

The **Methodist** Church 

FOCUS

Wesley Chapel Harrogate



Christmas 2015

Regular Activities

Sunday Worship 10.30 am every week

Holy Communion included in the first Sunday of the month

Methodist Women in Britain 2-3pm alternate Mondays from October to April

Bible Study at the home of Helen Evison on the 3rd Monday of each month at 2pm. Ring Helen for further details. 01423 870725

Tuesday Coffee 10.00 am—12 noon every Tuesday

Book Club every alternate month

Forward Together (includes coffee, lunch, speakers and general social fellowship) every week

Journey Group normally on the first Thursday in every month. Contact Philip Goodwin (563990) for details.

Wesley Guild monthly on Thursday afternoons during the summer months. Contact Lynne Harvey 0143 568968

For more details of our activities see our weekly news-sheet or visit **www.wesleychapelharrogate.org.uk**

Contacts:

Ministers: Rev. Christine Gillespie
Rev. Trevor Dixon

Senior Stewards: Christine Bunting
Les Sudron

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Jenny Goodwin

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Christine Sudron

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Focus is edited by Judith Yeats, who welcomes any feedback, input or suggestions for the improvement of our quarterly magazine. e-mail jyeats@btinternet.com

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Message from our Minister Christine

Think before you speak!’ ‘Count to ten before opening your mouth!’ Its advice that is given to children by exasperated adults who can clearly see how easily a difficult situation could have been avoided if only the child had first considered the likely consequences of their words.

I guess though, that if those same adults are honest they are probably aware of times when they also should have followed their own advice. ‘Every time I open my mouth I put my foot in it’, is the wry comment made sometimes by people who realise their words have made a bad situation worse.

The letter of James addresses just this issue. We read from it:- ‘All kinds of animals, birds and reptiles... have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue’ (James 3: 7-8 NIV)

And commenting on the various ways in which our words cause harm he writes:- ‘If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check’ (James 3: 2)

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There is a lesson here for us about what we say, but I think also there is a warning for us about what we encourage others to say.

I understand that when the first newspaper was produced it was arranged that it would be published weekly – providing there was enough news to justify it. That seems so quaint in our age of 24 hour news broadcasts and instant global communication. Yet there is a danger in our present situation. As soon as an event happens anywhere in the world politicians and community leaders are asked for a comment. They are expected to respond instantly in a short ‘sound bite’ and they are tempted to make that response stronger than the one of the person who spoke before them.

I wonder how many unstable situations are made more precarious, or conflicts made more hard line by the unwise verbal reactions of influential people who have not been given time to think.

It is easy of course to criticise leaders for what they say or journalists for the way in which the words are edited and published. I wonder though whether we should also look to ourselves and ask whether our expectation for instant news is helping to create the problem.

Christine Gillespie

The Power of Words

Whatever words we utter should be chosen with care for people will hear them and be influenced by them for good or ill." Buddha

Letter from your Pastoral Secretary



“Stick like glue” is a well-known phrase and as a relatively new Grandma it has taken on a new meaning for me as my granddaughter is beginning to reach running speeds faster than me! So increasingly, I want to stick like glue to Elsa to make sure she comes to no harm as we walk through the busy streets of Harrogate or a crowded playground in the Valley Gardens.

Within Wesley Chapel and hopefully outside in the wider world, our Faith should hold us together, expressed through love, care and compassion to all we meet. Our Faith should be the “glue” that binds us to other people in various ways, depending upon the individual and their needs and hopes.

“Where can we find you, Lord Jesus our Master?
We want to serve you, to answer your call.
Where do you lead us and ask us to follow?
What should we do in our service to all?”

*Singing The Faith - Hymn 672
Alan Charles Dickinson*

And at this Christmas time we especially pray that the glue of God’s Love can find its way to the heart of those who may never have heard the wonderful story of Jesus and for whom it holds no meaning.

Lord Jesus, from the repetitive carols
Played but not heard in every shop and supermarket,
To the frantic shopping for glitzy gifts, may we, your disciples,
Be ready to grasp every opportunity
To share the true meaning of Christmas with others. **Amen**

Every Blessing to you and yours. **Christine Sudron**

Letter from your Senior Stewards



At our recent Anniversary Service we were exhorted by our previous minister Rev. Shaun Swithenbank to 'look beyond the horizon'.

