



Welcome

Spring

Advent and the Christmas are now behind us. As I write, we're in the season of Epiphany and Lent is around the corner. Spring is starting to awake: the days are getting longer, and the first buds are appearing on the trees. It's exciting to see new life emerging, perhaps not just in nature, but also in ourselves. Let's allow the lighter days to put a smile on our faces and a spring in our step.

Lent is of course a time for reflection and recommitment, and perhaps a renewed intent to read the Bible and to pray? **Word in Time** offers daily Bible readings and reflections, and there is a **Daily Prayer** on the Methodist website as a starting point.

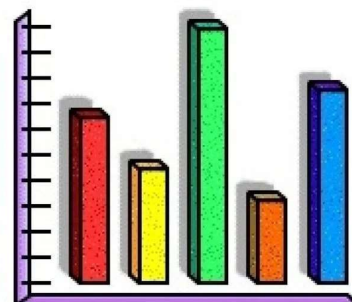
As we approach Easter, we commend the Easter Offering resources for 2024 and perhaps now is the time to start planning for the new Bible Month on Genesis? We hope you find encouragement and inspiration in this edition of your quarterly eNews for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders.

News

2023 in Numbers

We know that some of you like numbers, so here are some from our work together in 2023. Last year, we:

- Received and moderated WLP 83 portfolios
- Celebrated with 33 people who were admitted as Local Preachers in their circuits.
- Prepared, printed and delivered 387 long service certificates



- Enrolled 347 new Tutors, Mentors and student Worship Leaders and Local Preachers onto the Worship: Leading & Preaching course
- Received and replied to emails from 3,217 individuals
- Sent out 4 editions of eNews - a total of 24,852 emails!
- Introduced you to two new members of the team

It was a busy year for all of us, and we want to thank every one of you for your hard work and dedication in your leading of worship, your faithful preaching of the gospel of Christ, your care for the people of God wherever they are, and your passion for the mission and ministry of God's church. We look forward to working together with all of you in 2024.



A Local Preacher in the Armed Forces

We celebrate with Joe Navoka, who has completed his training as a local preacher whilst serving in the Armed Forces. Joe, who serves with the 16th Air Assault Brigade in Colchester, was admitted as a local preacher, together with Sally Crafer from the local circuit on 10th December.

Joe trained through the Armed Forces LP Training Pathway, established in collaboration between the Methodist Forces Board and the Local Preachers'

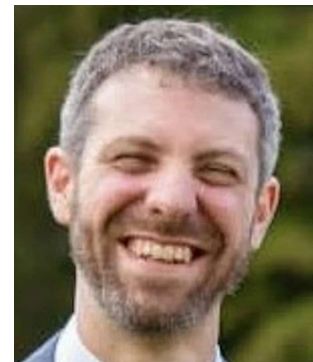
office.

Strong support came from the East Solent & Downs circuit in Hampshire. RN Commander Mark Barton was instrumental in designing the pathway as well as being Joe's Tutor.

You can read more on the Methodist website, and even watch Joe and Sally's Admission Service - click [here](#). If you are interested in finding out more about the Armed Forces Pathway, contact localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk.

Welcoming Dan

We are thrilled to introduce the newest team member of the Ministry, Vocations & Worship team, and we know you will join us in giving him a warm welcome! Dan Bishop joined us in January as the Director of Ministry Development. Dan brings extensive experience in education, and we are looking forward to working with him as we explore ways to better support all those involved in ministry in the church.



Dan has provided a photo (*although sadly, without a funny hat - Stefan*) and a few words to introduce himself:

I am very grateful for the opportunity to introduce myself to you. My name is Dan Bishop and I started in January as the Director for Ministry Development in the Connexional Team. Along with other members of the team, this role is about leading ministry development for the whole people of God, vocational discernment, supervision and ministerial flourishing and wellbeing.

Before joining the Ministries Team, I spent over 18 years as a teacher, latterly as a Deputy Headteacher. As well as this, since 2008, I have been a local preacher in five different circuits, leading worship in a variety of different places and contexts (from an immigration detention centre, to rural chapels, to city centre churches to MHA homes) in a variety of different styles (traditional and contemporary 'church' worship, Iona and Taizé worship, through to café church, forest church, Godly Play and more!) Throughout this time, it has been a joy to get to know church communities, a privilege to walk with them on a small part of their journey and to learn about the ministries of faithful Methodists up and down the country. I now live just on the edge of the New Forest and am a member of the wonderful community of Salisbury Methodist Church.

