The Methodist Church
West Oxfordshire Circuit

WINTER 2026

CIRCUIT NEWSLETTER

MEET THE CIRCUIT TEAM



REV'D ANDREW BIGGS, SUPERINTENDENT MINISTER CHIPPING NORTON, STONESFIELD AND WESTCOTE



REV'D SUE JACOBS, MINISTER, L/HANB, SUTTON, DAV RD,& BAMPTON



REV'D KATHY FLYNN PIONEER MINISTER, CARTERTON



REVD MOLLY CHITOKWINDO MINISTER , HIGH STREET & FARINGDON



CAROLINE TODD CIRCUIT ADMINISTRATOR



SONIA DURATURO, TOWN CENTRE CHAPLAIN, HIGH STREET

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If you'd like to submit a news piece for future Circuit newsletters, please contact Caroline Todd, Circuit Administrator.

administrator@westoxfordshiremethodists.org.uk

01608 656768

PASTORAL LETTER

THE REVD ANDREW BIGGS, SUPERINTENDENT MINISTER



Soon we will enter the season of Advent. The word “Advent” means “coming”, and when something is coming, we wait for it with anticipation, maybe excitement or trepidation. What are you waiting for this Advent?

Maybe you are waiting for the parties, the presents, the gifts and celebrations? Or perhaps you’re just looking forward to some time off, or a peaceful end to a challenging year? We hope, maybe to spend some time with family or friends. In the midst of all this, Advent asks us to listen for a deeper whisper, echoing down through history, radiating across the world: “A king is coming. A king is coming.”

One of my favourite party foods is Trifle – especially the non- Methodist variety! Its not just one thing – its got lots of different layers of lovely sweet stuff – and of course that layer soaked in what Methodists never touch! It seems less fashionable today though than it once was – and the “supermarket variety is just not the same as my Gran used to make!

In his book “The A to Z of Christmas”, Arnold Kellett likens Christmas to a “Christian Trifle” because “it has gathered so many layers over the years. At each stage of history a different layer has been added creating the “vast, international bean-feast of increasing complexity and magnitude, now so big that it is almost unmanageable, the supreme compulsory festival which forces itself upon us year after year, dominating the lives of countless millions….”[1]

PASTORAL LETTER CONTINUED...

For example, in pre-Christian Rome Saturnalia was an important festival held on the 25th December and involving a carnival of evergreen decorations, exchanges of presents, eating, drinking and making merry.

[1] “The A to Z of Christmas” Arnold Kellett, Inspire, 2006

Christians gradually took over many of these practices to celebrate Christ’s birth – because in the pre Constantine Roman Empire, it was a time when they could legitimately be seen to be celebrating without risking persecution.
In medieval times a number of pagan customs were consolidated into Christianity – the use of holly and mistletoe for example. This was why St Francis, keen to keep the essential message of Christmas alive in the thirteenth century, encouraged the setting up of nativity scenes and the singing of carols.
The Puritans under Oliver Cromwell added another layer when, reacting to excessive self-indulgence, they outlawed the celebration of Christmas altogether! It was restored with Charles II in 1660!

Then of course the Victorians added another rich layer – the writings of Charles Dickens and the example of Queen Victoria encouraged the revival of Christmas celebration in church and in gatherings of friends and family. This era saw the introduction of Christmas trees, cards, crackers and Santa.
Its no wonder that we wait with such excitement as we anticipate this rich season of the year and all it promises to bring.
But we must not forget to listen for that deeper whisper that underlies all our rich traditions.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him.” (Matthew 25:31-32).

We wish you all a very Blessed Advent season.

Safeguarding

From Sally Wan, Regional Officer for Safeguarding

Responding Well to Survivors District Webinar Monday 30th November from 7pm to 8.15pm

The Northampton District has arranged a Responding Well to Survivors webinar for anyone in the district to attend. It will raise awareness of the work of the Methodist Church with survivors and the support that may be available to them. It will be led by Kate Little (Connexion Safeguarding Survivor Lead Officer) with some input from two survivors supported by Sally Wan (Regional Officer for Safeguarding) and Revd Derek Mclean (Chair of the District Safeguarding Committee).

It will support the work of churches and circuits to inform them how they can respond well to survivors and promote the support that is available. It is open to anyone in the district who would like to attend and find out more but will be particularly useful to those in safeguarding roles and leadership positions in the church or circuit.

