

# *grapevine*

Spring 2026  
Issue Number 48

The **Methodist** Church   
**EAST ANGLIA DISTRICT**



## Young at Heart

# VOLUNTEER AT

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Welcome to the Spring 2026 edition of *grapevine* 'Young at Heart'.

In this issue you can read about the amazing youth work happening across our District, such as building bug houses in our Cambridge Circuit, an update from one of our Children and Families Outreach Workers, and a musical celebration to celebrate Circuit Twinning.

Zing Eagling shares about her time at Latitude Festival and Geoff Batty tells us about how the youth are engaging with the organ at Wesley Church in Cambridge.

We hear how some of our NPNP projects are helping to engage with young people in the District and Susan Eldridge shares how Churches Together in Poringland and Framingham Earl are making a difference in their community through their youth work.

We have various other updates from across the District, including District news, which introduces Aimee van Holland, our District NPNP Enabler.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition!

*Please remember this is your magazine. If there is something you would like included, we would love to hear from you.*

*The next issue is due in September 2026.*

## **grapevine**

is available in large print and on  
CD (audio)

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please contact the District Office:**

07434 934182

[office@eangliamethodist.org.uk](mailto:office@eangliamethodist.org.uk)

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### **The Editorial Team:**

Revd Helen Hollands, Susan Eldridge, Danielle Gravestock and Aileen Fox

### **Images:**

Front cover & Page 24— Danielle Gravestock  
All other images have been supplied by the authors of the articles.

# Introduction

Revd Helen Hollands



*Dear Friends,*

I grew up at Chandler's Ford Methodist Church in Hampshire. It is no exaggeration to say that the church community there shaped my whole outlook on life.

Although I went through the Beginners and Primary departments (as they were known then), it was the youth club that really made a difference to me.

I will always be grateful to those youth leaders, they offered us 3 evenings a week of their time, one was a youth club in the church hall with games, music and friends gathering together and always ending with a reflective 'epilogue'. Another evening was a drop-in at a couple's home for conversation, and thirdly, we had a Young People's Fellowship (YPF) that used to be hosted at different homes from week to week. It was there that we juggled big ideas, wrestled with tricky passages, wondered aloud about social justice and what it meant to be a disciple in the 1980s. When I moved on to university it was that group that gave me the confidence to participate in seminar discussions and think on a bigger map.

We also went away, almost always to London Weekend but to other youth fellowship weekends too. In London we slept on church hall floors, wore terrible clothes in green and yellow, threw pompoms in Trafalgar Square and were both entertained and challenged in



the Albert Hall. There are a number of ministers around the Connexion who attended that youth club and I was delighted to bump into one of them only last year at the Probationers' retreat.

MAYC (Methodist Association of Youth Clubs) shaped my understanding of faith and beyond. We grew in confidence, in discipleship and even in musical skills because of it. Work with young people continues to be just as important, if not more so, today. Our young people deserve to be recognized, heard and valued. It has been wonderful to experience some of them leading worship at Bowthorpe, Haverhill, and at St Ives. I know there are other groups too, please continue to encourage them.

The district offers support for our young people to attend 3Generate, the Methodist youth weekend that is held in October each year. Support is for both tickets and travel. If you would like to take a group then please contact Josh Pile, our District Youth Enabler, who will be pleased to tell you more and Shaun Cushion, our District Treasurer.

This photo will hopefully make you smile (I am on the right), it is from London weekend in about 1983...

Perhaps other people have photos they would like to share?

Every blessing,

*Helen*

Revd Helen Hollands  
Chair of the East Anglia District

# Building Bug Hotels at Harvest

Castle Street and Histon Methodist Church

Our Harvest services at Histon and Castle Street Methodist Church this year were buzzing with creativity, colour, and care for creation! Instead of simply bringing gifts of food and flowers, we rolled up our sleeves and made something that will continue to bless

the environment long after the service ended — our very own *bug hotels*.

Children and adults alike joined in, decorating wooden frames with flowers, bees, and

welcoming messages, before carefully filling them with sticks, pinecones, and natural materials to make cosy homes for insects. From bees to beetles, these little creatures play a vital role in pollination and soil health — and now they have safe places to shelter, thanks to our efforts.

It was a joyful reminder that Harvest isn't only about thanking God for food and crops, but about recognising our

responsibility to care for all of God's creation. In the Methodist tradition, we believe that everyone is important — no one is overlooked, and no contribution is too small and no one is too tiny in God's kingdom. The same is true in creation: even the tiniest insect matters,

playing its part in the great web of life.