In leading worship, we seek to offer an encounter with the eternal mystery of God which roots our lives; we seek to enable congregations to reflect on the wisdom that God's kingdom, revealed in Scripture and Jesus, speaks into the (often dark and broken) realities of the world in which we live; and we help people (individually and corporately) to respond, and to find their place within the life of Christ. This is a vital ministry and I have found the prayer below, written by The Revd Ruth Gee, and published in 2015/16 in the Methodist Prayer Handbook, hugely helpful in reflecting on our calling:

God-with-us, Emmanuel, may we

wait expectantly

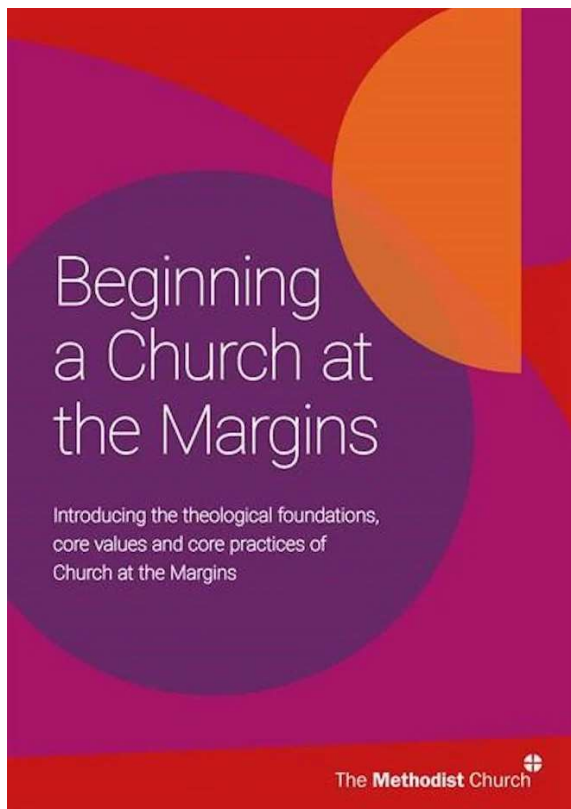
prepare prayerfully,

act carefully

live hopefully,

every day with you. Amen.

Events



Beginning a Church at the Margins: a 3-session interactive online course

This course is all about putting the Gospel into practice in the areas where it is most needed. All sessions run from 7 to 9pm. Book your place via the links below:

Session 1: 6 February - Creating connections and spaces where people truly encounter one another.

Session 2: 20 February - Nurturing communities in which people with lived experience of poverty are recognised as the experts.

Session 3: 5 March - Sharing the gospel and seeing transformation as people grow in faith and challenge injustice.

Download the free resource book [here](#).

Exploring Ordination

Do you remember that first sense of being called to lead worship? It's a special feeling that many of us will never forget. However, it can be tough to figure out where God is calling you next - is it to be a Local Preacher, or possibly a Presbyter or Deacon?

If you feel God might be leading you towards ordained ministry, or you know someone who is considering it, there are a series of events coming up that can help you explore this calling with others.

Do check out the **Ordination Exploration Days**, where you can connect with others and learn more about what it is to be ordained.

Ephesians and Christian Community

Hosted by the A.S. Peake Memorial Trust:

On **Saturday 9th March**, Dr Andrew Boakye, Lecturer in religions and Theology at the University of Manchester, will be leading a study day on "Ephesians and Christian Community: Unity, Maturity and Trust among the People of God" at **Methodist Central Hall, Manchester**.

The event will include workshops and discussion, and will consider how the letter to the Ephesians can be a manifesto of community, grounded in Jesus, recovering all that is life-affirming and beautiful about our common humanity.

The event starts at 10:00 and finishes at 15:45, with registration from 09:30. You can book your place through Eventbrite [here](#).



