

Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Facebook Posts

November 2025

A thought from Rev Neil:

Some years ago I was the minister of a lovely congregation in rural South Africa. They were, as many of our own congregations are now, an aging congregation with limited funds and declining prospects.

One of the issues that we faced as a church council was a number of large pine trees (non-indigenous to South Africa) which surrounded the church, hiding it from sight and preventing any new growth beneath their branches.

I put it to the meeting that we should remove the trees to open the building to the community again. Reflecting on the incident then, I wrote this parable (with some artistic licence!):

Many years ago, a congregation outgrew their church building. So they raised funds, prayed and worked hard, and eventually built a new church. Pride of place in their church building was a steeple, which the old building did not have, and right at the top of the steeple was a white cross, which could be seen across the whole town.

But the church was bare. And so, to beautify the church, the congregation decided to plant pine trees around the building - and they were beautiful. At Christmas time they decorated them, and the whole town would come out to look at the pretty trees outside the church.

As time passed the trees grew bigger, and bigger still. Soon they were too big to decorate, but they were still beautiful trees. Today those trees are bigger than the church buildings, and hide it, and the trees are higher than the steeple. Nobody can see the cross anymore because the trees are in the way. The ground beneath the trees is dead, and nothing grows there, the trees are not indigenous, and so no birds make their nests in the branches.

They really should cut the trees down, but nobody will allow it because they're "part of the church".

I'm glad to say that the church council *did* agree to cut down the trees (we planted a number of new indigenous trees to replace them) and we enjoyed a wonderful time of ministry together in the years that I was stationed there.



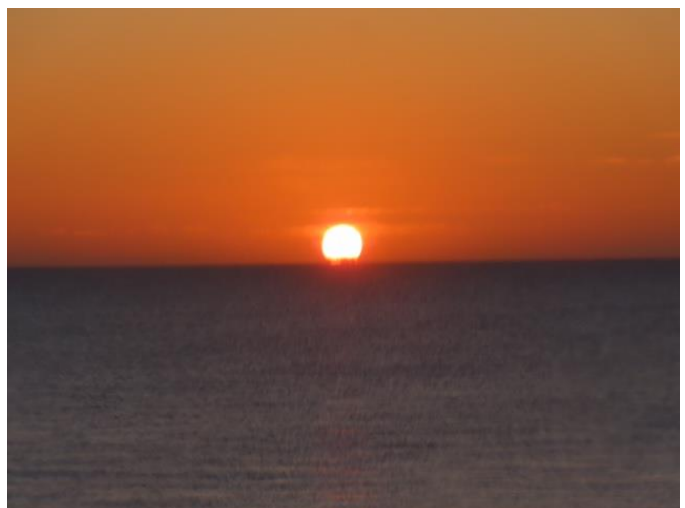
A thought from Aileen Fox:

This, This is the God we adore. Our faithful unchangeable friend,
Whose love is as great as his power,
And neither knows measure nor end:
'Tis Jesus, the first and the last, whose spirit shall guide us safe home;
We'll praise him for all that is past,
and trust him for all that's to come.

This hymn has become over the years one of my favourites, it has been used in various celebrations within the family both joyful and sad. I think the words speak for themselves for all of us on our Christian journey.

I first heard it in my twenties, I was on the then trustees meeting as a representative and two circuits had been tasked with trying to see if they could work together and become one circuit. The Circuit stewards (or whatever they were then called) and the ministers had met together and we came to the meeting when it had been decided that we would become one circuit. A steward from the smaller circuit stood up and told how they had begun meeting together and praying, and by his own admission his circuit was suspicious of being taken over. However, the more they met together the more they realised that there was a willingness to work together with Christ at the centre. He admitted he had been against the merger initially, and he looked at the stewards and other ministers from the bigger circuit and said "but I realised actually they were alright". He then announced the hymn this, this is the God we adore... we stood and sung it with great feeling. I have never forgotten that hymn and I had it at my wedding and Roger's funeral. I've sung it at celebration services, welcome and farewell services. It says it all to me. We'll praise him for all that is past and trust him for all that's to come.

As the nights draw in and we think of the long winter nights ahead, perhaps the hymn is something to ponder over and inspire us in the months before the lighter evenings arrive. One thing to remember is that Jesus is the light of the world.



A thought from Rev Derek:

The view from the window.

One of the good things about being a minister in the East Anglia Methodist District is that every other year we are gifted with a retreat for around forty-eight hours, and I drove down to Sizewell Hall in Suffolk on Tuesday 21st October. Sizewell Hall is possibly not the most luxurious property I have ever stayed in, but the picture above is the view from my bedroom window, which I feel is worth a little discomfort.

Looking at this view when storm Benjamin was blowing a gale and rain was falling, it is easy to forget that within a mile of this site there is the massive construction work to build the Sizewell C Nuclear power plant, and Sizewell B already overshadows much of this beautiful coastline.

