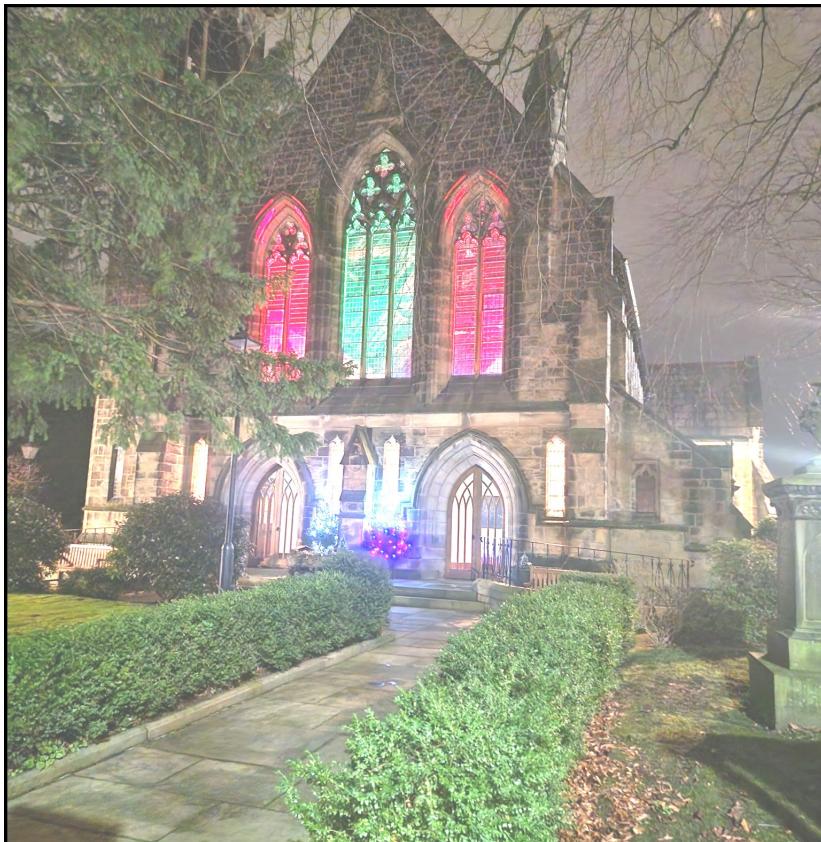


February - March 2026

Number 711

# The Messenger

The magazine of the Bridge Church, Otley



**The Bridge Church**

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH IN OTLEY

The official Magazine of the  
Bridge United Reformed Church, Otley  
Minister:- Reverend Jason McCullagh  
Telephone: 01943 465509  
Email: [jason.mccullagh@otleybridgechurch.org.uk](mailto:jason.mccullagh@otleybridgechurch.org.uk)

## **Messenger letter**

Dear Friends,

As the celebration of Christmas fades and our Epiphany journey draws to a close, we embark on the season of Lent. If taken seriously, this is a difficult season, a time of wilderness and challenge, a time of reflection, repentance, and spiritual preparation that helps us to get ready to make our Holy Week pilgrimage and then celebrate Easter.

It is all too easy to enjoy the moments of celebration and skip over the time of self-examination, but the Church has long encouraged Christians to make this journey to remember the time Jesus spent in the wilderness testing his call. We are invited to give something up for Lent, not to help us lose weight or to save money, but to focus our minds and our hearts on the journey. We are invited to go without something so that when we do we think about why we are doing this. In recent years there has been a move towards taking things up in Lent, doing extra things, but the underlying reason is the same – do this to think about the journey. Both going without and taking something up are good ways to observe the season of Lent as long as we are focused on the journey, as long as we are focused on Jesus!

The late pope, Francis, reflecting on the Lenten pilgrimage, suggested we do both:

Fast from hurting words and say kind words.

Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.

Fast from anger and be filled with patience.

Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.  
Fast from worries and have trust in God.  
Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.  
Fast from pressures and be prayerful.  
Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.  
Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.  
Fast from grudges and be reconciled.  
Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

As we journey through Lent, and prepare for Holy Week and Easter, these seem to me to be good things to give up and good things to take on so that the journey we make is focused on Jesus!

With love,

Jason



## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Please note that the next edition is not due for publication until after Easter. We would ask that you pay particular attention to the preaching plan for details of services with Easter week.

**THE BRIDGE CHURCH**  
**PREACHING PLAN**  
**15<sup>th</sup> February – 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February – Sixth Sunday in Epiphany**

Jason is preaching elsewhere in the Synod

The Service will be conducted by Mrs Sheila Ackerman

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February – First Sunday in Lent**

The Service is conducted by the Reverend Joseph Amoah

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March – Second Sunday in Lent**

**Sacrament of Holy Communion**

Jason is on holiday.

The Service will be conducted by the Reverend Michael Mewis

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March – Third Sunday in Lent**

**Parade Service**

The Reverend Jason McCullagh

John 4. 5-42

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March – Fourth Sunday in Lent**  
**Mothering Sunday and Sacrament of Baptism**

The Reverend Jason McCullagh

Colossians 3. 12-17

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March – Passion Sunday**

**Taste and See**

The Reverend Jason McCullagh

Mark 10. 13-16

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March – Palm Sunday**

10:30am

Jason is leading Junior Church.