Local Preachers' Retreat 2024

Friday 19th April - Sunday 21st April 2024

Oh, how I love your law...?

Taking his cue from Psalm 119, Bob Bartindale will be hosting a silent retreat at the beautiful Ammerdown Centre near Bath. There will be plenty of space for quiet reflection and a chance to consider what place God's Law has in our faith and life. We'll reflect on what it meant for Jesus to "fulfil the Law" and how this affects our discipleship and calling. It's sure to be a meaningful and thought-provoking weekend.

The cost for the weekend, which includes accommodation and full board, is £250. Booking forms can be downloaded on the [CLPD page](#) or on the [Reflect webpage](#).



Calling all Local Preachers' Secretaries!

If you would like to meet up with others from around the connexion to share ideas and concerns, why not join us online on **Monday 26th February from 2pm to 3:30pm?**

This 90 minute gathering on Zoom will include short introductions to topics of interest, time for informal discussion, and time for questions and answers.

The hosts will be Bob Bartindale from the Local Preachers' Office and James Devenish of the Learning Network.

If you would like to be there, please sign up on Eventbrite [here](#).



LWPT

Keeping the main thing the main thing: Preaching in a Secular Age

On Thursday 11th July (7:30pm - 9pm), Ian Buchanan (CEO of LWPT) will be speaking in the Yorkshire West District on the subject of:

Keeping the main thing the main thing: Preaching in a Secular Age with one eye on the Grand Story

The meeting is for all involved with communicating the gospel who realise that a significant change is underway in Western culture. What does this significant change mean for those who want to communicate biblical truth in a way that is faithful to the text and yet still makes sense in the 21st century?

The venue is Alwoodley Park Methodist Church, The Lane, Alwoodley Park, Leeds LS17 7BX. All local preachers and worship leaders are welcome. The church is offering Zoom connections for those who cannot be there in person.

Ideas & Resources

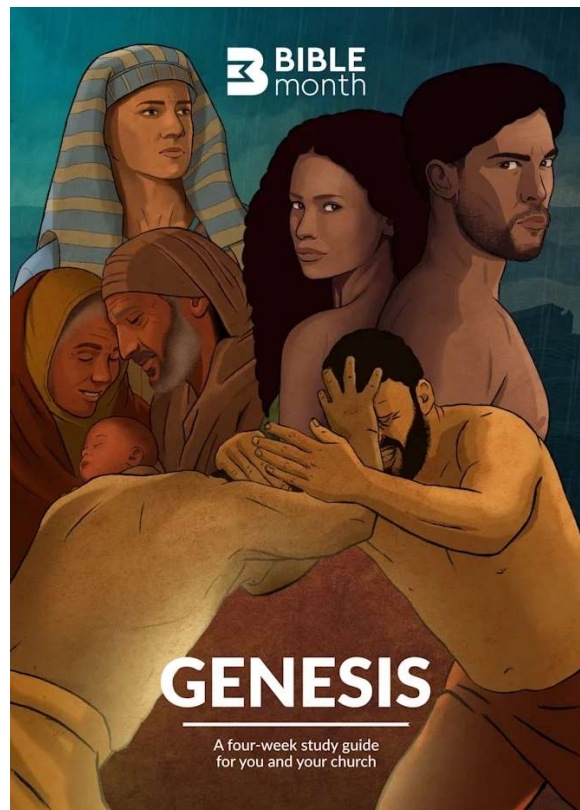
Bible Month 2024: Genesis

The Bible Month booklet for Genesis is now available from the [LWPT website](#)

Genesis is the starting point for all Christian theology and explores many of the foundational questions of life and faith: Who is God? What is God like? How does God interact with the world? How is that world meant to be? What does it mean to be human? What does it look like to be God's people?

Through the book, we get to journey with many different characters as they wrestle (sometimes literally!) with finding answers to these questions in the midst of the messiness and uncertainty of life.

Join us for the adventure and discover for yourself the life-giving truths that this brilliant book ponders and imparts. In the video below, Debra Reid (author of the Bible Notes for Genesis) explains why she believes Genesis is a book about salvation and hope:





If you want to use this 14 minute video in your Local Preachers' Meeting as an introduction to Bible Month on Genesis, you can find it on the Bible Month YouTube channel [here](#).

