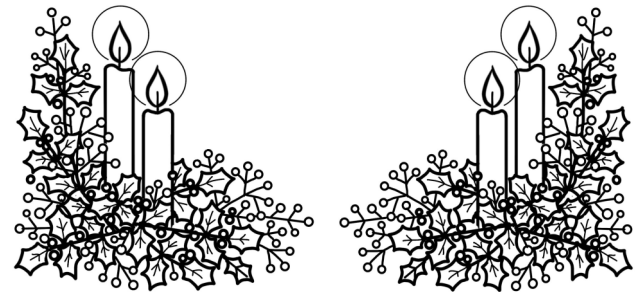




OCTAMAG

Christmas 2023



As Rev. Martin is now in his fourth year with us the time had come for his re-invitation to be considered. Rev. Martin expressed a strong sense of calling to remain in the Stockton Circuit and particularly to continue his work at Yarm and Thornaby. Over the summer months the Circuit Invitation Committee conducted a review of Rev. Martin's ministry with us and recommended to the Circuit Meeting that Rev. Martin be re-invited for a further period of 5 years. This recommendation was unanimously accepted. Rev. Martin has now accepted the Circuit's invitation to remain in his current post until August 2029.

Editorial

I'm delighted to say that I've had several interesting items this time from members of our Church family, some of them new contributors - and in some cases I didn't even have to ask for them! It's lovely to hear about friends' lives and experiences, some of them from another continent. And of course I'm very pleased to include the above information that Martin is staying with us for another 5 years.

Maybe some more of you will be inspired to write a piece for our Easter edition, deadline 21st February 2024.

I have included some information about our new Church Project and hope you will feel able to support this very worthwhile venture.

May I wish you all health and happiness for Christmas and for 2024.

Jacqui

It is told of the great preacher C H Spurgeon that after preaching at length one Sunday he said: "I don't mind people looking at their watches, but I do dislike to see them holding them to their ears, to see if they are still going."

Not applicable to any preachers we know . . .

YARM METHODIST CHURCH ACTIVITIES



Sunday

Worship and Junior Church (all ages)	10.30am
All-Age Worship first Sunday in month	10.30am
Holy Communion first Sunday in month	9-9.30am

Monday

Women's Fellowship	not yet restarted
--------------------	-------------------

Tuesday

Carpet Bowls Club	7.00-9.30pm
-------------------	-------------

Wednesday

Parent & Toddlers' Group	10.00-11.30am
Ladies' Friendship Group alternate weeks	2.00-3.30pm
Brownies (age 7-10 years)	6.15-7.30pm

Thursday

Octago (All-age Youth Club)	10.00-12 noon
Youth Club (Years 5-9)	not yet restarted
Choir Practice alternate weeks	7.30 pm

Friday

Saturday

Coffee	10.00-12 noon
First Saturday in month Teesside Dementia Link Services	

If you have a story, memory, poem or an experience to relate,
send this to Jacqui Fyfe by 21st February 2024
Email: helmutbaer@btinternet.com
(a Word attachment is best)
The next edition of Octamag is to be published for
Easter 2024

WHO'S WHO?

