



The **Methodist** Church

FOCUS

Wesley Chapel Harrogate



Christmas 2016

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FOCUS

Christmas 2016

Message from the Editor

I hope that you enjoy your new-look Focus, and that you find something to your taste in this Christmas edition.

We know that our magazine is distributed worldwide, and it is good to know that our friends from New Zealand in particular, enjoy reading all about Wesley and its activities. We send all our friends, wherever they are, our very best wishes for Christmas and the coming year.

It is interesting to read about some of our own church family: thank you Geoff for telling us about your experiences as a Bevin Boy. If anyone else has any stories they would like to share please let me know.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition; your articles and suggestions have been very welcome.

We look forward to 2017 in the life of our church. We know there are going to be some changes in the circuit as Mark Godfrey and Roberta Topham will be leaving us to go to pastures new, although neither of them is going to be very far away. Rev. Benjamin (Ben) Clowes will be joining the Nidd Valley Circuit, looking after Pannal and Trinity, and will be our superintendent minister. We look forward to welcoming Ben and his wife Catherine in September.

Meantime enjoy the festive season.
God Bless. **Judith**

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Credits

Photographs by Judith Yeats: *Cover; p4 Gullfoss Waterfall, Iceland; p8 Candle and Samuel Johnson Dictionary; p12 Books; p14 Wedding photographs*

Photographs courtesy of Lynne Harvey: *p13 Wesley Book Club, p15 Joy and Brian.*

Photograph of Bevin Boys p16: <http://ww.staffspasttrack.org.uk/exhibit/coal/organization/bevinboys.htm>

Websites:
12 Days of Christmas p7 http://resources.woodlands.kent.sch.uk/customs/Xmas/twelvedayssong.html

Clipart: p7, <http://www.clipartkid.com/day-1-christmas-cliparts/>

Message from our Minister

A few years ago I leaned on some railings at Niagara Falls and watched the water cascading over the edge. From time to time a small boat loaded with tourists in waterproofs made its way towards the falling water, and overhead birds wheeled around.

After a while I realised I was the only person not taking photographs. Everyone else was busy with cameras and I wondered whether any of them actually saw the Falls except through the viewfinder.

This year in Llandudno I watched as a woman walked down the prom. She turned aside when she caught sight of a statue of the Mad Hatter,

stood with her back to it and, with the aid of a camera on a long pole, took a photo of herself with the carving in the background. Now it seems we don't even enjoy the sights through a view finder – we turn our backs on them!

As we come to the season of Christmas we remind ourselves that despite our failings and our sin, God hasn't turned his back on us, neither does he watch from a distance. Instead he comes to dwell in our midst. To share our experiences fully – and by living our human life, enabling us to live the life of God. Let us rejoice in Emmanuel – God with us.

Christine



Message from our Senior Stewards

Don't ask me...

My three year old granddaughter gently asked her uncle 'where does the water go at the seaside?' What would be your answer to this question about the nature of tidal flow?

The same young girl in response to my words of 'God bless you' one bedtime looked at me and said 'who is God?' What would be your answer to this question?

Throughout life we have all asked thousands of questions, some we have answered ourselves, many have been answered by others and some we have long sought and continue to seek answers!

The Archbishop of Wales preached a sermon where he said 'The job of an Archbishop is to try and explain and commend the Christian faith. If I am honest, I do not always find the Gospel easy to explain, or interpret. I find it even more difficult to live out, and people who tell me that it is all simple, easy and straightforward underestimate the difficulties that many people face in trying to understand and absorb the Gospel, even when they long to do so. Nothing is as easy and

simple as it first looks. The drumbeats of the fundamentalist approach to scripture and a simplistic approach to the life of faith do not really resonate with my own heartbeat. And the church has always interpreted and reinterpreted Scripture.'

'To many there is nothing more important than seeking a relationship with God and many find that God can best be conveyed in the language of metaphor and poetry, for we are not dealing with an object amidst other objects but with the living God himself.

However, many ask the question 'how do I forge this relationship with God?' They find there is nothing more difficult and problematic than establishing a relationship with God, for who is it who ever saw God? Whoever heard him speak? We have to live virtually the whole of our lives in the presence of an invisible and mute God.'