The Service will be conducted by the Reverend Alison Micklem.

6pm

Evening Communion

The Reverend Jason McCullagh

Matthew 21. 1-11

## **Holy Week Services**

**Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March** – Meditation – 12 Noon

**Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March** – Meditation – 7pm

**Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April** – Meditation – 12 Noon

**Maundy Thursday** – Tenebrae – 8pm

**Good Friday** – Meditation – 10:30am

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April – Easter Sunday**

**Sacrament of Holy Communion**

The Reverend Jason McCullagh

Matthew 28. 1-10

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April – Second Sunday of Easter**

The Reverend Jason McCullagh

### **MINISTER'S REGISTER**

**5<sup>th</sup> October 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026**

### **BAPTISMS**

30<sup>th</sup> November      Eden James Davies

### **WEDDINGS**

25<sup>th</sup> October      Mr David Sheret and Mr Philip Sykes

### **FUNERALS**

10<sup>th</sup> October      Miss Pamela Bradley Rawdon Crematorium

28<sup>th</sup> November      Mr Raymond Joule      The Bridge Church

4<sup>th</sup> December      Mr Andrew Thorpe      The Bridge Church & Rawdon Crematorium

6<sup>th</sup> December      Mr Adam Barnes      The Bridge Church

15<sup>th</sup> December      Mrs Pauline Pickard Lawnswood Crematorium

27<sup>th</sup> January      Mrs Beryl Glavin      The Bridge Church

30<sup>th</sup> January      Mrs Ann Smith      The Bridge Church

## BRIDGE CHURCH IN NUMBERS

Each year, the Church Secretary submits the church's statistics to the United Reformed Church – the numbers in the table below are the figures submitted for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025 and how they compare to previous years.

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Total number of church members (at 31 <sup>st</sup> December)	104	104	103	107	114
Average attendance at Sunday morning worship	98	98	95	92	71
Average attendance at Mid-week Communion	20	17	15	15	-
Average attendance at Messy Church (children in attendance)	54	48	52	-	-
Average attendance at Messy Church (families in attendance)	34	26	28	-	-
Number of serving Elders	15	14	15	14	14
Number of non-serving Elders	17	16	18	18	16
Number of Baptisms conducted at the Bridge Church	5	5	2	3	3
Number of weddings conducted at the Bridge Church	1	0	4	1	2
Number of funeral services held at the Bridge Church	8	16	17	19	10
Number of memorial services held at the Bridge Church	0	0	0	1	3
Number of followers of Bridge Church Facebook page	905	831	756	-	-

## NEW MEMBER

Following the decision at the Church Meeting we were delighted to welcome Jenny Turner into membership of the Bridge Church. This took place at our service on 7th December.

Jenny is pictured with Jason, John and Margaret (who will be Jenny's elder).



**We have previously had commentary on books of the New Testament by Canon Paul Hardingham - he has also done similar articles about Old Testament books ...**

## **What's the Big Idea? An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament: Job**

*'Why does God allow suffering?'* This is a frequently asked question of Christians, because we believe in a God who is both good and powerful and it is explored in the book of Job. This book is part of the wisdom literature, along with Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Job was both wealthy and righteous, yet he experienced catastrophic suffering, losing all his wealth, children and health. This is portrayed as a result of Satan's challenge to God, testing whether Job's devotion to God was dependent on his circumstances or not.

The main body of the book (3:1-42:6) consists of dialogues between Job, his friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) and God. Job and his friends assume that God is almighty and just, and that no human being is wholly innocent. In the three cycles of speeches they wrestle with the reasons for Job's suffering, remembering his morally upright character.

Finally, all are silenced by God, as He speaks Himself (chs 38-42). He points out that Job knows very little about the universe when he reflects on God's power. Job confesses his lack of understanding and weakness, but then goes on to confess his confidence and trust in God. This puts suffering in a right perspective. Job is not condemned, and the book ends with the restoration of his family and possessions.

The importance of this book is that it realistically addresses the painful questions of life, without offering simplistic answers. It focuses on *how* we should respond to suffering, rather than on *why* God allows suffering: '*Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.*' (1:21)

# News of the Family

## News of the Family

### **Baptisms**

It was good to welcome two families who brought their little ones for Baptism recently and especially so as both go to Toddlers at the Bridge Church, and also to our Messy Church.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2025, Eden James Davies was baptised. Eden is the son of Chris and Isobel Davies. And on the 21st of December 2025 Gabriel Jerez Allen was baptised. Gabriel is the son of Rozeena Allen and baby brother to Betsy. It was good to see so many of their friends and family in church to support both Eden and Gabriel on their special days.

### **Uniformed Organisations News**

As we found out at the Christmas Gift Service, Christine Paterson has now retired as Beaver Leader after 13 years of service. There were four or five Beavers attending when Christine, who was known Sparrow, took over. When she retired there was a full colony, reflecting the hard work and dedication that she had given. Thank you, Christine, we hope you enjoy your well-earned retirement.



Noah Dockar has just found out that following a full day's assessment in York back in September, he has been accepted to go to the World Scout Jamboree to be held in Poland in 2027. Noah will be going as an International Service Team member. We look forward to hearing more from Noah in due course.

Do please pass on any good news you would like to share to one of the Pastoral Elders.

Thank you,

Margaret Armitage.