As these bug hotels are placed in gardens and green spaces, they will provide lasting havens for wildlife and help our local environment to flourish. Thank you to everyone who joined in —

for your laughter, your creativity, and your commitment to making Harvest not just a service of thanksgiving, but an act of love for creation. Together we are helping to sow seeds of hope, not only for people but for the planet; and help both churches towards our Silver Eco Award.



Castle Street and Histon Methodist Church  
Cambridge Circuit

# Young at Heart at Latitude

Zing Eagling

## *Reflections from the Festival Pastors' Tent*

Henham Park pulsed with colour, music, and movement, with 62,500 festivalgoers each day bringing an energy that felt both joyful and ageless. Serving as a Festival Pastor for the second time, I found

myself surrounded by people of every generation, all discovering something that made them feel young at heart. For me, that sense came through ministry in muddy boots and pink high-vis, where simple acts of care opened unexpected moments of grace.

Latitude's expanded footprint this year—two extra fields for campervans and tents—felt like a widening of the community I have come to cherish. I arrived knowing I would be stretched, blessed, and changed. The novelty of camping still makes me smile, but the deeper joy came from the shared purpose that bound our team together. Laughter, meals, prayer, and mission created a rhythm that kept us grounded even when the weather did not.

Torrential downpours on Thursday brought flooding and long delays for those



travelling to the festival. By Friday, the sun returned, lifting spirits and drying out belongings. The camaraderie of festivalgoers, together with the determination of organisers who worked through the night, kept everything moving. There was something wonderfully youthful about that resilience—a shared willingness to keep going, to adapt, to find joy again. Each morning at 9 a.m., we gathered in the marquee for prayer. Messages of support arrived from across the UK and from communities in America, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe.

Knowing we were being held in prayer by such a wide and loving network reminded me that ministry is never solitary. It is a shared calling, and that sharedness keeps the heart open and hopeful.

Our base became a haven for security staff, stallholders, and festivalgoers seeking a quiet

moment, a hot drink, or a listening ear. I found myself offering wristbands to anxious parents, pouring tea, and listening to stories that needed space to be spoken. Patrolling the grounds brought countless gentle encounters: a quiet chat with someone sitting alone, a smile exchanged with a weary festivalgoer, a prayer whispered in the midst of music. These were small moments, but they carried a spark of something youthful—a reminder that compassion keeps us alive to one another.

One of the most moving moments of the festival was being invited to sing with Andrew and Gemma as we led worship with guitar in the shared Sunday morning Communion Service, using non-alcoholic wine to ensure that all were included and could participate fully and comfortably. It was a pause in the rhythm of festival life, and a reminder that Christ walks with us wherever we go.

As I look toward 2026, I hope that

those of us able to arrive on Wednesday might begin the festival with singing and fellowship, grounding ourselves before festivalgoers arrive. These moments—planned and spontaneous—are the heartbeat of my ministry at Latitude.



Would I return for Latitude's 20th anniversary? Absolutely. In the mud and music, I witnessed how a shared mission draws people together. Baptists, Catholics, Anglicans, and the two of us from the Methodist Church became, for precious days, a family united in care and compassion. That unity stays with me as the year unfolds, reminding me that ministry is at its strongest when we stand alongside one another, offering what we can with open hands and open hearts.



Zing Eagling  
Festival Pastor

# Churches Together in Poringland & Framingham Earl

Susan Eldridge



We have an active Churches Together Group in Poringland & Framingham Earl which I believe predates when I joined the Methodist Church over 30 years ago. It currently comprises Methodists, Anglicans, Catholics and members of Cornerstone Church. We have just enjoyed Lent meditations followed by a simple soup lunch and our usual walk of witness on Good Friday. We sang carols outside our local Tesco Express the Saturday before Christmas and were provided with free mince pies and bottles of water.

The main reason I am telling you about this Group in this edition of Grapevine is that for over 20 years the Group has supported a Norwich Youth For Christ (NYFC) youth worker in our local villages. The hours worked and the villages covered have varied over time. Our current youth worker, Gary, splits his hours between Poringland & Framingham Earl and Stoke Holy Cross. We receive regular updates on Gary's work in Poringland & Framingham Earl at our Church Councils. In the past our Church Hall has been used as a base for some of the youth work. Regular donations from the Norwich Circuit



Mission Fund have been made to the youth work and have been greatly appreciated. Finances have been fragile at times but the Group has continued in faith and God has honoured that faith. The Lent lunches mentioned earlier help to raise funds for the youth work, as well as great fellowship.

Each year a Light Café is held as an alternative to Halloween and this year a local Police Officer made a point of thanking the team for what they were doing. In January we held an event for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and this focussed on youth ministry. Various facts were shared from recent surveys (including one by NYFC) and the one that stuck with me (and with a friend of mine) was that around half the young people answering the survey wished they had grown up in a time without the internet! That really does give food for thought.

