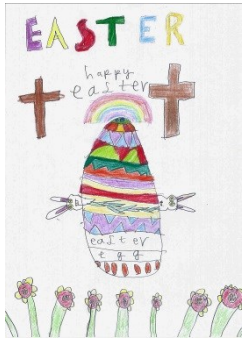
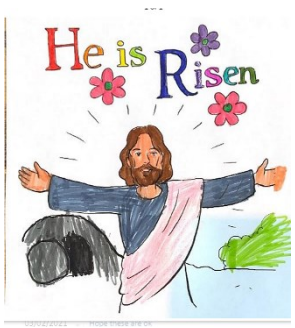
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The quarterly magazine of Stockton Heath Methodist Church

FEBRUARY—APRIL 2026







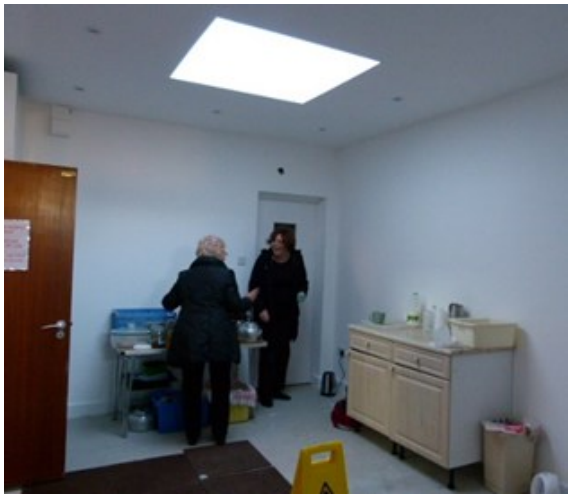


Stockton Heath Methodist Church
Charity Commission Number 1134148
Minister: the Rev Jeremy Tresise
Keep in touch on: www.shmc.org.uk;
www.facebook.com/stocktonheathmethodistchurch









FROM THE PAST

Do you remember the St Valentine's church social in 2018? Here, pizzas were being prepared.

Lisa and Dylan at a pets' service in 2016.

Who took part in the litter pick in 2018?

Church alterations under way. What is now the creche was being used as a temporary kitchen while the new kitchen area was being created in 2018.

Front page: art work for Easter by Sunday Club members in 2021.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings everyone and welcome to the first magazine for 2026. After a hectic Christmas period we are now in a slightly quieter time until Lent starts—which won't be too long now!

We started the Christmas activities way back in November with our annual fair which raised £1,820. Many thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make it a success.

Lesley provided another giant Christmas card for people to sign and make a donation to All We Can. I'm very grateful to Lesley for her annual money-raising project.

Another big fund-raising activity is carried out by the knitting group which raised £2,394 over the year so congratulations to all the knitters who work so hard in the background.

Lastly on the Christmas theme, I loved the new idea of displaying nativity sets around the church, lent by their owners. It was lovely and I rather hope this is repeated.

You may have noticed already that I have used photographs in this magazine which were first used in earlier editions. There is a reason for this which I have explained on page 14. **Please read this as it is rather important.**

Thanks to all my contributors.

All for now.

Julia

Data Protection: personal records are kept on computer by Rev Jeremy Tresise as minister, and Chris Park as records co-ordinator. If you wish to know what is under your name, please speak to either of them.

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DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE: Sunday, 12 April. This will cover May to July.

ACE
Member Editor 2026
Association for Church Editors

MESSAGE FROM THE REV JEREMY TRESISE

FEELING PARCHED?- PERHAPS DRY JANUARY IS AN ALL-YEAR PHENOMENON

Welcome to dry January! I write this on a day when thousands of households in Kent and Sussex have been without water due to burst pipes in the thaw after a cold snap and failed electrics in a water pumping station. We tend to take the supply of clean water for granted and only really stop to think about how it gets to us on those few occasions when it doesn't!