It is also important to say that the other joy of being in this place is being with colleagues who are dotted around the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and the fellowship has been excellent and we have had a good time of sharing together, with a first class leader who had focussed our thoughts on Russian iconography which has been amazing and helpful.

On Thursday morning not long before leaving, we were invited to stand and look out of a window of our choice and think about how the view we were looking at informed our lives where we are today, the things we had to back and face, our joys and our concerns. It was easy for me to choose my window, I had to go and look out at a view very similar to this one. I stood with a few friends in total silence, just drinking in the scene. From where we were standing and gazing out at the North Sea, there was no evidence of the £38 billion pound project and the hundreds of contractors working there, and it occurred to me as I stood thinking, that about a hundred miles away over the horizon there could well be somebody in The Netherlands, looking out at the same ocean and wondering what was over the horizon. Once again, I was reminded of the importance of stopping, staring and taking in the scenery, even on this dismal October day, with the wind blowing and the rain falling, there was a beauty in the sea, far more turbulent today than yesterday, the trees swaying in the wind and the stone balustrades standing firm as they have done for about one hundred and fifty years being battered by the forces of nature.

My attention turned to the four colleagues standing with me like statues, lost in their own reflections. Having been in the East Anglia Methodist District for twenty years now, I have seen dozens of colleagues come and go I found myself thinking of the journey that I had shared with two of these colleagues in particular. A bit like the mighty North Sea, very turbulent, our journey hasn't been easy and we have struggled with health issues, Church politics, work visas and even some very memorable Zoom meetings when the signal between downtown Ipswich and Zimbabwe was quite challenging. I value my colleagues in a way that I could never have imagined and I am deeply indebted to a Church that has made it possible for me to have such an encounter. I sit in my study and the window is an important part of the structure of the property, it allows light in, but it also gives me the opportunity to stop and gaze at the world outside, and be thankful.



A prayer written following the horrific attack on the train:

We come before God in prayer for all those whose lives have been touched by the stabbings on the train stopped in Huntingdon yesterday.

We bring our grief, our shock, and our longing for healing and peace into the presence of God who holds all things in love.

Merciful God,

In the face of violence and fear, we turn to you as peacemaker and peace giver.

Be close to all who are suffering because of this attack.

Bring comfort to those who are injured, peace to those who are frightened, and strength to those who are caring and responding.

We hold before you all who have been harmed and all those close to them.

Surround them with your love, and give them the support of others in the days and weeks to come.

God of peace, we pray for our communities, especially for those who travel in fear today.

As we struggle to understand why such devastating things happen, heal the wounds of body, mind, and spirit, and turn hearts away from hatred and despair.

Gather us, gracious God, in hope and compassion, that we may be agents of your peace and witnesses to your great love, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

(Helen Hollands)



Please pray for the congregation and community in Hingham



🌲 Get ready for a festive fun-filled morning at the **Tinsel Fair** at Saham Hills Methodist Chapel on **Saturday, 22nd November 10.30am to 12noon!** 🌲

Refreshments will be available, including delicious mince pies and hot drinks. 🍵🍰 Browse our wonderful selection of Handmade Crafts, unique Christmas Gifts, and Books, as well as a fantastic array of Bric-a-Brac treasures. 📺 And, don't forget to try your luck in our exciting Raffle 🎉.



A thought from Rev Neil:

I write this thought having come from town filled with decorative poppies, even as I prepare for Remembrance Day services for Sunday.

It is important to remember those who have given their lives for the sake of freedom, and to recognise that the freedoms we enjoy now have been paid for at a cost. As we remember we do well to reflect on lives both lost and destroyed through the trauma of war.

As a young person growing up in South Africa I was conscripted into an army supporting the apartheid government. I was able to spend my two years of compulsory national service in an air-conditioned communication centre, and I don't think my actions resulted in anyone's death that my absence or resistance could have prevented, but my service to an evil government is something I'm very aware of come Remembrance Sunday.

I got a medal for my service - a 'Pro Patria' (for your fatherland) which was awarded in South Africa between 1974 and 2003 for continuous service defending the country against terrorism. It's not a particularly special medal, there was no awards ceremony, hundreds of thousands of them were given out, and we commonly referred to them as 'Pronutro medals', ie, the type of medal one could expect to find in a cereal box (pronutro being a South African breakfast cereal).

But what does one do with it? On the one hand it is something that I can be proud of: I served my country, and I served it well; on the other is the recognition that I was the servant of an evil, unjust government. And it is a thin line between being proud of one's service and 'just obeying orders'.



Often our medals become monuments to the past, to our glory days, whatever they may be.