The webinar will be held on Monday 30th November from 7pm to 8.15pm.
Please use the link below to book a place Booking Link Survivor Awareness Webinar

Please note that a zoom link to the session will be sent a few days before the webinar to those that have booked.
Thanks

The next **Circuit Meeting** will be held on:
Wednesday 10th March 2027 at 7.30pm
at Carterton Church

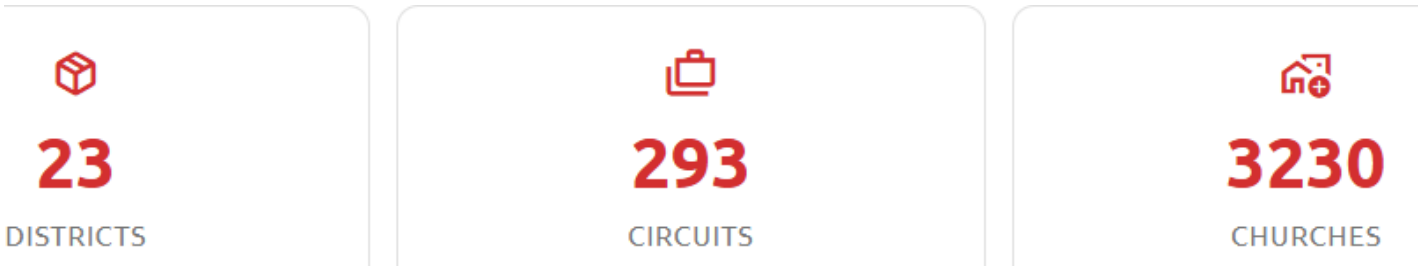
CIRCUIT FINANCE STEWARD
urgently required
Voluntary Role (full role specification available)
Please contact: Revd Andrew Biggs, Superintendent Minister
Telephone: 01608 544362 Mobile: 07968798317 Email:
superintendent@westoxfordshiremethodists.org.uk

Role description available at:
https://www.westoxfordshiremethodists.org.uk/news/a-plea-from-our-circuit-treasurer.html

Statistics for Mission 2026

The Connexional Statistics site is now open for 2026 data collection. You should now be able to submit your membership numbers.

https://online.methodist.org.uk/login/login



CIRCUIT FINANCE STEWARD VACANCY - URGENT

I am repeating the plea from our Circuit Treasurer as this has not proved successful. I do this because as you can see Eddie really does need to finish by the end of the year. Time is fast approaching. We are immensely grateful to Eddie for his long service and care and compassion he shows in the role. I know he will be a hard act to follow but please dig deep to approach anyone who may be suitable, God will do the rest!

In February 2008 I was asked by our Superintendent Minister if I would consider undertaking the role of Circuit Treasurer from the following September. As I was due to retire from my full-time job in the following June, and after careful consideration, I agreed – little thinking that I would still be doing the job 18 years later. In fact, I feel that the Church should really ensure that nobody is expected to undertake any position for so long.

We have taken some of the more time-consuming jobs out of the role of Treasurer – or Circuit Finance Steward, as it is to be called. Our Circuit Administrator, Caroline deals with the every-day payments, using CAF Bank's online system, and the accountancy firm Solutions in Accounting, run by Tony Holliday, is dealing with the bookkeeping and accounts preparation.

PLEASE HELP TO FIND SOMEONE TO SET ME FREE!Many thanks and God bless you, Eddie

REMEMBRANCE

I wanted to share this article because Remembrance Day fell between two newsletters.
On Remembrance Day, I braved the elements and joined about 100 people on a walk through time at Waddesdon Manor. An Exhibition currently on tour called ‘Standing with Giants’. We set off at 07.30 am on a cold and foggy morning, which I can only say enhanced the experience leaving an icy chill in the air. To read some of the soldiers last letters home felt overwhelming but written with such eloquence and gratitude for their lives knowing what they were about to leave behind, it was hard to comprehend. Many were just teenagers writing home to their parents. We owe each and every one of them a debt of gratitude and give thanks to those who allow their memories to live on.



Rev'd Kathy Flynn from Carterton Church also wrote an incredibly moving reflection and prayer ahead of Remembrance Day, which I have amended to include in this article.