Water security is an ongoing issue for the majority of the world's population who remain very much at the mercy of the local climate as well as of the local infrastructure and the politics of the region. Access to the drinking water supplied by the River Jordan in modern day Israel, Palestine, Syria and Jordan is a case in point.

For us the Jordan River has deep resonances, with its association with John the Baptist offering the baptism of repentance and its marking of the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus in a river alongside sinners. For many today, the river is simply a matter of life and death.

In Jerusalem, the city's main water supply came via the pool of Siloam, formed by the underground aqueduct of water 'sent' there from the heights of the hills above the city.

It was the place where Jesus told the blind man to go and wash his eyes after Jesus had spread the mud formed from his own saliva on them. This washing of his eyes enabled a man born blind to see for the first time. For the first time, the man could experience life more fully and embark on a journey of finding out just how (and by whom) his sight had been restored. *(John 9: 6-7).*

And like the man born blind, we too are called to embark on a similar journey of faith that propels us towards a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and what he can do for us. The story of this man is essentially a resurrection story, a story of someone who has received the light of life from an encounter with the risen Lord Jesus. The whole miracle could be summarised thus:

As Jesus passes by, he sees a man who has been blind from birth. Jesus says to him, "I am the light of the world", and tells him to wash in the 'Water' sent from above. Then he says, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?". The man asks, "Who is he?". Jesus replies, "You are seeing him for the first time; he is now speaking to you". (1).

And because this is a resurrection story, the story also demands a

response from us, for having seen the light that Jesus brings and having been washed in the water sent from above. How do we now live our lives in the light of such glory?

As Jesus cries out in John's gospel, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink…*(for)* out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water".

Jeremy

(1) The Miracles of Jesus: What Really Happened? H J Richards.

THE LIFE-CHANGING EPIPHANY

By Bob Peters (ACE)

One thing that always strikes me about the Christmastide readings in the Bible is their briefness. Many of the traditions of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, such as the number of magi, their names and the time of their arrival, a description of the stable nativity scene we use, rather than an underground cave, and so on, are not found in the Bible. They are additions that add to the wonder of Christmas.

The space in the Bible given to the birth of the king of kings, the greatest teacher and most admired and inspirational person to have ever walked on earth, and as the shepherds, the angels and the magi show us is worthy of being worshipped as God, is amazingly small. The visit by the magi only appears in the Gospel of Matthew. Yet God's word in the Bible never becomes old news; there is always something fresh and new to be learned from every phrase because they are there for a good reason.

Bible scholars tell us that the main purpose of Matthew's gospel is to convince the Jewish people that Jesus is the Messiah who was promised in the ancient scriptures. It is about a Jewish King who is to save the Jewish nation. Jesus was to be the King of the Jews. Yet here, at the beginning of his book, Matthew includes the magi, wise men from the East, probably from the Persian area that today includes Iraq and Iran. These men are clearly Gentiles, yet they had travelled great distances to worship the newborn King of the Jews.

So right at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, we find God revealing himself to be the God of all nations of the world – Jew and Gentile alike. The visit by the magi was clearly included in Matthew's gospel for this reason: it is part of God's revelation of his private plan for the universal church. This is one of the reasons why making time to study the Bible helps us to understand God better and so develop a stronger relationship with him.

When we seek to do this with sincere determination as the magi did, we will find him. He is not hiding from us. He wants to have a closer, more intimate relationship with each of us. After the magi found and worshipped God, they did not go back the way they came. Likewise, as we get to know God, we will be changed forever, and our new way of life will be different from the old way that we leave behind us.

THE H WORD

As well as forgoing flowers on the altar, some churches refrain from singing "alleluia", "hallelujah" and/or "gloria" during Lent. This practice, sometimes called "Burying the Alleluia", is a way of recognizing the solemnity of the season and anticipating the glorious praise to be sung in celebration of Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday.

If you type the word 'hallelujah' into Google, the top 3 predictions of the next word are 'meaning', 'lyrics' and 'Shrek'. I am a big fan of the Shrek films, and the Leonard Cohen song, but also of etymology which is the study of the meaning and origin of words, and how their usage changes over time.