What we often see around the world is that new governments don't appreciate the monuments of the old; statues are pulled down, street names are changed. The painful past is to be erased. We do the same in our lives - we ignore the things about ourselves that we don't like. Indeed, in christianese we may well say of someone accepting Christ that there is a new government, a new king in charge of the person's life - and that king has wiped the slate of the past clean.

I think there's immense value, though, in remembering. Yes, the lives lost, the sacrifices, the trauma and yes, even the glory, the effects of which are all still present in the lives of family members. I wonder how we live honestly and wholly trying to erase things that make us who we are? As followers of Jesus, while wiping the slate clean does give us a new start, it can also make us hypocrites because we fail to acknowledge the influences that events in the past - both good and bad - have had in terms of shaping us into the people we are today. We have to acknowledge the past, especially the things of which we may be ashamed. Acknowledge them, embrace them, love them. It is only when we do that that we can truly become whole people, people of integrity. People who love and accept the good and the bad in our lives - and people who can accept the good and bad in others.

As people who can accept and honour both the good and bad that comes from war. And so now when I look at my medal it becomes a symbol for me of who I am: trying to do my best, to be proud of who I am in service to myself. Hopefully serving the good in me, but recognising that sometimes I serve the evil, that sometimes the two are not so very far apart, and that together they make me who I am. And it is here that I discover my salvation, rather than in a pretence that the dark part of myself doesn't exist.

And maybe that's the importance of remembering each year: we dare not forget the good - and the evil - that have shaped us as community and country into who we are. Perhaps, as we remember honestly, and as we wrestle with the current state of world politics, we may yet discover a path that leads to freedom and peace, rather than further conflict.

A thought from Aileen Fox:

If someone says they are frightened of something, how do we react? Do we laugh, or offer them sympathy? I cannot stand anything running near me unexpectedly. I never liked playing hide and seek as a child! I was also frightened of dogs from a very young age, but in the last 6 years I have gradually managed to overcome that fear so that I can actually enjoy their company and huge thanks to patient dog owners.

Mice and spiders in the house for me are terrifying! I have a spider/insect catcher which allows me to catch the culprits without harming and put them outside. Outside I can cope with most things, but a mouse especially inside the house is a nightmare. Roger had a phobia about flying things near him after a childhood incident, so we made a pact when we married, he would deal with spiders and mice and I would deal with wings especially birds that got in.

Recently a mouse got in when the front door was open and plumbers were at work. I heard the mouse first, then I saw it run across the kitchen/diner. I did manage to stand in the kitchen to cook but as soon as the food was ready it was escape with a tray! I've tried all the tough talk such as 'it is only small and is more frightened of you' or 'it will hide until you leave the room'. I know all this but still I struggle. My daughter will tell everyone that I am petrified of mice but the minute they are trapped I will get upset and feel sorry for killing them.



I put 2 mousetraps in place nothing happened. 2 more purchased and the bait taken. I then began to wonder if I'd set them right. In the end a visit to a neighbour for help and they were not set correctly. Four mousetraps later bait taken from 2 but the 3rd did the trick. I was sad to see it so tiny; despite not having to touch it I still found it hard to remove it from the trap and dispose of it. I wore gardening gloves and was as far from it as I could be. I realised that this was something I still hadn't completely conquered. It set me thinking about all the things we find difficult in life, things we are frightened of and how we respond. As we enter the colder months perhaps it's a reminder that we need to look after each other because we all have fears. For some it may be the dark, or a fear of putting the heating on because of the cost. Perhaps the long dark evenings when someone doesn't want to venture out may set off all sorts of problems. For some there may be an anniversary coming up, or a memory triggered with Armistice/Remembrance Sunday. These things can trigger anxiety and real fear. Then as the world gears up for the Festive Season, memories of former days, can affect mental health, add to feelings of loneliness or even fear of being a burden on others! When someone says they are afraid... are we going to listen, offer support, work with them or are we going to laugh? Yes, I can laugh now at my mice fears, laugh with others about it as I move on gradually. Some people cannot laugh at their fears, are we going to be there for them, assure them they are not silly and help them?

A thought from Rev Derek: Lest we forget

For the last fifty years I have loved the writing of veterinary surgeon Alf Wight, better known as James Herriot, I can vaguely remember seeing the 1975 feature film with Simon Ward as James Herriot. I have the full series of the Christopher Timothy series aired from 1979 to 1990 and have loved watching the latest adaptation screened on Channel 5 and caught up with the final episode of season 6 earlier this week. I found this series particularly moving as Tristan Farnon deals with his ghost from the war, where he was decorated for being a hero, yet he knew deep down that the real heroes were those who had lost their lives in the war. Earlier in the series I was moved as the church bells rang out to announce that the war in Europe had come to an end, and on Thursday there was the announcement that the war with Japan was ended. I was particularly moved at the end of the final episode as the people from Darrowby climbed up onto a moor and lit a beacon and looking out over the hilly terrain they could see beacons glowing in the distance.

