



## 'Bags of Hope' from The Parkwood Community Group

At a time of a cost-of-living crisis and food insecurity The Parkwood Community Group jumped at the chance when we were asked by the 'One Community' organisation to submit a bid for a grant to support those who were struggling on the Trees Estate in Huddersfield.



Partnering with Primetime, a group with expertise in distributing food aid, we put together the idea of 'Bags of Hope', a project that would not only provide food but also bring some hope and instil a sense of belonging into the community.

The generosity of the Parkwood Community Team extended beyond the distribution of food. They extended their support to their partners, Primetime and the Drop By Centre, recognising their invaluable contributions. A special note of appreciation was reserved for Anne and Graham, whose home had been transformed into a temporary depot for food packing and storage.

Each bag contained enough ingredients and menus for ten hearty main courses, five sweet treats, a food token, and a Christmas present for the children.

As Christmas approached, families on the Trees Estate were looking forward the final day of their club sessions. Parents were invited to join their children - their presence brought together a community. The Drop By centre buzzed with excitement as children engaged in crafting and games, while the Bags of Hope were eagerly distributed.

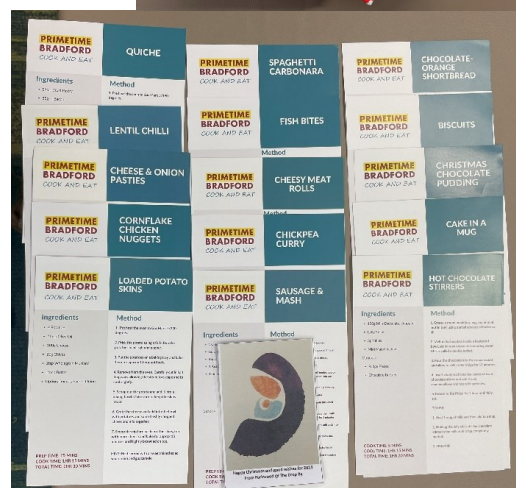
The impact of our efforts extended beyond the confines of the Drop By Centre. Volunteers ventured out onto the Trees Estate, delivering the Bags of Hope to families in need.

One particular address struck them - an elderly person's bungalow. Initially perplexed, they soon learned that the young person who attended their club was living with their grandparents. This poignant revelation highlighted the realities of many families on the estate, where multi-generational households and sofa surfing are prevalent.

Some of the food bags were also used to subsidise the Drop By Food Share project - providing vital additional food to support others across the Trees Estate in food poverty.

With a renewed sense of purpose, funding permitted, we want to repeat this initiative at Easter – we are hoping to find a more suitable location to avoid further disrupting Anne and Graham's home life!

The Parkwood Community Team





It is funny how humour can shed light into areas of our lives and make us laugh and think. I shared at the December Circuit Meeting this old joke that has been updated:

The world's top scientists send out a press release stating that the climate change calamity they've been warning about for years is coming to pass. They announce it will be catastrophic, wiping out the majority of the world's population, and it will happen in only four days. To comfort the people of the world, the Pope, the Dalai Lama, and the Chief Rabbi of Israel all appear on television.

The pope says, "My children, you have four days to accept our Lord and saviour into your heart and find comfort by his side in Heaven."

The Dalai Lama says, "My friends, I ask all of you to embrace Buddhist teachings so that you may find inner peace in the midst of disaster. We have four days to find nirvana."

The Chief Rabbi says, "My people, we have four days to learn how to live underwater."

Learning to live underwater is an interesting image to consider for the position we find ourselves in within the Methodist Church, the Circuit, and the churches. Things have changed. We notice it at local church level with reducing resources, and now it is becoming clearer with numbers available for ordained ministry also reducing.

This edition of In Touch covers the seasons of Lent, Easter right up to and including Pentecost. Despite my notes, the previous editions of In Touch have highlighted and celebrated the number of good news stories across the Circuit. Churches continue to find ways to express the gospel in appropriate ways for their locations. Times they are a changing or to use a phrase from a few years ago now we are looking at a "new normal".