'But that was never a bar to anyone seeking to come into contact with Him. That is what prayer is all about.

continued p6

God isn't an object among other objects to be explored, but a mystery in whose presence one can ultimately only rest in faith, hope and prayerful silence. Since God is beyond anything which we can conceive or understand, it's only through using images, metaphors and analogies that we can begin to find a language for Him, and whatever language we use about Him is always provisional, incomplete, and inadequate.

The prophet Isaiah said 'To whom can God be compared? His thoughts are not our thoughts; his ways are not our ways.'

Maybe it's the attempt to define him – that's when the trouble begins – perhaps we shouldn't attempt to define him, because if the creature can comprehend his creator, his creator is no longer a creator.

Praying is hard work, for to be still, you have to pay

attention. It's a relationship of love, and it's more of a listening than a talking. It's waiting for God. It's opening oneself to God. Prayer is about submitting one's will to God; it's not attempting to enforce one's own will on God and It takes a lifetime and more – because He is God.'

And so at this Christmas time we give thanks for this reflection by the Archbishop and also that Wesley Chapel has been a place for many people to ask questions and receive answers and we pray that this place will continue to provide a place for questioning, reflection, response and peace.

Now back to that little girl with the answer about 'who is God?'.

**Every Blessing
Les Sudron and Christine Bunting.**

Wesley Chapel Harrogate



A Guided Tour

We have recently launched our new brochure packed with information about our chapel. If you have not already done so please pick up a copy.

It is a well known fact that whenever our front doors are open people will pop in to have a look at our 'beautiful church'. Now we can offer them a guided tour. If you see any visitors whilst you are there please offer them a copy.

The story behind the carol



There is great debate about the meaning of this carol. One theory is that it was written as a catechism song for young Catholics who were unable to practise their faith openly. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality which the children could remember.

The true love of the song refers to God

The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.

Two turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments.

Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.

The four calling (originally colley birds) were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.

The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: Prophesy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.

The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control.

The ten lords a-leaping were the ten commandments.

The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.

The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

Message from our Pastoral Secretary



Let your light shine...

'Sometimes I picture myself as a candle. I used to be a candle about eight feet tall – burning bright. Now every day I lose a little bit of me. Someday the candle will be very small, but the flame will be just as bright.'

Whether we gaze upon a large roaring open fire with flames dancing up high or a single small candle whose flickering flame fights to keep alive, the presence of this light can offer comfort, warmth, hope and a feeling of well-being to us all.

Elsewhere in this issue of Focus we read the thought that '*God can best be conveyed in the language of metaphor and poetry*'; consider then the picture of Jesus being the Light for the world.

But not only Jesus...through his teachings each one of us is

encouraged and challenged to let our own light shine throughout our lives as an example and illustration of the Love of God. And our light can be like the roaring fire or the small candle.

*'Show me how to stand for justice;
how to work for what is right,
how to challenge false assumptions,
how to walk within the light.
May I learn to share more freely
in a world so full of greed,
showing your immense compassion
by the life I choose to lead.'*

Singing the Faith 713

Every Blessing this Christmas to you and yours and thank you for the light of your life.

Christine Sudron

Advent 1955

by John Betjeman

The Advent wind begins to stir
With sea-like sounds in our Scotch fir,
It's dark at breakfast, dark at tea,
And in between we only see
Clouds hurrying across the sky
And rain-wet roads the wind blows dry
And branches bending to the gale
Against great skies all silver pale
The world seems travelling into space,
And travelling at a faster pace
Than in the leisured summer weather
When we and it sit out together,
For now we feel the world spin round
On some momentous journey bound
Journey to what? to whom? to where?
The Advent bells call out 'Prepare,
Your world is journeying to the birth
Of God made Man for us on earth.'

And how, in fact, do we prepare
The great day that waits us there -
For the twenty-fifth day of December,
The birth of Christ? For some it means
An interchange of hunting scenes
On coloured cards, And I remember

Last year I sent out twenty yards,
Laid end to end, of Christmas cards
To people that I scarcely know -
They'd sent a card to me, and so
I had to send one back. Oh dear!
Is this a form of Christmas cheer?
Or is it, which is less surprising,
My pride gone in for advertising?
The only cards that really count
Are that extremely small amount
From real friends who keep in touch
And are not rich but love us much
Some ways indeed are very odd
By which we hail the birth of God.

