

THE



Gwent Hills and Vales
Methodist Circuit

INE

Winter 2023 – 2024

A SPECIAL JIGSAW

"There's a piece missing!"

The space where Rudolph's nose should have been was left empty. Matt turned the box upside down, searched on the floor, under the table and sofa, but nothing. He scanned the picture, feeling sad and frustrated, remembering how he usually felt when placing the last jigsaw puzzle piece – suddenly, the scene came to life, it was complete. But this one would always be *in*complete. He shrugged, whispering, "Only people who are passionate about jigsaws would understand the importance of the last piece."

Matt had a jigsaw on the go most of the year, and they would be seasonal – one for spring, summer, autumn and winter. With this latest, unfinished jigsaw staring up at him, he decided to go out and get some fresh air. It was a foggy winter day, so he wrapped up warmly. Although it was mid-afternoon, the cars all had their lights on, to penetrate the mist.

Catching the bus to town, Matt found a warm space on board, well lit and full of chatty people. Obviously, some travelled on this same bus every week, as they called out to each other while boarding. The windows of the bus were steamed up, so Matt used the arm of his coat to see out. Like dolls-houses, the homes flashed by – windows with Christmas trees, candles, stars; people stretching off stepladders to attach decorations to light fittings. Outside, inflatable

Revd Steve Boxall

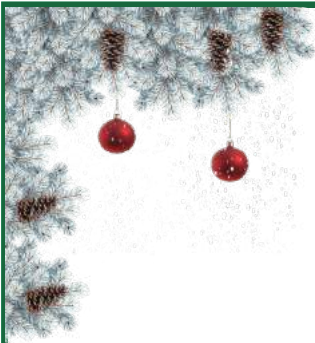
Santas bobbed back and forth, while reindeer pranced in front of sleighs. In one garden there was a large inflatable nativity scene, all lit up, and even though it flashed by, the image stayed with Matt.

The bus bounced along until there was only darkness outside. Matt was staring at his image reflected in the window. He noticed he was frowning, "*Incomplete jigsaw, incomplete Christmas.*" Then, remembering the nativity scene in the garden, a question: "*Why are there so few nativity jigsaws available? You find Santa and his sleigh, Scotty dogs on sofas, presents under Christmas trees, snow-covered villages, but not many nativity scenes.*"

Matt was still reflecting on this when the bus pulled into town. He felt the chill as he alighted and, in the fog, was drawn to the lights in the windows, particularly the charity shop, where he bought most of his jigsaws.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

HOUSEKEEPING

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CHRISTMAS CAROLS IN PONTYPOOL MARKET

Wednesday, 6th December 2023, 10.30am
Pontypool Indoor Market, Pontypool

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

Sunday, 10th December 2023, 4pm
Trinity Methodist Church, Abersychan

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

Monday, 11th December 2023, 6.30pm
Blackwood Methodist Church, Blackwood

THE BIG BREAKFAST

Thursday, 14th December 2023, 10.30am
Pontnewynydd Methodist Church, Pontnewynydd

“OH ZOOM, ALL YE FAITHFUL!” (Zoom Carol Service)

Sunday, 17th December 2023, 6pm
On Zoom – link and details below

WATCHNIGHT ZOOM

Sunday, 31st December 2023, 6pm
On Zoom – link and details below

WATCHNIGHT SERVICE

Sunday, 31st December 2023, 11.15pm
Fairhill Methodist Church, Cwmbrân

Details of individual churches’
Carol Services and Covenant Services
can be found on the current plan

GWENT HILLS AND VALES CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICE

Every Sunday evening, 6pm. Here’s the link:
<https://zoom.us/j/94168420492?pwd=cjFTbzZUejhwTFBtVXdnL1lFVkdldz09>
Meeting ID: 941 6842 0492
Passcode: 831858

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Deadline for items to be included in the Spring issue: 10th February 2024

WALES WATCH



...IN BRIEF...

- March 2024 will see the launch of Wales Synod Cymru's new website! Each Welsh circuit will be featured – watch this space for more news.



- By the end of the year, the GHAV Circuit will have hosted both of our Synod co-Chairs – **Revd Andrew Charlesworth** (pictured left) on Sunday, 19th November and **Revd Dr Jennie Hurd** (pictured right) on Christmas Eve.
- Speaking of websites (and because there was no more room on the “Branch Lines” page), in early 2024, there will be a brand new Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit website!



