

the bridge monthly bulletin

Jan - Feb 2024



Ryedale Methodists

I am spending New Year on the south coast of Portugal and on the eve of Epiphany visited the 'Adeia dos Sonhos', or the 'Village of Dreams' in Loulé. Parts of the town had been transformed into a festive wonderland with statues of giant elves and cartoon penguins, an ice rink and Christmas train. Young children loved it, but it was not my idea of a village of dreams – mine would still have chocolate fondue, but far fewer people, more trees and no piped music or plastic statues.

Thinking about dreams – both the thoughts and images that we have when we're asleep - and our aspirations and ambitions for the future - prompted me to find out more about the dreams mentioned in the bible.

Altogether there are 21 asleep dreams described in the bible, 10 of which are in Genesis. Six of the dreamers are kings, two are called Joseph but only one is a woman. In reading about them we see how God communicates with people in dreams, some of them are explicit instructions - such as where the wise men are told not to return to see Herod after they visited Jesus in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:12), and others are symbolic, such as the dreams experienced by Pharaoh (Gen. 41) about the fat cows eating the thin cows - which Joseph tells Pharaoh that it means seven years of good harvest in Egypt followed by seven years of famine. Some of the dreams in the bible are comforting, others are disturbing, some can be easily understood by the dreamer whilst others need to be interpreted by someone else.

At the beginning of Jesus' life, what happens to him and his family, largely comes about by five dreams, the first in which an angel tells Joseph not to divorce Mary, the second to the Magi, and then three dreams for Joseph where God tells him to take his family to safety in Egypt, and once Herod dies, to return back home to Nazareth, but to avoid Herod's son. Throughout the rest of his life, Jesus' path is defined by the plans and aspirations (dreams) that God has for him.

In Acts (2:17) we are told that 'In the Last Days, God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people: Your sons will prophesy, also your daughters; Your young men will see visions, your old men dream dreams."'

As we start a new year, all of us, both young, and not so young, should open ourselves up to dreams **and** visions, for ourselves, our families, and our churches and communities. These may come to us in various ways, but should always be interpreted alongside others, recognising that ultimately everything is in God's hands. Happy New Year, *Julia* (Senior Circuit Steward)

**Heavenly Father:
your ways are higher
than our ways and
your thoughts longer
than our thoughts.**

**You are from
everlasting to
everlasting and a
thousand ages in
your sight are like
an evening gone.**

**Yet you have in love
reached down to touch
our little time with your
eternity, and our life
with life everlasting
in Christ.**

**Lord, go with us now
into the future you
have in mind for us.**

**Cast out our fear; fill
us with faith and hope
and love; through the
grace of Jesus, your
Son, our Saviour.**

Amen



Image Left:

Dream of the three Magi
Canterbury Cathedral
([Wikimedia Commons](#))

Page 3: Stained glass
Gloucester Cathedral
([Foley Stained glass](#))

14 January JOHN 1: 43-51

This Sunday and next Sunday we shall be thinking about the call of some of the disciples; and today we learn about the call of Philip and Nathaniel. These are not two of the disciples who are often in the limelight, and it may be helpful for us to remember that not every disciple of Jesus is high profile. I value this account particularly because it shows us the role of sharing our experience, of telling others of the encounter with Jesus. You may find it helpful to read Genesis 32 vv22-32. Jacob (whose name means “cheater”) is changed to Israel (“the man who wrestled with God”) – and Genesis 28 v12, to realise that as Jacob’s is the bridge between heaven and earth, so Jesus, the Son of Man, is that same bridge.

In the Covenant Service, as disciples we pray:

***“Your will be done when I am valued and when I am disregarded;
when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking; when I have all things and when I have nothing.”***

21 January MARK 1: 14-20

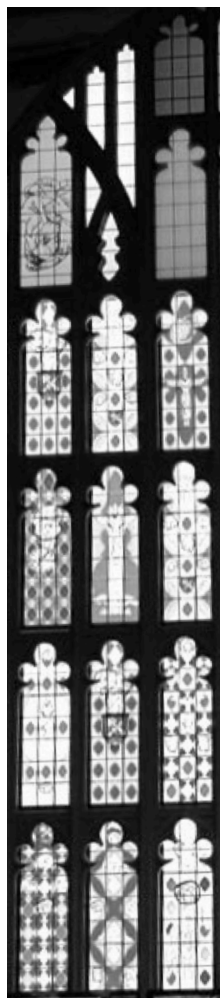
We start with the announcement that John the Baptist has been arrested – bad news. But good news does not depend on one man; and Jesus says, “God’s Kingdom will soon be here.” Sent from heaven, raised in Galilee, it is in Galilee that Jesus starts his religious campaign. Not in Jerusalem at the centre of Judaism, but in a marginal and insignificant place. And his first followers? Fishermen, without any of the apparent aptitudes and qualifications to fit them for the task ahead. Except, they were brave enough to leave what they knew (their nets), and were prepared to try a whole new way of life.

