

Herald

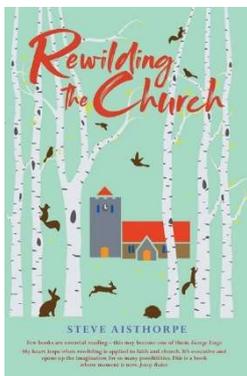
Ripon And Lower Dales Circuit Newsletter

Welcome to the Summer Edition of the Herald. Our vision is to provide a helpful place for connecting with some of what God is doing across the Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit. To give voice to those experiencing the love of God in their daily walk of faith. To celebrate and share the good news of God's kingdom. The next issue will be in September, so please do send your stories, big or small.

'Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.'



Book review in 100 words – Rewilding The Church by STEVE AISTHORPE

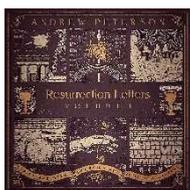


This month's review is of a book which continues to gather momentum in inspiring Christians to look beyond what Steve Aisthorpe describes as domesticated and embark upon a path of rediscovery through the adventure of faith.

If you haven't guessed it from the title, the main metaphor is rewilding the Church. Taking a recent idea in ecology and environmentalism as a metaphor, Steve Aisthorpe applies this for exploring what God is doing in the Church. In this book you won't find 'any preconceived outcomes' being offered. You will find an encouraging and challenging read that invites engagement with this fresh approach to discipleship and being church. An adventurous book which promotes integrity.



Worship Artist Highlight – Andrew Peterson. Resurrection Letters vol 1



I came to discover Andrew Peterson in a roundabout way, first by hearing an interview with him on a worship songwriters podcast, and then by reading his autobiography *Adorning the Dark; thoughts on Community, Calling and the mystery of making*, in which he describes his life of struggles and successes as a Christian songwriter.

Here are some words of introduction from his website.

*“For more than twenty years now, **Andrew Peterson** has been about the business of quietly changing lives in four-minute increments. In the city of Nashville where music is an industry in the same way fast food, generic greeting cards, and bumper stickers are industries, Peterson has forged his own path, refusing the artistic compromises that so often come with chasing album sales and radio singles and creating instead a long line of songs that ache with sorrow, joy, and integrity, and that are, at the end of the day, part of a real, ongoing, human conversation”.*

One song in particular that has recently risen to the fore, perhaps by being covered by Chris Tomlin, is “Is he worthy”. Taken from the Album Resurrection Letters vol 1, and based on words and images of Christ from the book of Revelation it takes us on a journey of reverence that rarely fails to move. Here is a link to the video of the song as sung by Andrew. <https://youtu.be/Olahc83Kvp4>



Stories from around the circuit.

Throughout this past year familiar stories have emerged about activities that would ordinarily have gathered onsite in one location found new life by gathering online. The Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit has also risen to the challenge and continues to actively engage online. This included the launch of the Mission and Ministries Gathering which met four times online and equally Spirit filled with a moving prayerful time we gathered for the listening post. We have journeyed in discipleship through enlightening Bible studies, quiet days, Holy Week reflections. Worship services have all taken place with people present online and most importantly gathering in presence of Our Loving God. These are but a few of the activities which have taken place.

We can add into that mix prayer meetings, stewards and leadership team meetings and not forgetting the Circuit Meeting which is quite a feat. Training days have taken place and webinars attended. When you might think the list of online activities has been exhausted, it goes on with Collective Worship online with local primary schools that brought a new joy and RE lessons took a new shape too, providing opportunities for supporting home schooling. Each one of these activities have a story to tell but in unison tell a story of how God didn't cease to be present or active in the life of the church. Whilst the online life of the church isn't everyone's cup of tea or it is simply not accessible due to circumstances, such as not having good internet connections, for a good number it has opened the doors to church which previously had been closed.

Journeying onwards we look to continue to be as inclusive and accessible as possible, and in doing so, recognise that being online or onsite in a building, both are church, and all are present physically. This means that all are engaged and experiencing the very real presence of God in their lives. Withholding one's personal preference, I hope this is something we can all agree is worth celebrating and something that is deserving of our thanksgiving to God. I would also want to note my appreciation and thanks the circuit team of staff members, tech team and church members who have learnt new skills and made all the above possible. I continually give thanks to God for the gifts and skills people have so generously shared for the benefit of others. *Revd. Gareth Baron*

If you have a story to share, please be encouraged to tell it!



Let us continue to be a people of prayer.

Whilst emerging out of Covid restrictions, with people regaining a sense of freedom, we pray for all those who are struggling with anxiety and those who are most vulnerable. Lord, help us to be a people who care for all and may the places we gather remain safe and welcoming.

Summertime can be full of fun, activities, and adventures, it can also be an extra difficult time for families struggling to find enough food for meals for example. We pray for safety for all during these summer days and pray especially for those who are finding things extra difficult.

