

Bishop Auckland and Shildon Methodist Circuit Weekly newsletter 13th February 2021

Sundays	<p>Visit YouTube to see a recorded service from Bishop Auckland Methodist Church. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCC_duanwurAoKYcmPeSWTug Or visit the website for lots of other opportunities for worship https://bishopmethodist.org.uk/church-community/worshiphome/</p>
Sundays 11am	Bishop FM 105.9 will have a recorded service from Bishop Auckland Methodist Church
Sunday 6pm	<p>Worship takes place on Zoom. Please get in touch if you would like the link to join, all are welcome. If you would like help to use Zoom this can also be arranged.</p>
Monday 12.45 pm 	<p>The President and Vice President of Conference are hosting a series of events on Facebook Live. https://www.facebook.com/MethodistPresidency/</p>
Tuesdays 12.45pm 	<p>During this Year of Prayer there is an opportunity to join with others across the Methodist Family in a weekly prayer session, on Zoom and Facebook https://www.facebook.com/MethodistChurchinBritain</p> <p>The Year of Prayer meeting for Tuesday 16 February at 12:45pm will be led by Sizwe Mkwanzazi, a member and a preacher in training at Wesley Memorial Church in the Oxford Circuit. He is a South African Rhodes Scholar reading for a DPhil in Education at the University of Oxford.</p>

District events

Cliff College Lent Course: Cliff College is delighted to introduce its first online Lent course for group study. [Creative Bible Reading – the Lent course](#) is based on one of our online short courses and has been specially adapted for group study. With teaching from Rev Dr Mike Parsons, previous Commissioning Editor for BRF, this course enables groups to consider different approaches to Bible reading. Topics include character studies, understanding individual stories in the context of the single narrative of the Bible, meditating on Scripture and more. The cost for this course is £25 per person, and all proceeds will go to support United Theological College in Harare, Zimbabwe, one of Cliff's global partners. For more information, contact enquiries@cliffcollege.ac.uk or call us on 01246 584229. Please do share this with your churches, circuits and Bible study groups.

Evangelism and Growth Team are hosting various Zoom meetings and webinars, [details for these are on this page](#). Join with us as we reflect on our practice together and spur each other on to live out our renewed commitment to becoming a growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking, inclusive church. Click on the webinar title to register and receive joining instructions.

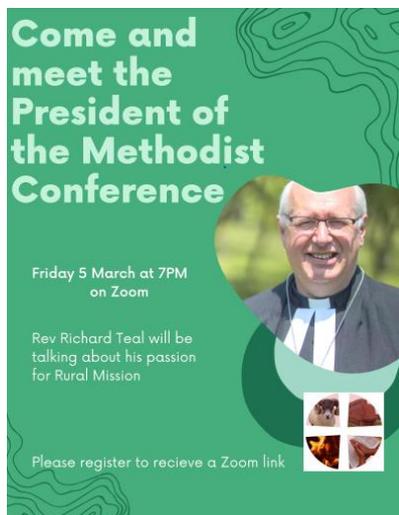
Final Reminder to sign up for Reset the Debt:

Come and learn the stories and the truths of pandemic poverty in the UK with Paul Morrissey and Hannah Brown from the Joint Public Issues Team. **Wednesday 17th February 2pm on zoom**. Hannah and Paul are leading this session especially for the North East region. They will share research carried out during the pandemic and news of the Reset the Debt campaign. Don't miss this opportunity to hear first-hand what is happening in communities across our land. [Register here to attend](#).

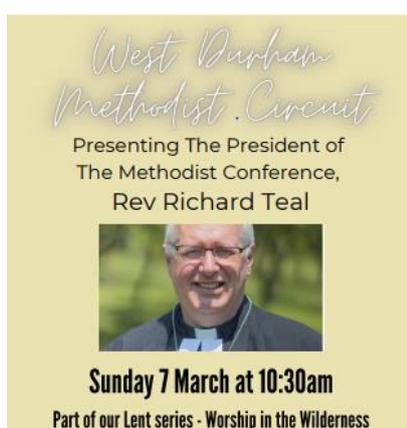
President's visit



On Friday 5th of March at 4PM there will be a Virtual Pilgrimage through the Dales. This event will be taking us through key rural issues using images and video. The President will offer his reflections on Zoom. Anyone wishing to join in, please register on this link: <https://forms.gle/2WcTFNZ1j1enpXpT8>



The President would also like to meet with folk across our district on Zoom and help us to understand better the issues affecting rural areas and how the church can respond. If you would like to meet the President on 5th of March at 7PM then please register via the following link: <https://forms.gle/1uCQDpm4uAsD4XMS7>



The President will also be taking the West Durham Circuit Service on Sunday 7th of March at 10:30AM. You can simply join the service live by going to Stanhope Methodists YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCI7-7i5M2PKpvgJN3gAZ5uQ/featured>

Courageous Day 2021

Grow | Travel | Transform

Courageous Day 2021 (27th February) Grow | Travel | Transform

The District event for children and young people is still taking place, but over Zoom.