Dear Friends

I would like to say a huge thank you for all the love and support I have received following the death of my husband, Roger.

I am very grateful for all the cards, flowers and visits I have received and all the support with Roger's funeral, leading up to it and on the day.

Thank you again

Love from

Hilda Barham

### **Where are the young ones!**

When talking about our church, we often say that it would be good if we could bring more young people into our congregation, and perhaps, in the future, we might find a solution for that. Maybe things need to change and need some future discussions.

But have we ever thought why there should be so many older people filling our pews each Sunday? Well, maybe it's because we older ones have lived for a good many years. We've all lived through some happy times, some fulfilling times, but we've also lived through some bad times - we've had disappointments, we've made mistakes, known periods of self-doubt and lost loved ones.

It is often through times of darkness that we come to realise our need of God, the need to reach out and receive into our lives the One who can always help us, who will accept us for who we are, and who will carry us through the bad times. It is these ones whom we mostly see in our church today. These too were once young and maybe thought little about needing God. Those who are young now will perhaps one day realise their need and begin to fill these same pews, ready to be welcomed in as part of God's family.

**Liz Wilkinson**

## Women's Meeting

**On Monday 1<sup>st</sup> December**, we started our Christmas theme as Margaret Crossfield demonstrated how to make her seasonal posies. Using red and white roses, peach coloured spray carnations and various greenery from her garden Margaret constructed them before our very eyes! Finally they were wrapped in cellophane and some lucky people won them in the raffle that followed. A lovely start to the Christmas season!

We also had an appropriate hymn and a prayer and of course celebrated birthdays! This was followed by tea and biscuits, and it was lovely on a soggy afternoon to have our afternoon brightened up.

**On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December** we held our last meeting of the year and were entertained by the 'Ladies Please choir led by Dorrie Clark and accompanied by Mike. Resplendent with their colourful sequined scarves, they sung a selection of songs, mainly with a Christmas theme. We were also asked to join in some of the carols. Their interpretation of 'The First Nowell' was amazing!

There were songs originally sung by Mel Torme and Johnney Mathis, songs which brought back memories for many of us. Mike played a solo on the piano , his version of 'God Rest ye Merry Gentlemen' made the piano talk. Jason mentioned his love for descants, which the choir sung so wonderfully. The Christmas theme followed with tea and mince pies. A happy joyful afternoon!

**On Monday 5<sup>rd</sup> January**, we held our first meeting of the new year which was led by Mirella. The title of her talk was 'Whatever Next', which she explained that she did not know what it would consist of - but that title would suffice! The meeting started with a couple of hymns and a prayer.

Mirella then went on to discuss the religious meaning of 'A Partridge in a Pear Tree'. She then told us about conversations that she had had with taxi drivers who took her to and from St James Hospital—they were mainly muslims apart from one who is Irish who only talks about cars! The others talk about many topics such as arranged marriages , their take on Christmas and how they look after

elderly members of their families. They also talked about how mothers have a large say on their life long decisions.

One particular driver insists on taking Mirella for drinks and food on the way there, sometimes when she doesn't feel like a spicy kebab! It was quite a revealing and entertaining talk enjoyed by all. The tea and biscuits were very welcome on a frosty day!

**On Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January** our meeting was led by Jason and after the usual hymn and prayer we then celebrated the birthdays, which happened to be our secretary and treasurer, Sylvia and Carol! Jason then introduced himself as the speaker for the day.

The title of his talk was 'A Summer in Chicago', which was good to brighten up what was a dark and dismal day. Jason has visited Chicago many times, starting in 2007, and it is obviously a favourite of his. He was due to go back in 2021 as an exchange with the minister of Western Springs First Congregational Church - but of course COVID struck which put paid to that! Eventually in 2023 it actually happened and Rich came here and Jason ventured to Chicago.

Chicago has many skyscrapers, the Sears Tower, was once the tallest in the world! Chicago is on the shores of Lake Michigan, and there is lots of water around. Jason stayed with friends on the 91<sup>st</sup> floor, wonderful views from his bedroom. He stayed at Rich's house when he was ministering at Western Springs church.

It was a very hot and in summer they often worship outside. Western Springs itself is of a similar size to Otley in population and the people were very friendly. I am sure that Jason will return one day, but probably when a new president is in residence!

We then had tea and biscuits and chocolate treats made by Sylvia's daughter, Ruth—they were delicious!

**Pam Bradley**



In September we had Mike Watson and his group of Ukulele players and singers. This was a n 'all our yesterdays' programme with music from the 40s through to the 80s. It was very much a singalong performance.

The October meeting was a talk by David Alred on the Washburn Valley. Being relatively new to this part of Yorkshire this was particularly interesting to Mike and myself. David is a very good photographer and is very knowledgeable about the local wildlife so the talk was well received by us all.

At the November meeting Sarah Ward gave a talk about 'Family Language Adventures Abroad', Sarah is a very well-travelled lady who likes to learn different languages by living amongst local people. She has certainly had a lot of adventures as a young woman - some quite scary but fascinating.

In December we had a visit from the Prince Henry's Senior Choir. We were assured by the teacher that they had not had much time to put a programme together (it being a busy time of year for the students) but it was a wonderful performance. They sang mostly Christmas music and some of the students had done their own arrangements, one or two played instruments making the morning memorable. The students are very enthusiastic about their music and the result is a professional performance. They certainly seem to like coming to sing for us.