A growing range of other resources for Bible Month are available on the Methodist Church's [Bible Month webpage](#). The Bible Notes from the booklet are also available (without illustrations) as a free download - follow the link from the Bible Month webpage. Other resources will include a 30 Day Reading Guide, a Journalling Kit, Singing the Faith Song Suggestions and Animations for playing in services.

You will also find a booking link for a **Bible Month Training Day** on Saturday 16th March 10am-3pm online or at a hub near you.

We look forward to hearing all about your experiences using Bible Month this year!



Easter Offering 2024 - Let Justice Roll

This year the Easter Offering 2024 service tells stories of people standing for justice, persisting in the face of setbacks and taking up the challenge anew as circumstances change. Some stories show how people now have hope because justice has 'rolled' into their lives.

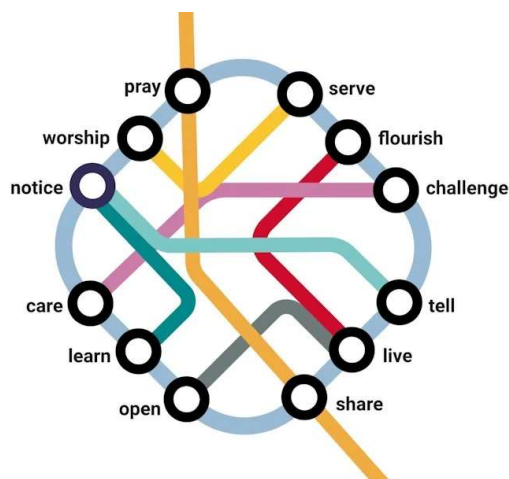
Let Justice Roll offers churches, circuits and districts a celebration of God's just purposes across the wider world. It includes the dedication of the Easter Offering, all of which goes to the World Mission Fund of the Methodist Church in Britain, supporting and working with over 100 Partner Churches and organisations around the world.

Service materials include:

- Leader's notes with guidance for local organisers in the preparation of the service
- A full PowerPoint presentation
- A promotional poster
- Order of Service
- Stories telling of ways we can 'let justice roll'.

For more information and downloadable resources, including the Easter Offering order form, please visit methodist.org.uk/EasterOffering.

You can order your printer Let Justice Roll resources, including your collection envelopes, from [Methodist Publishing](#).



A Methodist Way of Life

A new series of service outlines is now available to help embed A Methodist Way of Life in your church and community. These include notes for a talk or sermon; creative activities and discussion questions for all ages; and all in editable Word documents so you can pick and choose the items that work for you. PowerPoint slides featuring helpful images are also available. Download everything [here](#).

We welcome your comments on how helpful you find this material - please email us and let us know how you used the material and how it worked for you by clicking [here](#).



Methodist Service Book Online

The Admission, Commissioning and Welcome services from the MSB are now available online. You can access on the Singing the Faith Plus website [here](#).

In addition, the Morning, Afternoon and Evening Services section has also been published and can be found [here](#). Work continues on publishing electronic services and will keep you updated on any further developments.



A digital Local Preacher or Worship Leader?

A 3 week introductory course on how Local Preachers and Worship Leaders can develop their digital skills and become more confident about their role in a digital world. Comments from previous participants include:

A delightfully practical series.

It really inspired me to look at my preaching and leading worship in a different way.

Three sessions cover these topics:

Week 1: What's digital got to do with me? (why should LPs bother with the digital world at all?)

Week 2: Using PowerPoint well (including videos in PPT, recorded music etc.)

Week 3: Using social media and the internet for prayer and worship.

The course takes place on Fridays 1, 8, 15 March, 10.30am - 12.00pm, and Wednesday evenings 10, 17, 24 April, 7pm – 8.30pm.

For more information and to book your place, click [here](#).

SINGING THE FAITH PLUS

Local Arrangements

The words "Local Arrangement" are now appearing regularly on many Circuit Preaching Plans. This means that the Church Stewards are responsible for the service, but may of course invite anyone in the church to take part. This can be a great opportunity for people to get involved in preparing and leading worship. It's amazing how many hidden talents lie undiscovered in our congregations. Some churches now insist on a regular Local Arrangement so that everyone has a chance to participate, perhaps doing a reading or introducing a song, or by sharing a reflection or testimony. Local Arrangements can be a great opportunity for your church, reflecting the spiritual life of your community, and including everyone who wants to, whatever their age or experience.

