

# Connections



Ashbourne Methodist  
Church

January 2025



Dear Friends

I hope as Advent speeds along you are finding time for you and for God in the busyness of the world.

Recently, Chris and I took space for us and went to the Elite Cinema to

watch André Rieu and Johann Strauss Orchestra's Christmas Concert: Gold and Silver. Others from around our Circuit saw it too. It was full of wonderful music, dancing and humour.

One of the beautifully sung carols was the German Christmas Carol, *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht* – Silent Night, Holy Night. The carol has its origins in a small village near Salzburg on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1818.

Assistant Pastor of St Nicholas Church, Josef Mohr saw a small group present the drama of the first chapters of Matthew and Luke's gospels. Instead of going straight home after the event Mohr took a path up a hill overlooking the village of Oberndorf. As he looked at the snow-covered village, he was reminded of a poem he had previously written about the angels announcing the birth of Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, to shepherds on a hillside. He decided the

poem would make a carol for the Christmas Eve service. They didn't have music, and the church organ was out of action so Mohr asked the church organist, Franz Gruber to compose a melody that could be sung with guitar accompaniment. Despite only having a few hours, Gruber composed music for the poem, and it was sung for the first time on Christmas Eve 1818.

Since 1818 this carol has been sung all around the world and one fun fact is that it holds the Guinness World Record for being the most recorded Christmas song in history, with over 137,000 known recordings in 733 different versions!

This carol invites us into the still centre of the Christmas story, to contemplate Mary holding the newborn Jesus, the Light of the World. The image of Mary holding her newborn child in a quiet stable is a reminder that even in the most unlikely of places, peace can be found. The star that guided the wise men to Bethlehem, shining brightly in the dark of night, offers more than just light; it points the way to something greater than the chaos of the world.

Perhaps, this Christmas season, more than ever, we need to recapture that sense of calm. To allow ourselves time to reflect, to breathe deeply, and to remember that the Christmas story isn't just about

busyness and preparations, but about the quiet moments that speak of hope and renewal. In a world often marked by uncertainty and unrest, these quiet moments offer a sense of peace that can't be found in the noise. We may not be able to change the circumstances of the world overnight, we can choose how we respond. In this season, let us follow the star — a symbol of hope, shining brightly in the darkness and guiding us through. Let's listen for the call of the angels telling us once again that the long-awaited Messiah is born, offering peace, love and joy to all people.

May you have a blessed Christmas time

Nicola

### **Ashbourne Circuit Family News**

Soon after you read this, your decorations will be put away for another year. Presents will have been shared and given thanks for. Cards and wrapping paper will have been recycled. Hopefully, we can now look back at Christmas as a joyful time spent celebrating the birth of Jesus with family and friends.

BUT not everyone will be feeling quite the same. Many find Christmas challenging. Ill health, anxiety, loss of a dear one, financial worries, fear, and loneliness can all make this time of year a big struggle. So we continue to pray for all those in our church family and the wider community who are in need.

As we look to the New Year, we trust that God's gift of Christ gives peace and hope to all of us, whatever our circumstances.

Back in December, Gwen and Dennis celebrated their 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary so belated congratulations to you both. On January 28<sup>th</sup> it is Cherrie B's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and we send her our love and best wishes. We also want to send our thanks to Paul T for his hard work delivering the Safeguarding training, within our Church and the wider circuit, over the past few years. Cathy St. will now be taking this on, as part of her Safeguarding role.

Please remember to let us know if you are celebrating a special event which you wish us to share in the Connections magazine. Similarly, please tell us if you know of someone who needs a visit or special prayers. The new Circuit Prayer Diary and Directory is in the process of being distributed. Thank you to Carole for organising this. We can use this daily to pray for each other in our circuit and the wider Methodist Church, but please remember to respect each other's confidentiality.

