

Newsletter and Plan

December 2023 - February 2024



Nativity Scene at Orton Photograph taken by Rachel Woof, Orton

**KIRKBY STEPHEN, APPLEBY
& TEBAY METHODIST CIRCUIT**



Cumbria District (09/07)

‘Our mission is to know Jesus and make him known’

From the Manse

Welcome from The Manse to the Winter Plan and Newsletter

The theme chosen by this year's President (Rev Gill Newton) and Vice-President (Deacon Kerry Scarlett) is **'Hidden Treasures'** based on the words from *Isaiah 45 v 3* – *"I will give you the Treasures of Darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name"*.

Isaiah's words were spoken to a people living through dark and difficult times, times of huge disruption, conflict, change and challenge. Their world, like ours, seemed to be one of darkness, with little to lift spirits or encourage; yet in this world, we see glimpses of God's glory – with words and moments to inspire and guide. Finding 'treasures' within ourselves and within our fellowships and communities, can help us to rediscover a sense of hope, of vision and purpose – and to renew our sense of calling as God's people.

As we look towards Christmas and to celebrating again the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the words of Psalm 139 remind us that we are 'treasure in the darkness' and, that as such, we are enfolded in the hands of God with potential and new life. Like gold buried deep in the earth, God's gifts lie deep within us waiting only to be revealed. Brought into the light such treasures shine with divine radiance, filling the world, spilling out into the lives of others and revealing God's presence among us!

The star-lit night and the light which shines on that humble cave where the greatest gift of all was given – the birth of Emmanuel – God with us, is treasure indeed! God is born one of us – the King of kings, the majesty of heaven born and revealed in the darkness of night, This light, shining eternally in our darkness remind each one of us that we are treasure's made in God's image. Imagine, if we all realised the treasure hidden within us, and in each other and looked for that divinely inspired radiance shining from within, perhaps we would realise, as Isaiah wrote, that 'It is I, the Lord ... who call **you** by your name'. We are 'known' by God, and so great is our value to Him that He willingly gave Himself in Jesus for you and me – that He might call us 'His Treasured Possession' (*See Exodus 19v5*).

In the film 'The Nativity', Mary and Joseph and the infant Jesus are visited first by the shepherds. As they kneel in wonder, Mary places the baby into the hands of the oldest shepherd, saying, 'He is a gift for everyone!' Later, when the Wise Men arrive, one says, the greatest of kings born in the humblest of places' and they offer their worship, then their treasures to the child.

Lord God, open the eyes of hearts afresh this season, to see anew the gift of Your 'hidden treasure' to us and to all people. Then may we offer to God, the gold of all we have and are; the frankincense of our prayers and worship; and the myrrh of sacrifice and sanctification in our humble submission to Jesus. Amen

John reminds us that, ‘*The light shines in the darkness and the darkness will never overcome it*’. (John 1v5). May our lights shine this season of Epiphany, as we praise God for the treasures and gifts that are hidden within and around us. Encouraging us as we step into 2024 with confidence that – ‘He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion’ (Phil. 1 v6).

A Prayer

Lord God, help us to see the ‘hidden treasures’ in ourselves and in all those around us – which You have placed there for the good of all; and so to value them, that their richness may be shared for the good of all and for the glory of God. **Amen** (Rev Jonathan Pye – Chair – Bristol District)

Graham Kendrick caught this fragility, beauty and wonder so well in his carol ‘Like a candle flame’ (StF 176)

Like a candle flame, flickering small in our darkness,
Uncreated light, shines through infant eyes

*God is with us, Alleluia; God is with us Alleluia.
Come to save us, Alleluia; Come to save us, Alleluia!*

Stars and angels sing, yet the earth sleeps in shadows
Can this tiny spark set the world on fire?

Yet His light shall shine, from our lives, spirits blazing;
As we touch the flame of His Holy Fire.

This Christmas and New Year, I pray that we will find and experience ‘hidden treasures’ in ourselves, our fellowships and our Mission community – becoming catalysts for change in this dark world, to the glory of God! What treasures will be revealed in Christ’s Church as we wait in Him and walk with Him through this coming year 2024?

God bless you all richly in Jesus’ Name.

Rev Stephen Radford.