There are plenty of help available for planning Local Arrangements:

The Vine publishes fully scripted services which can be used for worship,

Singing the Faith Plus has a lot of resources to inspire you, and there are service ideas for **Methodist Way of Life**.

All of these resources are designed to be adapted to your local context - there is no need to use them completely as written. Be bold, be creative and make sure prayer is at the heart of your preparation and worship!



What the World Needs Now...

Looking at the world today, it's easy to be pessimistic. John Wing, a Local Preacher in Bristol, provides hope and encouragement in his new book.

From the Foreword by Revd David Deeks:
John Wing has long experience as a Christian believer and communicator. He has learned his trade as a lay preacher in the Methodist Church. He has the enviable skill of writing as he speaks. His is an accessible style which brings clarity to the task, with apt quotations and illustrations. John's writing also expresses the depth of his personal commitment; and it has the capacity to challenge the reader, through quiet reflection, similarly to allow the Spirit to question and heal and redirect their inner life.

The book can be ordered as a paperback or an eBook from Amazon using the link [here](#).

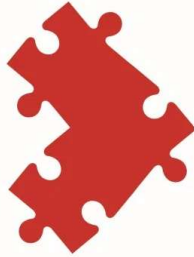


Are you interested in studying further for the benefit of local Methodist church ministry? Last year LWPT approved tuition grants for Methodist lay people wishing to study further at a UK based learning institution.

We offer up to £2,000 tuition plus £500 books / resources grants. If you wish to apply for a tuition grant this autumn please go to the [**LWPT website**](#).

Learning and Development

Worship:
leading &
preaching



WLP Developments

We would like to thank everyone who has been in touch regarding recent updates to the Moodle site. Over the last six months, we've successfully moved the website from a physical computer server to a "cloud server", which should give us a more consistent and reliable service and upgraded the Moodle software to the latest version.

In addition, the new version of Module 2 is available and the Ongoing Learning Hub (see below) is now available for existing WLP users. We're committed to continuing to improve the website and provide the best possible experience for all users. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we make changes and updates.

If you ever have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact the Learning Network or Stefan at the **Local Preachers' office**. We're here to help and support you in any way we can!

WLP Training Opportunities

There are some great training opportunities available through the Learning Network. Whether you're a student, tutor, mentor or Local Preachers' Secretary, these sessions can be really helpful - especially if you're new to training or just need a refresher.

With all of the ongoing changes to the site, it's always a good idea to stay up-to-date with the latest information. That's why we highly recommend checking out the **WLP Training** page to see all the upcoming sessions.

News for Welsh Speakers

The Worship: Foundations book, used by those training as Worship Leaders and Local Preachers, is now available in Welsh and can be downloaded from the **Worship: Foundations webpage**. If you are a Welsh speaker, involved in leading worship or exploring a call to preach, **Delyth Wyn Davies** in the Learning Network in Wales would love to hear from you.

Addoli:
arwain a
phregethu



Newyddion i siaradwyr Cymraeg

Mae'r llyfr Addoliad: Sylfeini, a ddefnyddir gan y rhai sy'n hyfforddi fel Arweinyddion Addoliad a Phregethwyr Lleol, bellach ar gael yn Gymraeg a gellir ei lawrlwytho o dudalen we **Addoli: Sylfeini**. Os ydych chi'n ymwneud ag arwain addoli neu'n archwilio galwad i bregethu, byddai **Delyth Wyn Davies** yn y Rhwydwaith Dysgu wrth ei bodd yn clywed gennych.

Ongoing Learning

The Ongoing Learning Hub is now open, and users can now use:

CLPD Log: users can keep a record of their CLPD activities and reflections - books read, films watched, memorable sermons...



...a helpful reminder for when your turn comes round to share your ongoing learning in your Local Preachers' Meeting.

Book Reviews: share your thoughts on a book you've read with the Ongoing Learning community.