We raise the price of things in shops,
We give plain boxes fancy tops
And lines which traders cannot sell
Thus parcell'd go extremely well
We dole out bribes we call a present
To those to whom we must be pleasant
For business reasons. Our defence is
These bribes are charged against expenses
And bring relief in Income Tax
Enough of these unworthy cracks!
'The time draws near the birth of Christ'.
A present that cannot be priced
Given two thousand years ago
Yet if God had not given so
He still would be a distant stranger
And not the Baby in the manger.

Church Notice Bloomer

The minister will light his candle from the altar candle

The stewards will light their candles from the minister's candle

The stewards will turn and light each worshipper on the front row.

(Ed. not our church I hasten to add!)

Wesley Guild



We were all reassured on 8th September to learn from Mrs. Alex Bird, of Age UK, that "Later life matters" – bearing in mind that we are a "Youth Club for Oldies!" Alex outlined the work of Age UK and told us of the many services and benefits provided by them. She provided us all with literature and helpful advice on a wide range of financial issues as well as personal care and support for the lonely, bereaved etc. Our thanks to Philip Goodwin who, again, played the piano for us at short notice as Barbara was unable to be with us.

We held our October meeting in the Church when we celebrated a belated harvest by singing our favourite harvest hymns (which members had requested) and listening to appropriate readings. My thanks to all who donated harvest produce and then bought it back after the meeting! The magnificent sum of £60 was made which was a tremendous boost to our Guild funds and pleased Keith – our treasurer! We were delighted that Barbara was well enough to be able to play for us even though it proved to be a challenging experience for her. Following a recent recital a velvet "duster" had been left in the piano which prevented the

lid from staying up in the correct position. I am delighted to report that it did not fall on Barbara's fingers and we did not have to call on Age UK for advice on dealing with compensation! Barbara very kindly provided background music prior to and after the meeting which we all enjoyed listening to. Thank you Barbara and welcome back to the Guild. After not being able to play for us for a while it was a real baptism of fire!

In November Mrs. Judith Simpson gave a very interesting presentation on the work of Amnesty International. AI is a non-governmental organisation (launched in 1961 by Peter Benenson, a British lawyer) focused on human rights and now has many millions of members and supporters throughout the world; it is a financially independent organisation which relies on donations from its members and the public. All men are created equal yet there are millions of people worldwide who daily experience injustice on a massive scale. The trivial injustices we often feel pale into insignificance when you think of the world-wide situation!

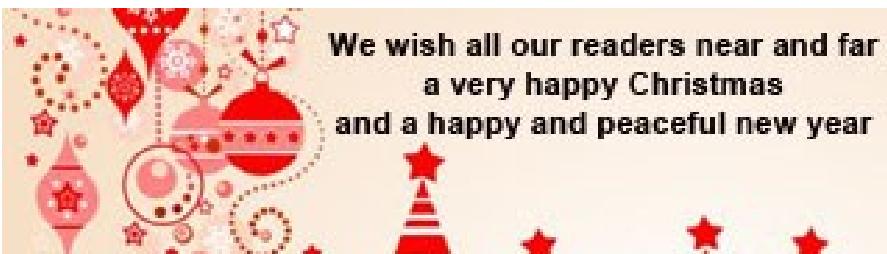
continued p11

Judith showed us a very informative film citing many great people in history, starting with Cyrus the Great, who have been pioneers for human rights. These include Mahatma Gandhi, Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela to name but a few. It was not until after the second world war that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. 48 countries voted in favour of the declaration. AI's mission is "to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression and freedom from discrimination within the context of its work to promote all human rights". Two issues of note are that AI campaigns world-wide against the death penalty and does not support those who protest violently. We all learned so much about the work of Amnesty and were very grateful to Judith for enlightening us.