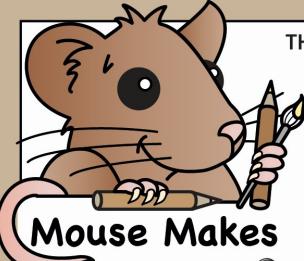
In January Denise Adlard came to speak on 'The Brontes of Howarth' describing the social conditions at that time and 'how Patrick met his wife Maria'.

#### CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH 2025

This is a big event to organise and prepare for, but it is always worth all the effort. We started planning at the beginning of October, first with a meeting with Jason to decide, using our experience from last Christmas, how to make it as good again as it was last year. Then writing copious lists and collecting as much as possible in advance. The shopping for supplies starts in November and we order and collect the fresh supplies closer to the day when we have the final numbers.

We put a sign up list in church for anyone wanting to attend. Then

# Young Peoples Pages



**THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS**

After Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan where did the Holy Spirit lead him to? v1

How many days was Jesus being tempted by the devil? v2

What did Jesus eat? v2

What did the devil tempt Jesus to turn a stone into? What did Jesus say? v3-4

What did the devil offer Jesus if He worshipped him? What did Jesus say? v7-8

What did the devil ask Jesus to do? What did Jesus say? v9

**SECOND TEMPTATION**  
THE DEVIL SAID:  
"I will give you power and wealth if you worship me."

**JESUS REPLIED:**  
"Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him."

Read Deuteronomy 6:13

**WE LEARN:**  
Put God first  
Worship only Him.

**FORTY DAYS** **SON** **KLORDNH**

**DOWN** **NONWORSHIP**

**TESTWORL** **DLTUNB**

**LVTEMPTATION** **ONGR**

**EIAMJESUS** **FNGDE**

**NLKPD** **DESERTEROA**

**THOLYSPIRITY** **MD**

**IMJERUSALEM** **FSJ**

**WILDERNESS** **JUMP**

JESUS • BAPTISED • RIVER • JORDAN • HOLY SPIRIT • LED WILDERNESS • DESERT • FORTY DAYS • HUNGRY • DEVIL TEMPTATION • STONE • BREAD • WRITTEN • SON • WORLD KINGDOMS • GLORY • WORSHIP • SERVE • GOD • HIGH JERUSALEM • TEMPLE • SON • JUMP • DOWN • LIFT • FOOT • LORD • TEST • LENT

**FIRST TEMPTATION**  
THE DEVIL SAID:  
"If you are God's Son order this stone to turn into bread."

**JESUS REPLIED:**  
"Man shall not live on bread alone."

Read Deuteronomy 8:3

**WE LEARN:**  
Read the Bible  
Learn God's word.

**SECOND TEMPTATION**  
THE DEVIL SAID:  
"I will give you power and wealth if you worship me."

**JESUS REPLIED:**  
"Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him."

Read Deuteronomy 6:13

**WE LEARN:**  
Put God first  
Worship only Him.

**THIRD TEMPTATION**  
THE DEVIL SAID:  
"If you are God's Son throw yourself down, the scriptures say God will take care of you."

**JESUS REPLIED:**  
"Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Read Deuteronomy 6:16

**WE LEARN:**  
God cares, trust  
Him do not test Him.

# Bible Bite

It can be read in the Bible in  
1 Samuel 2:11-17, 22-25, 3:1-21

## A short story from the Bible

As soon as he was old enough to leave his parents, Samuel went to live at God's temple in Shiloh, with the priest, Eli...

Eli's sons were also priests, but they helped themselves to what people had brought to give to God.



Eli talked to them about it. They ignored him.



One night, after everyone had gone to bed, Samuel heard someone calling him.



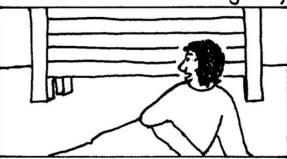
He thought it was Eli, so he ran to him.



The third time, Eli knew it must be God calling Samuel.



God called Samuel again,



and Samuel answered as he had been told.



The next morning, Eli demanded to be told what God had said.



Samuel was afraid, but he told him...

He is God. He will deal with us as is right.



God continued to talk to Samuel. He became known throughout Israel.