A SPECIAL JIGSAW

Continued from Page 1

A glance in the window showed there were new ones! Matt scanned each in turn, but they were not what he was looking for. He stepped inside to be greeted by Sylvia, one of the volunteers, “Hi Matt – there’s more over there,” as she pointed to a pile in the corner that hadn’t yet been put on display. Matt knelt down beside them, and, examining each puzzle, discarded them into a fresh pile. Halfway through, he came to a battered, dark-blue box held together with tape. A gold star adorned the centre of the lid, with the words ‘Two-Layer Nativity Jigsaw’ written underneath. Intrigued, Matt slid off the fragile cover, revealing two bags of jigsaw pieces and a leaflet with instructions for assembly. Matt had never seen anything like it before and took it to Sylvia, “I’ll have this one.”

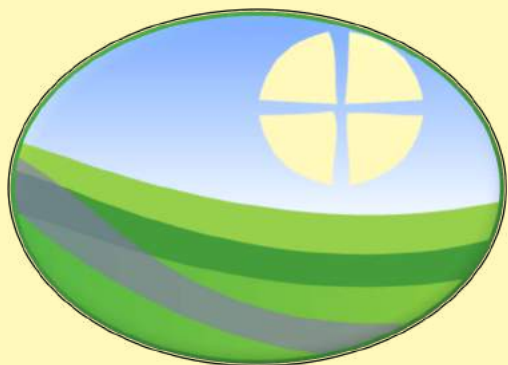
She examined it, “Not in good condition. Are you sure?”

Matt nodded, “Definitely!”

On arriving home, Matt immediately cleared away the incomplete jigsaw. The first layer of his new purchase, just twenty wooden pieces, was a traditional nativity scene – Mary cradling Baby Jesus with Joseph standing behind her. There were the lavishly dressed wise men with their gifts and the shepherds in their ragged clothes, all framed by a timber stable. A cow looking through the window, an angel sitting on the roof and a star shining down completed the picture.

The second bag contained only ten pieces, intended for overlaying on parts of the original to give a three-dimensional effect. As Matt lifted them out of the bag it was clear they were quite different from the first set – figures in modern dress, pictured from the back as if looking in from outside the timber frame. A builder in a high-vis jacket, a postwoman with a sack on her shoulder, a girl with a

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BRANCH LINES

News around the Gwent Hills and Vales
Methodist Circuit

CHRISTMAS DAY AROUND THE GHAV CIRCUIT

BLACKWOOD, 10.30am
Revd Andrea Sims

BLAENAU GWENT, 11.15am
Local Arrangement

CASTLE STREET, 10am
Revd Catherine Brobbey

FAIRHILL, 10am
Revd Anthony Gregory

HOPE, 10am
Revd Steve Boxall

LLANYRAFON, 10am
Miss Margaret Webber

NANTYGLO, 10am
Revd Lorette Hinson
*(United service
for all churches
in Revd Hinson's charge)*

PONTLLANFRAITH, 10.30am
Mrs Sue Radford

PONTNEWNYDD, 10am
Mr Manu Tu'ipulotu



One of the many joys of having a magazine like **THE VINE** is that it is a platform from which to share some of the wonderful outreach and community work that happens across our circuit. One such venture is **Love Zimbabwe**, a charity based in Abergavenny and founded by **Martha Musonza Holman**, who moved to the UK from Zimbabwe in 2001, although husband **David Holman** and daughter **Tanaka** are also very much involved! First a little background from the **Love Zimbabwe** website...

"We work in partnership with **Chinamhora Community Centre** in Domboshawa, Zimbabwe. Together, we create opportunities for sustainable living by applying a community development approach. The centre provides training, resources and equipment to help the community learn, increase food production and start micro-businesses. We encourage independence and sustainable living. Through collaborative community projects focused on education, health, food production and sanitation, we help the local community take action to adapt to climate change. To date, we have helped 25 individual artists and 10 cooperatives sell their fairly-traded crafts online. Additionally, the centre provides a library, facilities for disabled children and internet access for the community." (www.lovezimbabwe.org)

Love Zimbabwe celebrated its 13th anniversary this year at the **Abergavenny Food Festival**. The charity has gone through a period of rebranding and refining their objectives to meet the ongoing needs of people in the Chinamhora Village that they support. The launch was an opportunity to meet the charity trustees who were all present during the food festival weekend. The





Mayor of Abergavenny launched the new website which now clearly depicts the impact of the charity and the main themes of their operation which are Education, Health, Sanitation and Food Production.