The gift of exhortation is often called the "gift of encouragement." The Greek word for this gift is *Parakaleo*. It means to beseech, exhort, call upon, to encourage and to strengthen. The primary means of exhortation is to remind the hearer of the powerful and amazing work of God in Christ, particularly in regard to the saving work of Jesus in the atonement. We see Paul commanding Titus to use this gift in Titus 1:9 and throughout chapter 2, particularly Titus 2:11-15. He also charges Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2.

The Spirit of God gives this gift to people in the church to strengthen and encourage. Those with the gift of exhortation can uplift and motivate others as well as challenge and rebuke them in order to foster spiritual growth and action. The goal of the encourager is to see everyone in the church continually building up the body of Christ and glorifying God.

As individuals this could mean looking at ourselves afresh, reviewing what really holds meaning in our lives, considering if there is something new we have always wanted to do, reflecting on how do we continue to be the best we can be; as Christians this could mean responding to a challenge arising from the teachings of Jesus.

As a Church, the exhortation to 'look beyond the horizon' probably resonated with many of us.

Earlier in the year many members of Wesley Chapel responded to a questionnaire that allowed us to express our own thoughts, feelings, hopes, concerns, joy and sadness on a broad range of perspectives of life, theology and mission of Wesley Chapel.

This was part of the process to help us all move from being involved in a 'building project' to being a part of a future "mission project".

We will continue to reflect and strive to respond to the exhortations expressed in the review. Whether it is ensuring we open the church, our worship, our personal groups and ourselves to strangers and allow them to feel a real part of us, seek to connect with our partner congregations, understand more about being a Dementia Friendly Church, build on relational faith development such as the new house group set up by Helen Evison and provide a place for quiet and reflection in our services and our building together, we can indeed "look beyond the horizon".

We will also rejoice and give thanks to all those connected with the existing and in many instances, long standing expressions of mission and service in this place.

At our Anniversary Service we shared the following prayer:

Let us pray to God for the Church of Christ throughout the world, and especially this congregation of Wesley Chapel with its diversity, and our neighbours of all denominations that the light of God will shine upon us, and that all will be given strength to bear witness to the light of God in our mission and ministry, worship and prayer.

At this Christmas time we pray that God hears our prayers and that the Kingdom of God is with us now and beyond the horizon.

Every blessing. Christine Bunting and Les Sudron

Church Family News



LES IS RETIRING

Les is retiring from his position as Head of Funding with MHA, a position he has held for 10 years. Les will be missed by all his colleagues, however, according to MHA Monthly Newsletter, he is staying as a volunteer for MHA.

All of us at Wesley would like to wish Les a very long and happy retirement

Photograph of Les with Pam Rhodes by kind permission of MHA

WHAT IS RETIREMENT?

Retirement is having nothing to do and someone always keeping you from it. ~Robert Brault, rbrault.blogspot.com

Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under the trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of water, or watching the clouds float across the blue sky, is by no means waste of time.

~John Lubbock, "Recreation," *The Use of Life*, 1894

Retirement has been a discovery of beauty for me. I never had the time before to notice the beauty of my grandkids, my wife, the tree outside my very own front door. And, the beauty of time itself. ~Hartman Jule

Age is only a number, a cipher for the records. A man can't retire his experience. He must use it. ~Bernard Baruch

OUR NEW GENERATION

You may remember reading about Freddie Rich in our last edition, born in March, Grandson for Sue Hesketh and Great Grandson for Margaret Fletcher. Well this is Freddie, now 8 months old. Isn't he gorgeous?



His grandmother assures me that he will be brought up in the strict family tradition and will definitely be a Leeds United supporter.

God's Not Deaf

Two young boys were spending the night at their grandparents' house the week before Christmas. At bedtime, the two boys knelt beside their beds to say their prayers. The younger one began praying at the top of his lungs:

"I PRAY FOR A NEW BICYCLE..."

"I PRAY FOR A NEW NINTENDO..."

His older brother leaned over, nudged him and said, "Why are you shouting? God isn't deaf." to which the little brother replied, "No, but Grandma is!"

Wesley Guild

Lynne Harvey tells us what has been going on this season.



To my shame I have missed several meetings this year due to family circumstances and holidays. I will try to do better next year – God willing!