Gary's work currently includes a couple of lunchtimes a week at Framingham Earl High School. He is also hoping to start work in Poringland Primary School but an opportunity for this has not opened up yet. There is a regular youth work prayer group.



Start of Good Friday procession

and the advertising for it says it includes hot toasties, games, free snacks, crafts, “hang and chat” and more.

Although the numbers of young people actively involved are often small, it is great that this work is taking place. Our Minister, Revd Matthew, always speaks very highly about it.

Every Monday evening a High School drop-in is held at Poringland Village Hall

Susan Eldridge  
Framingham Earl Methodist Church

## Wavestation Surf Church

Anna Ground

Wavestation Surf Church was born out of a vision to connect with the coastal community on the North Norfolk coast in a way that is creative, engaging and focused on Jesus.



unexpected calling to this vision. Having lived most of my life in this area, I have a real heart for the people who live and work along the coast and many friends in the surfing community.

Many of our current ways of doing church often fail to reach the younger generations as well as the surfers, swimmers, and families who spend their time on the beaches. The Methodist New Places for New People initiative created an opportunity to repurpose the Mundesley Methodist Church building—which sits just a stone's throw from the sea—into a Surf Church and community café.

My involvement in this project began last summer when I received an



I am married to Tom and we have three grown up daughters. As a family we love the coast and have spent a great deal of our leisure time on the beach in Mundesley. Our girls trained with local surf lifesaving



clubs, worked summers as RNLI lifeguards and as teenagers discovered a love for surfing through a Christian youth group that I helped to lead.

My journey of faith began in my late twenties when I discovered the person of Jesus for the first time through Alpha. Since then I have shared my faith with many friends and have led Alpha courses and cell groups. Eight years ago, along with a small team, I helped to plant and lead Café Church in Mundesley, which is a growing and thriving church family of around 50-60 people.

My life has been marked with great blessings and great trials but throughout everything I have known Jesus there with me and believe he is better than anything we can ever experience. My

passion is to share that message to the people I encounter in my local community.

I started my role at Wavestation in January and have been thrilled to discover just how many people have also been stirred

to get involved. Local groups such as East Anglia Christian Surfers UK, Mundesley Surf Lifesaving Club and Glide Surf School are invested in this vision. Most excitingly, Headlight Youth, a group of around 25 teenagers who meet to learn about surfing and faith, are keen to partner with us and it's hoped Wavestation will be able to provide them with support, hospitality and a winter home. Through much prayer and discernment the team see



Wavestation Surf Church as a beacon of hope for the local coastal community to come to know Jesus and make Jesus known. We hope that we will create a place where sandy feet, wild swimmers and wet wetsuits will be welcome to join us in this great adventure of faith.



Anna Ground

Missional pioneer and surf church planter  
Wavestation Mundesley

# Sunday School Memories

Sarah Friswell

One of the main displays at the East Anglia Methodist Heritage Centre at Wighton is about the Methodist Church's work with children and young people. It is the display which causes the most conversations as people spot an artefact that sparks a memory from their childhood. It might be a Scripture exam certificate, a treasured book given as a Sunday school prize, a JMA collecting box or a sports trophy.

Stretching back to the origins of the Methodist Church, when John Wesley set up a school for the miners' children in Kingswood, Bristol, teaching and nurturing children has been a key focus of the church's work. From the comments we get at the Heritage Centre it is clear that it has made its mark. Many people hold treasured memories of time at Sunday School, at Youth Club or at one of the Methodist Schools in the District. Flashbacks to younger days are also kindled by the collection of 'London Weekend' items including green and yellow hats and scarves as well as MAYC banners and



photos. We even have an array of different styles of baptismal fonts, which

are particular to our Methodist tradition.

This year the young people's display is being enhanced with new donations, including a shield from Kings Lynn and District Sunday School Union



presented for Scripture examinations. The oldest winner of the shield is Tilney All Saints in 1938 and the most recent Snettisham in 1967.

Another new display will focus on 'Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary people', showcasing East Anglian Methodists and our extended Library is full of fascinating memorabilia about Methodist churches and people over the centuries.

Do come and visit (NR23 1PG). The Heritage Centre is open Tuesdays and Fridays from 11 am to 3 pm and will remain open until October. Admission is free, donations welcome. There is parking, an accessible toilet and refreshments. Group visits are also welcome (please phone 07546 732092 or email [eamethodistheritage@gmail.com](mailto:eamethodistheritage@gmail.com) to arrange).