About 60 students from Crickhowell Community

The Love Zimbabwe March at Abergavenny Food Festival 2023

Primary School, which is linked to schools in Chinamhora Village, together with about 40 parents, gathered in Castle Street Methodist

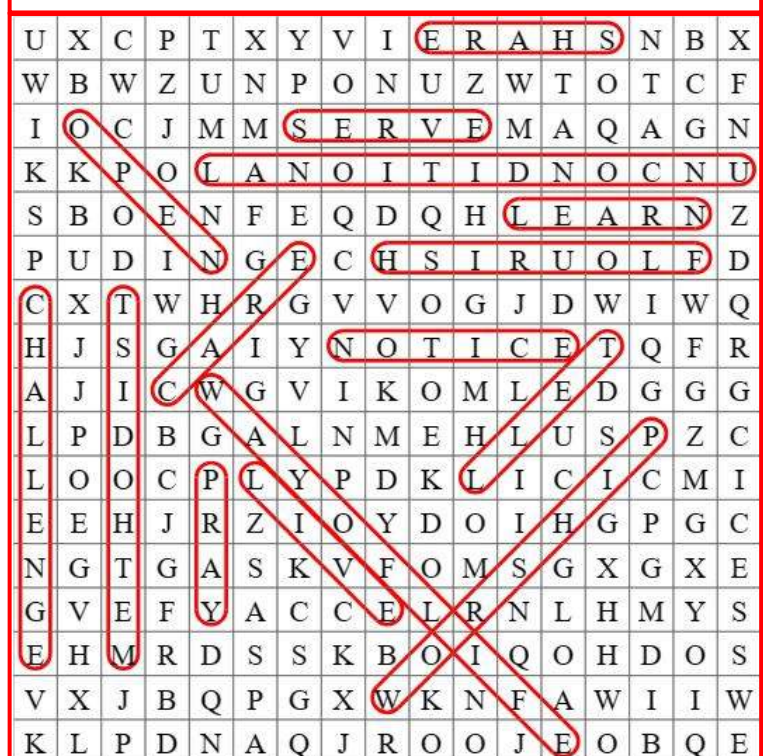
Church hall before taking part in the **“March for Africa”**, an event that was introduced ten years ago by Martha (pictured far right in the photograph above). With faces painted, and clad in colourful African outfits, the sound of drums and shakers brought a different dimension to the streets of Abergavenny. The march is fully supported by Abergavenny Food Festival, The Angel Hotel and Castle Street Methodist Church. Martha says, *“It is my hope that through global partnerships, we can learn from each other and increase more trust and empathy.”*

Martha and Tanaka will be going back to Zimbabwe in April 2024 to help monitor ongoing projects and work with mothers of disabled children at the community centre. From February 2024, collecting will begin at Castle Street Methodist Church for basic medical/hygiene supplies such as paracetamol, cough syrup, women’s/girls’ underwear, toothpaste, soap bars and antiseptic creams.

On Saturday, 10th February 2024, 7.30 – 10pm, there will be a fundraiser event for **Love Zimbabwe** at the Melville Theatre, Abergavenny. Tickets and more information about the charity are available from www.lovezimbabwe.org

**CARE
CHALLENGE
FLOURISH
LEARN
LIVE
METHODIST
NOTICE
OPEN
PRAY
SERVE
SHARE
TELL
UNCONDITIONAL
WAY OF LIFE
WORSHIP**

AUTUMN WORD SEARCH SOLUTION





CONNEXION CORNER

**“Do not allow yourself one thought
of separating from your brothers and sisters,
whether their opinions agree with yours or not.”**

John Wesley

News from the Methodist Connexion of the UK

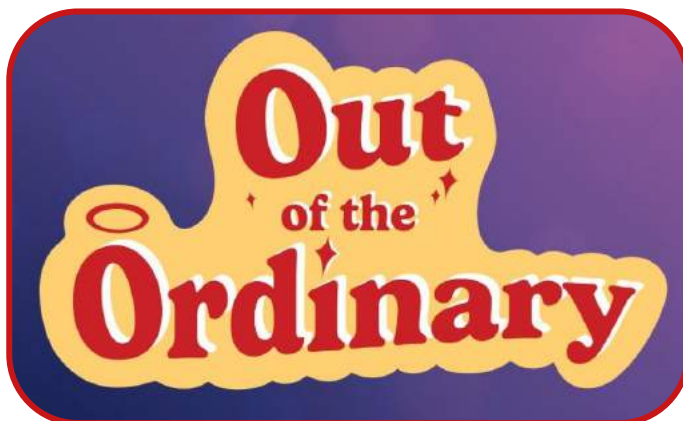
The Methodist Church's Christmas campaign for 2023 is ***Out of the Ordinary***. Share how the wonder of God's love is revealed in the ordinary...

