

the bridge monthly bulletin

January & February 2026



Ryedale Methodists

Reflecting back on the last year, one of the themes that has been quite dominant in my ministry is one of 'inclusion', or rather, the challenge of enabling true inclusion. Just before Christmas, I attended a webinar by the leaders of Magdalene Community Church, who, in forming a New Place for New People, found themselves naturally attracting people who, in their words, are far from Neurotypical. They meet outdoors, which provides a great deal of freedom, but spoke about the challenges of meeting everyone's needs, and the reality that one person's solution is another person's trigger. They have found ways to hold these tensions, but it has made me realise how much further we have to go in most of our churches to be as truly welcoming as we imagine we are. Ryedale isn't the most culturally diverse region, but even as Methodists, we hold a wide range of views and approaches to our faith. Each of our churches has its own character, but as our ministries are fairly locally focused, it's only when we seek consensus as a circuit that these differences occasionally surface. Within the Kairos Movement, where inclusion and enabling freedom to hold and share quite different views from one another is a fundamental value, we talk about creating a 'Brave' rather than 'Safe' Space'. It's a recognition that radical inclusivity is challenging to achieve and requires effort and grace on behalf of everyone in a community who wishes it to be a reality. The point of Brave Space, for me, is a place where we can be sufficiently vulnerable with one another that relationships can have real depth. It's through such relationships that I believe we more readily encounter the fullness of God together. It's no accident, perhaps, that in choosing to live as one of us, God elected to be completely vulnerable, to come with no barriers, no defences and fully open to experience the fullness of humanity. I wonder, can we match his courage? Can we grasp the challenge of radical inclusion?

I wish you all rich blessings as we enter this New Year.

Rev Andy



**May our faith rest
not on earthly wisdom,
Lord,
but on your power.
May our worship arise,
not from our familiar
practices,
but by the moving of
your Spirit.
May our lives reflect
not just what we have
learned,
but how we are changed
by you,
that we may be bold
to do your work in our
world.**

Amen

*Prayer from Roots on the web.
Image: joelp12_96361776/Vecteezy*



Lectionary Reflections *with text and images from Roots on the Web*

11 January 2026 HOPE REFRESHED Isaiah 42.1-9

Isaiah prophesies to those in exile about God's chosen servant, who will bring justice, light and freedom from captivity to the nations.

We explore the hope that God gave to all people in his Son, Jesus, whose baptism we mark today, and how we might share God's hope with those who are in desperate need of it.

What words and images would you use to bring hope to a defeated and disillusioned group of people? In Isaiah 42, we read how God brings the theme 'hope refreshed' to life. God speaks to the Israelites with the perfect blend of hope, care, encouragement and action. Through the words in Isaiah 42, God also provides 'hope refreshed' for all people, as these words are ultimately fulfilled through Jesus.

- What are you hoping for?
- How would you like Jesus to meet with you in the coming week?
- How might you bring the hope of Jesus to others?



18 January REVEALING THE HIDDEN Isaiah 49.1-7

In this second 'servant song', we hear how God's servant was chosen by God before birth, then hidden and prepared for the special mission of not only restoring God's people but also being a light to all nations.

As we reflect on the readings and theme, we also reflect on our own lives. What might be currently hidden, and what is ready to be revealed so that people can see more of who God is?

The children's game Guess Who pits a couple of players against each other attempting to find out the identity of the other player's character by asking a series of questions. There is something about hidden identity here in the Isaiah passage. Explore how often the poet is using the language of hiddenness. Ask who the servant is and why their identity is somewhat obscured (the poet, Israel, Jesus), and ask whether this points to the fact that God is often at work through unlikely people in unlikely places.

- What is hidden in this photo?
- Do you keep your faith hidden, or are you open about your values and beliefs?
- What could you reveal to others about your faith to help bring light and hope?



25 January MOVING OUTWARDS Isaiah 9.1-4

Isaiah proclaims light and freedom for those in the region of Israel – the Galilee of the nations. We hear again the well-known words, often heard at Christmas, about light dawning on those who have been walking in darkness. The coming of the servant means that their oppression is over and joy abounds.

This week, we will move outwards beyond the Christmas associations of the Isaiah passage and see our calling mirrored in that of the first disciples.

God's favour falls on and spreads over all peoples. The phrase 'Galilee of the nations' in Isaiah can refer to the people of Israel being a mixed and diverse population. However, in Matthew we see a different phrase, 'Galilee of the Gentiles' – showing God's salvation extending beyond the people of Israel to all nations and all peoples. How inclusive and far-reaching is the message of salvation that we proclaim? How often do we extend our call beyond those already within our gathered community?