“In 1988, I was on mission in Belfast, staying with the Christian Brothers on the Falls Road. On our first night, the Troubles flared up. The sound of gunfire outside the house filled us with dread. We were ushered beneath the kitchen table and, huddled together, I wrote my first song: "Oh Lord, what have we done, put a gun in the hands of the little ones?" This is the closest I have ever come, or would ever wish to come, to war. That experience gave me a deep gratitude for those who serve our country”.

Let us remember the cost of service and of the wars that still rage across our world. We uphold to God our continuing prayers for those soldiers who are deployed at this present time and will be separated from their families at Christmas.

I believe the link between Remembrance Day and Christmas is love, compassion and remembrance.

We take time to remember those who have passed away in our own families recognising some families are still grieving at what should be a time of celebration. Take time this Christmas to remember someone you know may be hurting and thank those who contuinue to bring you joy.

Here is wishing you and your loved ones a very Happy and Peaceful Christmas.
Revd Kathy Flynn & Caroline Todd



SAVE THE DATE

Saturday 20th March 2027

Circuit Stewards' Day

10am to 3pm

Hosted by Hope Methodist Church
29 High Street, Higham Ferrers, NN10 8DD
Nene Valley Circuit

More details to follow in the new year

CHIPPING NORTON METHODIST CHURCH

We hold a weekly coffee morning on a Wednesday 9.30-11.30, these raise valuable funds for church as well as providing friendship and fellowship for folks. Once a month we make the morning a fundraiser for various charities, either local or national. We were recently visited by Wiltshire Farmfoods who brought along some tasty samples and information on ordering their products.

DAVENPORT ROAD, WITNEY

Reaching out to our local community.

For many, many years Dav Rd church fellowship has been reaching out to those in our local community, particularly those living alone . We call it Rendezvous.

What started as a simple coffee and chat morning for church attendees on a Wednesday has grown into a gathering of many friends from all over who need to get out for an hour or two for fellowship and conversation. 10.00 – 11.30am each week.

Later this grew into Rendezvous 2 – a roast lunch on most first Sundays in the month. A great team of cooks, servers and clearer-uppers welcome all comers of all ages. Last month over one half were locals who come from the road, from villages, from the busy estates nearby – all of whom would have been eating alone at home. But a) they could share the meal in company and b) it was a roast, which many would either not be bothered to cook or couldn't afford. We make no charge or we make a collection for one of our charities.October was for All We Can and November we raised over £500 for Leprosy Mission.

Next month it will be traditional Christmas fare.I wonder how many we can seat in our hall!! In addition our church at Christmas has made a point of providing and visiting many families and those living in more straightened circumstances and who don't have too many resources when it comes to Christmas. In confidence we send out boxes of goodies to give them something special to open and put a smile on their faces. So simple but touching lives with care, compassion and Jesus' love.

Teams-4U Shoebox Appeal 2026

Collections of shoe boxes continues to create excitement and people's generosity and spirit of engagement with the project are evident. The excitement of seeing the number of boxes grow each week. Churches have finished collecting for 2026 and boxes are on their way for checking and delivery. Thank you to everyone who generously donated this year and we hope you found this a fun activity as well as a reflective experience.

Have you ever wondered what happens after you deliver your box to your local church? Below is a message from Teams-4U from 2025 :
"Thank you once again for your support in last year's shoebox campaign of 2025 and as many may know Teams4u collected, checked, and exported nearly 60,000 shoeboxes which is a fantastic achievement given the current world we live in!
Boxes went out to Romania, Ukraine, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Moldova, Georgia and Belarus.

As a small thank you the link below is a short video of the shoebox distribution in Romania taken last December where some of your shoebox donations will have been handed out. We look forward to seeing 2026's statistics . THANK YOU EVERYONE!
Detaills can be found in local churches.
If you would like to know anything more about where the boxes went then do please get in touch after Christmas"