Wendy Haslam (Pastoral Secretary) 15.12.24

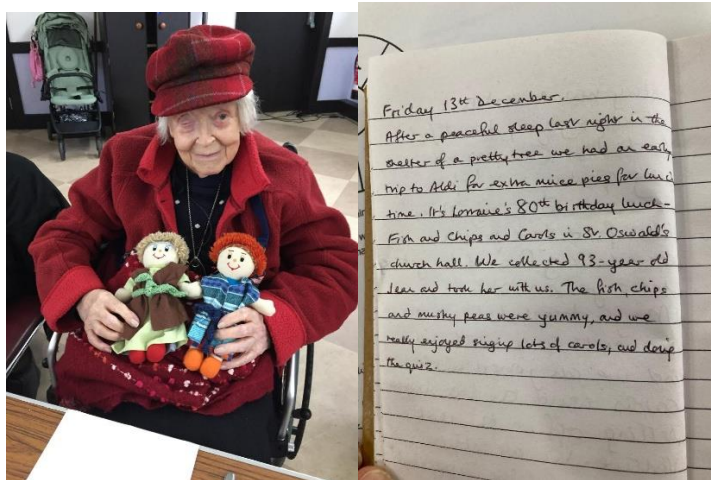
*Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. (John 15:4)*

Earlier in the year the Methodist Church in M'Bungoni asked for help to build a new toilet block, thanks to the help of donations from our Church, they have made great progress! A large congregation in the hundreds, their facilities were woefully inadequate – note the current toilet block in the back ground of the first picture! Thanks again to all who helped make this happen.



Rachel Murt

## Posada at Fish and Chip Lunch



### **MMRG**

The Mission and Ministry Resourcing Group (MMRG) are very much looking forward to facilitating a **District Retreat Day 'Knowing Our Place: Responding to Psalm 8'** on **Thursday 23rd January at the Rivergreen Methodist Hub from 10.00am to 4.00pm**. The day will be led by Rev'd Andrew Fox, who is currently Superintendent of the Rotherham and Deane Valley Circuit in the Sheffield District and brings with him a wealth of experience of ministry.

We are encouraging all who are involved in ministry in its widest sense to join us on the day.

Details of how to book are on the poster. People can also click on the link below or contact me via the District office [districtadmin@methodist-nd.org.uk](mailto:districtadmin@methodist-nd.org.uk) 0115 9375665

<https://forms.gle/dNFLqBjYqamF7XuG9>

## Shoebox Appeal

Thank you for supporting this years Shoebox Appeal.

Ashbourne and the surrounding area donated over 580 shoeboxes! An amazing effort during difficult times for everyone. Your shoeboxes are now on their way to children in Eastern Europe who might otherwise not receive anything at Christmas. Just think of the smiles on their faces when they open the shoeboxes.

If you would like to follow updates on the journey of the shoeboxes from around the UK, please ask them to join our Facebook Group: [Ashbourne Shoebox Appeal Supporters Group](#)

Many thanks

Kevin Barclay

Rotary Club of Ashbourne



## ADVENT SCHOOL VISITS (2 – 6 DECEMBER 2024)

Many thanks to all those people who helped to deliver the Christmas story to our local schools and settings.



We had a very enthusiastic and committed team of puppeteers, nativity characters, bag sorters, biscuit makers, photocopiers, activity cutters, refreshment servers, costume fitters, prop collectors, bookmark stickers and prayer supporters. As a result, we had a very successful week, visiting 9 schools and reaching 220 children with the good news of the birth of Jesus. It was a real privilege to present the story in the individual schools and at Elim Church. You can see some photos below.



And here are a few of the emails we have had back from teachers at the schools:

“Thank you to you and your team for bringing your Advent workshop to our school. All the children and staff thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and were excited to receive their activity pack. Clearly a great deal of thought and care was put into preparing this workshop and is much appreciated by us.”

“I just wanted to say thanks again to you and your wonderful team for this morning. The children (and adults!) all really enjoyed it. We really appreciate all the hard work and preparation that must have gone into getting everything ready. It was a lovely way to teach the children about the Christmas story!”

Thanks again to all those taking part. Going ‘on tour’ made it a very tiring week, but we all agreed it was well worthwhile.