The season of Lent and Easter remind me that what we assume is normal may not be as normal as we may allow ourselves to believe. Stories of healings and inclusion are set against plots and betrayals- quite normal so far. Then comes Easter, a story that invites us to see the world the right way up, all through the death and resurrection of an outsider killed on a cross; dead for revealing that the 'us' and 'them' is really 'we'. Jesus in the Easter story moves amongst those who we label as doubters, deniers and more, and invites them to see one another as they see him. 'We' is an important part of the Good News.

In a culture that promotes self-sufficiency and independence this is a hard message to embody. "What's in it for me?" comes with the mistrust of the other.

Yet if we pause long enough, we realise that we are totally dependent on one another in so many ways. We are part of a relational world that is part of a relational God. 'We' is at the heart of it all.

Nadia Bolz-Weber, Lutheran pastor reminds us that 'anytime we draw a line between us and others, Jesus is on the other side of that line'. This is an old wisdom as we find in the writing of John Donne:

More recently Muriel Rukeyser, an American poet, essayist, biographer, and political activist begins her poem Entitled Islands: 'O for God's sake they are connected underneath.'

We are connected, we rely on one another, we need each other and the creation of which we are part. This relational way of being that Jesus reveals is costly and reflects the heart of God who evolves in relationship with us. As followers of Jesus, the Gospel calls us to learn to embody this.

The only way to learn is to do in an environment that has people committed to the same aim. We have an opportunity to practice this, to seek to serve the intentions of the others in our Circuit by the way we relate and share. This will involve a Lenten journey of reflection including lament, confession and appreciation of God around us. There will be Holy Week times of loss and death, denial and betrayal. The story however does not end there, for there is Easter if we prepared to go this way.

My wondering is, "Are we prepared to go the Jesus way and learn to live under water?"

Rev'd Peter Catford

**No man is an island,  
Entire of itself;  
Every man is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main...**

**If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less,  
As well as if a promontory were:  
As well as if a manor of thy friend's  
Or of thine own were.**

**Any man's death diminishes me,  
Because I am involved in mankind.  
And therefore never send to know for  
whom the bell tolls;  
It tolls for thee.**

**John Donne**

# Charity Trustees

At the last Circuit Meeting, I was asked to provide information to Circuit Meeting members about the roles and responsibilities of charity trustees. Members of the Circuit Meeting, like members of each Church Council, are charity trustees. It can be difficult to understand their roles and responsibilities, not least because the Methodist Church uses different language than the Charity Commission.

The Charity Commission have developed a short quiz which you can take to learn more about the roles and responsibilities of being a charity trustee. The quiz only takes a few minutes, so why not give it a go or do it together at your next Church Council meeting! You can find the quiz here:

<https://beingacharitytrustee.campaign.gov.uk/take-the-trustee-quiz/>

I was able to support the Circuit because Huddersfield Mission is one of nine Community Anchor organisations and we receive a small grant to support community groups and activities. We can help groups, including churches, think through an idea, explore potential funding options or give constructive feedback on a project plan or funding application. The role of the Community Anchor is not to do it for you, but we can point you in the right direction. You can find out more about the nine Community Anchors here, <https://tslkirklees.org.uk/community-anchors/>

I can't repeat the Circuit session for every church in the Circuit, but we could organise a joint session or two for Church Council members, if desired. If you're interested let Shirley Burton know.

Paul Bridges, Chief Executive Huddersfield Mission

## Christmas Day Baptism at Gledholt

Christmas Day celebrations were extra extra special at Gledholt this year. Over some time, we have been blessed by many new friends joining us who were new arrivals to the UK. Baby Victoria, who was born shortly after her family arrived from Nigeria, has always held a special place in our hearts, and so her Baptism (at which five members of the church family were honoured to be asked to be her Godparents) was the first reason Christmas Day at Gledholt became extra special as we celebrated the birth of Jesus himself.

As well as Victoria's Baptism, we were thrilled to officially welcome her mum and dad into Church membership along with another new friend of ours from South Africa at the service.

All these new friendships are enriching church life at Gledholt and this year in particular made Christmas a time to count our blessings. After the joyful service no one rushed off but rather there was time for fellowship together, lots of laughter, chocolate and even, for some, an opportunity to dance! - Rev Sue Pegg



## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) – Training Dates for Spring

As part of working towards being a justice seeking church, the Circuit EDI Group are offering a further two face to face EDI training sessions.