Bookings for the day are now open, please encourage children and

young people to join. They are asked to put aside the time 10am – 4pm. There will be three online sessions with things to do in between. There will be a short time of worship at the start of each session, led by young people.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/128871226307>

Climate Sunday and green evangelism webinars



Would you like to get your church more involved in thinking about climate change? Whether you've got loads of experience in climate action or none, you may like to hold a Climate Sunday event this year. Join a coffee break webinar on 18 February at 11.30am to find out more. Register [here](#)

We're also hosting a webinar on 25th March all about green evangelism - take a look and register [here](#).

Pancakes



Fancy a challenge for Shrove Tuesday? Why not have go at some pancake art and make one in the shape of the Methodist orb? We'd love to see your efforts, share them on social media using #MethodistPancakes.

A message from the Chair of District following the recent Synod.

Dear friends,

I am writing to update you on the debate which took place at the Darlington District Synod on Saturday 6th February. The Synod had been called specifically to discuss the *God in Love Unites Us* report and in turn to feed its views back to the Methodist Conference. The Conference will then debate the issues again in June 2021 at which point it will make some final decisions about the recommendations in the report.

As you may be aware the Synod was asked to vote on resolutions focused on principles of good relating, a statement on cohabitation, the possibility of allowing same sex marriages on Methodist premises, and possible changes to the guidance on marriage and to standing orders. I know that there are a wide range of views on these issues and we have been concerned throughout to respect the diversity of view and to encourage respectful conversation. I must confess to feeling humbled by both the quality and the tone of the debate on Saturday and by a very real concern amongst Synod members to both celebrate our diversity and to hold together even when we disagree – indeed this active work of reconciliation is, I believe, an important witness to the world about how to disagree well and hold together in community. The feedback from our discussion in both group work and plenary, which reflected this diversity of view will form part of our feedback to Conference.

Overall the Synod strongly endorsed the recommendations within the report although, in relation to certain resolutions, there was a significant minority against. The voting was as follows:

Resolution 10/2 (Principles of Good Relating):	For: 84	Against: 3
Resolution 10/3 (Statement on Cohabitation):	For: 81	Against: 7
Resolution 10/7 (Changes to Guidance on Marriage):	For: 74	Against: 13
Resolution 10/8 (The Principle of Same Sex Marriages on Methodist Premises):	For: 75	Against: 14
Resolution 10/9 (Changes to standing orders):	For: 79	Against: 10

I recognise that there will be different feelings about this outcome across the district. There will be some who celebrate the result: for others this will be a source of pain or continuing discernment. In these circumstances it is important that we hold one another in prayer, that we continue to journey together and to hold one another in Christ's love. In recent years we have talked a lot about living with contradictory convictions. I hope that the compassionate and mature way in which Synod members of different views handled this discussion is a model and sign of the future and of the Church we aspire to be, in which all are welcome and in which our diversity, of many kinds, is seen as a gift to share rather than as something which pulls us apart.

You may be wondering what happens next. As I indicate above, the Conference will debate the report again in June having received votes from all of the District Synods. In terms of Resolution 10/8, if the Conference accepts the recommendation, it will then be up to individual church councils whether or not to register to allow same sex marriage on their premises and for individual ministers to decide whether or not they wish to conduct a same sex marriage. There will be no compulsion upon either a church council or a minister to do so. I recognise that it will take time for church councils to consider the implications of the report in full. I would encourage you to take the time that you need and if you feel district support or involvement would be helpful to facilitate this at a local level, do please let me know. Likewise, if a pastoral conversation before or after my sabbatical would be helpful, do let me know.

A central text for my ministry is Galatians 3:28 which affirms that in Christ there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. It is a central text in a gospel of reconciliation. In many respects the universal Church has fallen far short of that vision. My prayer is that, in a small way, our modelling of what it means to live together with contradictory convictions is a sign of Christ's presence with us.

Yours in Christ,