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OUTBREAK OF FOOT & MOUTH

The Methodist Church plans a week of rural communications from
16-20 Feb 2026



They'd be grateful for your contributions of any of the following;

- **Prayers** - for use in services, community remembrance, social media.
- **Short blog reflections** - memories of 25 years ago, plus challenges still faced by farmers today, support the wider church can offer, etc.
- **Photo memories with short captions.**
- **Local stories** of rural resilience, community support, hope from the ashes, ongoing connections...
- **'Thought for the day' piece to offer local radio.**
- **Podcast participants** - willing to take part in a pre-recorded audio discussion.
- **Film participants** - willing to appear on recorded visual snippets.

It's also a great opportunity to highlight ongoing rural challenges and community support offered by our local churches across the wider Connexion.

Please send to **Sarah Hulme** - Rural mission and Ministry Officer: hulmes@methodistchurch.org.uk

If you could let her know of anything you're willing to submit in Jan, that would be much appreciated.

Our deadline for receiving all content **is 2nd Feb 2026.**



Flourish Festival: Woven Threads

Come to York in 2026 for this diverse all-age festival of inspiration, celebration, worship and renewal. Following on from our successful events in 2019 and 2023 our theme for 2026 is **WOVEN THREADS: Rediscovering our place together in God's big tapestry.**

General Admission – <https://bit.ly/Flourish26>

Children Youth, Family Streams <https://bit.ly/FlourishCYF>

****The Children and Youth tickets to Flourish will be coming off sale on the 17th of January. This is not a negotiable deadline so please make sure that tickets are booked between now and the 17 January**



HAPPY ARE THOSE:

Happiness, Wellbeing and the Life of Faith on the Psalms

Revd Dr Isabelle Hamley

24 January 2026 at ST Mark's Church, Leeds Rd, Harrogate.

Time: 10-12noon (breakfast served from 9.30)

Happiness is big business: it motivates consumerism, advertising, political choices, and shapes communities; lack of happiness is often associated with mental health struggles. Yet the church rarely speaks of happiness or of how a Christian framework may help us think of happiness in faithful and distinctive ways. This talk will explore how the Psalms help us to think about happiness, its contours and its challenges. Dr Hamley is the Principal of Ridley Hall, a theological college in Cambridge. Isabelle's first love is Scripture, and the Old Testament in particular. She has written extensively about the book of Judges, and around issues of justice, violence and otherness.

Tickets:

£10 (including breakfast and refreshments); Students: £7;

Under 18s free; Zoom live-stream: £5 per person, must be purchased online in advance.

Tickets for in person attendance can be purchased online (Eventbrite) or on the door (card payment preferred).



1 February **WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE?** Micah 6.1- 8

The passage from Micah implores the people to do what God requires after rebuking how they have lived in the past. God presents his case against the people, reminding them of his faithfulness to them and that he does not require sacrifices or burnt offerings, but just and loving actions.

Today's readings may be a culture shock because, unlike the people of Micah's time, we don't envisage bringing livestock or groceries as offerings to worship. In contrast, the Beatitudes in Matthew explore what we can bring in our behaviour and interactions. Today, we're focusing on the why and what of offerings in our Christian lives.

Explore what the words justice, mercy and humility mean in practice. How do these ideas – which are at the heart of our faith – happen practically in our lives? Use a piece of paper to draw three concentric circles and explore how these values are at work in our personal lives (inner circle), our lives in the community in which we live and work (middle circle) and on an international level as policies for government and organisations (outer circle). Add thoughts and ideas to each circle. Finish by exploring the community circle and what might need to be added or worked on as you seek to live out these values as a community of faith.

- What does God want us to do with our hands, our hearts and our feet?
- Do our actions mean more than our words? How might we use both in worship?
- How can you do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God, this week?

8 February 2026 **STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE** Isaiah 58.1-9a,(9b-12)

The opening of this chapter of Isaiah begins with a reminder of what is at the heart of true worship and then proclaims a call to stand up for justice and equality.

Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel, echoes this appeal for genuine, righteous ways of living. Coupling these passages together reminds us that Jesus' bid to be salt and light was not new teaching, but a reminder to understand the message of the prophets. This week we explore the ongoing need for us to stand up for justice.