Just a reminder that it is a requirement for all Ministers (including active Supernumeraries), Lay Workers, Local Preachers, Circuit Safeguarding Officers, Circuit Stewards and Church Stewards to complete this training.

**If you would like to attend on either:**

- Tuesday 23rd April, 7 – 9:30pm at Netherton
- Tuesday 30th April, 1:30 - 4pm at Gledholt

**Please contact Shirley Burton to book your place.**

Alternatively, you can complete the training online, one to one, by accessing the Methodist Church's course on <https://mcb.theologyx.com>.

If you do the course online, please can you let Shirley Burton know for Circuit records when you have completed it.

Roz Page, Chris Mason, Suzanne Bridges, Sue Taylor and Andrew Marchington (Circuit EDI Group)

'There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in.' Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

One of the ways we can look at the world we live in is through the lens of cause and effect. If we do x action y happens. But in a world full of people from all walks of life it isn't as simple as that, not everything is equal. People have different starting places, life experiences, opportunities, and are treated differently based on their race, gender, age, sexuality, gender identity etc. There isn't just one cause and one effect, but the impact of being treated differently can be profound, life-long and multi-generational.

The world is full of injustice and it can feel overwhelming. How can we seek social justice, and how do we respond to what we see and experience? This might get us to think about what we do, how we act on what we are presented with. The Methodist Church has a history of social action, and it is a part of our identity. However, if we think of the Desmond Tutu's stream, have we identified the social action and the social injustice?

Social action can be seeing that people are hungry and feeding them, either directly or giving to a food bank. It can be collecting clothes to donate to a charity. It can be knitting blankets, providing warm spaces, donating money to charity, pastoral visiting and so much more. These are positive responses to others, and part of how we may seek to make a difference to people's immediate circumstances.

Social justice is taking things a step further. It asks about the causes and doesn't just address the effects. It asks us to take a walk upstream and look at what is happening there. What is creating these circumstances that are having such an effect on people and preventing them from flourishing and reaching their full potential. This can be through awareness raising, campaigning, activism, protesting, and seeking to change those structures or laws that create injustice. For example, in 2000, many churches across the country supported the Jubilee 2000 campaign for debt relief in developing countries through marching in London, letter writing, education, advocacy, demonstrations at the 1998 G8 summit.

It also asks question of whether this is 'with' people who have lived experience of injustice or if we are doing this 'for' people. The Methodist Church is beginning to work more from the position of working with and alongside people, rather than what can be a more distant and uninformed for.

In a report to the Methodist Conference in 2023, five priorities were identified to work towards being a justice seeking church:

1. Tackling inequality and poverty: seeking life in all its fullness
2. Enabling a flourishing environment: right relationship between people, planet and God
3. Seeking justice for refugees: one people, one world
4. Opposing discrimination: all are made in the image of God
5. Pursuing peace: seeking justice and reconciliation

There are many good things happening around the Circuit of social justice and social action. Stories about people, projects and communities where relationships are nurtured can found in the pages of In Touch, and some stories we don't hear of, where people have made a quiet difference where they are.

The Circuit Social Justice group continues to explore social justice and social action and in the past projects we have tried to reflect both. But we are always ready to learn and to find ways to deepen our commitment to being a justice seeking church. Thinking of what Desmond Tutu said, the river can be deep and wide, but it is important to find ways to explore it. What is the river like in your community? What do you think you will find upstream?

Roz Page and Suzanne Bridges

## Crafty Church at Scholes

A Crafty Church session was held at Scholes on Ash Wednesday/Valentine's Day, which provided the themes for the children who attended. Nineteen youngsters, age 4-10yrs, enjoyed doing a variety of activities including painting stones, layering sand into small bottles, making hand-heart cards, icing heart biscuits and creating a collage landscape on which children stuck a figure of themselves. The younger children particularly enjoyed playing with sand (a desert!).

Parents and children then gathered together in church. Suzanne talked about our journeys through life and Jesus' time of preparation in the desert before his ministry began. The children also enjoyed singing 'Love is like a magic penny', with accompanying actions and musical instruments! The afternoon concluded with refreshments of pancakes, fruit and the iced biscuits made earlier. It was a very successful event!

Thanks were expressed to all who helped run the activities.