Tim Dutton

### **Visit of the President and Vice President of the Methodist Conference to the Nottingham and Derby District**

Saturday 11th January 2025

President and Vice President will be at the Rivergreen Methodist Hub 10:00 – 11:00 - Meet and Greet with the District Team, District Executive and Senior Ecumenical Leaders

11: 00 – 13:30 - Reasoning Together – An opportunity for ministers, circuit stewards and local preachers & worship leaders to meet with the President and Vice President, and hear more about their vision: ‘Learn to do what is right, seek justice and challenge oppression’ (Isaiah 1:17a)’. ----Buffet Lunch included-----

Vice President Afternoon - Idlewells Shopping Centre (Retail Chaplaincy) and The Sanctuary

President Afternoon - Nottingham City Pioneer Project

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2025

President 10:30 - Preaching at Ashbourne

Vice President 10:30 – Preaching online via ‘The Stream If you would like to join the online service, see separate leaflet for details. From Zoom details please email: Michelle [districtadmin@methodistnd.org.uk](mailto:districtadmin@methodistnd.org.uk)

**SAFEGUARDING** : important change to DBS Update Register system

If you have already subscribed to the DBS Update Register, you will know that currently your DBS renews automatically on an annual basis, and you do not need to do anything at all to make this happen.

The new system requires that, after five years on the register, you will receive an email from the Update Register Service asking if you are still a volunteer and want to stay on the register.

You are given two weeks to respond to this email, and after you reply the renewal will happen automatically again for the next five years.

Please be aware that if you fail to reply within the two week deadline, your name will be removed from the register and you will need to have a new DBS check done.

If you require any further clarification, please contact me.

Thank you

Cathy Stubbs  
(Safeguarding Officer)

“My mother always used to say: The older you get, the better you get, unless you’re a banana.”

• “When your mother asks, ‘Do you want a piece of advice?’ it is a mere formality. It doesn’t matter if you answer yes or no. You’re going to get it anyway.”

“You know you’ve reached middle age when you’re cautioned to slow down by your doctor, instead of by the police.”

“Common sense is like deodorant. The people who need it most never use it.”

“As you get older, three things happen. The first is your memory goes, and I can’t remember the other two.”



### **Methodists for World Mission.**

Although we have so many mission opportunities on our doorstep, in my new role as Mission Coordinator, I do want to take the opportunity to regularly share with you news of the global mission work that the Methodist Church is undertaking. With so much work going on, for this edition I have decided to select just one Country, Kenya.

There are two reasons why I have decided to start with Kenya. The first is totally personal. My Parents lived in Kenya and I was born in Nairobi and so the country is dear to my heart. Secondly, Revd Helen Cameron, President of the Methodist Church, recently visited the country, so I thought it would be interesting to share news from this visit. As some of you know, Revd Helen Cameron will be preaching at Ashbourne's Covenant Service on Sunday 12 January.

The British Methodist Church entered Kenya in 1862 and started at Ribe station near Mombasa. Today the Church is present in 45 counties in Kenya and efforts are being made to cover all 47 counties. The Church has Ministers and church members from almost all the ethnic groups in Kenya.

MCK became autonomous from the British Methodist Church in 1967 and the Church has continued to grow steadily. With its' Headquarters in Nairobi, the Church now has over 1000 congregations, with ministries including a University with satellite campus and a Hospital with a number of dispensaries and clinics. MCK manages over six hundred primary and secondary schools, numerous colleges, three Guest Houses, three rural training Centres, and children's homes.

During Helen Cameron's Presidential visit to Kenya, she visited the Kisumu Synod in Western Kenya - the largest Synod in the country. Here, in a vast rural area inhabited by 23% of the population of Kenya and which borders Lake Victoria and Uganda, the Methodist Synod comprises 30,000 members spread across 68 churches/societies in 12 circuits. In one of those

Circuits, she visited the only Health Centre in the area and a High School at Ugunja. The Clinic, established in 2001, is the only Methodist hospital in western Kenya and provides both preventative and Community Health Care services. However, resources are limited and conditions are basic. There is a shortage of beds, a shortage of basic drugs and medical equipment and a shortage of staff.