I was born at the end of the 1950s so the Second World War had been ended for over 13 years when I put in an appearance, so for me the Second World War was nothing more than an event in history, like WW1, the Battle of Hastings and the War of the Roses and for me it has always been easy to be detached. My dad was 11 when the First World War broke out and he knew people from the village where he grew up who went to war, but never came back. He was in the Home Guard during the Second World War which meant that he never saw active service, and later in life he laughed at the antics of Dad's Army on the telly. My mum's younger brother joined the first airborne division and flew in Arnhem in September 1944 in a glider, he returned, but knew friends who weren't so lucky. Even though he survived the war, it shaped the rest of his life and my mum talked about the fear her family felt waiting for news of his whereabouts and the relief when he came home unscathed. He might never have had physical wounds, but he had memories that would haunt him for the rest of his life.

For so many people, today will be a day of remembering and it is interesting looking at all the displays and the preparation for marches of remembrance on Sunday. Crowds will turn out, most of us with no memory of the Second World War, but simply to show our respect. Of course, we have plenty of military personnel who have died in the South Atlantic during the Falklands war, in places like Northern Ireland, the Gulf and Afghanistan and we don't simply come together to remember, but we also owe a great debt of gratitude to both the fallen and the survivors who served their country over the last 125 years, so, if you are somewhere that marks the two minutes of silence, remember and give thanks because without the efforts of the few, the rest of us wouldn't be able to live in peace.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning, We will remember them.



Photograph of the Dereham Remembrance Garden courtesy of my son in law.

Please pray for the congregation and community in Holt





**HOLT METHODIST
CHURCH
CHRISTMAS FAIR**

**SATURDAY 15TH NOV
11 AM TO 3 PM**

LIGHT LUNCHES WILL BE SERVED
VEGGIE OPTIONS AVAILABLE

**HOMEMADE CAKES AND SCONES
STALLS, TOMBOLA, RAFFLE,
COMPETITIONS**

**COME AND
JOIN US**



Beetley Methodist Church

Coffee Morning



**Saturday, 29th
November**

9.30-11.30am

**A share of the proceeds goes
to the Food Bank**

A thought from Rev Neil:

When I was twelve, I began to sense that there was something deeper in life, and to sense, somehow that perhaps this deeper thing that I was looking for could be found in Christianity. Our family weren't churchgoers, but I had a modern English version of the Bible because a nasty teacher had prescribed writing out Psalm 119 as punishment, and so began to read.

Long story short, I ended up becoming an ordained minister.



I wonder if everybody experiences the same desire to journey inward, to seek to fill that which seems to be missing, at a similar age? I suspect that they do. It is at this age that we celebrate significant spiritual moments, whether Bar or Bat Mitzvah, confirmation, initiation or possibly baptism. It was Blaise Pascal who suggested that in men and women "this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words, by God himself." (Pensees #425) This suggests to me that this search is a vital part of normal human development, as regular as learning to walk and speak, yet it is an aspect that is hugely neglected.

I think it's important to say that I don't believe that this is necessarily a search for the Christian God that has been programmed into us by our Creator, as some may suggest, but rather is a search to expand and explore that which lies within so that as human beings we may learn to live lives that are fuller and have deeper meaning.

The experience of fully encountering Being - the "is-ness" of life (if I may borrow from John Macquarrie) - I think, can be described as God, and the Christian, or Muslim, or Hindu, or Buddhist interpretation thereof as expression of the search undertaken in different cultures and expressed in the language and norms of that culture.

As a child grows, he or she begins to experiment with speech, trying to form their first words, "Mama," or "Da". All the adults gather around and encourage them to form words; as a child starts trying to stand, the parents encourage them to walk. Indeed, it is considered important for the child to walk and talk within their own limits and so the efforts of parents and society are employed to further that aim. The child will learn to walk and talk according to their own language and style and culture and community, and (hopefully!) becomes a successful part of that community.

But what about our children's search for meaning? Maybe send the kid to Sunday school once a week (during school time), say grace occasionally. Do we stand around encouraging the child to take the first steps, speak the first sounds of spiritual growth? Or do we send them out on their own hoping they pick up something meaningful somewhere, because honestly, we haven't done much spiritual searching (and/or finding) ourselves?

I'm not commending religious indoctrination, where children are forced to learn catechisms or creeds, but am advocating that as people encourage their children to walk and talk according to their culture, they encourage their children to embark on a deeper journey into themselves, growing spiritually in a way that suits their personality, desires and interests, and in that they may discover God - whoever God ends up being for them.

I think that it's dangerous when avowed atheists such as Richard Dawkins (in "The God Delusion") suggest that parents encouraging their children to follow their religion is immoral. Surely, he would not encourage adults to avoid teaching their children to talk, on the assumption that when they are old enough, and in possession of all the facts, they can choose for themselves which language they would like to speak, if at all? Indeed, such a parent would be considered negligent.