Hilary Deakin, Scholes





# Introducing the Circuit Social Justice Project for 2024... (Random) Acts of Kindness

I imagine that the phrase 'random acts of kindness' is not unfamiliar to you. Have you ever wondered where this phrase comes from?

Just over 40 years ago, Anne Herbet, Berkeley writer and activist, wrote on a restaurant placemat, "Practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty". In 1982 she established the Random Acts of Kindness movement, the idea being "to make our world a kinder place, one act at a time." It refers to selfless acts, big or small, without any expectation of personal reward.

This concept is now embedded within society and while much goes unnoticed, as it should, perhaps the most evident was during the Covid Pandemic – communities supporting each other and offering hope through 'acts of kindness'.

As churches and individuals, I believe 'acts of kindness' are integral to our faith, whether these be intentional or random. Whilst ongoing, Lent can offer a time of deeper reflection which challenges us to action, perhaps starting with '40 Acts of Kindness for Lent.'

The new Circuit Social Justice project for this year, *(Random) Acts of Kindness*, is looking to explore social action and social justice in various ways; within our local communities, globally, environmentally and challenging issues such as poverty. As the project develops, further information will be shared in Circuit Project updates and *In Touch*. To begin, the project will focus on 'acts of kindness' within our local communities. Many churches across our Circuit offer community support in various ways. I wonder what your church is doing within the local community? But 'acts of kindness' are also relational; we may receive as well as give. So, I wonder if you have experienced any 'acts of kindness', no matter how big or small, and how that impacted on your life? We'd like to be able to share and celebrate some of these stories from around the Circuit in the next edition of *In Touch*, so please get in touch.

Suzanne Bridges, on behalf of the Circuit Social Justice Group

**For further information or to get involved with the Circuit Social Justice Group, contact Suzanne Bridges, [suzhmc@gmail.com](mailto:suzhmc@gmail.com)**

## March

Launch - provide food for thought on social justice/social action and introduce Acts of Kindness project (Circuit Service and In Touch)

## April

Acts of Kindness – local impact. Challenge, encourage, celebrate what churches are doing within their local communities. Share stories.

## May

Acts of Kindness – global impact. Support/partner MWiB, including Easter Offering service 'Let Justice Roll'.

**A BIG Thank you!**

**Action for Children Circuit project 2023**  
This Circuit project for 2023 has now come to an end.

The Circuit Social Justice Group would like to thank everybody for their support over the past year. Together we have raised £6,390 including Gift Aid, for Action for Children, donated to Secret Santa, promoted the work of this amazing charity, and collected and made items for Bradford Baby Steps and much more!

## Step Out Walk

**Saturday 8th June, 1pm starting at Marsden**

Come and join us for this annual fundraiser for Action for Children. From Marsden we will be walking along the canal to Slaithwaite Methodist Church, where refreshments will be provided. Then the walk will return to Marsden where further refreshments can be enjoyed!

**For further information and to sign up please contact Liz Bishop at [lizbishop251@gmail.com](mailto:lizbishop251@gmail.com) or call 07853 916988**



# Huddersfield Mission

Working at the Mission every day, I have realised that I can sometimes forget just how special the Mission is. What a difference the staff and volunteers make in the lives of our customers. To use the phrase from the Methodist Christmas social media campaign - *there is extraordinary in the ordinary.*

There is hope served with a cup of tea.  
Dignity given with a new set of clothes.  
Justice served with advice about benefits.  
Compassion shared with a listening ear.

So that we can see the extraordinary in the ordinariness of every day we gather a case study each month from an individual we have supported. It is always heart-warming to read how we have been able to help people and what it means to them. More recently though, we have been trying to capture the difference we make in another way too. Our advice staff and volunteers help people with advice and information, but increasingly with a wide variety of practical help as well. We've started counting this, and working out how much this would be worth if someone had to buy it. This practical help can include a mobile phone or a sim card, some clothing or a bus pass, an energy voucher, a free meal, or a grant to buy some furniture. In the two months since we have started to count this practical help we estimate that it is already worth over £19,000.

There is a difficult and challenging irony for any charity that is supporting people experiencing poverty. When economic factors, locally or nationally, mean that more people need help and support, those same economic factors mean that resources available to support people are themselves more difficult to obtain. Charities such as the Mission find themselves with increasing demand and less resources.