I understand that, in September, the members enjoyed hearing Matthew Lunn speak about his work with children and families. He showed some films of his work in the Churches and local schools which revealed how successfully the children are drawn to the lively and diverse Christian activities which he and his colleagues provide. Matthew works tirelessly in the circuit and his enthusiasm is to be greatly admired. Thank you Molly for your input here.

In October, Rev. Brian Shackleton kindly travelled from Pickering to speak about the work of All We Can. This organisation works alongside other agencies such as Christian Aid, Tearfund etc. offering vital help in providing clean water supplies, sanitation and medical help in rural areas to mention but a few of its aims. All We Can also lobbies Governments to act on climate change and injustice and works towards the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals. Brian said that although he felt initial resistance to the former Methodist Relief and Development Fund changing its title to All We Can when he came to realise the work being done, in many countries of the world, by so many people prepared to be there as long as it takes to do 'All We Can' he soon reneged on his original opinion.

My thanks to Gladys and Les Simms for their help in Chairing the meeting and for providing me with the above information.

In November, it was our delight to hear Rev. John Parkin speak about his life and Christian journey. This started with him being born a Roman Catholic. In later years he and his wife became Officers in the Salvation Army. He then had a brief foray into Methodism before being ordained a Deacon in the Church of England at the age of 70. He is still active in this role until 2016 when he plans to retire. John put most of his life changes down to the advice given by “interfering busybodies” he had met on the way. He said this with tongue in cheek! Thank goodness he met them. His work has involved him being in charge of various branches of the Salvation Army. He and his wife then went into child care as House Parents for the N.C.H. All this before his ordination. It was our privilege to listen to John's interesting and humorous life story.

The title of his talk was ‘God is Good’. Long may God continue his good work through him and we wish John and his wife every blessing in their retirement. We cannot imagine that either of them will have idle hands for long – some ‘interfering busybody’ is sure to come along with other ideas!

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Christmas Traditions. Crackers. Crackers have been part of British Christmases since 1847, when they were invented by Tom Smith. Smith sold sweets in a twist of paper (the origins of the traditional sweet wrapper). As sales slumped, Smith began to come up with new ideas. His first tactic was to insert mottos, with limited success. He was inspired to add the crackle element when he heard of crackle of a log on a fire. The size of the paper wrapper had to be increased to incorporate the banger and the sweet itself was eventually dropped to be replaced by a small gift.

Wesley Guild continued from page 8

We meet on 10th December, for the last time this year, when we look forward to sharing a Christmas lunch with members of Forward Together before assembling at 2.00 p.m. for Christmas readings and carols. I would like to thank all those kind ladies who will be preparing and serving our lunch and we hope that members of Forward Together will stay and join us for our Carol Service. My sincere thanks also to Gordon and Barbara Lister who have kindly chosen our readings and carols. I would also like to thank Barbara for her duties as Hon. Accompanist – a role she has loyally undertaken for several years now.

The Guild has attracted new members this year from Woodlands and we are delighted to welcome Violet Davill and Florence Wylie to our midst. My thanks to all Guild members for their loyal support and to Mary Ellis, Katharine Carmichael and Joy Blakey for their help with serving refreshments – a very vital job! A big thank you also to Molly Blades our President and to Keith Carmichael who is Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I conclude by wishing you all a peaceful and happy Christmas and New Year. May God continue to bless us all with the wonderful fellowship we enjoy in the Guild as we look forward to another happy season in 2016.

Lynne Harvey

Pontius Who?

At Sunday school, the younger children were drawing pictures illustrating Biblical stories. The teacher walked by and noticed one little boy was drawing an airplane! "Oh, what Bible story are you drawing?" she asked. "This is the Flight into Egypt," the little boy answered. "See, here is Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. And this," he said, pointing to the front of the plane, "is Pontius. He's the Pilot."



Our Methodist Women in Britain season has started well. We were especially pleased to welcome our friends from Trinity who have joined with us this year. Our first meeting was a Welcome meeting which gave us a good opportunity to get to know each other.

better Since then we have had interesting talks from Jeanette Mowatt about *Save the Children* in Indonesia; Rev. Michael Wearing; Geoff Scurrah entitled *Coppers not Cash*. As this goes into print we are looking forward to our Christmas lunch which will be at Ascot House on Wednesday 16th December.