By the way, I don’t think it is too late for New Year’s Resolutions if they are appropriate for you.

28 January MARK 1: 21-28

I suppose if the Galilee region seemed a bit of rural backwater, Capernaum must have been the nearest thing that the area had to “the big smoke.” Most importantly for us it was a significant crossing place of various trade routes, which would have given it a real cosmopolitan feel, and more recently it was of strategic importance to the Romans. So in today’s reading the public ministry of Jesus starts with a reminder that the Good News is for everyone. But perhaps what was even more touching is that the first healing miracle that Mark records is that of a man with a mental disability. This is a real statement about the Kingly Rule that sets a man free.

***Lord, in the short days of winter, it is tempting to shut our doors and conserve the warmth of our own space.
Help us to remember that the Kingdom demands that we widen horizons and think outside the box.***



A prayer For Covenant Sunday

Unchanging God, as we turn the page from one year to another,
we are so grateful for your steadfast faithfulness.
Through this last year, we have seen glimmers of your love and hopefulness
in the midst of dark, painful and challenging times:
new treasures once hidden, but now wonderfully revealed.

Nevertheless, we are conscious of the times
when we broke our promises to you,
when we relied on our own resources
rather than drawing from the deep wells of your grace and strength,
when we expected more of ourselves than you demand of us,
when we missed the signs of your presence or
when we failed to notice your offers of light and comfort.

We are sorry and ask you to forgive us.

And now, as this new year begins,
we welcome the opportunity to renew our covenant relationship with you.
May we do so in the confidence that
you will continue to remain faithful to us,
your love for us will never be exhausted and
our ultimate hope is in Jesus Christ.

May our renewed relationship deepen our awareness
both of your presence and activity,
enabling us to discover still more of your precious treasure as this year unfolds.

In the name of Christ, Amen

Revd Gill Newton, President of the Methodist Conference

LECTIONARY REFLECTIONS FEBRUARY

Rev Brian Shackleton

4 February MARK 1: 29-39

As we continue to look at the “first day in the ministry of Jesus in Capernaum we ought to pause to remember that all this happened on the Sabbath. (Horror of horrors for Jewish traditionalists.) But just in case we think that the holy place (the synagogue) is the exclusive place for holy works, Jesus goes to the home of Simon and Andrew and heals Simon’s mother-in-law; still on the Sabbath. And then as the Sabbath ends the world and his wife crowd around the house with their various ailments – and are healed. It is as if we are being told in no uncertain manner that there is no inappropriate time or place to share in God’s work.

Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

11 February MARK 9: 2-9

This is the Sunday before Lent, and Lent represents an opportunity to remember the Jewish people’s forty years in the wilderness, and the forty days of the temptation of Christ. We see it as a time of austerity and discipline. But first, as a prelude, we need to celebrate a mountain-top experience which can be seen as being more in tune with an anticipation of the Resurrection-Imagine that we are with the privileged threesome, Peter, James and John, as they move into a rarefied atmosphere. It seems inappropriate at this height to be saying that they felt out of their depth, but it is totally appropriate for us to set aside time when we can just wonder at the majesty of God, and recognise our limitations. We need something different from gorging ourselves on pancakes before we move into Lent.

“For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.”

Athanasius, 4th century bishop of Alexandria

18 February MARK 1: 9-15 LENT 1

At first glance this week looks rather like a reprise of the gospel reading of Jan. 7th – the baptism of Jesus. But the additional verses (vv12-15) take us into a very different place. First, the temptations, and our opportunity to look again at life style. And perhaps to ask questions about our underlying values – we shall certainly understand the Crucifixion so much better if we have taken this exercise seriously. But then Mark announces that John is in prison, so we start to understand how costly Kingdom values can be. And v15 is a restatement of the Good News that the Kingdom of God is imminent. So, work that out for yourself!! Write any implications you discover on a postage stamp – or a postcard – or perhaps you will need to write a letter to yourself that you can read again at significant times in your future life.