Please pray and thank God for:

Upper Eden Linking Lives

Families Together in Tebay and Orton

The appointment of a new Circuit Youth Worker

Upper Eden Food Bank’s new areas of outreach

All the schools in the Upper Eden area and our connections through NISCU and NYC

For the young people fired up by 3-Generate and the Youth Worship Services at Winton

For all those who serve the Circuit and the area in their many and varied roles.

Chairman of the District

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Circuit Ministers

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Staff Rest Days**Ministers**

Rev Stephen Radford

Friday

Rev Andrew Sterling

Saturday

Circuit Administrator

Mrs Avril Swinbank

Friday, Saturday, Sunday

Circuit Connexion Services

December—No Service

January—Warcop

February—Tebay

Website Addresses**Circuit Website****www.ksaandtcircuit.org.uk**

Methodist Church Website

www.methodist.org.uk

Cumbria District Methodist Website

www.cumbriamethodistdistrict.org.ukHOW link <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6iZVadGymIBC04aEEOJryw>

Please look at the website for latest news and also reflections from lockdown.



If you are on Facebook please “Like” our Kirkby Stephen, Appleby & Tebay Methodist Circuit page and keep up to date with our latest news!

Visit of Bishop Americo Jara Reyes

A visit to the Coffee Morning at Kirkby Stephen Methodist Church for an opportunity to meet Rev Jackie Betts, lead coordinator of Cumbria Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) - seen here with Maria Esther and local supporters of MWiB. (Maria Esther had helped lead a Cumbrian MWiB Conference in 2016). The visitors received a warm welcome from Rev Stephen Radford, the Superintendent Minister, and a large number of attendees.



A visit to Tebay Methodist Church for an ecumenical service which included the local Anglicans. The helpful translation of Bishop Americo's sermon was provided by a Uruguayan member of the congregation and her daughter.

A Prayer from Joan Wager, Member of the Cumbria-Argentina Methodist Partnership Steering Group

We pray for Bishop Americo Jara Reyes and for the developing link between Primary schools in Langwathby, Cumbria and UCEL Rosario, sharing school values and activities. We especially pray for the relationship between Methodist Woman in Britain and its Argentinian equivalent, FeMMA, and the projects supported by MWiB to enhance employment opportunities for indigenous women. Amen

A prayer for the New Year

God of all that is, seen and unseen,

At the beginning of this day,
make me attentive to the treasure you have in store
and give me grace to be surprised.

When the way is dark or unclear,
be the glint to guide me on.

In the midst of this day,
enable me always to work towards your light
and give me strength to be patient.

When life is difficult and progress slow,
help me to know how much I am treasured by you.

At the end of this day,
show me again the treasures you and I have unearthed together
and give me a thankful heart.

Amen

Pru Cahill, deacon, North Lancashire Circuit





As a student at Cliff College I did my dissertation on open air preaching. Methodism's founder John Wesley was prolific street preacher, though he said himself that he had to make himself 'more vile' in order to begin. With the influence of his friend George Whitfield, this way of speaking boldly helped shape Methodism and was part of its growth together with the early societies.

Today many of us feel uncomfortable with the idea of preaching in such a way. Some worry such preaching is too closely linked with fearful turn or burn preaching than communicating the good news of Jesus Christ. Others simply think this sort of preaching is ineffective. The aim of speaking boldly isn't to resurrect open air preaching (although it doesn't exclude this), it simply calls us to communicate the good news we have received in places and with people where it has not been received.

I believe we need to go back to our foundations and resurrect the notion that our message really is good news to people. Many people in our society either don't know our story, or believe our message is false and at worst oppressive. There are people who have encountered the gospel and believe it to be bad news for them or, maybe worse, irrelevant. If the good news we are preaching does not come across as good news to people, may I suggest we are doing it wrong. We may ourselves have the wrong ideas of the gospel, which may not realise, and actually cause us harm and to be further away from the embrace of God. To preach good news to people means it needs to sound like good news to the people we are preaching to.

But we all might want different news to be good news, so how do we know if we are telling it right? Scripture is clear that if it is not good news to the person oppressed, to the outsider, the bereaved, the lonely, then it is not good news. In other words, if those who are caught in the grip of the effects of sin and darkness and chaos in their lives do not see the gospel of Christ as good news, then there is something fundamentally wrong with our message or the way we tell it.