We pray for all those experiencing change during these summer months. For those entering new employment and for the those starting new schools, colleges, and universities. We pray for good starts to new roles and new educational years, praying for nurturing places of work and learning.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen

4 Sufficient is enough.

Sufficient! It might not sound exciting, or dynamic, or even inspirational, but in my opinion sufficient is an underestimated word and in the right context can be transformational. Paul provides us with an excellent example of this in his writings about the grace of God in 2Corinthians. Paul shares what the Lord had spoken to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” The full passage is worth exploring and takes some unpacking. However, these words remind me that sufficient is enough and especially when it refers to God’s grace. Whatever our human weakness, by the grace of God we are strong when we depend on God to strengthen us. I believe everyone is called to be a child of God, that we can always depend upon God who loves us. That when we depend on God, we discover our truest self.

What if we apply this to how we approach the witness and ministry of the church. When considering new missional initiatives what consideration is given to how by the grace of God, we can do immeasurably more when God is at work within us? We read about this in Ephesians, ‘Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. Unfortunately, part of our human weakness is to try and do things in our own strength. This can lead to what I believe is an unhelpful question of ‘how can we sustain this? Whilst this might be asked for all the right reasons, I would suggest a better question is who will sustain this missional work? Further, I’d suggest that God is the answer to this question. When we seek to join in with God in mission God sustains us. This may be like the manna in the desert as with the Israelite community or the handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug as with Elijah. When we place all we have in the hands of God, we see great things happen, like when fives loaves and a couple of fish became a divine picnic for thousands. Just as we discover our truest self on a personal level when we depend on God, so too we discover our truest expression of being a community of faith and our best expression of church when we depend on God. I wonder, how might we experience the transformational power of God in the future story of the church recognising that sufficient is enough, especially when it comes to God at work within us.

A seed reflection by Revd. Gareth Baron



You have 5 new messages!

Heartfelt thanks to Karen Emms for serving with such diligence as a Circuit steward.

Karen steps down this year as a Circuit Steward and I am sure I speak for whole circuit in saying a huge thank you to Karen for faithfully exercising your ministry whilst serving in the role of Circuit Steward, including being Senior Circuit Steward. Karen’s heart for seeing the circuit of churches grow and flourish is evident, and we are delighted that Karen continues to minister around the circuit in her new role as the Circuit Safeguarding Officer.

Welcome to Amanda Milner who has joined the Circuit Leadership Team following being newly appointed by the Circuit Meeting to serve as a Circuit steward.

Amanda is a member of Bedale and District Methodist Church and brings to the role a wealth of skills and experience. I am sure you will join with me in praying for Amanda as she begins this new addition to her ministry within the circuit.

May we **continually** hold each other in prayer, and I would ask we hold all who serve in leadership, pastoral, or preaching role in prayer. We are a modest number as a circuit family of churches and yet a tremendous amount is achieved through such generous giving of time, energy, and gifts.

Cautiously Caring – Last month I wrote a letter to all the churches in the circuit about journeying cautiously and with care for all people once the Covid-19 restrictions were lifted. I am grateful for all the churches responding in such loving ways and taking seriously the need to continue cautiously. There have been a few who have pushed back against such measures and whilst I respect there are different perspectives, we cannot deny the real risk which is evident in positive covid-19 cases. This also impacts much wider, with people having to self-isolate and others suffering the illness. Keep Safe, Show Care.

An Inspirational Lecture & Equally Inspiring Project.

Last month the Methodist Justice Lecture was given by Gordon Brown and with well over two thousand views to-date is worth viewing if you haven't already. The Lecture can be found via Methodist Church YouTube channel. The Lecture is part of the newly launched Walking with Micah project and included below is some information about it. More information can be found online by visiting The Methodist Church website and you can sign up to receive the Walking with Micah newsletter via email.

I would encourage everyone to connect in with this project and to engage in whatever ways we can to work together for justice.

'Walking with Micah: *Methodist Principles for Social Justice is a two-year project of the Methodist Church to help us explore what it means to be a justice-seeking church. Drawing on our tradition, theology, experience and partnerships, the project seeks to help us to renew our shared passion for justice.'*

The Sunshine Rains – My summertime by anonymous

My summertime poem doesn't carry complaint of the weather,

Weather 'It's too hot' or drizzling downpours of grumps brought with the rain.

No, my summertime poem is a mirror of the joy, reflecting goodness and brimming with life.

Like the beauty of creation in bloom with songs of colour and every living thing giving praise to its King.

It's a poem of appreciation for all the summertime highs, for warmth and for weekends spent outside.

With a heartful of pleasure brought by each day and trying to ignore the signs of seasonal change.

So, whilst its today, tomorrow can wait.

Enjoy growing with God in these serene, light filled, delightful summertime ways.

Note from the editor – Thank you for reading this month's issue of The Herald. If you have an article, a book worth a 100-word review or a newsworthy story to share, please do get in contact on email: Gareth.baron@methodist.org.uk

For further information about the Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit please visit the website www.riponlowerdalesmethodists.org.uk

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'For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.'

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