It is particularly interesting to look at the meaning of the word Hallelujah. I often use it without thinking, perhaps when something opens up on my phone that has been painfully slow, or the loading symbol next to the mouse finally disappears on my laptop. But I digress! The word is actually much older than you think – it has its origins in Hebrew and is found in the Bible. As with a lot of Hebrew words, its meaning isn't easily translated into something simple in today's language. Hallelujah is actually 2 words הלל*h-l -l* and יה*j-h.*

Ancient Hebrew is quite a complicated language, partly because there are no vowels in written texts! The root of nearly all ancient Hebrew words is formed of 3 consonants, and in the case of hallelujah, these 3 letters are הלל. This root occurs 146 times in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and means 'to praise'. The second part of the word is יה*j-h* which is the shortened version of) יהוה*y-h-w-h* or Yahweh, which is the name for God. Yah occurs 50 times in the Hebrew Bible, but Yahweh occurs 6,828 times in total! So putting those two words together *h-l-l and j-h* you get: praise the Lord!

Louise Churchus



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A HYMN FOR LENT

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
for we have no help but thee;
yet possessing every blessing,
if our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us;
all our weakness thou dost know;
thou didst tread this earth before us;
thou didst feel its keenest woe;
lone and dreary, faint and weary
through the desert thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending,
fill our hearts with heavenly joy;
love with every passion blending
pleasure that can never cloy;
thus provided, pardoned, guided,
nothing can our peace destroy.

One of my favourite TV programmes is 'Grand Designs'. I just love the vision and the enthusiasm of those people who take enormous risks to build their dream. This hymn, often chosen for services during Lent, was written by a very successful architect, James Edmeston. He lived in the East End of London in the first part of the nineteenth century, not far from where I was born, and wrote over 2,000 hymns, yet this is the only one that has survived the test of time. You might be surprised to know that James wrote it specifically for a special group of children, those living in the London Orphan Asylum. We know this because he wrote this piece of information above the hymn when he published it in his book, 'Sacred Lyrics'.

It appears that James was first introduced to the Orphanage in his capacity as an architect to do some work on the building, but he was so touched by what he saw, so impressed by the care given to these 'unfortunates', that he wanted to become personally involved. He was a practical man, and by all accounts got stuck into some of the more mundane chores vital to the running of such an establishment, but unlike some of the other benefactors, he actually chatted to the children and wrote little verses for them. I love the title of one of his compilations for the very little ones, 'Infant breathings'.

'Lead us Heavenly Father' has been sung on some very significant occasions - the Princess Royal's wedding in 1922, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother's wedding the following year, Queen Elizabeth's ninetieth birthday service - and as new hymnbooks have come out, it's continued to be selected. However, one of the lines in the second verse, where Jesus is described in the desert as 'Lone and dreary, faint and weary' has undergone some changes as the word 'dreary' seems to have been unacceptable. So, in 'Singing the Faith' we have 'tempted, taunted, yet undaunted' and in the Church Hymnary we have 'Self-denying, death defying, thou to Calvary didst go'. I still prefer the original, but then I usually do!

One more thing you may be interested to know about James Edmeston: one of the pupils to whom he taught architecture was Sir Giles Gilbert Scott who was the 'Grand Designer' of Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral. What an inspiration!

Hazel B

WHY IS HE GETTING WRONG?*

A child in the crowd watches Jesus carrying his cross through the streets of Jerusalem.

It's not fair!
Why is he getting wrong off the soldiers?
He's a good man.
Everyone knows him.
He helps people.
He makes them better.
He talks to people.
He tells stories – good stories.
Everybody listens to him.
Look at them!
Why are they hurting him?
Why won't they leave him alone?
He's not a bad man.
He's a kind man.
It's not fair.
Why is he getting wrong?

** Getting wrong' is a phrase used in the northeast of England and means 'getting into trouble' or 'getting blamed or punished'.*

© *Ruth Burgess and Kirsty Langlands, aged 10* from Eggs & Ashes, published by Wild Goose Publications, Iona Community, Fourth Floor, Savoy House, 140 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow, G2 3DH, and used with permission.