For more details of our programme in the new year please visit Wesley Chapel website www.wesleychapelharrogate.org and follow the Church Family link

Stopping in the woods on a snowy evening
by Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

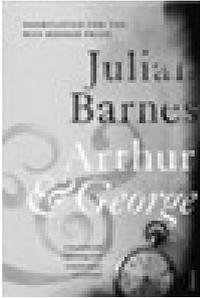
My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep



Wesley Book Club



Arthur and George by Julian Barnes

Here was a book that everyone in the group enjoyed reading! A beautifully written historical novel by the Booker-winning writer, Julian Barnes who, with extraordinary empathy and imagination, invites readers into the world of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji. These two men would never have met but for a terrible miscarriage of justice. The book is based on real-life events and the case led to the setting up of the Court of Appeal.

As well as reading about the investigation of the case, the book includes surprising biographical details about Conan Doyle – his marriage to Touie, his nine year affair with Jean Leckie, his frustration at the fame attached to being the creator of Sherlock Holmes and his involvement with spiritualism, psychics and mediums.

The contrasting world of George Edalji's fight for justice led to discussion on racial prejudice and the dark undercurrent of racism in turn-of-the-century England; identity and nationality; police incompetence and corruption; and justice and evidence.

Don't expect a tidying up of loose ends as happens in most detective fiction. This is based on real life so there are uncertainties and unproven accusations and a degree of 'unknowability'. It's a very readable and fascinating book.

Maureen Greenberg

Coming up next

February 2016 *The Sacred River* –by Wendy Wallace
About three women who leave a fog-bound London in 1882 for the light and heat of Egypt

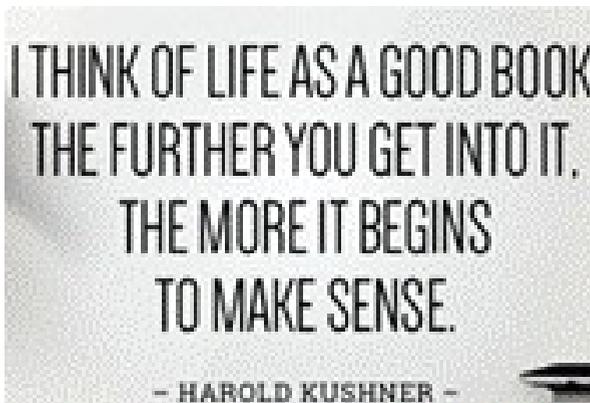
April 2016 *Hare with the Amber Eyes* by Edmund de Waal

The history of a family through 264 objects - set against a turbulent century - from an acclaimed writer and potter

June 2016 *Common Ground* by Rob Cowen.

Over the course of one year, the author discovered a common - though extraordinary - square mile of wood, meadow, hedge and river on the edge of Harrogate.

Exact dates have yet to be arranged— Meetings are at 2pm usually on a Tuesday and generally last about an hour and a half.



<http://ebookfriendly.com/>



Bible Study Group

After advertising in the weekly notices for those interested in being involved in a Bible Study group, we had some interest and next found out which day would be best for the group to meet and decided on a Monday, and chose the 3rd Monday a month as that prevented clashes with other meetings or the monthly music concert. Once we had decided on the day we chose to meet from 2pm till 4pm. We set the inaugural meeting for July 20th when we got to know each and decided on the study we wanted to undertake.

We decided on Philippians and the first study was an introduction to the letter and the first 11 verses in August. The second study completed the first chapter in September. We studied chapter 2 in October and chapter 3 in November. We will complete the final chapter in December.

We have learnt how much Paul valued the church and rejoiced in them. He longed to see them and wanted them to stay firm in seeking to follow his example and stay focussed on the Lord Jesus. He was grateful for the gifts they had sent to him to support him in his imprisonment. He did not want them to be distracted from their focus on striving to keep on to the goal of Christ Jesus.

In the New Year we will follow the York Lent Course on the Psalms, just doing a study a month, not just in the period of Lent. There are 3 men, John, Geoffrey and Bill, 3 women Rosemary, Molly and Sheila who join Malcolm and me for the study. We start with a drink, biscuit and a chat. Helen and Malcolm lead the discussion. We find it very stimulating to discuss the chapters, as a group. It has deepened our fellowship as we share insights together.

Helen Evison

Notes from the Church Council held 20th October, 2015



Rev. Christine Gillespie welcomed everyone to the meeting and led the opening devotions.

Christine proposed and the meeting agreed that Judith Yeats should be appointed to the Church Council, because she is our representative to St. Peter's PCC and also because she is our contact with the Charity Commissioners.