25 February MARK 8: 31-38 LENT 2

If ever there was a passage that tells us that this is the road to Jerusalem, this is it. No wrapping it up or softening the edges: this is the blunt truth. So who would want to belong to a group that seemed so clearly destined for rejection? Peter verbalises the objections that the others must have shared. And Jesus tells the crowd, as well as the disciples, how costly the way must be. So maybe it is time for us to decide just how committed we are in our discipleship. Carrying the physical cross used in crucifixion demanded real strength. And we shouldn’t underestimate the moral strength and spiritual resilience that discipleship may require today.

SUPERINTENDENT IN RYEDALE

As you know, Revd Peter is retiring this summer, and we are in the process of looking for a presbyter to take up the superintendent role in Ryedale.

During the summer the Circuit Invitation Committee (members of CLT) prepared a profile, which is similar to a job description. The profile was based on feedback provided by our circuit chapels and describes Ryedale, the churches that the minister will be in charge of, and our priorities for the appointment, including worship styles, ecumenical working and community links.

Matching presbyters who are looking for an appointment to vacancies in circuits is undertaken on a national level where District Chairs meet to determine which person would be the best fit for each vacancy. As of the beginning of January there have been two matching meetings, and sadly Ryedale didn’t receive a match at either meeting. Overall there are around 40 ministers fewer than circuit vacancies, and only a limited number of ministers seeking an appointment are interested in taking up a superintendency in North Yorkshire. The Driffield-Hornsea Circuit in our District is also looking for a superintendent and hasn’t been matched.

There is another matching meeting in mid January but it is unlikely that Ryedale will be matched with a presbyter. We are now looking at alternative ways of filling the gap that will be left by Revd Peter, potentially with a combination of ordained and lay people, and are meeting with Revd Newton (Chair of our District) to discuss what may be possible at the end of January. *Julia Branson*



Rievaulx Barn Service

Meeting for our monthly Prayer Meeting at the beginning of December, our thoughts were very much centred on services and other events in the run up to Christmas. We felt that this Christmas would be a great opportunity for us to share the true meaning of Christmas in the community as well as on our Church premises. It was going to be a hectic time and we prayed for God's strength to carry out what we believed He had called us to do. We started with a Women's Christmas Craft and Coffee morning and Sunday morning Christingle Service. Five night's Carol Singing round villages and outlying farms in the area followed as well as an afternoon Carol Singing in Rievaulx Abbey. We raised nearly £1,200 for the British Heart Foundation and Great North Air Ambulance.



There were only a few people watching in the Abbey but we received feedback that one person had had their life changed through what had been said which made it all worthwhile. We also had a great Carol Service on 17th December. Our final event was a Barn Service at our farm on Saturday 23rd December. As a result of one person having a vision a number of years ago we had done this in the past for several years but we had given it a break since 2012 until now. We had never imagined that we would ever do it again but we knew that God was calling us again this year. The building was packed with people both from our local community and beyond; some who we could never imagine would ever come under the sound of the Gospel. Some of the other events had also brought in people who wouldn't usually be seen in the Church. We rounded it all off with a Social Evening after Christmas and a great time was had by all!

We serve an all powerful, awesome, miracle working God and we should never limit what He is able to do. We can sow the seed as He calls us to do and leave the rest to Him. Looking to the future we are called to "Look Forward...Look up (to Him) and Think Big". "We will thank Him for all that is passed...and trust Him for all that is to come". *Sheila Foster*

Crafting the Cross

Pickering Churches Together are doing a Lent course called Crafting the Cross which will be on Saturday mornings from 10.30 at 5 different churches in Pickering and Middleton. We are open to anyone and hope that people will come along to explore the cross through simple arts and craft activities in the sacred spaces of different churches in the area. Each church will run their own session and share what the cross means to them and we hope to have a display in a neutral venue on Saturday 23rd March. Please keep this new venture in your prayers and keep an eye out for publicity nearer the time. *Karen Pattison*



World Day of Prayer

**WDP Bible Study at Norton
Bethel on Tuesday,
6 February at 10.30.**



The theme this year has been prepared by the Christian women of Palestine and is **"I beg you, bear with one another in love..."**

Services 1 March at 2pm:

Kirkbymoorside Friends Meeting House
79 West End YO62 6AD

Malton St Michael's in the market square

Slingsby Methodist Chapel

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Messy Church

preparation meeting

For all interested in preparing for, or hosting a Messy Church around Easter-tide.
At 7 Meadow Road, Pickering
on 22 January at 10 am.



ryedalemethodists@gmail.com
<https://www.ryedalemethodist.org.uk/events.html>
for further information



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