Yet we live in a society in which this spiritual part of human development has been neglected for years, and we see the effects of it: more people in therapy than ever before, more unhappy relationships than ever before, increasing individualism and consumerism. A 'me first' attitude that threatens to destroy the planet and rejects the value of community. The best practices of our different faiths, I believe, offer us at least a framework for our own spiritual development, and a greater willingness to engage in that has the potential to change our world.

A thought from Aileen Fox:

Dark nights, damp and cold, Autumn and Winter are here. Being British we moan about the weather and long for Spring and it's only early November! It is always a shock to me that first time in autumn when I return home and it's dark. I have left in daylight and forgotten to put the outside light on; to me that's the real sign of the autumn/winter season, putting the outside light on when it's still light.

Light means a great deal, we are able to see clearly whether trying to locate something in a dark corner of the cupboard or needing a light to read or sew by. We light candles that bring cheer and use them in celebration.

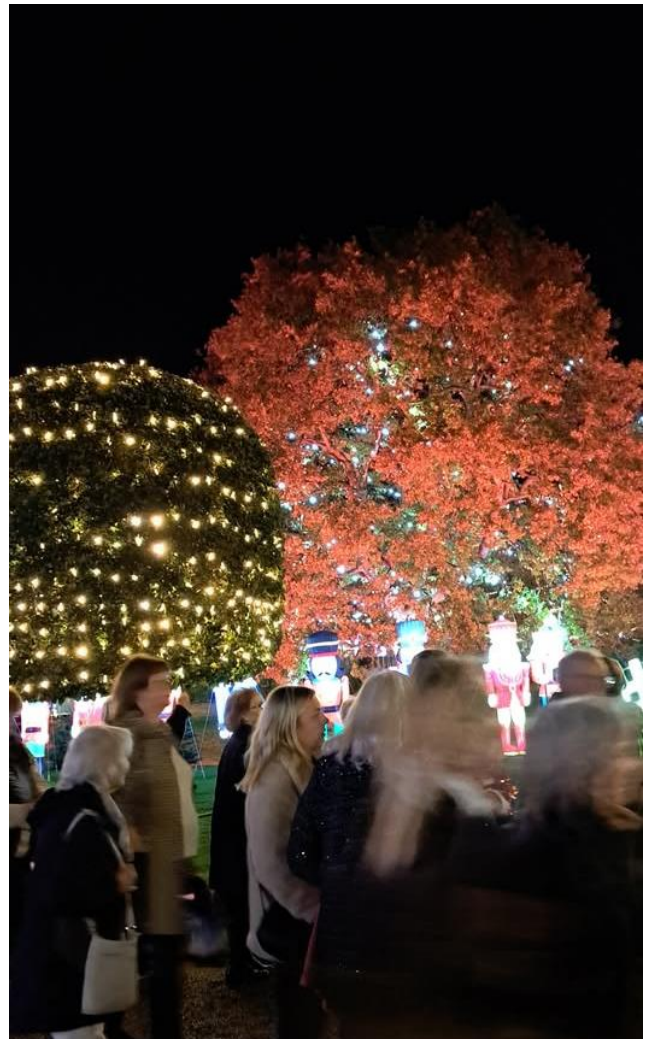
I had a ticket for Thursford's Christmas Show. In the early afternoon I entered from daylight into the auditorium festooned with lights. Afterwards in the early evening there were lights in the trees before we made our way to the more dimly lit car park.

It got me thinking about our need for light, not only to see where we are going, but also to do the things we enjoy and to feel good. Sitting at a table in the dark would be difficult, we would struggle to find our way there, let alone prepare a meal. Yet for many people darkness is a regular occurrence. We know if we have a sudden power cut especially in the evening, we wonder where the torches are. Yet in the 21st century people live regularly without light, it may be because of war, poverty, or there is insufficient infrastructure to bring electricity to an area. We take so much for granted when others have so little.

Many years ago I slept out on a wintry night in Sheringham to publicise the problem of homelessness. It was a Methodist Youth project. Whilst we had sleeping bags and someone keeping an eye on us to make sure we were safe as the pubs emptied, it was daunting and not an experience I would repeat. Yes, there were some street lights and the stars, but there was for the most part, darkness and cold. It was a big relief when morning came.

We have just had Remembrance Sunday, did we think about the conditions that the troops experienced in the trenches? Did we think about the darkness being experienced by many today in Ukraine, in Sudan, after natural disasters following hurricanes and destruction? Are we truly aware that there are families who sit with a candle because they cannot afford to put money on to the electricity supply?

In the first chapter of St John's gospel we read of the Word becoming flesh. Verse 4...in him was life and the life was the light of all people. Verse 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. Are we prepared to be lights in a difficult world and show Jesus' love for all?