The Stewards had made three preliminary decisions concerning the programme 'Pilgrim's Way':

- (a) a small group would meet with Presence Church, although this has not happened yet
- (b) we should investigate becoming a dementia friendly church. Material is being circulated and a meeting has been arranged to explore the issue further
- (c) create a new Bible Study group – this is already happening under the leadership of Helen Evison, to whom the meeting expressed thanks for her initiative on this.

Other decisions will be made in due course, one of which will be a discussion on the future of the Church Life and Mission Team.

Jenny Goodwin gave an update on Forward Together. HELP, one of the charities who joined us at the beginning of the year to provide activities once a month has decided to withdraw as the attendance has not been good. SOP (Supporting Older People) are willing to carry on, but our contact there, Judith Simpson, is retiring at the end of the year and we await confirmation of her successor. Hopefully they will continue with an activity on the first Thursday each month.

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David Hunt will offer a devotional time once a month. For an experimental period, coffee will revert to being downstairs in the Lower Hall, from January to April, with the activity taking place in Unit 3 (the far end of the Hall)

Reports were received from the Senior Stewards, the Pastoral Secretary and the Treasurer. The Treasurer's report included discussions concerning the use of a generous legacy left to Wesley Chapel by the late Gladys Cook, and also the matter of charitable giving by Wesley. *(See page 18)*

Ulrike Hitchen had asked if once again we could put out Christian Aid envelopes at Christmas, as the government was willing to match the giving pound for pound. This was agreed.

The Stewards would be reviewing Safeguarding and Risk Assessment, and account would be taken of any new requirements highlighted in the circuit safeguarding meeting.

Future Dates:

- Saturday 5th December: the Vice-President of Conference will be visiting Wesley in the morning.
- Sunday 6th December: the President and Vice-President will attend the District service at Trinity at 4.00 pm.
- Sunday 6th December: 6-30pm Ashville Carol Service at Wesley
- Sunday 13th December 10-30am: Gift Service – Springboard to be the recipient and steps will be taken to find out the most suitable gifts.
- Sunday 20th December 10-30am: Carol Service.
- Thursday 24th December 6-30pm: Communion service
- Christmas Day: Service at 11.00 am, followed by the Christmas lunch at 12.30 pm
- Sunday 3rd January 10-30am, 2016: Covenant Service.
- Sunday 21 February 10-30am: Cafe Service.
- Good Friday, 25th March. 10am Service of meditation
- Easter Sunday, 27th March: 10-30am Service with Holy Communion

(Report continued on p 17)

Christine Gillespie also mentioned that a Lent Study Group would be taking place at Woodlands on Wednesdays 10th, 17th, 24th February and 2nd March at 2. p.m. Patricia Stableford said that a Lent group was taking place at St. Peter's also on Wednesdays at lunch-time during Lent, starting on Ash Wednesday. All are welcome to attend either course.

We agreed to engage in conversation with the management committee about the desirability of having Christian material available in the building when outside groups are using it. Reinstating the prayer corner was one idea put forward.

Helen Lunn said that as part of the Circuit Review, 20/20 Vision, meetings were taking place with individual churches.

Helen also reported that she is part of a District Review into the changing patterns of marriage – as asked for by the Connexion. Each Circuit is to be consulted.

Christine reported that Rev. Nick Witham would be leaving the Circuit in 2016 and a probationer was being sought to replace him at Starbeck, Park Grove and Scotton churches.

Our District Chair, Rev. Liz Smith, would also be leaving in 2016.

Rev. Christine Gillespie closed the meeting with prayer.

**Date of next Church Council:
Thursday, 25th February, 2016**

**Date of Annual Church Meeting:
Sunday, 24th April, 2016**

Wesley Toilets

Good news. Those of you who have been using the premises at Wesley for some time are very aware that the toilet facilities are showing signs of wear and considerable use. In the Ladies the facility for Baby changing are not at all up to present day standards. From time to time there are intrusive odours which we have found it difficult to locate and therefore eliminate.

The good news is that it was agreed at the Church Council and at the Centre Management Committee that we investigate upgrading all the toilets in the building. We have a scheme to produce toilets where people will not want to be in and out as soon as possible but may even want to linger a while!!

All being well the work will be done during the summer months and so the inconvenience caused by the work should be minimised.