Sarah Friswell  
West Norfolk



## Methodist Heritage

# Children and Families Outreach Worker at Berkley Street

Alison Cracknell

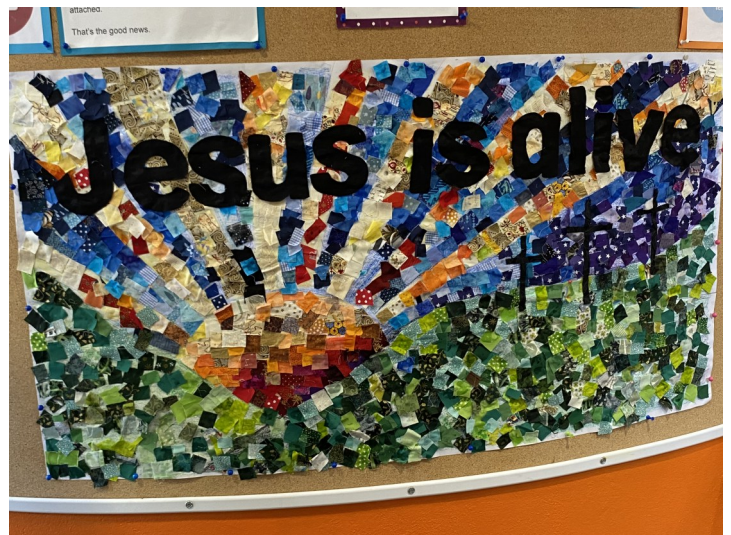
In Autumn 2023, “Grapevine” was about ‘Lay ministry’ and a year into post as the Children and Families Outreach Worker at Berkley Street, St Neots, I contributed an article. Here is an update...

**BERKLEY BUSY BEES** ~ preschool group is recommended as somewhere to have fun with your child with a sense of belonging and community. We welcome everyone, walking alongside families, sharing in joys and sorrows. We include an intentional faith-sharing element each week, Bible stories told with actions, knitted toys and puppets, and the parachute. ‘Prayer Bear’ comes monthly, with families contributing thoughts and ideas before watching bubbles take our prayers to God. In February, we launched a new element to develop spirituality ~ I am special conversations ~ with a selected family each week and a chocolate heart to eat!

**WINHILLS TOTS** ~ preschool group, run in partnership with Winhills Primary Academy in their school hall, is a space that families, often with high levels of need and worry, can come together safely, access support and encouragement, and grow together. This group has no faith-sharing element and is simply about being a presence in our local community. There are activities for families to play together and we always sing at the

end. We have established a link with the Children's Centre, whose facilities we use to run the group, and a worker now comes monthly to run additional activities.

**MESSY CHURCH** ~ running 6 times a year since 2011, is an essential contact with families. We have crossover of families from Berkley Busy Bees and Winhills Tots who come along to activities in the holidays too and when children go to school, families can maintain their connection with the church. In 2025, we explored the life of Paul over our sessions looking at a different aspect of his life each time. In 2026, we are investigating people Jesus met. We have grown our Messy Church team, with new volunteers coming along to help in different ways. We no longer talk about ‘Messy’, ‘Busy’ or ‘Winhills’ families, just ‘our families’, as many access multiple groups.



Jesus is alive... collaborative collage created at our Easter Messy Church 2026

**SCHOOL UNIFORM PROJECT** ~ offers

unwanted uniform a home with new families. We continue to collect clothes, store and rehome them throughout the year as needed. Our Annual Big Giveaway Weekend in the summer holidays welcomed 61 families in 2025. We invited everyone who came to our faith-filled events. St Neots Tesco Extra contribute brand new stock which is surplus to their needs.

**BIG TOY GIVEAWAYS** ~ we invite families worried about the cost of Christmas gifts to choose from a hall full of preloved toys. We serve festive refreshments and share news of our Christmas events. Families tell us it makes such a difference. We have also been the beneficiaries of toys donated in Tesco and Co-op stores in St Neots. These are shared with local schools for families who they have identified as being in need. Berkley Street is viewed locally as a place where you will find help and support because of our faith.



Easter Garden 2026... created by the families at our Lent Mini Messey series, with the stone rolled away on Easter Sunday

**SUNDAY CLUB**

~ has grown from 2 children in 2022 to 15 now! We planned and led the Nativity service recently with dancing, lego created



Clay heart... made by one of our Sunday club during a session exploring God's love for us all.

video, singing and artwork all included. The under 3's stay in worship.

**SCHOOLS WORK** ~ we regularly visit our 4 most local primary schools with an 'Open the Book' assembly, where we share Bible stories. Eynesbury CE Primary, just along the road from the church, visit us, with KS2 coming for "Unpacked" reflective sessions

exploring festivals and KS1 coming for "Storybox" visits where we hear a story and do some craft.

**FOREST CHURCH** ~ a new and developing initiative in 2025, on a Saturday afternoon once in each season, because we are passionate about the power of outdoor learning and its contribution to spiritual development. We have been hindered by heatwaves and by rain, but the sessions we have held in Priory Park help families to explore faith together outdoors.