# The Big Bash!



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS

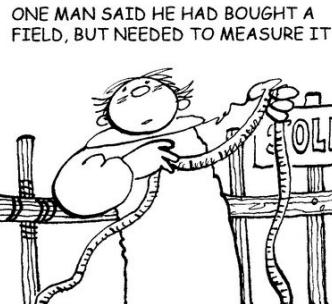


ONE STORY WAS ABOUT A RICH MAN WHO DECIDED TO HAVE A PARTY

HE SENT OUT LOTS OF INVITATIONS

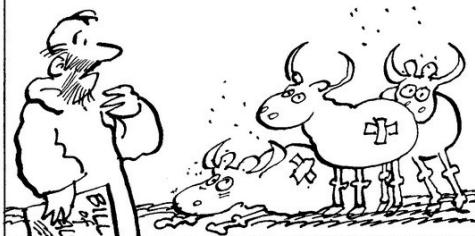


BUT PEOPLE STARTED MAKING EXCUSES



ONE MAN SAID HE HAD BOUGHT A FIELD, BUT NEEDED TO MEASURE IT

ANOTHER MAN SAID HE NEEDED TO TEST DRIVE THE OXEN HE HAS JUST PAID FOR

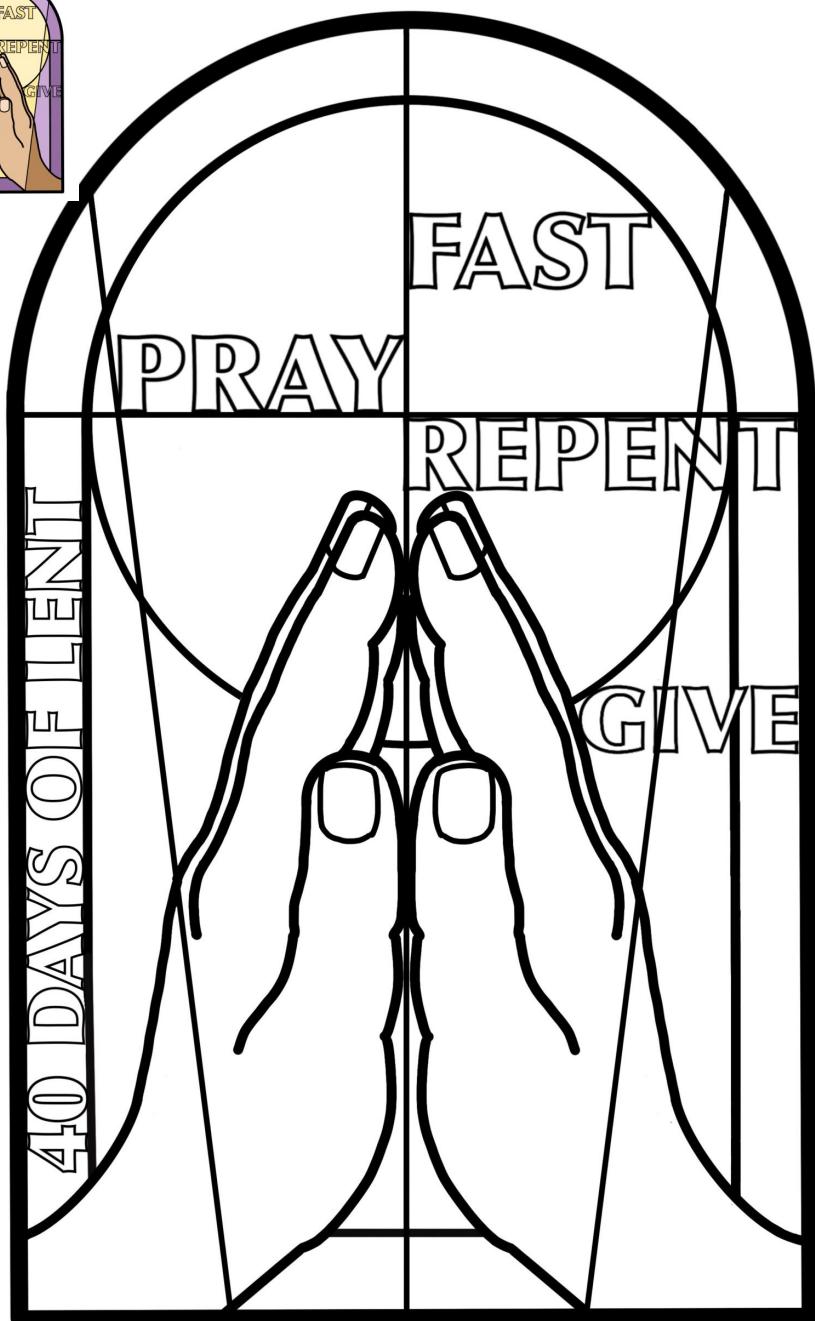


ANOTHER MAN SAID HE HAD JUST GOT MARRIED - AND HIS WIFE WOULDN'T LET HIM OUT!

SO THE RICH MAN INVITED ALL THE POOR AND NEEDY INSTEAD.



THE PARABLE MEANS WE SHOULDN'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR NOT FOLLOWING JESUS.



## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHILDRENS AND FAMILIES WORKER

"Thank you for such a warm welcome to my new role in the Church. It's a joy to serve alongside you as the new Children and Families Support Worker. I'm excited to see which way God leads us over the coming months. I'm also encouraged by the bible verse Joel1:3 "Tell our children! Let it be told to our grandchildren and their children too". Joel is encouraging the children of Isreal that there are good times coming - something I always need to remember!! There are so many generations represented by the Bridge and prayers for our loved ones and the wider community to know Jesus are always heard and never wasted.