Teams-4U, https://youtu.be/-JB7BYnOhdY

ADVENT ACROSS THE CHURCHES

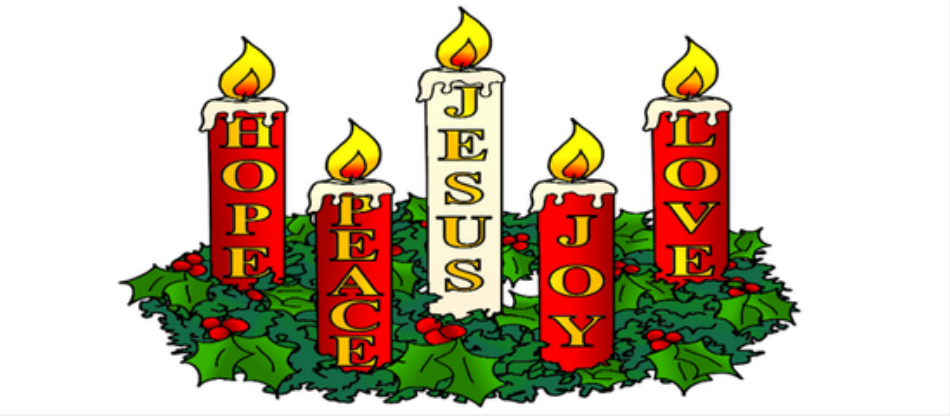
CHIPPING NORTON and WIGGINTON METHODIST CHURCHES
ADFEST 2026

A festival to celebrate the start of Advent

November 28-29

A WEEKEND OF CRAFTS, STORIES, SINGING, CHRISTMAS BAZAAR CAFÉ AND CAKES
AND MUCH MORE

CHIPPING NORTON METHODIST CHURCH
OX7 5LH
ENTRY: FREE





ADVENT ACROSS THE CHURCHES

Christmas Fayre at Davenport Road Methodist Church.

On Saturday 14th November from 10.00 till 12 noon
In aid of Dav Road Community Hub project (Kitchen redevelopment).

Come along and start/finish your Christmas shopping.
Lots of great gifts, toys, and, of course, an amazing selection of jigsaw puzzles
Coffee and mincepies
This event has always been a great way to catch up with friends from all over the circuit.
DO COME and enjoy yourselves.

Saturday November 28th from 9.30 – 11.30am (come when you can)
Wreath-making at Davenport Road!
To book your place please contact...
Beth on 07910992075 or beth.faulkner25@gmail.com Or Liz on 07970 497787
Suggested donation of £30pp to cover all costs of equipment and foliage (provided). Any profits made will be going to charity.
It's amazing what can be achieved even if you haven't an artistic bone in your body.



ADVENT ACROSS THE CHURCHES

Minster Lovell

A warm and friendly welcome is given to all.

Advent Study Group with Rev. Sue at 11.00 am
Friday 27th November
Friday 4th December
Friday 11th December
Friday 18th December

Saturday December 5th 10-12 Café as usual, with an opportunity to make a Christingle with Rev Sue.

Tuesday December 15th 12.00 Light Lunch followed with entertainment by the school children. If you would like to come to the lunch, please let Dawn know by Friday December 4th 01993 775675

Thursday December 17th 11-1 The empty chair
If there is someone or something that you will be missing this Christmas you might like to pop in to the chapel, light a candle, just sit and think of them or a situation, and leave when you are ready. Every half hour Rev Sue will lead a short time of prayer.

The History of the humble mince pie



Why do we eat mince pies at Christmas?

It may surprise you that the very first mince pies were filled with meat that was shredded into little pieces, called shred pies. They were made to look like Christ's manger. After 1660, the pies became what we are more familiar with today, the meat was replaced with sugar and dried fruit as it became more affordable. So although they are called mince pies, their filling is still called 'mincemeat', but there's no longer meat in them.

Deadlines for Circuit Newsletter 2027

Deadline for copy – Publication

Dates are approximate according to work schedule

January - No Newsletter

Feb-Mar (Deadline 26/01/27) (Pub 03/02/2027) Lent/Easter

Apr-May (Deadline 25/03/2027) (Pub 01/04/2027)

Jun-July (Deadline 25/05/2027 (Pub 01/06/2027)

August No Newsletter

- -

Sept-Oct (Deadline 24/08/2027 (Pub 01/09/2027)
New Connexional year

Nov-Dec (Deadline 26/10/2027) (Pub) 02/11/2027

Please send to the Circuit Administrator, Caroline Todd
Email: administrator@westoxfordshiremethodists.org.uk

Advertise your church events, share good news stories and much more

Updated 23.11.26