I will conclude by saying a few heart-felt thank you's. First of all to Molly, our President, especially for leading us with such meaningful prayers at our meetings and for her great support of the Guild – not only at Wesley! To Helen, who not only reads our lessons but often chooses them with husband Malcolm's help. Thank you Keith for being our Chancellor of the Exchequer, to Mary, Joy, Katharine and the tea ladies who make the ever welcome brew and to all members who faithfully support our meetings. Thank you too to Barbara, our accompanist, and to Graham and Philip who have played for us in her absences. We very much enjoy our hymn singing and our accompanists do us proud. We have had some excellent attendances at the Guild this year and we are delighted to have welcomed several members from other churches in the circuit. All are welcome – please come and give us a try!

My love and best wishes to you all. I wish you every blessing for Christmas and for 2017.

Lynne Harvey



We wish all our readers near and far
a very happy Christmas
and a happy and peaceful new year

Wesley Book Club Reviews



***Hidden Lives* by Margaret Forster**

I think I am right in saying that all our members enjoyed this book. It was not a novel, rather a memoir of Forster's grandmother and mother and reflects the changes in women's lives across three generations. It provoked much nostalgia and a lively discussion. We were all disappointed that Forster did not find out what had happened to her grandmother during the first 23 years of her life and why she shunned her (illegitimate?) daughter Alice. Could more research have been done by Forster? The genealogists amongst us certainly thought so.

It is an excellent social history but posed many questions about Foster's life at university. Her husband, well known novelist and journalist Hunter Davies seemed to appear out of nowhere. Further research reveals that they met at school in Carlisle.

Some of us wanted to read

more of Foster's books, another was more interested in reading Hunter Davies' works. All agreed it was a good read.

***Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont* by Elizabeth Taylor**

We tend to choose a light read at this time of year, because we like to celebrate the season with a festive lunch, and this doesn't leave a lot of time for serious discussion. *Mrs Palfrey* was just that. Only one of our number did not enjoy it, feeling it was a little 'too near the mark'. The rest of us enjoyed reading about the lives of retired people who live in a hotel, and found their idiosyncrasies and their interactions amusing, if somewhat unkind. Mrs Palfrey's relationship with a young writer whom she passed off as her grandson was particularly humorous. It was felt that the book was well written, though some thought they would not bother to read any more of Elizabeth Taylor's novels.

Judith Yeats



Book club members preparing for the Christmas celebration.

Coming next:

Tuesday 14 February: *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* by Mary Ann Shaffer & Annie Barrows

Tuesday 11 April: *The Kashmir Shawl* by Rosie Thomas

Tuesday 13 June: *The Captain's Daughter* by Leah Fleming

(all meetings start at 2pm, usually in the foyer at Wesley)

Famous author's quote:

'The chief beauty about time
is that you cannot waste it in advance.'

The next year, the next day, the next hour are lying ready for
you,

as perfect, as unspoiled,
as if you had never wasted or misapplied
a single moment in all your life.

You can turn over a new leaf every hour
if you choose.'

Arnold Bennett

Church Family News



Congratulations to Jemma and David Bunting who were married at St. John the Baptist Church, Knaresborough on 17 September.

Several friends from Wesley went along to share in the couple's special day. Christine read a passage of scripture from 1 Corinthians. It was a very happy occasion. We all wish Jemma and David much happiness in their new life together.



Congratulations to Brian Blakey, who celebrated his 87th birthday on 2 December. This picture, with Joy, was taken at Southlands on his birthday. He shares his special day with several friends including Sue Hesketh, Rev. Shaun Swithenbank and Jenny Daly from Bilton. Belated happy birthday to you all.

Brian is always pleased to receive good wishes from the folk at Wesley.

CHRISTMAS AT WESLEY

Sunday 18 December , 10-30am, Carol Service. Your gifts for the Harrogate Homeless Project/Springboard will be welcomed at this service. Items urgently needed are coffee, sugar (they use a lot of this), squash, soap powder, socks and underpants for both male and female.

There is already a plentiful supply of razors and toothpaste, hats and gloves, so it would be most useful if you could give the items listed above.

Saturday 24 December, 6-30pm, Christmas Eve Communion Service led by Rev. Trevor Dixon.

Sunday 25 December 11am, Christmas Day Service led by Deacon David Hunt.

