

the bridge monthly bulletin

December 2025



Ryedale Methodists

As I write this letter to you, my attention is occasionally distracted by the view from my study window. It has become a familiar scene over the last couple of months, of three to four large vans, each sporting the logos of various trades, from carpenters, window firms to plumbers and decorators, and their associated tradesmen and women bustling in and out of the house opposite. Why this buzz of activity? Well, it turns out the house is to be the new home of the soon-to-arrive new priest-in-charge in Malton. I hope to make his acquaintance and that of his family in a couple of weeks, but clearly, there have been significant renovations or alterations that have been required to accommodate their needs. There is, I know, great excitement in the parish after the usual hiatus of an interregnum period, but I imagine, also some curiosity and even perhaps nervousness, as to what the new priest will be like.

During this time of Advent, we place ourselves in the shoes of the people of God, as they awaited their Messiah. They were encouraged to make preparations for his coming by many prophets, but latterly by the somewhat outlandish John the Baptist. And yet, despite millennia of preparation, Jesus was, for most of his ministry, someone who confused people. Yes, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies, but not in the way most anticipated. Sadly, so many at the time were so stuck in their expectations that they missed the radical and world-changing good news and life he offered. It's a trap we can all fall into, because we expect God to act in our image, and to follow the patterns of the past. That includes the same idea that the Pharisees held, that the church, as it is, was all it should be. The fact is, the pattern we actually see in history, and likely in our own experience of Jesus in our lives, is that God is a God of surprises. Our lives as followers of Jesus have changed, and will continue to change to meet the context of our time. Likewise, as human beings, we so often seem to simplify issues into a binary, 'this' or 'that' option and yet Jesus, in response, always seemed to offer a third way, which was more nuanced, and unlocked the stalemate.

If we are to prepare ourselves, this Advent, for God's movement in the world, then I believe we need to work to open our minds and hearts, as to how, where and indeed through whom, God may be already at work in our world and be prepared for some surprises.

Rev Andy

**Cradled in a manger,
meanly laid the son of
man his head; sleeping
his first earthly slumber
where the oxen
had been fed.**

**Happy were those
shepherd's listening
to the holy angel's word;
happy they within that
stable worshipping their
infant Lord.**

**And to those who never
listened to the message
of thy birth, who have
winter, but no Christmas
bringing them thy peace
on earth,**

**Send to these the joyful
tidings; by all people,
in each home, be there
heard the Christmas
anthem, Praise to God,
the Christ has come!**

*George Stringer Rowe
(1830 - 1913)*



Lectionary Reflections December 2025 *Rev Penny Worth*

7th December: Isaiah 11.1-10

These are words born out of longing. A longing for things to be different. Prophets have the imagination to see that things don't have to be like this; there are alternative ways for the world to work. This writer is certainly an amazing prophet, and this is a big leap of the imagination!

We have a picture of a perfect leader, someone with immense wisdom and utter integrity, and we have a picture of perfect peace, where even in the animal kingdom there is no violence. Israel's history has been pretty flawed up to this point; there has never been a perfect leader, there has never been perfect peace. We can imagine people's reaction to this passage, "Yeah, whatever. Dream on."

But we have now seen a perfect leader. This passage has been interpreted as a picture of Jesus. We are still waiting for perfect peace, in other words, for God's kingdom to come on earth. So we might say we have seen the first stage of this, but not its fulfilment.

Perhaps advent is an invitation to make this leap of imagination. To recognise that things don't have to be like this; with God's intervention in human history all things are possible. Perhaps God is waiting for us to join him in first imagining, and then creating, a new future of justice and peace. Have we the courage?

14th December: Matthew 11.2-11

Here is another prophet with the imagination to see a new, different future. Advent readings often show us a super-confident, certain (maybe, even stropky!) preacher, but here we see John's vulnerability and uncertainty - perhaps his time in prison, under constant threat of death has changed him. The prophet who once proclaimed Jesus as the 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' is now utterly unsure who Jesus is. Jesus response to John's question is to point to signs of the kingdom all around him.