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FOR EASTER SUNDAY SUNRISE

The first gold of dawn
The long day
stretched into night
and time crept onward
towards the new day.

With the first gold of dawn
came a resurrection,
a new hope that grew
with the rising sun,
and went out to a waiting world.

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AMNESTY WRITE FOR RIGHTS DECEMBER 2025

A huge thank you to everyone who supported our Write for Rights event on 7 December 2025 held in the church hall. This global campaign, which runs during the months of November and December, is one of Amnesty's biggest pushes to support individuals and groups who suffer human rights abuse and have no voice in the outside world.

At the event we signed cards for 3 selected cases. It is humbling to know that just one message or signature when joined with those of many others can make a big difference.



Sonia Dahmani; photo from Write for Rights 2025 publications

Sonia Dahmani, a lawyer and media commentator in Tunisia, has dedicated her life to defending human rights and standing up for the marginalised in her country. She is a vocal critic of inhumane prison conditions and racism, regularly addressing these issues on television and radio. She was arrested in 2024 and convicted of 'spreading false news' by the Tunisian authorities. She was held in a rat-infested cell, faced degrading treatment and was denied her regular medication.

As the cards for her, sent via Amnesty International in Tunisia, arrived in Tunisia her case gained global support. Letters were also sent to the Tunisian authorities by Amnesty members and in December 2025 she was released from prison. She still faces charges related to her original conviction so Amnesty will continue to follow the progress of this case and request that the unfair charges are dropped.

Cards and messages of support were also sent to the parents of 3-year-old Unecebo Mboteni who died in 2024 after falling into a pit toilet at his pre-school in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province. In the poorest areas, pre-schools must rely on this type of toilet as they have no help from the Department of Basic Education responsible for sanitation. His parents are campaigning to eradicate them, but to date nothing has been done, despite multiple deaths, and no one has been held accountable for Unecebo's death.

Our third case involved a brave journalist in Myanmar, Sai Zaw Thaike, who went under cover to report on the devastation caused in his country by Cyclone Mocha. Since the military took power in 2021, more than 200 journalists have been imprisoned, and media outlets have been banned and forced into exile in an effort to control the information that is reported internally and to the outside world. He was discovered, arrested, beaten and sentenced to 20 years with hard labour after a trial lasting one day.

Amnesty will continue to support and follow our 3 cases and others although news on what is happening to them is often delayed. There are many successes following each year's Write for Rights campaign due to the volume of support from Amnesty members and like-minded others who give their time to make a difference by sending a message of hope. Thank you.

Gill Hardy, Warrington Amnesty Group

*The following is taken from the last edition of 'the **connexion'** and used with permission.*

Haiti is in a state of chaos. The world is too busy with other crises to spare a thought for this, the first Black republic in the world. Consider:

It saw off the armies of France, Spain and England in its struggle for independence.

France imposed a crippling indemnity on the new nation, destroying for ever any chance of building a sound economy.

A British diplomat wrote a widely-publicised book accusing Haiti of devil worship.

American marines occupied Haiti for 30 years and USA corporates raped the country, extracting all its mineral and agricultural wealth.

Dictators ruled.

The 2010 earthquake claimed 303,000 lives.

A head of state was assassinated.

Gangs rule.

So many would-be helpers have found it all too difficult and have pulled out.

British Methodists, while recognising the difficulties, must not be among them. We must pray, give, hope, organise and stand in

If asked which countries in the world are most in need of help we would probably mention Ukraine, Palestine (Gaza and West Bank), Sudan, amongst others, but who would say "Haiti"?

This small island in the Caribbean is seeing horrendous suffering amongst its people but nothing is being done to try to sort out the problem. Now the Methodist Church has started a campaign and is inviting British Methodists to join in prayerful solidarity with the people of Haiti.