12-30pm Christmas Day Lunch. This will be our 32nd Christmas Day lunch. The first lunch was held in 1984. There will be a warm welcome to anyone who might otherwise be on their own at Christmas. A three course traditional Christmas lunch will be followed by some light entertainment and carol singing. Contact Philip Goodwin, 01423 563990. Transport can be arranged.

Sunday 1 January 10-30am, Covenant Service led by Rev. Christine Gillespie.

Dirty work as a Bevin Boy

Geoff Darby responded to an article in Yorkshire's 'Down Your Way' in June 2012 and had a letter published about his experiences as a Bevin Boy. See below an extract from Geoff's letter.



On 23 January 1945 I commenced as a conscript Bevin Boy to work at George Elliott's Lepton Edge Colliery - there were no baths, no canteen and no lockers. After four weeks in the haulage system I was moved to the thirty-one inches' high coalface. Being only 145 metres deep the pit was quite wet. I would catch the 5.30am bus from Huddersfield and travel in pit clothes, helmet, knee pads and clogs. We certainly came out with black

faces and hands and with our clothes black and wet. We ruined many a seat on County motor buses.

My parents' bath was ruined too and when our bathroom froze up in the winder I used the oval zinc bath on the front room floor of our Dalton home. My last day was Saturday 17 January 1948 and at last I could get rid of my pit clothes and no longer have a black face and filthy hair etc.

The regular ritual was for blackened miners to come home to the zinc bath, full of water warmed on the range by mum. Only about a third of pits had bathing facilities when Geoff was a Bevin Boy.

Christmas ads: The modern Christmas sermon

Children are opening the doors on the Advent Calendar and either finding a picture or a sweet, or maybe both. One child is reported as having said that it has felt like advent for ages. "Why?" asked a parent, "Because the Christmas ads came out ages ago." was the reply.

Two weeks isn't exactly a definition of 'ages' but the child had a fair point: the launch of the big retailers' Christmas ads has become synonymous with the start of the Christmas season.

Heart-warming, humorous, and nearly always containing a moral message, these much anticipated micro-films have become the de facto Christmas sermon by the High Priests of Retail.

At first glance, or to the cynical eye, they're little more than a shameless consumerist exploitation of the concept of giving at Christmas. But in a society where people trust retailers more than clergy or politicians, we'd do well to take a closer look at their message and meaning.

This year we have an over-stretched father who longs to be with his family, a girl (and her pet dog) who want to bounce, a sister with an annoying younger brother, and a highly efficient wife making Christmas that bit extra special. Sound familiar? That's the idea: they all reflect

back to us what it's like to be an ordinary Brit in 2016 faced with yet another Christmas.

What is fascinating is that their underlying message affirms family values and selflessness – spending time with our loved ones, having fun, feeling part of a family, making amends and, of course, eating and drinking aplenty. Clearly, these are all things that people want Christmas to be about.

You could be forgiven for wondering what they are really advertising as very few products are actually shown. But retailers are using these highly sophisticated marketing tools to meet people where they're at, to say "Hey, we know what it's like, and we can help." Unsurprisingly, those whose very existence depends on the commercialisation of Christmas are telling us that the answer is to buy more stuff!

Whatever we make of the adverts, it's encouraging that people's desire for a more meaningful, relationship-centred Christmas has been recognised and that life's struggles are acknowledged for what they are. They're a great talking point about how belonging to Christ, and his church family, bring these gifts all year round – and all without the need for a single credit card.

Siobhan O'Reilly Calthrop

Goals and unexpected glory

Most of us at Wesley know that Deacon David Hunt is a staunch AFC Bournemouth supporter. The unlikely rise of AFC Bournemouth from the depths of English football to the Premier League guided by a dynamic young manager, Eddie Howe, has captured the imagination of people around the world. The following is taken from a fascinating interview by Adrian Butcher with the club's Chaplain, Andy Rimmer. In the present situation when we are surrounded by news of allegations of child abuse in football, it seems that it is more important than ever to have a pastoral presence football clubs.

'I see myself as a pastoral, spiritual safety net,' Andy Rimmer explains. 'I am there for the players, the staff, their families and the supporters. As a chaplain, you are there to be the God person. I am not a counsellor or a psychologist. I am there to bring something of faith. I am like a dad or a friend.'