A thought from Rev Derek:

Children in Need 2025

The Friday of the BBC Children in Need appeal has been an important part of my journey up to Christmas for me for a long time. Launched in 1980, I would have watched the first ever programme while still living at home with my parents and almost an unbelievable half a century on, I marvel at how much life has happened during that time, both for me personally and for the charity as it has raised over a billion pounds and, more importantly transformed the lives of millions of children. As I write my thought for the day for this Sunday, I am tired and find myself in need of a bit of a boost, and, like a little ray of Sunshine Pudsey Bear, smiles and waves and give me the energy I need.

One of the most memorable parts of The Children In Need Appeal for me over the years has been the relationship with the BBC One Show. I used to love watching the Team Rickshaw Challenge as a group of teenagers with their personal mountains to climb, would spend time in a relay pedalling a rickshaw, pushing themselves beyond their wildest expectations, telling their story, and celebrating their five minutes of fame. It saddens me when I know that some of those young heroes are no longer with us, but they did it! They had received and they had given back and I will always love them for that.

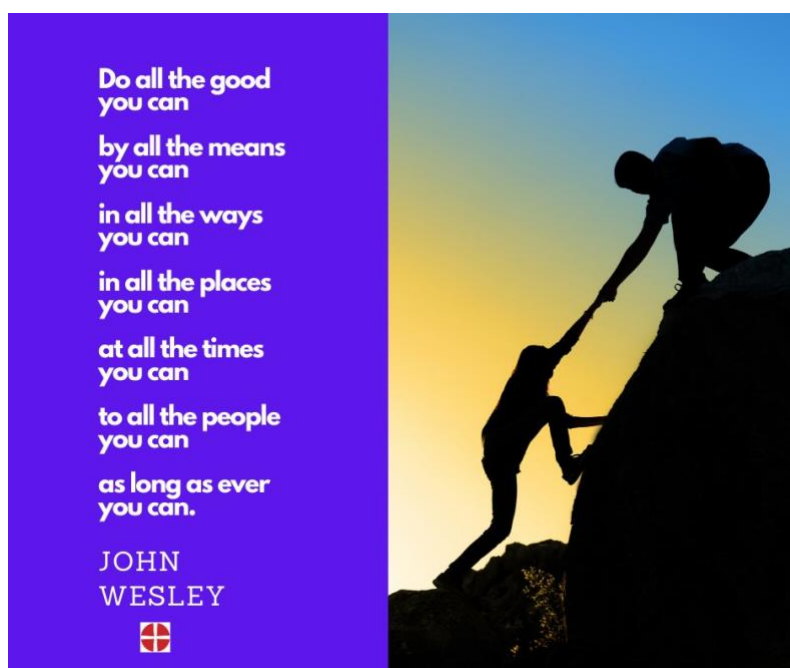
As with so many other things, Covid changed the way things could happen and in recent years we have seen the emergence of The One Show challenge squad. These are young people who have benefitted for the money raised by Children in Need and, in the period leading up to the big show on Friday 14th November 2025, we have come to know the four young people, heard their stories, been moved by the lives they lead, and been inspired by them. Whilst across the land people will have been holding creative and imaginative fundraising events, will have been shaking buckets and contributing to the next billion pounds to be raised, these four young people are different, they have received, and are now giving back, not just their loose change, but giving until it hurts.

For me, this is perhaps one of the best metaphors for life I can think of. I believe in a God who has given me everything and I do my best to give all I can in appreciation and sometimes that means not simply token gestures, but giving until it hurts. This has been a tough week for us a family and I nearly copped out and reused an old thought for the day, then I saw the familiar little yellow bear with the polka dot bandage, he is special to me because he bears the name of my home town, God Bless Pudsey and the millions of lives transformed over over forty five years.

People say "I don't believe in God" and I shake my head in disbelief.



Please pray for the congregation and community in Litcham





**HOLT METHODIST
CHURCH**

AFTERNOON TEA
FRIDAY 28TH NOVEMBER
2 - 4 PM



**A DELICIOUS SELECTION OF
HOMEMADE CAKES
STALLS & TOMBOLA**



SWAFFHAM METHODIST CHURCH

THE MEETING PLACE DROP-IN

will be pleased to welcome

**Green Pastures Christian Pop-up Shop
(from Dereham)**

on Tuesday 25th November

10:00 – 12:00

**Please come and join us for
tea/coffee/biscuits/toast,
a friendly chat,**

and a browse around the Pop-up Shop.

Books, gifts, cards etc.

all in time for Christmas!

shop@greenpasturesdereham.org.uk

Tel: 01362 697953

A thought from Rev Neil:

From a very young age Alex, I guess like most other kids, has been fascinated by dinosaurs. Our lounge floor was covered with toy dinosaurs of every description, dinosaur books, we had dinosaur shows on TV.

