Spirit. Let's embrace the generative power of love, be open to transformation, and incorporate play and joy into our lives. May we continue to cultivate curiosity, wonder, and connection with others as we journey through life.