Please join me in praying for the children and families we encounter:

Lord, we pray for every child and family who walks through our doors each week. May they experience Your immense love and feel that they belong and find their spiritual home with us. Guide them, protect them, and draw them closer to You, for your glory – Amen

Thank you again for your friendly welcome – I'll update you more fully when we know more clearly the decisions made about any new work I'll do alongside existing groups – with love - Ailsa □"

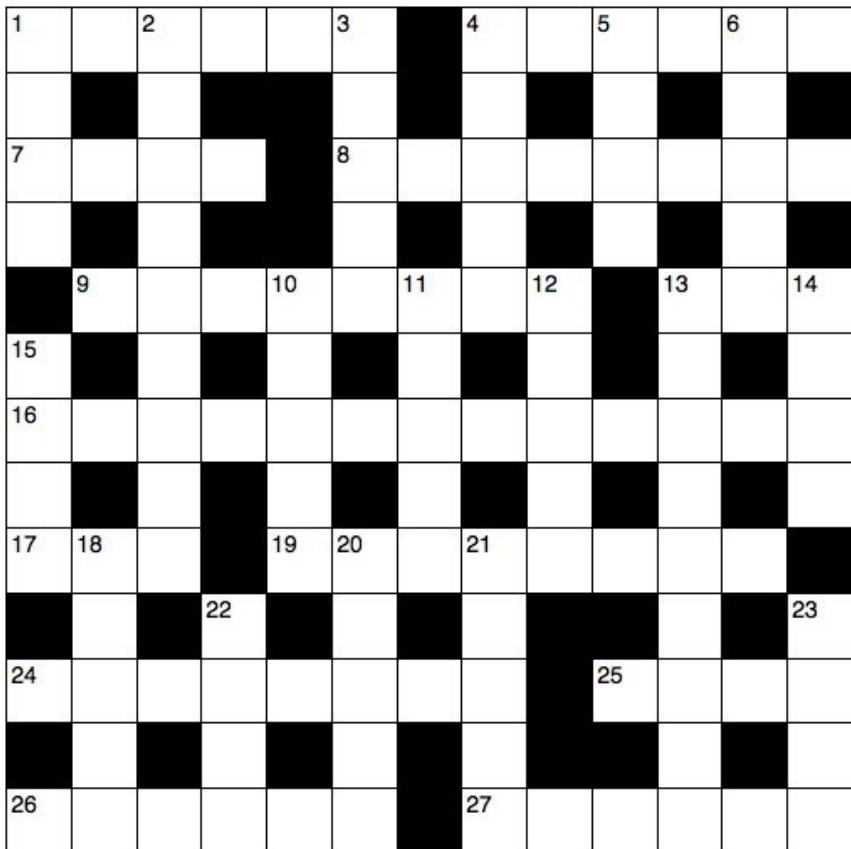
Ailsa Cummins

### **NEXT MESSENGER**

Material for the next edition of the Messenger should be in the hands of the Editor by Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> March and will be available for collection on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2026

If possible, please send by e-mail to:

**[alan.anslow@otleybridgechurch.org.uk](mailto:alan.anslow@otleybridgechurch.org.uk)**



## Across

- 1 'If you love those who love you, what — is that to you?' (Luke 6:32) (6)
- 4 'They threw the ship's — overboard' (Acts 27:19) (6)
- 7 The first murderer (Genesis 4:8) (4)
- 8 He was the head Levite in charge of the singing when the ark of God was brought back to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:22) (8)
- 9 Samson was noted for this (Judges 16:6) (8)
- 13 Solicit money or food from passers by (Acts 3:2) (3)
- 16 What William Booth's Christian Mission became in 1878 (9,4)

17 Alliance of Religions and Conservation (1,1,1)  
19 'I will praise your name for ever and ever. — — I will  
praise you' (Psalm 145:1-2) (5,3)  
24 Simon had (anag.) (8)  
25 Desperate (Deuteronomy 28:48) (4)  
26 Elisha witnessed the boy he was seeking to resuscitate do  
this seven times before opening his eyes (2 Kings 4:35) (6)  
27 The belly and thighs of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's  
dream were made of this (Daniel 2:32) (6)

## **Down**

1 'Before the — crows, you will disown me three  
times' (Matthew 26:75) (4)  
2 Relating to the books of the Bible between Acts and Reve-  
lation (9)  
3 'They have — the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know  
where they have put him!' (John 20:2) (5)  
4 Belief (5)  
5 'Take the following fine spices: ... 250 shekels of fragrant  
— ' (Exodus 30:23) (4)  
6 'Do not — Jerusalem, but wait for the gift' (Acts 1:4) (5)  
10 A seer (anag.) (5)  
11 'Even there your hand will — me' (Psalm 139:10) (5)  
12 The wild variety was part of John the Baptist's diet (Mark  
1:6) (5)  
13 A non-Greek speaker who was looked down on by civilized  
people (Colossians 3:11) (9)  
14 Famous 1950s musical whose characters included mem-  
bers of  
16 Across, — and Dolls (4)  
15 The province from which Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1  
Corinthians 16:19) (4)  
18 'He was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a  
measuring — — his hand' (Ezekiel 40:3) (3,2)  
20 'Today, if you hear his — , do not harden your hearts as  
you did in the rebellion' (Hebrews 3:15) (5)  
21 The Jericho prostitute who hid two Israelite spies on the  
roof of her house (Hebrews 11:31) (5)  
22 'And now these three remain: faith, — and love. But the  
greatest of these is love' (1 Corinthians 13:13) (4)  
23 'God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it  
to an end' (Daniel 5:26) (4)

## BRIDGE CHURCH – LENT CHALLENGE

The poster is orange and white with a blue box containing the donation list. It features a photo of a man and a woman smiling at the top. The Shine logo is in the top left corner. The text is in a sans-serif font.

