

the bridge monthly bulletin

July/August 2026



At a gathering of New Places for New People leads in London at the end of June, I was asked to select a photo that spoke to my current ministry. I chose one, similar to the one shown here, but with a scarcity of teaspoons. Why did I choose that photo? I think it resonated with the receipt of such a set as a wedding present from my parents, as my wife and I embarked on our new life together. A gift of some of the essentials of home, but also a tool to equip us for that space, over meals, where family life often centres and relationships grow.

I introduced our new Wilderness Pioneers last month, and this month I have the pleasure of sharing that Chris Shore has also been recruited as Local Lay Pastor at Helmsley and will be offering pastoral care at Rievaulx and into the Malton area. I'm also delighted to announce that Rev Harold Stuteley, who lives in Scarborough, is, from September, kindly offering a quarter-time appointment to preach and offer pastoral care. This will initially focus on Thornton Dale and Scagglethorpe, but if his time allows, beyond that. The last piece in the puzzle is one day a month from the Bridge's Missional Property development expert, Thomas Rattigan, who will be bringing fresh eyes and proposals to us, to better use our church buildings.

The cutlery tray, therefore, spoke of us now having the personnel and therefore the tools in place, for our next exploratory steps in mission and ministry. Alongside that, however, the dawning realisation that metaphorically we now need to make the meals! And so we begin a learning curve together, of exploring and experimenting. Although most of the team have now started in post, we are planning a 'safari' welcome service on the 13th September, we hope starting in Malton, stopping at Hovingham and then Helmsley before heading to Sinnington and finally Thornton Dale, with opportunities for worship and eating together as we go, as well as a taste of some outdoor worship. Oh, and the lack of teaspoons? The missing elements? All of our new colleagues need to draw others around them to fulfil their ministry, so please do offer your support, and if you'd particularly like to offer your skills, then please get in touch with one of us.

Finally, I would ask your prayers and assistance to the circuit stewards who are in the process of seeking feedback, to facilitate the re-invitation of Rev Graham for an additional year at the end of his current stationing, which would otherwise end in September 2027.

Blessings as we enter this summer time, when many of us will holiday and recharge and renew our batteries, mental, physical and spiritual. *Rev Andy*



**With minds alert,
upheld by grace,
To spread the Word
in speech and deed,
We follow in the
steps of Christ,
At one with all
in hope and need.**

**To fill each human
house with love,
It is the sacrament
of care;
The work that Christ
began to do
We humbly pledge
ourselves to share.**

**Then grant us courage,
Father God,
To choose again
the pilgrim way,
And help us to
accept with joy
The challenge
of tomorrow's day.**

Fred Kaan

Lectionary Reflections *Graham Thomas*

July 5th

Romans 7:15-25a. Matthew 11:6-19, 25-30

Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does (Romans 7:24b-25a).

Jesus despairs at his generation; John comes calling from the wilderness like an Old Testament prophet, a fasting ascetic, and they think him crazy. Jesus comes and shares food with outcasts and sinners; they think him a drunkard and unclean. Jesus says **opinion polls don't count for much, do they? The proof of the pudding is in the eating.** (Vs19b) or in the NET. **But wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.**

Jesus is our example, as his heavenly Father was for him. Sometimes we try to force things, to use our skills and talents. Like Paul says in Romans, we keep trying to do what is right but always seem to fall short. He cries out, "Who can help me?" Jesus says to us, **"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me, and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you."** He wants that same close relationship with each of us that he has with his Father. **Keep company with me, and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.** (Vs 28-30)

July 12th

Romans 8:1-11. Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's! (Romans 8:11)

I love the transition from Romans 7 through to 8. **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus** (vs 1 NET). The Message is much more poetic, but in this I prefer the NET and other translations. This is the experience of my conversion, this is real to me.

The Parable of the Sower is about the word of God being planted in our lives. As preachers, we like to emphasise various aspects to suit our sermon point. Maybe we obsess too much about the seed and the soil, and the failure to grow. The sower tries his hardest to broadcast the seed to the right place. The seed is a valuable resource. Some doesn't go where it's supposed to, but surely the vast majority does. **Some fell on good earth and produced a harvest beyond his wildest dreams.** Jesus says in his explanation to his disciples, **"The seed cast on good earth is the person who hears and takes in the news and then produces a harvest beyond his wildest dreams."** This is my experience - Jesus, the Word lives in me.

July 19th

Romans 8:12-25. Matthew 13:24-30,36-43

The Spirit of God is arousing us within. (Romans 8:23)

I was one of the last cohorts of future pharmacists to be trained in Pharmacognosy, the study of plants as sources of medicine. One of the skills was to be able to distinguish between medicinal plant material and recognise common adulterants. The mixing of quality products with cheaper material was called sophistication.

In this story, the "enemy" doesn't sow weeds or thistles; he sows darnel (*Lolium temulentum*), a weed that bears an uncanny resemblance to wheat until the ears of grain appear. Darnel is considered poisonous; ingesting the weed causes feelings of drunkenness and can prove fatal.

