



the bridge monthly bulletin



March 2026

Ash Wednesday marks the start of Lent, a period traditionally for preparation for baptism, and for those seeking restoration into the fellowship of the church. I don't know how many of you attended an Ash Wednesday service this year. I was speaking to some colleagues, who said it was only relatively late in their Methodist experience that they'd attended one, and they still are relatively uncommon.

Our weekly Kairos Movement gathering landed on Ash Wednesday. We were invited to watch a recording of a short Ash Wednesday service led on Zoom by Rev Nadia Bolz-Weber. Nadia is a heavily tattooed Lutheran minister, with a former life marked by drug and alcohol abuse, whose church, 'The House for All Sinners and Saints', reaches people that most churches cannot. If I tell you they have a drag 'Minister of Fabulousness' that possibly helps paint a picture. The service, however, was simple and relatively traditional. It was clearly recorded during COVID, and although clunky and unpolished, what stood out for me was their emphasis on our mortality. Transported back into that pre-vaccination period, the words, 'Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return' were particularly chilling, recalling the death toll at the time. My observation, culturally, is that most of us avoid contemplating such realities. Many Christians choose not to engage in Good Friday, preferring to leap to Easter Sunday, with its hope, joy and celebrations. Life, of course, rarely spares us those journeys into the dark valleys. For me, the point of the Lent-Easter journey is to remind us that Christ is present with us and perhaps at His most creative in darkness and even death, and stands ready to lead us back to light and life. We are a resurrection people; we believe there is life after death, and that isn't just about physical death. I've witnessed some incredible turnarounds for churches and organisations that have accepted their end has come, and subsequently seen a fresh seed of hope germinate, bringing them new life and new purpose. Those seeds often cannot grow until the death of what has been is fully grasped. Baptism is about us dying with Christ and being born into a new life in Him. The dying, the repenting, the literal changing of our mindset is a crucial aspect of that, and that requires a letting go of the old ways of thinking and the limits they impose upon us. Lent, I believe, is a time to practice and consider what, how and where we should be letting go, and sometimes even allow things to come to an end. We do so acknowledging the fear that brings, but with the possibility that in doing so, Easter life may yet spring forth. I'm perhaps fortunate, in my role, that I have sight of the fresh shoots of new life that are springing up around the UK, and I see those seeds germinating in our midst too. Acknowledging the darkness, embracing reality isn't easy, but if it enables us to embrace the fullness of Easter Hope, it is a practice worth pursuing. Whether you find yourself in the dark valley or in the fullness of Christ's life and light at this time, I pray you will trust Jesus is with you this Lent. *Rev Andy*

**Now the green
blade rises
from the
buried grain,
Wheat that in
the dark earth
many days has
lain;
Love lives
again, that
with the dead
has been:
Love is come
again, like
wheat that
springs up
green.**

Singing the Faith 306



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Lectionary Reflections March 2026

Graham Thomas (All quotes are from The Message)

March 1st Romans 4:1-5,13-17; John 3:1-17

He trusted God to set him right instead of trying to be right on his own (Romans 4:3)

We all examine our lives during Lent, we think about the Cross and Resurrection, of the Passion of Christ. We follow traditions and give up things to make this season more poignant. Yet the drama is a God drama, not a human drama. Jesus goes to the Cross, we follow his journey, but all the time He is pointing at God.

We read about Nicodemus only in John's gospel, chapter 3: a few verses in chapter 7 and more in chapter 19. A Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, the Temple's ruling council, he comes to Jesus in secret at night. He recognises that Jesus is from God, but Jesus explains, that in itself is not enough.

Unless you are born of the creative, invisible, Spirit of God, you cannot be baptised into a new life. You need to be shaped by the Spirit, the breath of God, to find real life. In Romans 4:16 Paul says this about our life with God **the fulfilment of God's promise depends entirely on trusting God and his way, and then simply embracing him and what he does. God's promise arrives as pure gift.** Jesus is pointing us towards God, not to find condemnation, but to see His Love.