Christmas angel... fabric collage

In January 2025, Berkley Street committed to fundraising for an extension to the initial 5 year post. We are so grateful to everyone who contributes so much to make this a success. The work goes on...

Alison Cracknell  
Children and Families Outreach Worker

# Upwell Garden Church: From Seeds to Green Shoots

Simon Goddard

Over the past couple of years, the District has been nurturing a number of New Places for New People projects, each seeking to respond creatively and faithfully to the missional opportunities of their local context. One of these is Upwell Garden Church, a project rooted – quite literally – in the gardens of Upwell Methodist Church in the Fens Circuit. With the recent appointment of a pioneer who will begin in April, it feels like the right moment to share the story so far.

Upwell Methodist Church sits on the site of a former monastic garden, and today its grounds extend to around two and a half acres of mature trees, open spaces and cultivated areas. Long before Garden Church was imagined, these gardens were already a place of welcome: home to Scouts and Girls' Brigade, host to a potting-shed chapel and labyrinth, and known locally as a space where the wider community felt able to gather.

In Spring 2024, I was invited to accompany the circuit in testing



whether this existing gift might become the seedbed for a new worshipping community. Working a few hours each month, my role has been to listen, experiment, coordinate volunteers, and help discern whether there was

both community appetite and spiritual potential for something new to grow. During that initial viability phase, a small team worked together to host a series of outdoor events designed to be light-touch, relational and welcoming. A large summer garden party in September drew around 150 people from the village and beyond, with free food, children's activities, music and opportunities to explore the garden in reflective ways. This was followed by a pumpkin-themed autumn gathering, deliberately gentle and playful, which attracted a dozen families and created a warm, joyful atmosphere.

Since then, further events have continued to build visibility and trust: another garden party, a harvest celebration, an Advent event, and most recently a Pancake Day event.

Alongside these, relationships have been deepening with the primary school, community groups, and individuals who are not part of any existing church, but who are open to conversation and shared activity in this natural space. We've been discovering together how it's possible to connect with one another, and with God, in a garden!

What has been especially striking is the goodwill that surrounds the project. The garden is already “known ground” for many families, particularly through Scouts and Girls’ Brigade, and that familiarity seems to lower thresholds for engagement. People are not being asked to cross a line into something unfamiliar; instead, faith is being explored where life already happens.

As the District discerned the next steps, it became clear that this work now needs dedicated leadership, time and pastoral presence if it is to move from a series of events into a forming community. We are therefore delighted that funding has enabled the appointment of a part-time pioneer,



who will begin work in April. Dave Barker, who will be taking up the role of Garden Church planter, introduces himself like this:

“Hi, I’m Dave, and I’m going to be taking up the position of Garden Church Planter in Upwell. Currently I lead a

Baptist Church with my wife in Coventry, but we will be moving over to the Fenlands in early spring with our three children. My passions are growing food, cooking and eating! I love music, especially singing and musical theatre. I’m hoping to be able to combine some of these passions to help build a new Christian community around the Upwell gardens. I look forward to meeting people in the circuit. Please do pray for us all as we move east; that we can end well here, that the practical aspects of our house move get sorted, and for our children processing the move.”

As Dave begins, part of my role will shift into line-managing and supporting him, while the wider oversight of the project will sit with a new group formed of people from the District and the circuit. The early months will be a time of more listening, with Dave learning the place and people, and starting to shape a sustainable rhythm that holds together hospitality, spirituality and care for the garden itself.

Upwell Garden Church remains at an early stage, but the green shoots are emerging, and we are hopeful about the fruit to come. There is a shared sense that something life-giving is emerging: a way of being church that takes seriously creation, community, and the slow work of God in people's lives. We are grateful for the prayerful support so far, and we invite you to continue to hold this project – and Dave and his family – in your prayers as this next season begins.

Simon Goddard  
Mission Accompanier

# The Encouragement of Youth

Geoff Batty

It is always pleasing when youngsters come after the service to look at the console of the organ here at Wesley Church, Cambridge. Some are just interested in all the gadgets that are there and like to press them and try them out –



especially the pedals if they can reach them! I am conscious of the shortage of organists in many churches throughout the country these days, and I am keen to try and spark an early interest that may lead on to something which could develop into a lifetimes activity. I remember well as an infant being lifted onto the organ bench to sit beside my father as he played for morning services at our Methodist Chapel.

I remember too, the strong reluctance in many churches to let youngsters have a go at playing the organ. Sometimes it became an obsession. On one occasion, a few years ago, I was asked to play for a service at a church, and on arriving there found the organ locked and the resident organist had gone off on holiday and taken the key with him!