She also visited Kawangware Slum school in Nairobi. **"A place where everybody is somebody."** This sign in the Kawangware Church and School compound in many ways summed up Revd Helen Cameron's inspiring and humbling visit.

In 1996, the women of the small Methodist congregation in Kawangware slum started a feeding programme in the Church on a Sunday for some of the most needy children in the community. This developed quickly into a kindergarten and a few years' later, after fundraising for a couple of classrooms, the mothers managed to register a Primary School. The Primary School, which serves children from the slum, now has 108 children on roll, 60 of whom can only afford to pay for a lunch levy. But despite the financial challenges, the Church is determined to continue to provide education and lunch for the most vulnerable children in its' midst.

Please pray for the work of the Methodist Church in Kenya.

Crispin Scott

Many will remember Peter Dawson reading a poem he had written when he completed his sermon at Ashbourne recently. Peter has copied the editor with the poem so all can share

Light (A seasonal poem)

I am the light of the world, says Jesus  
Brighter than the sun  
Stronger than hope  
Sweeter than mead  
Longer lasting than stone  
Sharper than a pin,  
As soft as moonlight,  
Revealing the past,  
Celebrating the now,  
Indicating future paths,  
As loud as the sea,  
As quiet as a feather  
As new as birth,  
Older than forever,  
As loving and as gentle as sunrise.

You, says Jesus,  
Are the light of the world.  
Go, shine.

Peter Dawson.  
(*Ref Matthew 5: 14 – 16*)



## **The Introduction to James in the Message Bible.**

When Christian believers gather in Churches, everything that can go wrong sooner or later does. Outsiders, on observing this, conclude that there is nothing to the religion business except, perhaps, business – and dishonest business at that. Insiders see it differently. Just as a hospital collects the sick under one roof and labels them as such, the church collects sinners. Many of the people outside the hospital are every bit as sick as the ones inside, but their illnesses are either undiagnosed or disguised. It's similar with sinners outside the church.

So Christian churches are not, as a rule, model communities of good behavior. They are, rather, places where human misbehavior is brought in the open, faced and dealt with.

The letter of James shows one of the church's early pastors skillfully going about his work of confronting, diagnosing, and dealing with area of misbelief and misbehavior that had turned up in congregations committed to his care. Deep and living wisdom is on display here, wisdom both rare and essential. Wisdom is not primarily knowing the trust, although it certainly includes that; it is skill in living. For, what good is a truth if we do not know how to live it? What good is an intention if we cannot sustain it?

According to church traditions, James carries the nickname 'Old Camel Knees' because of thick calluses

built up on his knees from many years of determined prayer. The prayer is foundational to the wisdom. Prayer is always foundational to wisdom.

## **Home-Grown Poetry Evening For Christianity Month**

On a date in May at a venue to be arranged we will be holding a poetry evening as part of Christianity Month. I have offered to organise and host this event and my idea (and hope) is that anyone attached to our church circuit who has ever written a poem (or has a poem written that they really like, written by someone else) will bring it along and read it out. These do not need to be overtly Christian or Spiritual poem but a smattering of those will be welcome. It will be like an "Open Mic Night" and all are welcome whether to "perform" or just to come and listen. So, have a think, hunt out those scribblings of yesteryear, look for your favourite poems or put pen to paper. More details in the New Year will be provided. Watch this space!

Peter Dawson

## **Christmas Carol**

A wonderful evening was had by all who attended "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens' on Saturday, 14th December at Brailsford Methodist Church.

We were entertained by Ron Middleton and Lewis Hancock of the Kirk Ireton Light Program with a recitation of 'A Christmas Carol'. They sent us back to the time when you listened to the Radio in the 1930s.

It was a truly memorable evening, with Ron and Lewis's ability to captivate us into the story with their varying character voices of Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit and family, Jacob Marley, the Fezziwigs and others.

The event raised £287 towards roof repairs and purchase of a new overhead projector. Our thanks to all those involved in the preparation for the evening.

No 'Bah Humbug' here!!

Jonathan Webb



### **Praise God?**

There is a tear of sorrow,  
And there is a tear of joy,  
And there is a tear of tears,  
In which these tears alloy.