*The Bridge Church are again supporting the Shine Food Bank in the West Bowling area of Bradford.*

*We are asking, once again, for members and friends to collect an item per day during Lent, which starts on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February and to bring your goods to church.*

*Please see the list of items that are required most by the Shine team.*

*Shine operate from St Stephen's Church in West Bowling and we have built up a good relationship over the past five years, through our Lent Challenge.*

### **BIBLE STUDY**

This Spring, Jason will offer a lecture course exploring The Episcopal Bishop of Washington, Mariann Edgar Budde's, book 'How we learn to be brave'.

The dates are as follows Tuesdays at 2.30pm or Wednesday at 7.30 pm:

**Session One:** Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March or Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March

**Session Two:** Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March and Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March

**Session Three:** Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March and Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March

**Session Four:** Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April and Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April

**Session Five:** Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April and Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April

**Session Six:** Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April and Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April

**Session Seven:** Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May and Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May

## **N.O.W. MISSION AND CARE GROUP**

When, towards the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the United Reformed Church voted in favour of abolishing District Councils Synods and were invited to reimagine how churches could work together. The Yorkshire Synod created Mission and Care Groups.

Our Mission and Care Group has recently decided to change its name to the N.O.W. Mission and Care Group – the Nidd, Ouse and Wharfe. The Group consists of eight churches: The Bridge; Salem; Dacre; Bilton Grange, Harrogate; Knaresborough, West Park, Harrogate; St Paul's, Harrogate; and St Columba's, York.

The purpose of this group is to deepen the relationships between the churches in our area. Currently I serve this group as Convener and John Eveleigh serves as Secretary. Gill Chapman sits on the Pastoral Committee as the Synod Pastoral Elder to these churches.

Recently, we have completed our plan for events in 2026. Each event is designed to help us share together; some seek to develop our faith, some allow us to socialise, some invite us to worship, and others to discuss issues relevant to our churches. These meetings are open to every member of the eight United Reformed Churches who make up this Mission and Care Group. So, when you see these events advertised, the invitation is for you!

### **Jason**

### **Programme for 2026.**

Jan 29th (Thurs) 10.30am	- <b>M &amp; C Group Meeting</b> - St Paul's, Harrogate (Centenary Room).
Feb 14th (Sat) afternoon	- <b>Social Afternoon</b> - The Bridge Church, Otley.
Apr 25th (Sat) 10.30 - 15.00	- <b>NOW Conference</b> - Bilton Grange, Harrogate.
May 12th (Tues) 7pm	- <b>M &amp; C Group Meeting</b> - Dacre
July 12th (Sun) 2.30pm	- <b>Joint M &amp; C Group service</b> - West Park, Harrogate
Aug 14th (Fri) Noon	- <b>Ministers/Secretaries/Treasurers Lunch</b> - St Columba's, York.
Sept 15th (Tues) 7pm	- <b>M &amp; C Group Meeting</b> - Salem URC Burley in Wharfedale.
Nov 19th (Thurs) 10.30am	- <b>M &amp; C Group Meeting</b> - Knaresborough URC.
Early December	- <b>M &amp; C Group Christmas Dinner</b> - TBA

## **COMMITMENT FOR LIFE & THE BRIDGE CHURCH**

For well over thirty years the Bridge Church has been supporting projects in Zimbabwe (like the one featured here) through our contributions to Commitment for Life.

This year's Commitment for Life Sunday will be on Palm Sunday, Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March. A few weeks before then you will receive an envelope, and you are asked to make a contribution for this year's appeal, please bring your envelope on Palm Sunday with your donation. Last year we raised a fantastic £1417.59. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Bridge Church'.

There are also some collecting boxes still available if you are able to put your loose change in a box, and bring that along on Palm Sunday too.

### **Feature – shoemaking in Zimbabwe Together we walk: a fairer future starts with us**

With support from Commitment for Life, Chipo received training in leather work. She also received training in leadership and business skills. This gave her renewed confidence as well as a diversified income.

Mornings are busy for Chipo. She helps her daughter, Perfect, get ready for school that is situated a few miles down a dusty road.

'When I made some sandals for my husband, school shoes for my daughter, and a handbag for my mother, I felt so happy,' said Chipo, 'I saw this goat and bought it with money from my leatherwork. I am happy that it is me who made the shoes which my daughter puts on.'

Stories of changed lives are a blessing and why we choose to commit to justice.



# faith *Alive!*

**FAITH ALIVE AND ACTIVE**  
**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March at 7pm**

**BARRY MILLER**  
**'The Assisted Dying Dilemma'**

As Parliament debates the 'Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill' our Faith Alive and Active session will look at the various challenges.

*A meal is served before the meeting (please sign up if you would like a meal) the talk and discussion will commence at approximately 7.45pm.*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February**

**6.30pm - Meal (please sign up)**

**7.15pm - Worship in the Sanctuary**

**7.45pm - AGM**

## CROSSWORD SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1, Credit. 4, Tackie. 7, Cain. 8, Kenaniah. 9, Strenght. 13, Beg. 16, Salvation Army. 17, AR.C. 19, Every day. 24, Admonish. 25, Drie. 26, Sneez. 27, Bronze. 28, DOWN: 1, Cock. 2, Epistolic. 3, Taken. 4, Tenet. 5, Can. 6, Leave. 10, Erase. 11, Guid. 12, Honey. 13, Barbarian. 14, Guys. 15, Asia. 18, Rod in. 20, Voice. 21, Rahab. 22, Hope. 23, Men.