We may never feel as certain as John sounds at the beginning of the gospels, but there will be times in our lives when we lose even that confidence we once had, so we can identify with John's questioning.

If you could ask Jesus a question, what would it be?

You can ask him a question. Try it!

21st December: Mathew 1.18-25

This passage is so familiar it is difficult for God to speak to us through it. It's pretty down to earth when you think about it. Matthew is very keen for his readers to get the message that Joseph didn't have sex with Mary until after Jesus was born. I can remember as a child thinking that church wasn't the right place for all this talk about sex! There's also some gender politics going on here. Young women were generally powerless individuals in this society; an unmarried pregnant young woman was very vulnerable indeed. The passage is making two points: firstly, that Joseph behaved very generously when he discovered his fiancée was pregnant and positively heroically when he accepts the angel's instruction to marry her anyway. Secondly, and most crucially, we are being told that Jesus is both God and man, divine and human. People will have different views about the historical accuracy of the virgin birth, but whatever we think about that, Jesus dual identity is at the heart of our Christian theology. God is uniquely present in this man, so that Jesus' self-giving on the cross is also God's self-giving. It is this that mysteriously enables our salvation.





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25th December: Read Luke 2.1-20

Can you remember a Christmas when you didn't hear these words? What is loaded into them, under them, around them for you? For some of us they will evoke the excitement of Christmas as a child, for others the sadness or joy of a family event that happened around Christmas. For most of us they will have emotional baggage of one sort or another.

"You couldn't make it up" is a phrase we often hear when something in the news is more unbelievable and weird than usual, but surely it applies to the Christmas story more than any other. Stories don't come more amazing or scandalous than this, but it is so difficult to hang on to that sense of shock when you've known the story since you were two!

A Christmas Prayer

God of winter glory,
of pale sunlight cut to ribbons by bare black branches,
of cut-glass ice intricately etched with your imagination,
what desperate love drove you to the Mary-stable-shepherd idea?
Help us to see in this story of poverty, struggle, hope and fear,
your most beautiful creation.



28th December: Matthew 2.13-23

Is this the grimmest passage in the New Testament? I think I protect my emotions by not letting my imagination dwell on this. When I was a new mother I couldn't have read this aloud in church. Hearing on the news about the slaughter of so many children in Gaza has brought this story to mind time and time again. I am sure God wept over these babies and toddlers in Bethlehem and weeps over the children of Gaza now.

This passage raises questions right at the heart of our beliefs: why does God intervene to save the Christ child, but allows the other children to be murdered? This is a question none of us can answer for others, but for me it has to do with the freewill that God gives to humankind. We see everywhere that God doesn't intervene to prevent the suffering that the actions of evil people cause to the innocent. If he did there would be no such thing as freewill, and we would be so much less than human.

Perhaps one day we will know. Meanwhile we **can** know that -

**'when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that self-same aching
deep within the heart of God.'** STF 103

CHRISTMAS SERVICES 2025 RYEDALE CIRCUIT

in Methodist Churches unless otherwise stated

See preaching plan for regular Sunday services

3 & 10 DECEMBER	Thornton Dale	11:00	Advent Reflections at the Old Grammar School T Dale. See poster. Bring and Share lunch.
7 DECEMBER	Pickering	10:30	All age Worship informal nativity service