You may be aware that Gladys Cook left a sum of money to the chapel in her will and it was agreed by the Church Council that a significant contribution to the cost will be borne by that bequest. We are very grateful for the gift and we believe this will be a way in which the whole congregation will benefit from Gladys' generosity.

Wesley Centre Property Committee



Christmas Traditions: The forerunner of the Christmas pudding was called frumenty. Served in medieval times, this was a spiced porridge, enjoyed by both rich and poor. It had its origins in a Celtic harvest god, Dagda, who stirred a porridge made of up of all good things of the earth. Mince pies, or Christmas pies, were banned by Cromwell, but made a comeback after 1660. Custom dictates if the mincemeat is homemade, everyone in the household should stir it for luck.



Christmas Day Lunch

*** 2015 ***



WESLEY CHAPEL

Oxford Street, Harrogate.



Home alone on Christmas Day?
Nobody to share your lunch with?
Come along to Wesley Chapel for some company and a free
3-course turkey lunch, served at 12.30 p.m.



Please book a place - just phone Philip on Hgate 563990
Transport to and from Wesley Chapel can be arranged
if needed (we will need your address for this).
You're also most welcome to come first to our Family
Christmas Service at 11am, then downstairs for lunch.



Maybe you know someone else who would welcome this
invitation please spread this message.



The bottom line in the poster is important - while *you* may be fixed up for Christmas, you may well know some lonely soul who is not.....

This is the 31st year of Wesley Chapel providing a Christmas Day lunch.

We should feel privileged not only that we have the facilities to provide a 3-course Christmas lunch to 90 guests, but also that we live in a community which provides sponsoring of all costs and provides nearly 40 volunteers on the day (and many more offers) to staff the event.

It is also warming to note that usually over 30 of the guests choose to come to our Christmas Day service.

Philip Goodwin



Friday Opening

Some of you will have been surprised to pass Wesley on a Friday morning to find its doors open and coffee being served, but this is an experiment running until Christmas to build upon the valuable work of those who serve our neighbours on a Tuesday and a Thursday in addition to the regular Saturday events. In addition to the coffee, tea and biscuits we have been serving soup and a roll, have made available the 'Bookshop in a box' Christian resources and a crucial part of the offering has been a 15 minute period of Christian reflection at 12.15 each Friday. However the main thrust has been meeting the needs of the ones who have come through our door and chatting to as many as possible about how this opening serves their needs.

Numbers have been relatively small so far, hardly surprising given the low-key nature of the operation, and mostly consists of those passing the door who see the notice. Many are Wesley coffee regulars who welcome the extended opening day; many are visitors to Harrogate, both Methodists and other denominations who are in the habit of seeking out a church for refreshment and rest and many compliments have been received about the beauty of the building after its refurbishment. Comments have on the whole been positive and one of our 'regular' couples expressed the view that there are few places in Harrogate suitable for those who cannot afford the prices of typical Harrogate boutique cafes.

This is early days in the experiment but there seems to be a need here for the Centre to satisfy, if we can find the volunteers to support the work. Our priority up to Christmas will be to provide a small taste of Advent joy and peace in the midst of the commercialised season and to experiment further with the provision of prayer cards to test if this is a way to meet spiritual needs of those who enter our premises.

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It has been a delight to welcome many Methodists from Wesley and beyond so please drop in one Friday – if possible to share in the lunchtime devotions, visible evidence of God’s presence at the heart of the day to day work of the Centre.

Andrew Johnson

Concerts at Wesley

LUNCHTIME RECITAL	Monday 4 January 2016 at 1pm	The Prince Consort
PIANO RECITAL	Saturday 23 January 2016 at 7-30pm	Jean-Efflam Bavouzet playing Beethoven Sonatas
LUNCHTIME RECITAL	Monday 1 February 2016 at 1pm	Arcturus - Chamber Ensemble from Opera North Orchestra
LUNCHTIME RECITAL	Monday 7 March 2016 At 1pm	Hanna Hipp (mezzo- soprano) (Poland) Emma Abbate (piano) (Italy)

Vocalis presents
A Merry Little Christmas
Saturday 12 December 7-30pm
at St. Mark's Church

Carols and Christmas Songs old and new
with congregational favourites

in aid of the Harrogate Homeless Project.