When God's people return from exile, their gratitude to God fails to translate into turning away from the behaviour that had been their downfall. Stepping up their religious observance, they are upset that God doesn't seem grateful. Isaiah points out to them that no amount of fasting can offset the injustice they inflict on the disadvantaged. They should treat their workers better, and actively get involved in improving the lives of the poor and the homeless and stand up against injustice. How often do we make the same mistakes? By assuming our religious observances are all that is needed, we sometimes miss the urgent call for justice around us. We cannot worship and fast but ignore the struggle of those who are homeless right outside our church door or oppressed by hunger and poverty.

- What beliefs might motivate Christians to campaign for justice?
- What areas of injustice and oppression would you like to 'shine a light' on?
- How is God prompting you to challenge the status quo and make your voice heard?

15 February **I WAS THERE** 2 Peter 1.16-21

Peter gives his eyewitness account of Jesus being transformed by the light of God's glory. Writing about it later to the early Christians, he has had time to savour and to review his overwhelming experience and remains convinced that Jesus will return to rise as the morning star in our hearts

The scene of transfiguration is the focus of our readings today: something being changed before our eyes. Moses encounters God on Mount Sinai and the people of God are changed by the Ten Commandments. Jesus is transfigured himself in the accounts by Peter and Matthew as a revelation of God, and Jesus as the Son of God. This week we consider the life-changing impact of these events.



Explore the transfiguration story through its principal characters; what does each tell us about what exactly happened? Consider the characters in the order Matthew's account does: What happened to Jesus? Why were Moses and Elijah there? Why did Peter think it appropriate to build booths for everyone? Does what God says clarify who Jesus is? It is possible that the key moment is afterwards when Jesus tells his friends not to be afraid: what did they have to fear? There is so much detail here and each reveals something important about God.

Text and images Roots on the web



22 February 2026 TESTING TIMES Genesis 2.15 -17; 3.1-7

On the first Sunday in Lent, we read the account of the Fall in Genesis. Adam is placed in the Garden of Eden and commanded to care for it but warned not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Later, the serpent deceives Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, shared with Adam; they both realise they are naked and cover themselves.

Half-truths and deceptions can be so convincing, making it easy for us to succumb to temptation without noticing. We live in a world where the media can share unchecked reports and AI can generate facts or images in an instant:

this week we explore how our trust in God must guide us to discern how to live with testing of wants and needs as well as truth and uncertainty.

The positive is that God provided a garden of abundance, from which the couple may eat freely and never be in need. The negative is that there is one tree from which God says they may not eat. The serpent suggests that God has deceived Adam and Eve. For Adam, the consequence of his disobedience was that his given task in the garden, to 'till it and keep it', became a labour against the curse put on it (v.17). They had so much, yet gave into temptation to take more. Is our world still battling to regain its balance as God's world is undervalued? What do we lose when we misuse God's provision of abundance?

- What happens when things get twisted?
- Why does the serpent/devil twist the truth and what is the result?
- How does Jesus's example help us when we face testing times?

Text and images Roots on the web

Please join us in praying for Venezuela

Almighty God, whose Son is called Prince of Peace, We ask for the peace of Christ to reign in Venezuela. We ask that you touch and move the hearts of all those intervening, bearing arms or calling for armed resistance. May they be moved to seek a peaceful solution for the good of the nation.

We pray that the hearts of communities all over the country, especially those close to the strikes, will not be dismayed.

We pray that they will find the strength to turn to God for help in this time of trouble, remembering that God upholds them with his righteous right hand.

We pray for our partner church in Venezuela, the CCMV, that you grant its members peace during these disturbing times.

We pray, Lord, that you will strengthen their resolve to continue incarnating the faith, hope and love of Christ in their communities.

We join with our Venezuelan Methodist family in asking that your good, acceptable and perfect will be done in Venezuela and in the church. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

The President and Vice President of the Methodist Church in Britain.

TAIZE SONG BOOKS

One of our members has a supply of Taize song books to pass on if anyone in the circuit could use some. Please contact Circuit admin if you are interested.

FOOD BANK Please continue supporting local foodbanks this winter.

The message below came to Circuit admin from Ryedale Community Foodbank - Malton:

Thank you for your support throughout 2025 and a Happy New Year from us all at the Foodbank. We had our busiest December ever, giving out 960 kilos of food on the Friday before Christmas. The shelves at Howe Road are very bare! **The main shortages are:** tinned meat; meat in sauce; tinned vegetables; tinned fish; tinned rice pudding; tinned custard; tinned fruit; small jars of coffee; biscuits; shampoo; shower gel; toothpaste, Many Thanks.

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