March 8th Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't, wait for us to get ready. (Romans 5:6)

Continuing the theme of looking to God, Jesus is all we need to know about God. This is the whole meaning of the Incarnation, the Word made flesh. Born like us, lived like us and died. In his life and teaching God inhabits his every action. His death and resurrection, make this relationship available to us.

The woman at the well had problems and issues in her life, Jesus discerns them all and offers her the God answer. The Living water and the Spirit with which to worship. It does not matter who you are or whether you feel ready or not, God through Jesus is offering you life. This changes and alters our life, we are a new creation born of God, filled with his Spirit. I love this verse in Romans 5:2 **We find ourselves standing where we always hoped we might stand - out in the wide open spaces of God's grace and glory, standing tall and shouting our praise.** When we find God and stand in his the wide open space of his grace, surely we want everyone to know. Isn't it wonderful that the woman told all her neighbours, until they said, you don't need to tell us any more **We've heard it for ourselves and know it for sure. He's the Saviour of the world!**" (vs 42)

March 15th Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

You're out in the open now. The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. (Romans 8:8)

Healing the blind in Jesus' ministry is not always about making a person see again. He usually uses it to let us "see God" a deeper understanding of our relationship. In his later years my father had difficulty in seeing, he had macular degeneration. This meant that in the very centre of his vision was a big black void. The peripheral vision was there, but it meant that driving was problematic and illegal. Dad couldn't see that, until eventually we asked him to have his eyes tested. Being registered partially sighted, he needed to "see" it was safer not to drive.

Jesus here is talking about blindness and what we cannot see because there is no light. **People waste their lives on things they must do in the darkness where no one will see.** (Ephesians 5:12) He tells his disciples not to think about cause and effect, but take the opportunity to see what God can do. He tells them that he is the Light of the World.

The man was just happy he could see again, but it caused contention in his community and amongst the religious leaders. Was it the same man? Had he been pretending to be blind? ...he was healed on the Sabbath for goodness sake!

When I could see Jesus, I didn't care about the why or how of it, I wasn't bothered about the theology of it, I could see Jesus. The darkness receded, the scales fell from my eyes, I knew that he is Light and wanted me to shine.



March 22nd Romans 8:6-11, John 11:1-45

Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them - living and breathing God! (Romans 11:9)

I am, Resurrection and Life. This is Jesus in the days before his Passion. He has been told about Lazarus' illness and how serious it is. There is a concern that going to Bethany is too close to Jerusalem to be safe. Jesus knows two things: the right time and God's revealed glory.

A recent experiment in Physics has shown that atoms of sodium can be in two different places at the same time. This means that either time isn't what we think, or at the quantum level what we consider "normal" doesn't hold true. This is the same paradigm shift that Jesus is declaring here. If time is an illusion and space is multi dimensional, we can only be sure of what we see and know. People saw Lazarus and Jesus alive, after they had died.

The mathematician Rev Thomas Bayes in 1755, was able to say that the probability of the evidence for the Resurrection being true was more likely than not, due to the validity of people's observation. You need to know, Jesus is the Resurrection and Life. Paul tells us **When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life.** (Romans 8:11)

March 29th, Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 27:11-54

Having become human, he stayed human. (Philippians 2:7)

A couple of years ago I did a study on the Stations of the Cross, looking at the woodcut prints of the artist Nicholas Markell. I read all the Gospel versions of Jesus' journey to the Cross. In most traditional depictions Jesus is shown falling three times, each time showing the exhaustion and trauma of his humanity. In Romans and Philippians Paul tells us that Jesus was human. The phrase translated is "by becoming the likeness of people". This phrase is used exclusively in these places. (also Romans 8:3, read footnotes [M] in the NET)

It doesn't mean that Jesus just looked like us and was divine. What Paul means is he looks like us but he was different, He was without sin. This is important, Jesus, the Word that is God, became flesh, not sinful "flesh" but human. Why? It is because God loves us so much, he sent his Son to save the world. He does that on the Cross, in his likeness of us. He dies for all our sin, yet is without any sin in him, so we can enter the Kingdom, free and unbound.