As he grew older his interest morphed into palaeontology and a fascination with fossils. What a joy then for us to discover that we can go fossil hunting on the beaches not too far from us!

Our favourite beach for fossil hunting is West Runton where it is relatively easy to pick up any number of fossils in a short time. I suspect there are many that we're missing because we don't really know what to look for!

The point of this thought, though, is about time.

If you know anything about dinosaurs, for example, you will know that the Tyrannosaurus Rex lived closer in time to us than to the Stegosaurus, and Cleopatra lived closer to the iPhone's invention than to the building of the pyramids. Our minds just tend to lump everything together in the category of "age of dinosaurs" or "ancient Egypt".

As a child growing up in the seventies, the sixties, before I was born, seemed a little like ancient history, yet now the 2010s - a similar time gap - seem like just yesterday.

Of course, as a human race, our time on this planet is nothing but a blip, modern humans taking only the last few seconds of a twenty-four-hour clock representing the whole history of the earth. How much have we learnt, built, accomplished - and destroyed - in those seconds?

So, what is my point?

Often we are inclined to view ourselves with a certain level of superiority, perhaps seeing ourselves as the pinnacle of creation, the moment when God had been able to rest from all they created because "it was very good".

A broader view of the wonder of creation - the ages that have come before us, the age of dinosaurs, the age of the Egyptians, and yes, perhaps even the sixties, should fill us rather with a sense of awe and wonder. We should be amazed at the privilege we have of being part of life on this incredible planet.

We should be reminded of the very small amount of time we have been around and, while we may have disproportionately affected the future of the planet, be reminded that the earth will - hopefully - recover after we are gone. In a few thousand years, never mind the two to three hundred thousand years that modern humans have been here, there will be very little evidence of our presence on earth.

Hopefully once we are gone the planet will heal and restore itself.

But it doesn't have to be that way. I write as COP30 is meeting and the United States seems determined to make as much use of fossil fuels as possible.

But perhaps, if we realise our limited presence on the earth, rather than plundering the earth for all it has, we will learn again to care for it, to “tend the garden” which was given to us so that our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren can learn and grow and play (with toy dinosaurs and fossils!), and treasure what has been handed down to them.

That we can instil in them a sense of wonder, and that together we will all learn to live simply, limit our effect on earth, and marvel at the scale of creation, from the very beginning to the future of the planet.



A prayer by Seb Bell for Transgender Day of Remembrance

Jesus at the Pride Protest:

Jesus stands at the protest.
Not as a spectacle.
Not as a sermon.
Just there;
He's shoulder to shoulder with the ones
whose names are bellowed over hate.
His sign reads, "You Are Safe With Me."
It's hand-crafted, uneven,
held high with calloused hands
that once touched lepers
and now reach for the rejected again.
He's walking beside the trans teen
whose family won't speak their name,
beside the drag queen
who was followed home last week,
beside the priest's kid
who stopped praying just to survive.
Jesus doesn't flinch when slurs are shouted.
He's heard worse when on the cross.
He locks eyes with the preacher on the corner
holding a sign that says "Repent,"
and Jesus replies:
"They're already holy. You just can't see it yet."
He helps lift the barricades,
and shares his umbrella during the downpour.
He holds space when someone starts to cry,
not with answers,
but with presence.
A presence that says:
"I see you. You are beloved. Even here."
He's not above anger,
but his rage burns clean.
No destruction; just disruption.
Not violence, but never peace at the cost of
justice.
He stands in front
when police push forward.
He doesn't move.
Not because he wants a fight,
but because some things are worth standing in
the way for.
He joins the chants:
"Trans rights are human rights!"
Not ironically. Not symbolically.
Fully.
Because Jesus has never been worried
about bodies that don't fit categories,
or love that doesn't come with church approval.
He's marching, not to be radical,
but because love,
real love,
doesn't hide behind stained glass
while people bleed in the street.



A thought from Aileen:

Angels

I was recently in Norwich and decorations abounded. The glittery features outside Chantry Place looked bright even on a dull rainy day. I wandered through the Royal Arcade. The windows were full of festive items with bright displays but there were also statues of Angels placed outside the arcade shops. They were in gold but not garish or glittery. Some had crowns and carried what looked like a sheet possibly of music. (Ready to sing Hark the Herald Angels...?) The taller ones clutched hearts golden hearts. Hearts are vital to each one of us to enable us to live, but equally our hearts cause us to feel different things like love, joy and even sorrow.

The festive season can be full of jollity, family, gifts but for many also a time of loneliness, grief, sadness, stress, sometimes homelessness and often financial worry.

The Gold Angels made me stop and think. There are people who are angels, though they are not dressed in gold or have wings. These angels are just ordinary people who care, often making great sacrifices themselves. They may volunteer for a charity or church, provide transport for those without the means of getting to doctors or hospital or shops. Some help at a warm space or community cafe, or support a foodbank. Others assist with youth organisations, older people groups or fundraise for vital organisations.