At Wesley we have Jack Morton, the son of two of our choir members. As an infant he was very interested in the

piano and the organ and tried to play them after the Sunday service. Jack is now in his teens and has developed a special interest in theatre organs and in playing theatre and cinema organ music. He is largely self-taught but even so he has won prizes for his

playing. You can see and hear him on the Web. Go to 'Jack Morton organist'.

After our morning service, and after the set Postlude has been played, Jack will often climb onto the organ bench and play his kind of music while the congregation is socialising with coffee and biscuits. I often feel that it gives a Palm Court atmosphere to the place. Jack is soon leaving school and going to work at

Harrison & Harrison, the famous organ builders in Durham. He has previously done a spell of work experience with a theatre organ builder in Barnsley.



You can see Jack playing the Wesley organ on one of the pictures on the previous page.

I am very keen to encourage children to have a go at playing our organ – who knows where it may lead, like Jack's story. Here are pictures of just three such children, Edward, Joanna and Matthew—some having started piano lessons, others not.



Geoff Batty

Organist & Choirmaster at Wesley Church, Cambridge

## Musical Celebration for Circuit Twinning

Rosemary Rayner

We had a Musical Celebration of our Circuit Twinning with Matjinge Circuit in Zimbabwe on Sunday March 8th at London Road Methodist Church in King's Lynn.



In the last 2 years, the Methodist Circuit in West Norfolk has supported our friends in Zimbabwe with our prayers and financial help to restore their borehole water supply. They had been sending children more than 2Km to fetch water. Once the water supply was working, we arranged the purchase of a Starlink internet connection and 6 computers for the secondary school and the construction of a fence around the manse, where the superintendent lives, so that he can grow vegetables. The mains electricity supply at the manse and the school is unreliable. We would like to continue to support them with the purchase of

solar lamps for the children, which cost £12 each, and eventually with solar panels, which would cost around £900.

It was a joyful occasion, with performances from FenSong

Performing Arts children and adults from Downham Market, the Dersingham Choir, and Zimbabwean Singers who are from Heacham. Revd Dr Richman Ncube spoke about his recent visit to Ghana, on behalf of World Missions, and about his secondary education in Matjinge High School in Zimbabwe. We raised more than £500, split between our Matjinge fund and Methodist World Missions. Afterwards, there was tea and a circuit service.

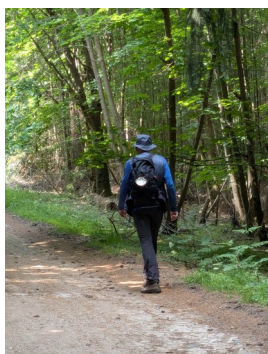
If anyone would like to help us with our project or wants further information, go to our Crowdfunder website via this QR code.



# A spring in Your Step

Sarah Friswell

It's never too late to try something new and in 2026 we have the perfect opportunity. A series of one-day walking pilgrimages is planned to take place across East Anglia, encouraging you to discover the benefits of walking with purpose and exploring what pilgrimage is all about.



Pilgrimage is an ancient tradition which has had many meanings over the years. Often seen as an exclusively religious activity, it is now widely understood in the secular world too. Thousands of people undertake pilgrimage journeys each year, with the 'Camino' in Northern Spain being the most popular route. TV programmes follow groups of celebrities on pilgrimage. There are shelves full of books on the topic.

Here in East Anglia District, there will be the chance to 'have a go' as pilgrimage walks will take place once a month, following different routes on each occasion. All are welcome to any or all of the events where you can enjoy times of fellowship, chat, quiet and companionship. There is no charge to join the pilgrimages but there will be the opportunity to make a donation to cover costs.

A team from the District has put together the series of walks and members of the group will lead the events.

The detailed programme includes:

- 2 May: An 8 mile pilgrimage around Fen Drayton Nature Reserve focussing on caring for the environment. Starting with refreshments at Over Methodist Church, Cambs (10am start)
- 13 June: Walking in the footsteps of former pilgrims from Wells to Walsingham, Norfolk (10am start)
- 11 July: Starting at The Hive, Great Cressingham, Norfolk, a longer route (approx. 11 miles) for those who want to stride out further and enjoy the East Anglian countryside

Further dates will be added in due course, including a short and accessible pilgrimage and the chance to walk the labyrinth in the Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds.

For further details (including practical details on timings, where to meet, what to bring, what to expect) and to book, contact

[danielle@eangliamethodist.org.uk](mailto:danielle@eangliamethodist.org.uk)

Sarah Friswell



# Young at Heart.... with a Bright Future

Revd Nigel Fox

My contact with friends of the Chinese Church began shortly after arriving in the Norwich Circuit when, in 2003, we agreed that the small growing community of Chinese Methodists could start using premises in Sprowston on Sunday afternoons.