(With apologies to W, Blake: 'The Smile'.)

I was minded to write this after the Praise Service in November, when the theme was, 'How shall we; indeed, how can we praise God in our difficult times?

This time last year was for me the most difficult time. I had been caring for my wife Paula for several years, her health had deteriorated, and on December the fifth, she died.

Then the sadness of failing health was changed for another sadness; of loss, quietness and grief. The tears came of course, aplenty at first and then less so. Even after a year they can be easily nurtured by a thought, a picture, a memory.

Doubts crept in- I desperately wanted 'Salvation' for Paula to be true and real- not something that I had read about and had once truly believed in, maybe in some superficial way but now unsure.

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However, we sometimes laugh until we cry; tears are not the sole domain of despair. We can be moved to tears by the beautiful, the wonderful, the gifts we are given, devotion, praise even.

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During the summer my 'RESET' button was mysteriously pressed and that 'sure and certain hope' was alive again for me. The revelation came that my tears of sorrow could actually now be tears of joy since there is salvation and the loved one you once had is being better cared for than ever you could have done! And I am comforted.

So, should you see a tear on my cheek, it is a sign of my sure and certain hope for all- and joy unalloyed. God be praised!

P.S. The prayers and kindnesses of so many people, not least those of Brailsford and Ashbourne Methodist

Churches have been invaluable, and for these I shall be eternally grateful.

Alan Coker Mayes,

## **Brailsford Methodist Church Bookclub**

Brailsford Bookclub is now in its third year of running... and from starting with just three people it had grown to around fifteen people, sometimes slightly more.

We meet on the last Thursday every month, unless otherwise organised and have grown in fellowship and friendship.

The reading material has ranged from the autobiography of Michelle Obama to Johnathon Strange and Mr Norrell by Susanna Clarke.

Not all reading material has met with a resounding "wonderful", but what each book has done, accompanied by discussion, is pushed boundaries, thought processes and a recognition that having an open mind is important to learning and growth. It is a safe space where we come together, share experiences and ask questions, sometimes with profound answers.

We recently held our Christmas fuddle where this year we had the privilege of four extra special guests, Mary, Joseph and two Shepherds (seen on the blue chair), we had a bring and share lunch with non-alcoholic wine etc, Christmas crackers, and Carols around the tree as well as a short time of prayer and blessing to conclude, and of course, not forgetting the 'business' of reviewing the last book.

It has been and continues to be a huge joy and privilege to meet with all who are part of BMCBC and I look forward to 2025 and our exciting new reads. If you fancy coming along in 2025 please let me know and I'll give you further details. Many blessings,

Tracy Dawson

### **Ashbourne Circuit Church Services**

Please check the website for the most current information,  
<https://www.ashbournemethodist.org.uk/news>.

#### **SUNDAY DECEMBER 22<sup>ND</sup>**

Ashbourne	10:30	Robert Sales	All Age, Carol Service
Brailsford	10:45	At All Saints	
Kirk Ireton	18:30	Tom Parkinson	Carol Service
<b>Kniveton</b>	<b>14:30</b>	Rev Nicola Briggs	Carol Service

#### **TUESDAY DECEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>**

Milldale	16:00	Rev Nicola Briggs	Christmas Eve Service
<b>Brailsford</b>	<b>23:15</b>	<b>At All Saints</b>	United Christmas Eve Service

#### **WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup>**

**Ashbourne 10:00 Rev Nicola Briggs Christmas Day Service**

**SUNDAY DECEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup>**

**Osmaston 10:45 Village Hall United Benefice and Circuit Service**

**SUNDAY JANUARY 5<sup>th</sup>**

Ashbourne	10:30	Peter Dawson	
	16:30	Tracy Dawson	Afternoon Tea Service
Brailsford	10:30	Rev David Leese	Holy Communion All Age, Covenant
Parwich	14:30	Rev Nicola Briggs	Holy Communion Covenant