Some might question what a vicar is doing at a football club at all. Doesn't he have a church to look after? Surely those overpaid players are mollycoddled enough? God and football just don't mix, right?

Andy points out that about 75 clubs in the English game have a chaplain. It's a growing phenomenon. No one would criticise the work of, say, a prison chaplain, so why criticise work with footballers, he argues. And chaplains have been around football clubs for a long time.

'Yes, football is a bizarre and different world but if you don't have the whisper of God from a chaplain, how else will it be heard?'

'Football clubs are not brilliant people-places. They talk about being communities – but it is really a results business. So they recognise that it is good to have someone here who can look out for people.'

'Sometimes my role is to bring a bit of perspective to the football bubble. I ask them about life, relationships. As they get older and have families, they realise life is about more than just football.'

Andy is at the club once in the week and on home match days.

'I go in every Tuesday, for four hours. I am there when the players arrive for breakfast. If we have lost, I will take in some chocolates. I visit the injured and chat to them and talk to the staff. I also organise a monthly prayer meeting for the club. We just go out to a local café together.'

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Andy is at the heart of pre-match preparation on a Saturday leading five minutes prayer for staff and players 75 minutes before kick off.

'I never pray for the result, but for the game and for the guys themselves,' he says. 'I pray against injury and that the players will use their God-given talent to glorify him. I'll read a Bible verse, mention Jesus and we will have a time of reflection. There are usually five or six people there. Often most of them aren't Christians.'

Lifelong fans of the Cherries are still pinching themselves. Those of us who have seen them lose in the last minute at Rochdale, surrender at Shrewsbury or cave in on a damp night in Crawley can scarcely believe our side are in the Premier League never mind that they beat Chelsea and Manchester United last season.

When Andy joined Bournemouth in 2007 they were struggling on and off the pitch. The following season they were relegated to League 2 – and with a points deduction because they'd gone into administration. Relegation to non-league looked certain. AFC Bournemouth seemed doomed.

It was then that Eddie Howe was appointed manager, aged just 31. Against the odds, he kept the club in the league. In the years that followed, he has led them to three promotions.

Andy believes the ethos Eddie has instilled – based in part on the ideas of US basketball coach, John Wooden – has been central to the club's success.

'There is an amazing kinship at the club. It is built on the principles of hard work, character, perseverance... biblical principles really.'

Andy says no one at Bournemouth really believed they could climb higher than the Championship – a level they'd reached for only three years in their history. But, on a Monday night in April 2015, a goal by Marc Pugh set them on the road to victory against Bolton and virtually guaranteed promotion to the Premier League. Cue disbelief and joy, champagne and celebration – and worldwide media attention.

There will be a different sort of celebration at the Vitality Stadium on 6th December when players, families, staff and fans gather for the annual Carol Service. Andy hopes more than 1,500 will attend.

'I'd love as many as possible to come along,' he says. 'I love this club to pieces. It will be a great night, celebrating Christmas.'

*To read the whole interview visit
<http://www.christmashope.org/goals-and-unexpected-glory/>*

Wesley Chapel Regular Activities

Sunday Worship 10.30 am every week.
Holy Communion included in the first Sunday of the month.

Network 2-30pm alternate Mondays from October to April.

Bible Study at the home of Helen Evison, usually on the 3rd Monday of each month at 2pm. Check with Helen to confirm and for further details, 01423 870725.

Tuesday Coffee 10.00 am-12 noon every Tuesday in the foyer.

Book Club every alternate month. Contact Judith Yeats for details, 01423 506014.

Forward Together. Coffee served from 10-45am, lunch at 12 noon.

Journey Group usually on the first Thursday in every month. Contact Philip Goodwin for details, 01423 563990.

Wesley Guild monthly on Thursday afternoons during the summer months. Contact Lynne Harvey for more details, 01423 568968.

For more details of our activities see our weekly news-sheet or visit **www.wesleychapelharrogate.org.uk**.

This magazine has been brought to you by your Pastoral Visitor.

Name _____ Telephone No. _____

Remember your Pastoral Visitor is always there as a friend if needed.