The campaign has already started (January) but it's not too late to join. It provides resources for personal and communal prayer, including testimonies from Haitians, weekly reflections and prayer prompts. Whether you light a candle, lead a prayer in worship or share the campaign on social media, your voice matters. Let us stand with Haiti – not only in crisis but in hope, lifting our voices together in prayer for Haiti.

Sign up to receive emails from the Voices for Haiti campaign at: methodist.org.uk/VoicesForHaiti

solidarity with this wonderful people in their hour of need.

The Revd Lord Leslie Griffiths of Burry Port, Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Haiti, Supernumerary Methodist Minister and Minister in Haiti between 1970 and 1980.

ALL WE CAN Methodist relief and development

Through its work centred on education, health, agriculture, environmental and gender-based protection, ERDI seeks to strengthen and reduce the poverty rate of women, young people and those with disabilities in the country. Centred on Nimba (Liberia's second most-populous city), ERDI works through community structures, equipping local leaders to continue projects into the future.



Daniel's Story

I am Daniel Nyan Gboe, the Founder and Executive Director of Efficient Research and Development Institute, ERDI for short.

In 2012, we began outlining our purpose. We developed a roadmap for building our organisation, considering our mission, our supporters, and funders.

We decided to have our headquarters in Nimba as opposed to Monrovia, as we knew there was a lot already going on in Monrovia, and we wanted to have an impact within rural communities. We began gathering volunteers, raising finances, and bringing people with knowledge and experience on board so we could thrive. I started this with my family; my wife played a major role in our success, but today, ERDI goes beyond family. ERDI is for and by the community now.

A large portion of our work centres on women and youth empowerment. We realised that in rural Liberia, the women are the ones who are working more, but they do not own the land. So, if we try to improve the economic viability of women and youth, especially in rural Liberia, we must ensure that they have access to land and their own land governance committees. They must have leading roles in their communities. For instance, if land is being divided up within the community, it is divided among family heads. You will find that the family heads are men; even if a woman is considered the head of her family, she is not seriously considered the family head in the eyes of the community. As a result, she will not have access to the opportunity of gaining equal access to land.

Another big issue in Liberia is that our culture and traditions often only support men to be leaders. It means that even if women are striving, they are overlooked. If you go to a community meeting in rural Liberia, you will see that more men come and contribute than women. The space has not been fully given over to them. So, we are trying to support women in leadership. We don't just want to support the young, up-and-coming women, but those currently in communities who are being overlooked.

We see ERDI as a shelter for women and youth, a place where they can come and be warmed. Without ERDI, a lot of the groups of rural women that we support would have fallen apart without us bringing them together into our wider community.



Helen's Story

My name is Helen, and I am 30 years old. I have had a disability since I was one. I live with my parents, and I have a college graduate degree in accounting. I work jobs in data collection.

I have faced discrimination in the past. The job market is scarce, and I know when I've been for interviews and people have seen me, they have not accepted me because of my appearance. They don't care about your capability, what your mind can offer. There is still discrimination. This also extends into education. I know that most of our schools are not accessible for people with disabilities, especially those in wheelchairs.

Then, I became connected with ERDI. This has been life-changing, as it opened doors for advocacy and inclusion within my community. Community-based organisations like ours are vital because they raise awareness, challenge discrimination, and educate families about equality, especially for women and children. They help create spaces where everyone can thrive.

Because of ERDI's work and the awareness they have created, access to services has improved for me and others with disabilities. Before, it was hard to get recognition or support, but now people know us. In schools and offices, people understand and give me the freedom I need. ERDI has helped us get job badges and participate in exhibitions, which means those of us with education can be chosen for work. Even in election offices or other places, we are recognised because of the awareness ERDI has built. Things are changing bit by bit, and that gives me hope.

My ambition is big. That even if I start with just a little, I pray that God provides for me and that people around me support me because I

want to be able to help others tomorrow - my disabled sisters, brothers. If I see someone struggling, I want to be the one who lifts them up. I dream of owning a big business one day, starting with a dry goods market selling items like grains, dry milk, and foodstuffs that don't perish easily. With this, I can create opportunities for others to be independent and live with dignity.