- a seemingly ordinary birth becomes God's out of the ordinary world-saving event through Jesus.
- every day, ordinary acts of kindness can break through to the extraordinary.

The main themes and symbols of each week are contained in this issue's Word Search on page 7.

For more information, go to:

[An Out of the Ordinary Christmas \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://methodist.org.uk)



...or contact your Circuit Administrator (page 2).

Methodist Prayer Handbook 2024/2025 Praise and Protest

The Methodist Church

WE NEED YOUR PRAYERS!

Drum-roll please: the **2024/2025 Methodist Prayer Handbook** title and theme is:

PRAISE AND PROTEST

The following thoughts can be used to craft and submit a prayer. In her song of praise, the 'Magnificat' (Luke 1:46 – 55), Mary thanks God for the child Jesus, who will announce God's kingdom which "brings down the powerful from their thrones and lifts up the lowly". To

engage in God's mission and be part of that transformation, we believe the Methodist Church is called to become an increasingly evangelistic, inclusive and justice-seeking Church.

Following the prophet Isaiah's call, echoing through the ages to us and reflected in Mary's prayer, the **2024/2025 Methodist Prayer Handbook** will focus on how the Church can "learn to do right; seek justice and defend the oppressed" (Isaiah 1:17a, NIV). We invite you to offer prayers using Isaiah's three key actions for becoming the justice-seeking Church we are called to be, in response to God's love in Christ:

♦ **LEARN**

We invite prayers that we might be attentive to God's ways, and discern how we go about learning to live justly in our local communities and churches.

♦ **SEEK**

Please offer prayers that seek God and God's ways, and invite us to love God and to love our neighbours. Prayers could relate to looking actively for what God is showing us as the Body of Christ corporately, or more personally, to become people who recognise injustice and take action.

♦ **DEFEND**

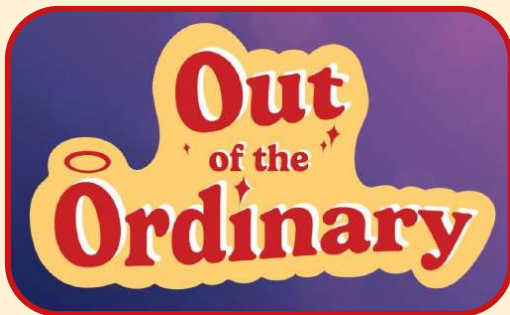
Finally, we welcome prayers for the Church to become more aware of the voices of the people we are called to defend – those who are marginalised and silenced. We welcome prayers that support others in their protest and prayers for how we get involved.

For submission details, please contact your Circuit Administrator (page 2)

PUZZLE PAGE

W	J	X	Z	Z	W	Z	I	F	D	K	B	S	V	U	E	E	L	I	K	Y	C	Z	K
O	O	B	H	N	E	U	U	V	W	G	E	B	G	X	U	Z	F	T	Q	H	J	J	J
U	G	G	G	C	P	P	V	U	Z	R	W	M	T	N	L	P	H	E	A	D	I	L	H
T	W	K	F	J	M	E	D	D	I	M	L	R	V	M	I	G	N	N	N	G	Q	W	J
O	M	A	K	F	B	B	V	S	I	G	A	K	V	J	I	W	G	I	M	W	Z	K	E
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R	Q	W	Z	N	A	Q	K	U	T	I	U	F	N	F	V	Y	T	E	O	P	O	T	V
D	G	X	X	R	E	Q	S	G	B	R	T	V	B	F	K	A	T	R	O	N	R	H	X
I	W	N	Y	C	V	T	N	Y	M	H	Y	T	H	T	C	N	R	G	U	P	Y	E	N
N	M	E	P	K	N	I	S	I	V	C	C	M	E	D	A	O	E	Z	B	C	C	R	W
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Y	Y	C	I	A	T	I	H	B	V	A	A	R	L	P	L	O	T	D	D	Z	A	S	U
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B	O	X	O	F	P	R	E	S	E	N	T	S	M	R	W	P	X	J	P	O	B	R	W
W	J	K	E	L	P	O	E	P	R	E	H	T	O	N	I	D	O	G	P	L	W	P	L
E	J	Z	Q	V	C	T	Q	N	X	J	D	Z	P	W	F	L	X	V	P	U	W	R	C
W	Y	E	T	O	X	S	C	V	L	H	G	F	F	V	G	J	C	U	F	G	Z	B	C
C	A	J	Q	Q	X	D	U	K	M	Y	I	F	L	W	K	H	I	Y	P	M	Q	F	C