When John the Baptist was unsure of Jesus, John's disciples asked for his credentials. Jesus replied: 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them (Luke 7:22). I believe we are being called to deeply reflect on the message we preach as a church. Like John and his disciples many people will be unsure about Jesus because people are not seeing the good news in effect. A quote, often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi goes 'preach the gospel, use words if necessary'. There is a sense that our words are simply not enough unless they are paired with the way we live. We must be known for our love before we can tell people their lives can be transformed by Christ's love.

If we are Christ's representatives on earth, we are also representatives of the gospel – the good news. I pray we might heed that call as Christ's people, that we are transformed by the gospel to the point that our gospel cannot help but be the gossip in our communities.

Rev Andrew



Lectionary

3 Dec	Isaiah 64:1-9, Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, 1 Corinthians 1:3-9, Mark 13:24-37
10 Dec	Isaiah 40:1-11, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, 2 Peter 3:8-15a, Mark 1:1-8
17 Dec	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11, Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, John 1:6-8, 19-28
24 Dec	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16, Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 Romans 16:25-27, Luke 1:26-38
31 Dec	Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Psalm 148, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:22-40
7 Jan	Genesis 1:1-5, Psalm 29, Acts 19:1-7, Mark 1:4-11
14 Jan	1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20), Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, John 1:43-51
21 Jan	Jonah 3:1-5, 10, Psalm 62:5-12, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Mark 1:14-20
28 Jan	Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Psalm 111, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, Mark 1:21-28
4 Feb	Isaiah 40:21-31, Psalm 147:1-11, 20c, 1 Corinthians 9:16-23, Mark 1:29-39
11 Feb	2 Kings 2:1-12, Psalm 50:1-6, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6, Mark 9:2-9
18 Feb	Genesis 9:8-17, Psalm 25:1-10, 1 Peter 3:18-22, Mark 1:9-15
25 Feb	Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16, Psalm 22:23-31, Romans 4:13-25, Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9



Circuit Calendar

December

2nd	3.00-4.30pm	Tebay-Christmas Teas
7th	7.00pm	K Stephen-Light up a Life
20th	7.30pm	K Stephen-Carol Service
24th	10pm	K Stephen-Christmas Eve Communion Service
25th	10.00am	K Stephen-Christmas Day Service at Baptist Church
25th	10.30am	Tebay-Christmas Day Service-Rev S Radford
25th	10.30am	Appleby-Christmas Day Service-Rev A Sterling

January

6th	10.00-11.30am	K Stephen -Coffee Morning
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February

3rd	10.00-11.30am	K Stephen -Coffee Morning
4th	2.30pm	Orton—Michael Hardie from the Leprosy Mission Tea afterwards

Mid-week Services and Prayer Meetings

Appleby Monthly Communion Service on 1st Wed each month.

B Sowerby Fortnightly Bible Study Tuesday Evening 7pm
Information Available from David on 017683 41223

K Stephen Fortnightly Bible Study Wednesday Morning 10.30am
Information from Heather on 017683 71202
Tuesday Weekly Prayer Meeting at 12.00pm

Kirkby Stephen section prayer meeting
First Wednesday of each month at 6.45pm at Kirkby Stephen

N on Lune, Ravenstonedale & Orton Bible Study
Information from Wilf on 015396 23600

PRAYER POINTS



We are all on a journey through life and for many people this is a spiritual journey where we can ask questions and seek to discover more about ourselves and God. We're not tourists focusing on sight seeing (though that can be enjoyable!) but in the spiritual sense we are pilgrims seeking to deepen our relationship with God.

Prayer itself is a journey into the heart of God. A dialogue where we not only speak but learn how to listen because God created us to live in a dynamic relationship of communication with Him.

Let's be still and pray to Him now:

Dear Lord,

In my journeying with you, may I never lose my sense of direction, never lose sight of the landmark towards which I travel. And should cloud or rain obscure my vision, may I draw closer to you, so that my feet may tread in your footsteps.

Your words be my encouragement and your love my protection against the storms that assail me. You tell us that you will be with us always, to the very end of the age and that is the wonderful reassurance and hope we all have and we thank you Lord for your promise. AMEN

Be by my side Creator God every step I take.
Be before me Saviour God every step I take.
Be behind me Merciful God every step I take.
Be within me Strengthening God.

Sue Thackray