As Christians we share the likeness of all human kind, but are different because we know this is true. We in our humanity, by grace, through faith, show God revealed in us, by love.

Images from photographs taken at an exhibition of Textile Art by Jacqui Parkinson.

Mission Update

Do pray for us, during this time of recruitment for our 'Wilderness Pioneer', that God may lead us to the right person, with the gifts to help us explore our outdoor spirituality. We will be interviewing on March 28th.

New Streams

Behind the scenes the District Leadership have been working with me to re-brand, and re-structure the Kairos Circuit, as the now 'New Streams' circuit. This brings together a number of personnel, not limited by the value system of Kairos. This team will be supporting us with our Wilderness Pioneer project and includes:-

Fran Taylor who will be introducing us to the Faith Rooted Community toolkit, that enables us through conversations in our community to shape our mission and ministry.

Jane Masterman who many will know as our former District Safeguarding Officer. She will be helping circuits like ours to do things differently, but safely.

And we will be recruiting shortly, someone with experience in website design, video and graphics to work with Elliot offering digital support to new projects. If you know of someone with such gifts, do let me know. *Rev Andy*



How a butterfly led to a banner.

It all started with an Easter Messy church. While exploring the Easter story, the children created two crosses. There was a 'Good Friday' cross which was stark and bare. The second cross was an 'Easter Morning' cross decorated with brightly coloured flowers and butterflies.

Around this time, I was about to attend a wedding and my outfit was made with material patterned with small butterflies. I made an embroidered butterfly from felt to wear as a decoration for the plain jacket. It never made it to the wedding as I was advised by my daughter that 'it didn't look right'. In retrospect I agreed with her.

I was wondering if the butterfly might have another purpose, when those paper butterflies came fluttering back into my mind. Could we make a banner for church, covered in butterflies.?For some reason a scripture quotation came floating in with the butterflies. 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. The butterfly is the ultimate symbol of transformation and seemed to fit the quotation.

It so happened that our house group was studying Paul's letter to the Romans, and that very week, we were looking at chapter 12 - It seemed that the subject of the banner was developing a life of its own. It became a communal project with people being invited to take a plain butterfly and decorate it. We had a craft evening where we could pool materials and decorate butterflies over coffee and a chat. The plain butterflies were in shades of blue to give cohesion to the design. One small boy, who had made a butterfly for the Easter cross, decorated a felt butterfly with the help of his older sister. In the meantime, I had been scouring charity shops looking for suitable background material and found exactly what we needed. A pair of dark blue curtains. These were cut in half so that we have material to make a further three banners when new inspiration strikes - and whatever the lectionary dictates for the day when the banner is introduced to the congregation, part of Romans chapter 12 will replace one of the readings! **Daisy Barnes**

ONE HOLY WEEK

Journey with Jesus and his Disciples this Lent as we unpack the story of Holy Week. We gather to watch an Episode of 'the Chosen' between 7-8pm, with refreshments, followed by half an hour of discussion.

 23rd Feb Entry	 2nd March House of Cards	 9th March Woes	 16th March The Same Coin	 23rd March Because of Me
 30th March Reunions	 31st March The Upper Room Part 1	 1st April The Upper Room Part 2		

Join us in person at Norton Trinity Methodist Church
10 Plum St, Norton, Malton YO17 9JA
or on Zoom
98228115667 Pass: 330917
<https://tinyurl.com/ryedalelent>




Pause. Breathe. Make space for God. Easter 2026

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Anglican & Methodist Churches Together

Lenten Reflection



Wednesday 11th March
11am
Thornton Dale Old Grammar School

Followed by a bring & share lunch
For more information Tel:01723 859841