May God bless me so that I can bless others.

We're sharing the stories of All We Can partners, like ERDI, because we want to remind you of the vital work they do. You are also a vital part of making sure this work can happen. Because of your support, All We Can is supporting development through our incredible local partners.

With your continued support, we can reach even more people who are depending on someone to care.

All We Can—used with permission

JOKES FROM ACE

God is talking to one of his angels and says "Do you know what I have just done? I have just created a 24-hour period of alternating light and darkness on Earth. Isn't that good?" The angel says, "Yes, but what will you do now?" God says, "I think I'll call it a day".

As in previous years, for Lent, I gave up all my New Year's resolutions.

A minister on holiday was reading his hometown newspaper and was stunned to read his own obituary. Shocked and upset, he telephoned the editor to remonstrate. "Just a minute," came the cautious reply. "Where are you calling from?"

News bulletins today usually begin with "Good evening" and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.

People who have not got a sense of humour should not be put in charge of anything. *(Robert Runcie)*

Stormy weather is what we need from time to time to remind us that we are not really in charge of anything.

Question from an 8-year-old after sitting through a sermon on the first chapter of Genesis: "When we get to the last chapter of Revelation, how old will I be?"

Fed up with bad news?
Try looking at www.positive.news or subscribing to their printed magazine. Whilst most of the news overwhelms people with negative narratives, Positive News offers instead a lens on the world that helps give people a fuller picture of reality, supports their wellbeing and focusses on what is going right. They aim to show the rest of the media that good news matters.

STOCKTON HEATH METHODIST DRAMATIC SOCIETY

Presents

THE HOLLOW

by

AGATHA CHRISTIE

17,19, 20 March at 7.30 and 21 March at 3.30pm

THREADS THROUGH THE BIBLE

Some of you visited this exhibition last year when it was at Liverpool Cathedral. A smaller version is to be exhibited at Chester Cathedral from 8 May to 29 June this year. The themes are Threads through Creation, Threads through the Cross, Threads through Revelation.

REV DR WILLIAM (BILL) DAVIES

I'm sure many of you will remember Dr Davies who was in this Circuit back in the 1960s/1970s, and who was President of Conference in 1987/88. I recently found out (though some of you may already know) that he died back in June 2024.

He was a very influential person on me when I was a teenager as, besides preaching around the Circuit, he also spoke to the Crusader group of which I was a member at the time. He also edited a magazine called 'Dunamis' which I used to receive.

THE END IS NIGH!

Not quite as bad as it sounds, but please do read on.

I produced my first magazine (then called Outreach) for this church in 2010 and at the end of last year had been doing so for 15 years, missing only one issue during the first COVID lockdown.

I use computer software called Publisher which is owned by Microsoft. Microsoft, in its wisdom, is terminating this software later this year which means there are only 2 more editions of *the*LINK to go, so I have decided that this will be a good time to retire.

Would anyone like to take over? Obviously a new format would have to be developed. Content would be up to a new editor although I can support them re articles, copyright, etc, etc. Or perhaps you feel that our weekly notice sheet and the church's website are sufficient.

Please think about this and let me know what you prefer. Better still, let me know if you would like to become the church's new editor.

In the meantime, for the final 2 magazines I will be looking back for more photos and maybe some articles. Sadly I don't seem to have saved the earliest editions, winter 2014/15 being the first one I have on my computer. Still, there is plenty to go at, but don't let that put you off sending in new articles!

Julia

Alex officially opening the recently refurbished church, with James Tebbutt, Chair of NW District, and Geoff.



Lego Bethlehem on display at Penketh MC just before Christmas. Thanks to Geoff for the photos







Ann and Mike take part in cycle rides for Palestine. Money raised in the past has gone towards creating playgrounds for the children in Gaza. I wonder if they are still there.





Chris in Costa Rica on his final assignment, featured in spring 2024 magazine.



Do you remember Sarah's epic marathons to raise money for Myanmar? This was her final one in 2019.