Puzzle created by Joanna using wordmint.com



ANGEL WINGS
CHANGING YOUR MIND
FEATHER DUSTER

LANTERN
OUT OF THE ORDINARY
BABY JESUS
ENGAGE COMMUNITY
GOD IN OTHER PEOPLE
LETTING STUFF GO
POINTING TO THE LIGHT
BOX OF PRESENTS
EXTRAORDINARY
GOD IN US
LISTENING
SPEECH BUBBLES

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING...

In this season when it is so easy to get caught up in the busyness of preparation, cooking, presents and celebration, take a few moments each day to reflect and give thanks for the many blessings God has bestowed on us:

- ♦ For Jesus – God with us!
- ♦ Our families, homes and friends
- ♦ Such health as we are blessed to enjoy
- ♦ Our leadership, and the fact that in this country we are allowed to disagree with them
- ♦ Our freedom to worship as we choose
- ♦ The leadership of our churches, especially Wales Synod Cymru and the Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit
- ♦ Daily nourishment
- ♦ Blessings specific to each of us...

Please pray for:

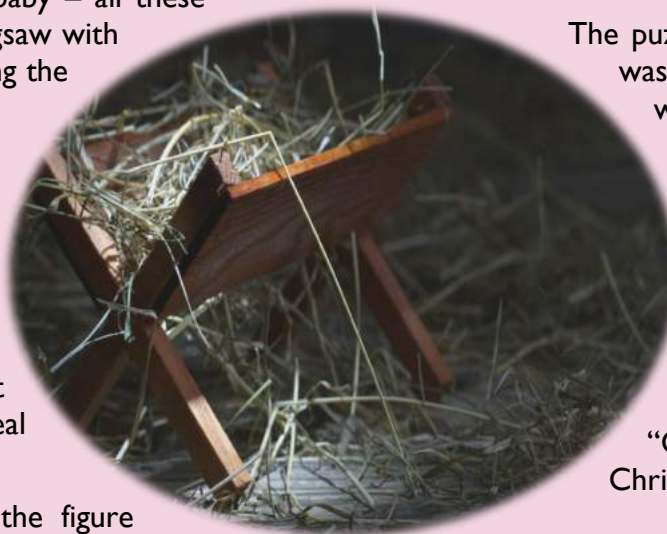
- ♦ Those whose countries are torn apart by war and conflict
- ♦ All refugees
- ♦ Those who are without a warm place to shelter
- ♦ Those who are alone
- ♦ Those who struggle with ill health
- ♦ Those who struggle with addiction
- ♦ Those who struggle with poverty
- ♦ Those who have been bereaved
- ♦ All those in positions of leadership, whether at national, local or business level, and the leadership of all churches
- ♦ Our individual churches and their witness
- ♦ Ourselves and our own walks of faith

Continued from Page 3

skateboard under her arm, a man in a brown, hooded coat holding a baby – all these went into place in the jigsaw with their backs to Matt, facing the nativity.

He picked up the last piece. In the instructions this was described as blank, and the instructions said, 'Draw a picture of yourself on this last piece – be part of the real meaning of Christmas.'

Matt looked at the figure drawn on the piece and smiled – a woman with short brown hair, in a red coat, hat and gloves, the last owner of the jigsaw, smiled back.



A SPECIAL JIGSAW

The puzzle was finished, and Matt was moved by its effect – he was looking over the shoulders of everyday people who had been drawn to the stable. As he continued to gaze at the scene, he began to feel a part of it; in a strange way, complete and where he should be – "Complete jigsaw, complete Christmas..."

***This Christmas,
come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!***

Rev'd Steve Boxall