Adults £10 in advance, £12 on the door.
For more information visit
www.harrogatevocalis.org.uk

Harrogate Gilbert and Sullivan Society
Christmas Concert with
Brighouse and Rastrick Band
Saturday 19 December 2015
The Royal Hall, Harrogate

Afternoon performance 2.30pm
Evening performance 7.30pm

To buy tickets: visit

www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk

Tickets from £16.50. Concession £2 for Seniors. Full
Time Students over 16 - £10. Children under 16 free

Harrogate Choral Society
Saturday 12 March 7-30pm

at Ripon Cathedral

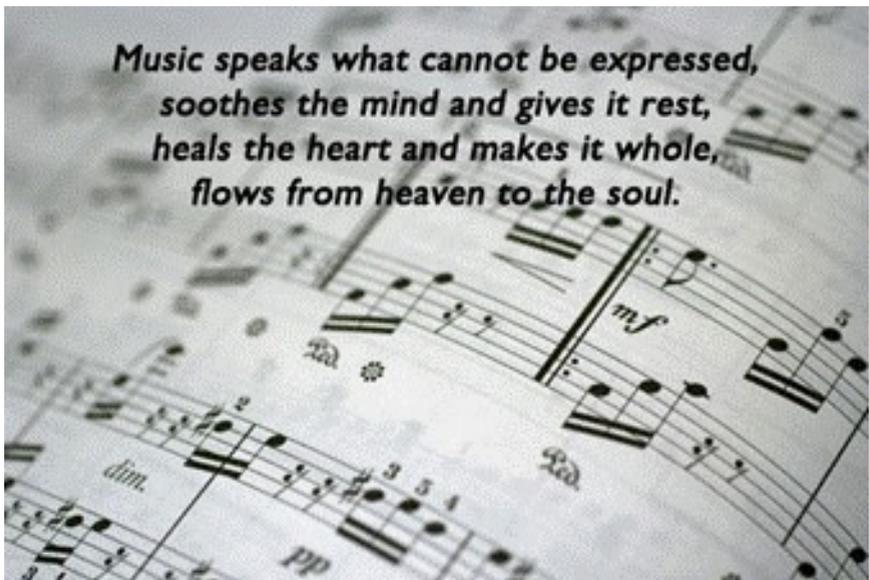
Bach *St John Passion*

Tickets £20 and £18

£1 reduction for senior citizens,
unemployed and under 16s. Free for under 6s.

For more information visit

http://www.harrogatechoral.org.uk/current_season.html





Having a clear out for Christmas? We are always grateful for household items you may no longer need to help set up clients moving on to independent living. Currently we are in need of kettles, fridges, rugs or carpets, cookers, curtains, kitchen utensils and general household items. We are available

24 hours a day to accept donations of smaller items at 7 Bower Street. For larger items, please give us a call on 01423 566 900, we do try to accommodate collections requests when we can.



**Live Lectures at St. Mark's Harrogate
09:30—12:00**

£8 (5 students) including continental breakfast

23 January 2016 Dr Paula Gooder *The Body Beautiful?* The Importance of the body in Paul's theology

5 March 2016 Revd Dr Derek Tidball, *The crown and the cross: the relationship between the kingdom of God and the cross of Christ*

All Welcome. www.hstm.org

Focus on Christmas

The First Christmas Tree

It is generally thought that Queen Victoria's consort, Prince Albert introduced the Christmas Tree to the United Kingdom. It was in fact Queen Charlotte, the German wife of George III who should be credited with this tradition. She set up the first known English tree at Queen's Lodge, Windsor in December 1800. Decorated Christmas trees had long been popular in Germany and legend has it that Martin Luther 'invented the Christmas tree'.

Historian Alison Barnes writes that 'on winter's night in 1536, Luther was walking through a pine forest near his home in Wittenberg when he suddenly looked up and saw thousands of stars glinting jewel-like among the branches of the trees. This wondrous sight inspired him to set up a candle-lit fir tree in his house that Christmas to remind his children of the starry heavens from whence their Saviour came.'

In the early 1600s in Southern Germany the inhabitants of Strasburg set up fir trees in their parlours and hung roses cut out of many-coloured paper, apples, wafers, gold foil, sweets etc. In some instances box trees and yews were brought into the house instead of firs.

When Queen Charlotte came over from Mecklenburg-Strelitz in 1761 to marry King George, she brought with her many of the customs that she had practised as a child, including the setting up of a yew branch in the house at Christmas. She placed her yew bough in one of the largest rooms at Kew Palace or Windsor Castle and with the help of her ladies dressed it with candles. The whole court gathered round and sang carols and then gifts from the branch were distributed. These included such items as clothes, jewels, toys and sweets.