In this series of parables, Jesus uses the term, **"Are you listening to this? Really listening?"** (He who has ears, let him hear, in other translations.) Know the difference, is what Jesus is saying. Paul says it is the Holy Spirit within us that witnesses to the truth. Know the difference and choose to walk the way of Jesus.





July 26th

Romans 8:26-39, Matthew 13:31-33, 44-53

I'm absolutely convinced that nothing - nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable - absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus, our Master, has embraced us. (Romans 8:38-39)

As with most preachers, when we preach about the Kingdom, we are aware that there is a paradox, a paradox which Jesus' parables don't specifically answer. He provides us with stories that start "The kingdom is like..." a mustard seed, yeast, treasure in a field, a rare pearl, a haul of fish. The paradox is that it's free to all, yet there is a sorting, judgement. It's here and now, it is when we get to heaven, it is close to us, it is far away.

Jesus says to his disciples, **"Are you starting to get a handle on all this?"** The more we know about Jesus, the closer our relationship with him, the more we understand. Like Paul, we become sure that **absolutely nothing** can get between us and God; we live in his Kingdom.

August 2nd

Romans 9:1-5, Matthew 14:13-21

They're my family. I grew up with them. (Romans 9:3b)

I have some sympathy with the idea that the Feeding of the Multitude works better as a metaphor than an actual event. What makes me think it is as reported, are Jesus's words.

There is no need to dismiss them. You give them supper. The story is about the disciples faith and trust. The answer that we've only got two fish and five loaves doesn't faze Jesus; he will use what we offer. He gets them to sit down on the grass, he faces heaven in prayer, blesses and breaks the food into pieces. The people were fed with an abundance left over.

The people were there to meet Jesus, to be healed and saved. **When he saw them coming, he was overcome with pity and healed their sick.** Like Paul, Jesus has compassion for his people, his neighbours, his community, his country. He still says to us today, **you give them supper**, he will bless whatever we bring him and there will be an abundance left over.

August 9th

Romans 10:5-15, Matthew 14:22-33

You're not "doing" anything; you're simply calling out to God, trusting him to do it for you. That's salvation. (Romans 10:10)

Later in chapter 17 of Matthew, Jesus says **The simple truth is that if you had a mere kernel of faith, a poppy seed, say, you would tell this mountain, 'Move!' and it would move.** (Matt 17:21) The inference is that there is no more or less faith, just faith. So what happened to Peter? His confidence when he sees Jesus and fear when he sees and feels the reality of the storm.

Faith is one step beyond belief; I believe in a lot of things, mainly because the reality of life shows them to be truth. My experience tells me that when I wake up and get out of bed, gravity is going to stop me floating around my bedroom. I believe in God because it seems to me a rational choice. I believe in Jesus because of the veracity of the manuscripts attesting to his life. I have faith because I trust God is God, that Jesus is my saviour, that this truth has set me free. Could I walk on water? Probably not, but I know Jesus can and I have faith in him.

Chairman and Vice chair of the Methodist Conference 2026 - 2027

The Revd Mark Slaney currently serves as Chair of the Scotland District and the Shetland District. Mark preached his first sermon at the age of 15. Prior to his ordination 24 years ago, Mark served 10 years in youth work plus jobs as a builder's mate, cleaner and van driver.

Mark says that what matters to him most as a Methodist is the three-letter word 'ALL' meaning everyone, everywhere, everything, the scope of Gospel and Kingdom, and therefore worship, mission and ministry.

"I am delighted and I feel honoured that the Conference has chosen to designate me as President for 2026. I am really looking forward to meeting as many Methodists and ecumenical partners as I can, as well as representing the Methodist Church in Great Britain and abroad."



Vice Chair Caroline Stead is a local preacher in the Yorkshire West District, where she is also the Synod Secretary. She is an accompanist to a minister in training, serves on the Discerning Ordained Vocation (DOV1) Committee and on Chairs' nomination panels.

A former maths teacher, Caroline was also a Lay Stationing Representative for 11 years. She has been a representative to the Conference since 2008, including six years on the Business Committee.

Caroline is passionate about inclusivity and ensuring that people are welcomed and safe within Methodist Church, and supporting volunteers within the Church. "I am humbled and excited that the Conference has chosen to designate me as Vice-President for 2026. It is a privilege to serve the Church in this way and meet new and old friends around the Connexion."

On 24 June, powerful back-to-back earthquakes struck Venezuela. Entire neighbourhoods have been devastated. Families have lost loved ones and homes.



Prayer for the people of Venezuela

Loving God,

When the earth trembles and homes fall to dust, hold our hearts, God.

When grief shakes families to the core, hold our hearts, God.

Send our hands and feet to help however we can.

Our sisters and brothers in Venezuela live this now.

God of love and mercy, may we match your love in the way we respond - now. **Amen**



New Chairman Yorkshire North & East Methodist District



We are thrilled to announce that the Revd Romeo Regardo Pedro will be taking up the role of District Chair from the 1st of September 2026 for a period of six years (subject to conference).