With much able assistance from local members, work developed in Monday meetings as well. It wasn't long before signs of genuine growth emerged, and the community of almost 30 that joined us in Sprowston became over 120 or so within a decade. My role was to be as supportive as I could be, enabling our Chinese friends to make progress within their own culture.

It was distinctive, giving a very clear impression to a visiting Preacher who once remarked, "But they're so young!"

With the warm and able guidance and support of Rev Fenn, we were able to ensure that Edmond Tsui became accredited as a Local Preacher and then appointed full-time as Lay Pastor. The community was also formally recognized as a new Church within the Circuit and fresh premises became available at Bowthorpe Road in 2014.

Work on part of the premises led to some unexpected repairs which, in turn, led to a major building project. This 'young-at-heart' Church was certainly planning for a bright future with its willingness to grasp the opportunity. Grateful thanks are due to so many

people for their hard work and generous financial support, locally, in Norwich and across our District. The result was an amazing new worship space, opened in 2018.

In 2023, some 25 years after formation as a Methodist Community, a commemorative booklet traced not only the history up to that point but also set out the future hopes and plans for development. It was no surprise to me that several of the 13 points for future development revolved around disciple-making amongst young people – proving that, whilst growth involves the entire age range, they all are and remain, young-at-heart.

By that time, also, the leadership passed from Edmond to Pastor Stephen and his dedicated team.

This young-at-heart Church has now outgrown its Bowthorpe Road premises. The 'International Service', a congregation comprising mainly of youth, students and young adults, now meets at Costessey on Sunday afternoons. My contact continues there and it remains a privilege to be involved each month in preaching.

But I am acutely conscious of the fact that I am now more than 3 times their average age! That, in itself, helps keep me 'young-at-heart', too!

Revd Nigel Fox  
Supernumerary in Norwich Circuit

# District News

## **An introduction to one of our new members of the District Team, Aimee van Holland, District NPNP Enabler...**

Hi, my name is Aimee van Holland and I started as the NPNP enabler for East Anglia at the end of September 2025, after stepping out in faith for what I felt God was asking of me as a next step. This was both slightly nerve racking and exciting as I have worked in education for 17 years.

My background was teaching Drama to secondary school age children and then working in the Alternative Education sector. I have a real passion for seeing people go from surviving to thriving in different areas and environments. I became a Christian at 30 years old; I attend Freedom Church in Great Barton and have been involved in leading groups as well as hosting Sunday home church along with my husband Neil, and I now lead our music worship team. I also serve on a committee for the Refresh women's weekend conference held



twice a year at Sizewell Hall.

I have been married for nearly 18 years, and we have 3 children 14, 12 and 6, so I welcome any prayers for parenting especially these teenage years. I love adventures and one of

my highlights was climbing Snowdon last year, I love going on trips, attending conferences and Christian festivals, paddleboarding, and much to my husband's dismay I also love

camping! I also volunteer at my friend's farm locally and feel like God is stirring something in me in learning about how we



steward the land, teaching me new skills as well as gaining resilience and patience along the way.

I'm very much enjoying working for the Methodist Church and excited to be a part of how God is working in and through people in East Anglia.

**Contact Aimee:**  
[aimee@eangliamethodist.org.uk](mailto:aimee@eangliamethodist.org.uk)

# District Youth Strategy Menu for Circuits



As part of the District Youth Strategy, Circuits are encouraged

to write their own Circuit Youth Strategy. This “pick n mix” menu is designed to give Circuits some ideas of what might be included in their strategy and is designed to promote discussion and discernment. Circuits can pick which might fit their context and adopt some (not all) of these suggestions. Of course, Circuits are also encouraged to think of other aspects that might be included that are not covered here.

## Menu for Circuits to consider:

- Conduct a youth audit within the Circuit. - Young people attending worship - Youth groups/meetings - Uniformed organisations connected with the local church.
- Youth work to become a standing item on Church Council and Circuit Meeting Agendas.
- Set aside an annual youth budget – accessible for young people to attend learning/training opportunities/youth trips and activities.
- Create opportunities for the voices of young people to be heard within the local church and Circuit - be innovative in how to do this.
- Create a questionnaire for young people to express their views in relation to worship/mission and ministry in the church.
- Audit where ecumenical/other denominational youth projects are taking place within the Circuit - seek to support and partner with existing youth projects.
- Seek funding to employ a youth worker within the local church/Circuit.