You will be aware that Kirklees Council is cutting a wide range of its services to balance the books, and these cuts are affecting the voluntary and community sector including the Mission. We are still in discussion with the Council but it is clear that the savings that they need to find are considerable.

If you feel able, please consider giving a donation to help the work of the Mission. You can do this on our website or if you prefer at the Mission reception, and if you are a taxpayer please fill in a gift aid form as well.

Thank You  
Paul Bridges  
Chief Executive - Huddersfield Mission



## LEPTON WELCOMES COMMUNITY CHOIR

Over the last three years Lepton Methodists have been forming a close friendship with a Community Choir from nearby Flockton who advertised on the local Facebook page. Since then we have joined together to celebrate several festivals.

In December, helped by a small grant from Kirklees, our usual Carol Service became a 'Songs and Carols for Christmas' and we invited everyone living in the area to join in the fun. The church was packed and it was wonderful hearing so many join in with the singing of the carols and songs as they were encouraged to do by the choir. The concert and the refreshments afterwards were free of charge making the event accessible to everyone. Our next concert is planned for May 12th and will include songs from the musicals Joseph, Jesus Christ Superstar and possibly Godspell. Some of our Church members have now joined the singers themselves further strengthening the church's link with the choir and the church with local people.

Rev Sue Pegg



# News from Almondbury



## Christmas Journey

The first week of December saw us busy hosting nearly 300 children and their teachers from several schools as they came for Christmas Journey. Once again everyone has appreciated hearing and seeing the Christmas story told in a different and entertaining way with lots of interaction with the children.

Pictured are Thursday's 'cast' (Peter, Suzanne, Sarah, Susan, John and Alex), not forgetting Catherine, Sandra, Annette, Richard, Malcolm and Mike who have been part of the team on other days. Thanks are due not only to them but also to those who have come along to prepare and serve refreshments.



## Carol Service

Although using a traditional format for our service of lessons and carols, we introduced something very different. Instead of singing *Silent Night* accompanied by the organ, we sang to a video and also signed (following the actions of Matthew Makaton!). Sadly there is no photo of the entire congregation of some 70 people, of all ages, joining in, but it was a wonderful sight to see - a demonstration of our inclusivity.

## CRAFTandCHAT

The small but very productive CRAFTandCHAT group has continued to knit and crochet hundreds of items during 2023. The output – consisting mainly of blankets, cardigans, hats, scarves etc – has been given to a variety of outlets, including Salvation Army, the Yemen, Ukraine, Bradford Baby Steps via Action for Children, hearts for Huddersfield end of life care at HRI and York/ Scarborough Teaching hospitals.



Pictured is the latest donation – 14 blankets, 20 scarves, 10 pairs gloves, 10 adult hats and 15 jumpers and cardigans for children and babies - which are going to Ukraine via the HuddersfieldToUkraineHumanitarianAid organisation based on Leeds Road. These will be taken on a large container-based lorry for distribution to towns and cities across Ukraine, for use in communities and orphanages, some for single mums whose husbands/partners are involved in the war.

The group meets on Monday afternoons between 1.30pm and 3.30pm – new members are always welcome to come along and enjoy a cup of tea as well as a chat and some craftwork.



John Robinson, Almondbury

# ASKING THE BIG QUESTIONS IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS



when

Saturday 27th  
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where

Ripon, North Yorkshire  
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what

A summer camp for 11-17 year  
olds  
We have a programme packed with activities,  
games, bible study, campfires, worship and  
much more, as well as time to simply chat, relax  
and reflect.

how  
much

£110pp  
This price covers everything except optional  
trips and spending money.

## The OUTLAINE Singers 'THE CRUCIFIXION'

BY J. STAINER

*Listening to the events of Holy week unfold in music sung by  
the choir and soloists, with well-known Lenten hymns for all  
to sing*

*Palm Sunday March 24<sup>th</sup> 6pm  
Golcar Providence Methodist Church - HD7 4AN*

*No Admission Charge  
Retiring collection towards church and charity*

In Touch is edited by Suzanne  
Bridges and Rev Roz Page, and  
produced by Chris Mason.

Please send all contributions for  
the next edition of In Touch (June -  
Aug 24) by Fri 24th May to  
suzhmc@gmail.com

**In Touch** 



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