Romeo is currently serving as Superintendent of the Sheffield Circuit. He has served in a variety of ministerial contexts both in the UK, Namibia and Cape Town. Through the discernment process it became clear that Romeo had a clear call to this role, and will be able to help the District continue to grow from where we are now and respond to the leading of God's Spirit.

We can't wait to see what God has in store!

August 16th

Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32. Matthew 15:10-20, 21-28

There was a time not so long ago when you were on the outs with God. (Romans 11:30)

Both these readings speak into the racial, gender, and religious tensions that are so prevalent today: Jesus's seemingly harsh words to the Canaanite woman, Paul offering hope to converted pagans and Jewish Christians.

Jesus, in all his interactions with people, never picked a side; he pointed to God, encouraged people to view themselves in that lens. A Canaanite, the "Old Enemy" for the Jews, a woman, both these would have a devout Jew ignoring them. **Mercy, Master, Son of David! My daughter is cruelly afflicted by an evil spirit;** she was driving his disciples crazy, making a scene. We know Jesus had seemingly ignored a blind man using similar words. He stresses to his disciples, as when he commissioned the seventy to go on mission, that they were to avoid areas that were not Jewish. The message was for the Children of Israel.

She prostrates herself before Jesus and begs; she pleads her humanity. Jesus here shows that all people have the right to approach him in faith. She knows in herself that her intercession is worthy of healing and salvation. Jesus knows her faith and agrees. Not because she begged, but because it was right.

August 23rd

Romans 12:1-8. Matthew 16:13-20

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. (Romans 12:2)

From Caesarea Philippi, the turning point of the Gospel, Jesus now sets his eyes firmly on Jerusalem and confrontation. He asks one of the three questions that he actually affirms the answer. **And how about you? Who do you say I am?"** Peter answers instantly: **"You're the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God."** We know from reading the Gospels that the disciples still had much to learn. It was probably after the resurrection (of which the Transfiguration was a glimpse) when it all became clear. Jesus asks this of each of us who follow him; Peter's is the only answer. It is this that makes us different: Jesus is from God, sent to save us, because God loves us. God has intervened in our reality to change who we are. The only way to God is through Jesus.

Paul is reminding us of what that means: we are different, we view the world through God's lens.

We walk the path that Jesus shows us in the way that Jesus walked it; there is no other way. He lives in us now.

August 30th

Romans 12:9-21. Matthew 16:21-28

Love from the centre of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. (Romans 12:9-10)

Jesus reveals to his disciples what confrontations he is about to face. Jesus has to say **Peter: Get out of my way. Satan, get lost. You have no idea how God works.** The moment comes when Jesus starts to teach his disciples what **taking up the cross** means. **Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self.** If you want to follow Jesus, you have to let him lead, **the author and perfecter of our faith**, as it says in Hebrews. As Jesus is broken and poured out for us, we have to be given of ourselves for those who Jesus puts us in contact with, our neighbour.

In the Bible as a whole, salvation is usually associated with servanthood: we are saved to serve. We all need that Red Sea moment, where we irrevocably leave behind what we were, to become what God wants us to be, helping others.





A morning with the Psalms at St Hilda's Beadlam.

We spent a "morning with the Psalms" at St Hilda's, Beadlam, using words from the psalms for each part of the service.

We had the set Gospel reading about the call of Matthew and read part of a psalm which we thought might have come to his mind when he was called.

We looked at illustrations of various psalms and then the young people created illustrations for Psalm 104 using calendar illustrations.

For psalm 150 people were invited to 'play' a percussion instrument each time they heard the name of a musical instrument, and then they accompanied the final hymn, which, like the rest of the music, was based on a psalm. *Daisy Barnes.*

People's Emergency Briefing

The People's Emergency Briefing is presented in a film, which features footage from last November's National Emergency Briefing, bringing together leading UK experts in climate science, food security, health, economics, national security and nature.

It presents a calm, evidence-based overview of how the climate and nature crisis is affecting everyday life in Britain - and what the science says about risks and responses.

The initiative is explicitly non-partisan and supported by a wide range of organisations, including the Church of England, National Trust, WWF, the Royal Meteorological Society and many others.

Faith communities have long traditions of stewardship, care for the vulnerable, and intergenerational responsibility. This is an important moment for thoughtful, compassionate local dialogue.

Following the 50-minute film, a structured discussion led by Tim O'Brien (District Net Zero Officer) about what this means for our community, will take place.

Date of screening: 18 July Time:10.00 Location: The Palace Cinema, Malton.

Rev Andy says: *This is being encouraged by the Eco group at Norton Trinity and facilitated by Tim O'Brien the District Net Zero officer. It is apparently really excellent, although challenging. It is free entry, with thanks to the Palace Cinema and I would encourage people to book as it is being shared widely.*



SAVE THE DATE 13 Sept SAFARI SERVICE 13 Sept SAVE THE DATE

Join us for a multi-site 'safari' service as we welcome Chris, Kate, Trudy and Harold into the Circuit on 13 September. Come for the whole day or just one stop.

Malton for Bacon butties, stopping at Hovingham for a walk, then Helmsley for lunch, before heading to outdoor worship at Sinnington and finally tea and cake at Thornton Dale.



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