CAROL SERVICES

14 DECEMBER	Allerston	16:30	Christingle at Village Hall
	Ebberston	15:00	Carol Service Rev Mark
	Scagglethorpe	10:30	Carol Service Rev Andy
	Rievaulx	10:30	Messy Church. All age worship.
	Wombledon	10:30	Carol Service <i>Daisy B</i>
17 DECEMBER	Kirkbymoorside	11:00	Next Steps Carol Service and lunch
20 DECEMBER	Pickering PC	10:00	Crafting the Crib - until 12 noon
21 DECEMBER	Helmsley	10:30	Carol Service Rev Andy
	Hovingham	10:30	Carol Service Rev Jane P
	Thornton Dale	10:30	Carol Service LA
	Kirkbymoorside	10:30	Carol Service HC Revd Graham
	Malton	15:30	Carol Service Rev Andy
	Norton Bethel	15:30	Carol Praise Margot T
	Sinington PC	16:00	Village Carol Service. Led by D & Y Scaling
	Slingsby	16:00	Carol service Rev Jane B
	Allerston	16:30	Carols by Candlelight Rev Graham
	Norton Trinity	18:00	Rev Andy
	Pickering	18:00	Carol Service Rev Graham
	Rievaulx	18:00	Carol Service LA
22 DECEMBER	Pickering	19:00	Blue Christmas - a service for those who find Christmas difficult.
24 DECEMBER	Leavening	16:00	Crib festival - Jolly Farmers car park.
	Pickering	18:30	Revd Graham HC

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICES

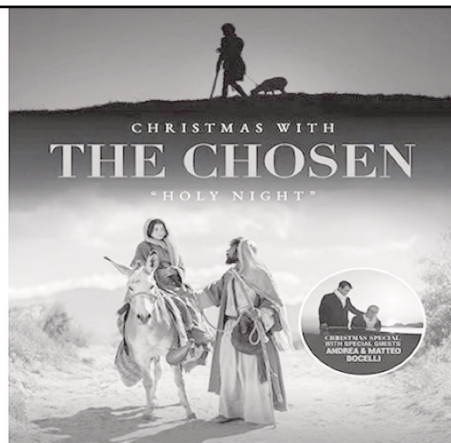
25 DECEMBER	Kirkbymoorside	10:00	Mr Chris Shore "The best gift"
	Malton	10:00	Rev Andy L at Norton Trinity
	Norton Bethel	10:00	Family Worship LA
	Pickering	10:00	Rev Graham Ransom
	Ebberston	10:30	Rev Mark H
	Helmsley	10:30	Local Arrangement
	Thornton Dale	10:30	Local Arrangement
28 DECEMBER	Rievaulx	10:30	AAW LA
	Slingsby	10:30	<i>Audrey F</i>
	Thornton Dale	10:30	Rev Graham
	Norton Bethel	15:30	Christmas Praise with <i>Audrey F</i>
30 DECEMBER	Pickering	11:00	Messy Church until 13:00

22ND DECEMBER

6:00-7:30pm at Malton Wesley

Join Us For This **FREE**
Showing of
**'CHRISTMAS WITH
THE CHOSEN'**

with Hot Drinks and Warm Mince Pies.



Blue Christmas

Mon 22nd Dec 7pm Pickering Methodist Church Potter Hill

A reflective service of comfort and hope for anyone who finds the celebrations of Christmas difficult.

If life feels hard and empty. If pain and loss drag you down
If your mood is as low as it can go and you want hope, not celebrations

We are here to welcome and to hold space with you and to offer hope and light in your darkness.

Anyone can come along and join us on the longest night with no pressure to do or be anything that may make you uncomfortable, no matter which church you belong to or if you never go to church, please join us. All are welcome.

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The Town Fair held at Kirkbymoorside at the end of November was a wonderful opportunity to chat with both locals and visitors alike and have a presence there as a church family. We had a real variety to offer including home baking, preserves, books, jigsaws and pre owned goods.

The town was really busy in spite of the weather. A real buzz to this lovely market town and a huge thank you to all who made it possible. *Anne C*

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**Anglican and Methodist Churches
Together**

Thornton le Dale

Advent Reflections

Wednesday 10th December

**St John Harris
Old Grammar School
Thornton Dale**

Followed by a Bring & Share lunch



ryedalemethodists@gmail.com
<https://www.ryedalemethodist.org.uk/events.html>
for further information



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