## **GETTING TO KNOW .... MARGARET THOMPSON**

### **What first brought you to the Bridge Church?**

I came to The Bridge as I am URC in my heart! I have known of The Bridge Church all my life. I came to Young Congregationalists' meetings here more years ago than I care to remember. I was at school with the late Sheena Beadle. More recently, I moved back to Otley, and although I tried other places of worship the URC drew me back.



### **Can you tell us something about your faith journey?**

My faith journey has been lifelong. My grandfather was a missionary in the Gilbert and Ellis Isles, in the South Pacific Island of Niue. Service and faith have been my upbringing. I served as Church Secretary in vacancy and in that capacity as well as leading worship, I baptised my grandson, married my son and conducted many funerals. Each and every deed a joy and privilege. I had a break about 20 years ago when church life got a bit much but I'm glad to be back.

### **What is your favourite hymn and why?**

My favourite hymn, currently, is I the Lord of sea and sky. Here I am Lord. Is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night...But I reserved the right to change my mind!

### **How would you like to see the Bridge Church develop?**

I am in awe of all that is happening at The Bridge. I felt loved and belonging very early on. Thank you. I am deeply aware that Jason has a heavy load and I would maybe like to see more lay people involved in worship. Leading prayers as well as reading.

### **What can you tell us about your working career?**

My training was as a teacher. It is engraved on my forehead as it is with many of us. I need to resist the urge to tell

everyone how to do things my way! I started in Seacroft, then moved to a small Headingley Independent school which I had attended as a child. However, I only worked full time in school for a short time as sharing of caring responsibilities fell to me. I had a handicapped brother who died just last year. In order to help my mother with his care I did tutoring at home which had a degree of flexibility about it.

### **What hobbies do you have?**

Sadly, I seem to have no worthwhile hobbies being useless at sport and even worst at handicrafts. I think I would say that the church was a hobby insomuch as it consumed my spare time - Junior Church, Am Drams. I also was a Brownie leader. And Church Secretary.

### **Where is your favourite place in this country?**

My favourite place in this country is Hornsea where we have static caravan which we visit each week. Or is it Spurn Point. Can I have 2?

### **Where in the world would you like to visit?**

We have been fortunate to have travelled the world in the years after my husband retired. The South Seas being a priority! But we never managed the Banff to Vancouver railroad. Nor will now.

### **If you could invite 3 people to dinner (dead or alive) who would they be and why?**

If I could invite 3 people to dinner, they would have to have low expectations as I am not a dinner party cook. I'd like to meet Barack Obama and ask him why he gave up so easily. And Donald Trump to ask him what his definition of peace really looks like. And of course, Paul McCartney. To ladies of my age no explanation needed.

## CHRISTMAS EVENTS ROUND UP



Gift Service



Bridge Café Christmas Party



Sunday Singers  
'On Tour' at  
Costa Yeadon



Miniature Nativity  
in the grounds



Christmas  
Day Dinner



Carols by  
Candlelight



Brass Band Concert

## **CHURCH DIARY - FEBRUARY—MARCH 2026**

### **Weekly events**

***The Bridge Cafe - Every Thursday at 2p.m.***

***Parents & Toddlers - Every Thursday and Friday at 9.30 a.m.***

***Quiet Communion - Every Wednesday at 10 a.m.***

### **Regular Events**

#### ***Women's Meeting***

February 16<sup>th</sup> - Anchorage to Banff by Road, Sea and Rail - Anne Howard.

March 2<sup>nd</sup> - Newall, Otley's Suburb, A look back in time -Andrew Howard.

March 16<sup>th</sup> - A Bee in my bonnet - all about Bees - Helen Cox

March 30<sup>th</sup> - Air Ambulance—a five year update.

***Food and Friends 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month at 10.30 a.m.***

March 4<sup>th</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup>.

***Supper Club—3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month at 7.30 p.m.***

February 19<sup>th</sup> - The Mobile Police Museum - David Hardcastle.

March 19<sup>th</sup> - Dei Goes to War - Alun Pugh.

***Strictly Social 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month at 7 pm***

February 26<sup>th</sup> - Cheese and Wine Evening.

***Singing for Fun - alternate Mondays at 7.30 p.m.***

9<sup>th</sup> February, 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 13<sup>th</sup> April

***Messy Church - 28<sup>th</sup> March***

**The Bridge United Reformed Church  
Bridge Street  
Otley, West Yorkshire, LS21 1RW  
[www.otleybridgechurch.org.uk](http://www.otleybridgechurch.org.uk)**

**Secretary**

John Eveleigh  
Telephone 07988 802700  
[secretary@otleybridgechurch.org.uk](mailto:secretary@otleybridgechurch.org.uk)

**Treasurer**

Alison Anslow  
Telephone 0113 281 7035

**Magazine Editors**

Alan and Alison Anslow  
Telephone 07956550621 (Alan)  
[alan.anslow@otleybridgechurch.org.uk](mailto:alan.anslow@otleybridgechurch.org.uk)

**Church Publicity and Website Editor**

Colin Whitaker  
Telephone 07941 234849

**Pastoral Elders**

Margaret Armitage - 01943 878062  
Tina Johnson - 01943 462540  
Christine Paterson - 01943 467159

**Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators**

Alison Anslow and Colin Whitaker  
(contact details above)

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**@otley\_urc**