Angels are people in our streets who despite being in a hurry themselves stop and help, it may be for someone who has fallen in the street, or helping with a broken-down car. Angels support and call the emergency services at road traffic accidents. Some angels even rescue a lost cat or dog that is perhaps injured, others even tend a dead animal on the road and take it to a vet. Whether lost or dead they take so it can be scanned for a chip and the owner contacted. People who are angels go the extra mile because they care for other people.

God cares for us all he sent Jesus into the world. Perhaps we could try and be like angels, helping, supporting and most of all sharing the Good News of Jesus, the real reason for Christmas.





A thought from Rev Derek:

The Customer is King

The pilot for the sitcom "Are You Being Served" first hit our screens on Friday 8th September 1972 and the likes of Mr Rumbold, Captain Peacock, Mrs Slocombe, Miss Brahms and Mr Humphries soon became household names as they manned the Ladieswear and Menswear departments of Grace Bros. For a while during the early part of my career I worked for a large clothing wholesaler and I have stood in shops that look very similar to the fictional Grace Bros. We had a mantra back in those day "the customer is king" and as a young man learning to deal with customers I was constantly reminded that it is the customer who pays my wages and therefore, regardless of how awkward they were, how unreasonable their demands were, they were always treated with respect as though they were the most important customer the business had the privilege to deal with. What changed?

Sadly, we had to cancel our fortnight's holiday recently. The plan had been to spend a week at a small independent hotel in Blackpool, I rang the owner, she sent her love and best wishes and looked forward to seeing us when Karen was well enough - job done in five minutes and I felt good. Our second week was in a cottage in North Yorkshire booked with one of Britain's largest holiday cottage companies. After some digging I found a telephone number, I rang and went through the automated switchboard, being told that it would be easier using their website.

I sat listening to terrible music for half an hour and nobody answered. I tried a WhatsApp "live chat" and once my message had been sent I was told that an agent would be with me shortly, four hours later and following increasingly threatening messages I had still heard nothing. To cut a long story short, five days later all I had received was a satisfaction survey. I sorted the holiday myself by contacting the people who own the cottage by phone and they sorted me out, the saga with the booking agent still rolls on though.

My daughter, who is dependent on her glasses, went to a well-known optician for her annual check-up and needed a new prescription. Her lenses are quite specialised and when she went to pick them up, she couldn't see through them, she was told to take them home and try to get used to them over the weekend which is ridiculous advice, two retests on, she is still waiting for a pair of glasses she can actually see through. I took my car into a local garage for a minor job that needed doing on Friday, when I had heard nothing from the garage, I rang them late afternoon and was told they hadn't even looked at it. I thought nothing of it but rang them Saturday morning only to discover that the garage is closed until 8am Monday!

There was a time when I would have penned a letter of complaint for poor customer service, but it seems to me, that complaining about customer service today is a full-time task. Today in the church calendar is known as "Christ the King" Sunday, and my recent experiences have made me think about what is important and who is important to us. I like to feel valued and maybe on a day like today I appreciate the fact that whilst I might not feel to be valued by modern day companies, I still matter to God.



Please pray for the congregation and community in Mattishall



A thought from Dee Moden:

Appreciating the Seasons

Autumn comes in all its glory, nature eagerly tells its story
Leaves are falling from the trees every time there's a breeze.
The berries are ripe and ready for birds' lunches
While crab apples hang like jewels from the branches.
As the seasons change nature and creation meets,
Colours of Autumn surround our streets.
Birds migrate to warmer climates; Hedgehogs go to sleep and hibernate.
Gardens prepare for the Winters sleep, silent, peaceful, dark and deep.
Restfully recharging, preparing the way, ready to burst forth another day.
Scarves, hats and gloves donned as the days get colder
Jack Frost lurking behind every street corner.
The seasons roll round year after year, it's nature just doing its thing.
Do we really appreciate this amazingly wonderful world we live in?
So, we should stop, take our time, listen and look around.
Drink in all the sights and sound
You will be amazed what treasures are lurking there
You only have to 'stand and stare'



Walsingham Methodist Church

JOIN US AT OUR

Crib FESTIVAL

DECEMBER 5TH - 14TH

11am-3pm Monday to Friday
11am-2pm Sat 6th and Sun 7th

Over 80 Crib



All Welcome

Sunday 14th - 2pm open for viewing

4.30pm Carol Service

Refreshments after

High Street, Little Walsingham, Norfolk



Swaffham
Methodist Church

Christmas Fayre

Saturday
6th December

9.30am – 12 noon



Cakes,
savouries &
preserves

Tombola / Children's
Tombola



Books, games
& jigsaws

Children's
Corner

Gift stall



Refreshments

Charity Registration No. 1163777