**SUNDAY JANUARY 12<sup>th</sup>**

Ashbourne	10:30	Rev Nicola Briggs Rev Helen Cameron	Holy Communion Covenant
Brailsford	10:45	At All Saints	
Kniveton	14:30	Anne Parkinson	

**SUNDAY JANUARY 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

	10:00	Muddy Church	Biggin area
Ashbourne	10:30	<b>Pulpit Swap</b>	
	18:30	Lorraine Hawkins	PRAISE

Brailsford	10:30	Tom Parkinson	
<b>Parwich</b>	<b>17:00</b>	Rev Nicola Briggs	Holy Communion Covenant

### **SUNDAY JANUARY 26<sup>th</sup>**

Ashbourne	10:30	Fiona Green	
	<b>18:30</b>	<b>At Elim Church</b>	<b>ACT United Service</b>
Brailsford	10:45	At All Saints	
Kirk Ireton	18:30	Peter Dawson	
Kniveton	11:00	Rev Nicola Briggs	Holy Communion Covenant

Changes to normal services are in **bold**

Dates for your diary and your prayers

### **DECEMBER**

Wed 25th	12:00	ACT Christmas Lunch and Party at Elim Church
Sun 29th	10:45	<b>United Benefice and Circuit Service at Osmaston Village Hall</b>

### **JANUARY 2025**

Sat 11th - Sun 12th	Methodist President and Vice- President visiting the District
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|--------------|---------------------|--|
| Wed 15th     | 10-12<br>7-9pm      | Advanced Safeguarding Training (on zoom)                                     |
| Thu 23rd     | 10:00<br>-<br>16:00 | District Day of Reflection at Rivergreen District Hub for anyone in ministry |
| Wed 29th     | 19:30               | Ashbourne Church Council   |
| <b>MARCH</b> |                     |  |
| Wed 19th     | 19:30               | Ashbourne Church Council   |
| Wed 26th     | 19:30               | Circuit Meeting at Brailsford  |

### **Circuit Directory and Prayer Diary**

There is a new edition of the Circuit Directory and Prayer Diary. Your pastoral visitor, housegroup leader or church steward should be giving them out. As old copies contain sensitive information, they should be destroyed by shredding or burning.

Please pray for the families listed on each day of the month. Let's cover our circuit with prayer.

If you need another copy, please contact Carole Thorpe on [circuitadmin@ashbournemethodist.org.uk](mailto:circuitadmin@ashbournemethodist.org.uk) or 346535.

## **ADVANCED MODULE SAFEGUARDING TRAINING 2024/25**

The training dates and venues are now available

### **Online sessions**

Wednesday 15th January 10:00-12:00

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1047806727127>

Wednesday 15th January 19:00-21:00

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1047810337927>

### **Face to Face sessions**

Saturday 15th March 10:00-14:00 Stonebroom

Methodist Church DE55 6JT

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1047828462137>

Saturday 10th May 10:00-14:00 Brailsford Methodist

Church DE6 3DA

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1047834590467>

**February edition of Connections** -deadline for items to be included is 5 p.m. Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2025 by email to [clifflewer@aol.com](mailto:clifflewer@aol.com) or by hand.

## **District Retreat Day**

A District Retreat Day has been planned for Thursday 23rd January at Rivergreen Methodist Hub from 10:00 – 16:00.

The retreat is aimed at all who minister in the District, whether lay or ordained. It will be led by The Rev'd Dr Andrew Fox and will use Psalm 8 as a focus for the day.

To book, please scan the QR code or email Michelle at [districtadmin@methodist-nd.org.uk](mailto:districtadmin@methodist-nd.org.uk)



## **Posada (rear page)**

Shepherds meeting a cow on a farm; Mary & Joseph at Muddy Church; Mary & Joseph at Welly Club; Mary & Joseph having cake at Cornerstone; Mary & Joseph at Carols @ Cornerstone;

Shepherds at a brass band concert and Mary & Joseph with Open the Book sharing the Christmas story with primary school children

They have also been to the Welly Club Service, watched a Derby County football match, been to the Afternoon Tea Service and the Fish and Chip lunch, helped the treasurer with his spreadsheets and listened to the Archers.

# Advent Posada 2024