In 1800, as a treat for the children of all the principal families in Windsor, instead of the customary yew branch, Queen Charlotte brought inside and decorated, an entire yew tree and covered it with baubles, fruit and present. It was an 'enchancing spectacle for the children who arrived at the house on Christmas Eve.

Extract from Alison Barnes *The First Christmas Tree*, History Today, Dec. 2006, p2

Christmas Poem

I have a list of friends I know, all written in a book,
And every year when Christmas comes, I go and take a look
And that is when I realise that these names are a part
Not of the book they're written in but of my very heart.

For each name stands for someone who has crossed my path
some time
And in that meeting they've become the rhythm in each rhyme.
And while it sounds fantastic for me to make this claim
I really feel that I'm composed of each and every name

And while you may not be aware of any special link
Just meeting you has changed my life a lot more than you think.
For once I've met somebody, the years cannot erase
The memory of a pleasant word or of a friendly face.

So never think my Christmas cards are just a mere routine
Of names upon the Christmas list, forgotten in between.
For when I send a Christmas card that's addressed to you
It's because you're on the list of friends whom I'm indebted to.

For I am but the total of the many friends I've met
And you happen to be one of those I prefer not to forget.
And whether I have know you for many years or few,
In some way you have had a part in shaping things I do.

And every year when Christmas comes, I realise anew
The best gift life can offer is making friends like you!
And may the Spirit of Christmas that forever endures
Leave its richest blessings in the heart of you and yours.

Author unknown

Thank you to Jenny Goodwin for supplying this poem



Didn't You Get My E-Mail?

As a little girl climbed onto Santa's lap, Santa asked the usual, "And what would you like for Christmas?" The child stared at him open mouthed and horrified for a minute, then gasped: "Didn't you get my E-mail?"

A Very Modern Hermit

Sister Rachel Denton, (aged 52) was a teacher for 15 years in Cambridgeshire, and eventually became deputy head. But she gave it all up 12 years ago for a life of contemplative silence as a Roman Catholic hermit. She lives in Lincolnshire in an end-of-terrace, ex-council house in a village half an hour's drive from Grimsby. There she tends her vegetable garden after rising at 6am, for worship in her box room, now converted into a tiny white-walled prayer room. She may wear the traditional habit, but her life is very different from that of 14th century Julian of Norwich who walled herself up in a tiny cell and only allowed herself one window from which her admirers passed her food.

Sister Rachel celebrates a life of solitude, silence and prayer, but she has also embraced the internet age, and uses digital technology to maintain her vows and her hermitage. 'Part of me would love to live in a cave on a mountain and see nobody ever and not have a Facebook and Twitter account, but the reality is that if I'm to earn my own living, technology enables me to do that.'

She uses Facebook and Twitter where she has 86 followers. She will tweet several times a month—her Twitter page reads 'Tweets are rare but precious'. She also has own website. She orders her food via the internet. She has proved that it is possible to live 'in solitude and silence' whilst keeping up with news of her family and friends, whom she sees two times a year when she goes to Mass with them.

For Sister Rachel her life of solitude means adventure, not loneliness "For me, that silence is where I can best meet God"

To read more about this extraordinary woman <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/0/24367826>



Epilogue

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our Focus. I hope that everyone has enjoyed reading it. Please let me have your news so that your Wesley family can share in your special occasions. In one of our churches magazine there are several pages of Family

News—we have only been able to manage two half pages. Do share your special birthdays, anniversaries, new grandchildren, great grandchildren, special holidays—we would love to hear about it. Our next Focus will be out during the first half of March—in good time for Easter. You can let me have your contributions any time. Don't wait until March.

We are delighted that our Focus is read by many friends who live in different parts of the country, and indeed further afield - as far away as Rotorua in New Zealand. It will have a different feel to it in the southern hemisphere of course, as it is summer there, whilst here in the UK we are reading about snowy nights in the forest! We thank all our 'distant friends' for your interest and send you all our good wishes.

The development team at Wesley Centre has just produced *A Brief History* of the church. Do look out for it and let us know what you think. Happy Christmas. With love, Judith

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We wish all our readers
at home and abroad
A Happy Christmas and a
Peaceful New Year