Resources: a growing library of resources - articles, book extracts, videos etc. all tagged by subject to stimulate your thought and encourage you to dig deeper.

Blog: record your thoughts to share with the Online Learning community and join in conversations that interest you.

We hope to add more features in due course, and to encourage users to add to the material. We hope that it will become a space where you can share your own experiences and learnings.

At the moment, Ongoing Learning is open to anyone with an existing Moodle account for Worship: Leading & Preaching. To enrol, simply click on Ongoing Learning on the WLP Home page and follow the links.

We will shortly be enabling self-registration to allow anyone to register for the Ongoing Learning Hub even if you don't currently have a WLP account. Watch this space!

Hot Tip for Students

We are often asked about the best way to approach a module in WLP. We always recommend that before you start on the Learn material, take a look at the Project Brief. If you know what's expected in your portfolio, you will have a sharper focus as you work through the watching, learning and listening in Learn.

Remember that the Project Brief is a guide, not a straitjacket. We encourage students to use imagination and be creative in their projects, and to take the opportunity to try out new thoughts and ideas.

It is often a creative idea, or a fresh way of presenting a familiar passage that will help people to worship. Churches are changing, so it's a good opportunity to try out new ideas and approaches and use your creativity, whilst always keeping the Learning Objectives in mind. Make the most of the feedback from your Tutor and from those present at the services or events you lead too.

If you or your Tutor need clarification on the requirements for a particular project, your Learning Network officer (usually also the Regional Moderator) can help. Or contact us at localpreachers@methodistchurch.org.uk.

Hot Tip for Tutors

There are several ways to find your students' work in the Project Workspace. However, here's one method which seems to work for most people:

- Select any "Project Workspace" on a module screen.
- Select "Overview of Students" on the right-hand menu. If you can't see the right-hand menu, click on the little arrow in the semicircle at the top right-hand side of the screen (see picture on right).
- You should now see the grid of coloured boxes for your student(s). We call this their "dashboard".
- Selecting any of these boxes will take you to a particular project. You can see which project is which by hovering over the box.
- Selecting the "back" button in your browser should take you back to the dashboard. If it doesn't, select "Overview of Students" again.



In Closing

Stefan's Very Important Question

I asked a few people the important question "*What is the best type of cake?*". Here are some of the enlightening answers that were given:

My initial answer was that any cake is good! But I think the best cake I ever had was at a café in County Mayo: the clementine and almond cake and rhubarb and cinnamon cheesecake were both memorable!

- **Dan**, Director of Ministry Development, Connexional Team

The best type of cake is any cake I make with my enthusiastic three year old (who got an apron and rolling pin for Christmas) - which usually means cupcakes with a Frozen theme!

- **Naomi**, Presbyter, North Kent

Chocolate. (*No further explanation required - Ed.*)

- **Emily**, Administrator, Connexional Team.

And so my question to all of you for the next edition is "*How would you describe the colour of the perfect cup of tea?*" Feel free to send me your answer along with your name, role within the Methodist Church and your Circuit to the [Local Preachers' Office](#) and I'll select some of the best answers to be published next time.

A Message From Bob

Since the early days of the church, the 40 days of Lent have always been associated with reflection, self-examination and repentance. The period is



associated with the time of testing that Jesus endured in the Judean wilderness, that led to the start of his active ministry. In some church traditions, it became a time of preparation for new believers, leading to their baptism at Easter.

Although Lent is often associated with self-denial and frugality, the word itself derives from an Old German word for the lengthening of days in spring - a reminder to watch for signs of hope.

How will you spend Lent? Perhaps trying to restrain your chocolate consumption and saving yourself for Easter? Perhaps in a renewed commitment to daily Bible reading and prayer? Perhaps joining a local Lent group or using one of the excellent Lent resources such as that from **Embrace**, who support Christian charities in the war-torn Middle East?

Lent is an opportunity and an invitation to reflect: not to indulge in introspection, which can be negative and discouraging, but to take time to perceive how God is working in us and through us; to be open to the influence of God in our lives, even the parts we think we understand.

That may even include our approach to worship and preaching.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any hurtful way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.
(Psalm 139: 22-24, NRSV+footnote)

Bob Bartindale

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