- Recruit and train volunteer members to run/assist in youth work provision.
- Commit to a timed period of prayer and discernment in relation to God’s call in the church regarding mission to young people. Outline how this discernment will take place.
- Look to join with neighbouring Circuits in youth work provision.
- Run a youth drop in/after school provision.
- Incorporate young people in leading worship/sharing testimony and prayer - provide opportunities for young people to share their ideas/calling and preferences for worship.
- Create time within worship once per month (or more) for young people to share/lead worship.
- Appoint a Circuit Youth Development Team to write a strategy and co-ordinate youth provision and mission.
- Appoint a Circuit lead role/person for youth work and youth mission.
- Run a Youth Alpha Course/Youth Confirmation Course.... times per year.
- Run a youth Bible Study/online Bible provision specifically for young people.
- Purchase youth resources e.g. Youth Bibles, Youth for Christ session resources.
- Create a space within your church building for young people to feel comfortable and welcome – e.g. youth led discussion on location/furnishings/ use of space.
- Run a Circuit wide activity for young people.... times per year.

To discuss further, please contact Josh:  
[DYE@eangliamethodist.org.uk](mailto:DYE@eangliamethodist.org.uk)

# Popular Teas Venue Keeps Dry at Winter

Helen Randall

Wicken Methodist Church is celebrating the repair of its leaky porch roof - fixed just before all the recent rains set in. This completes the first half of a project to secure its historic building from the worst of the British weather.

Repairs were becoming urgent because the building was beginning to let water in, both through the porch roof and in various spots where the old lime mortar is wearing out. Happily, generous donors and grant-giving trusts have come to the rescue.

Sara Rains, the church's Property Steward, said: "We're really grateful to everyone who's helped. We started a project fund with a generous legacy, which was boosted this year by fantastic grants from Cambridgeshire Historic Churches trust, the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Benefact Trust.

Our local Methodist Circuit has also given us some money, and this summer's Sunday Teas programme and Flower Festival went really well. Not only have we re-covered the porch roof, but we have enough left over to do the urgent brick repointing too."

Sara added: "It's been great to see the building welcome so many visitors to our Sunday Teas and other events this year. We aim to do the re-pointing

work in the spring, ready for next year's Teas!"



**Cambridgeshire  
Historic Churches Trust**

Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust gave the largest grant. It helps churches and chapels across the county repair and improve buildings that are well-maintained and open for public worship. Wicken church members are very grateful to East Cambridgeshire District Council's Building Control team who helped with inspecting the work, to meet the Trust's grant conditions.



**Garfield Weston**  
FOUNDATION

The Garfield Weston Foundation is a family founded grant-maker supporting charities operating in a wide variety of sectors across the UK that make a positive difference within their communities.



**BENEFACT  
TRUST**

Benefact Trust is also a large, UK grant-making charity.

It awarded more than £23 million to churches, charities and communities in 2020, with the aim of promoting the Christian faith and other charitable

causes, especially projects that tackle homelessness, poverty and social exclusion.

Wicken Methodist Church building is over 100 years old, and listed by the county and district councils as an asset of local heritage importance. It is a popular venue for Wicken's Summer Teas programme and an autumn Flower Festival, and it hosts a 7-11s youth club in the summer. It is open for worship every Sunday morning, except when the congregation visits St Laurence's Church for Morning Prayer every other month, and it welcomes



people to festival events.

The building is also available for hire, and hosts Wicken Coronation Band's junior section for regular rehearsals.

The Sunday Teas programme will start again when the weather warms up in spring 2026.

Helen Randall

Wicken Methodist Church

## Are you pondering the future of your local rural churches? Struggling to lead through a season of great change?

### Why not join us on the Rural Mission & Ministry Course

Come and gather with other ecumenical rural leaders to explore what community, mission, evangelism & leadership can look like in rural contexts.

For further information & to book, please visit:  
<https://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/ruralministrycourse/>

£250 bursary for Methodists - please contact Sarah Hulme, rural mission & ministry officer via [hulmes@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:hulmes@methodistchurch.org.uk) for further details.

**Rural Mission & Ministry Courses 2026**

- 19-20 May '26 at Yarnfield, ST15 0NL
- 10-11 Nov '26 at Woking, GU22 8AB

SCAN HERE

 An ecumenical community for all rural leaders, lay & ordained, and those considering a move to rural.

# Contributions

We hope you have been inspired by the articles  
in this edition of *grapevine*.

If you would like to make a contribution to  
the next edition, we would love to hear from you.

Please send any news items, letters and photographs,  
which you would like to share with others in the  
District to:

[office@eangliamethodist.org.uk](mailto:office@eangliamethodist.org.uk)

*or post to 'grapevine'*

District Office,  
Chapel Field Road Methodist Church  
Norwich, NR2 1SD

For further information, please contact  
the District Office on 07434 934182

*Unfortunately we cannot guarantee  
inclusion of all contributions.*

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