Minister	Revd Dr Martin Ramsden 4 Tees Bank Avenue Eaglescliffe TS16 9AY	07483 863502
Church Council Secretary	Mrs Judi Breckon	01325 333133
Treasurer	Ms Abby Beer	01642 640528
Finance Team Secretary	Mr Michael Salmon	01642 652851
Property Secretary	Mr Paul Toplis	01642 788034
Weekly Notices	Mrs June Howard-Norman	07801 549931
Gift Aid Promoter	Mrs Linda Hills	01642 878705
Rooms Booking Secretary	Mr David Peckett	07837 567618
Publicity Officer	Mrs Judi Breckon	01325 333133
Flower Arranging	Mrs Gill Bainbridge	01642 780695
Crèche Secretary	Mrs Judi Breckon	01325 333133
Women's Fellowship	Mrs Janet Howells	01642 648594
Ladies' Friendship Group	Mrs Margaret Lazenby	01642 780767
Carpet Bowls Club	Mrs Dyala Moon	01642 782969
Parents & Toddlers Secretary	Ms Lyn Taylor	07792 093222
	Mrs Dorothy Robinson	07761 986749
Brownie Guider	Mrs Helen Wortley	01642 730215
Safeguarding Officer	Mrs Paula Clarke	07926 199229
Octago	Mr John Dunn	07718 266820
	Mrs Avril Simpson	01325 332824
Choir Contact	Ms Victoria Harris	
	victoriazoe_harris184@yahoo.co.uk	
Octamag Editor	Mrs Jacqui Fyfe	01642 780423

Constant kindness can accomplish much.

As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding,
mistrust and hostility to evaporate.

Albert Schweitzer



Minister's Letter

Dear brothers and sisters,

This year the Methodist Church has produced a range of resources during the Seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. These resources are entitled *Out of the Ordinary* and they look really good. I particularly like the first line of the explanatory notes that come with the resource:

'Out of our ordinary acts, in our ordinary lives, the world-transforming, extraordinary love of God can shine through'.

I have been thinking and praying very much about the idea of *shining* in recent days. In these recent weeks, as we have watched the unfolding events in Israel-Palestine with horror and utter despair, I have been so aware of the darkness of this world. In my prayers I have remembered that Jesus said that he is the light of the world and that those of us who follow him will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life (John 8.12).

This is the same Gospel that we read as the high point of our Christmas readings, the Gospel that begins by saying that 'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it' (John 1.5).

Not long ago we had some Halloween pumpkins in our house. One had the shape of a cross cut into it, another had lots of stars and the third had a smiley face. As we put the candles in and lit them we noticed how the light was even brighter to our eyes when we turned our lights off. One of the things about darkness is that it makes the small sources of light appear to shine even more brightly.

Somehow, when we are so aware of the darkness in our world it causes us to focus ever more on the one true light that still burns brightly in our world. Particularly at Christmas, in the midst of all that is happening, we look to Jesus again and we receive his light into our lives anew.

We invite Jesus afresh to make his home in our hearts so that his light may shine through us and thereby bring hope, joy and new life to those that we meet. St Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4: 6-7,

‘For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us’.

In another place, Paul encourages us to ‘shine like stars in the world’ (Philippians 2.14) and Jesus tells us that we ‘are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way let your light shine before others’ (Matthew 5.14-16).

This brings me back to the title of the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany resources: *Out of the Ordinary!*

It is as we receive the light of Jesus in our hearts that this light is able to shine out from our ordinary ‘clay jars’. What a miracle and how important, how needed!

All of this relates to our priorities as a church for this coming year. Together we declare that God’s love is for **Everyone**, which is why we are so determined to **Share the good news of God’s grace** and we can only do this if we know the light of Jesus shining in our hearts which is why we emphasise the foundational importance of **Enjoying spiritual growth and guidance**. It is this last priority that constantly reminds us that the most important thing of all is remaining focused on God.

Prayer is the most important aspect of this. In the New Year, as a church, we will be following a resource called *The Prayer Course* together. This has been unanimously approved by the Church Council and will be an exciting spiritual adventure for us.

Let the adventure begin right now though. May we focus fully on Jesus the light of the world through this Advent Season, celebrating the birth of the Christ child at Christmas and drawing ever nearer to our dear Saviour as the New Year begins.

With love and prayers, Martin

Martin

“Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn’t before! Maybe Christmas, he thought, doesn’t come from a store. Maybe Christmas . . . perhaps . . . Means a little bit more!” *How the Grinch stole Christmas, Dr Seuss.*

I think that it really doesn’t matter if Christmas is in winter or in summer (although I prefer the last one. Sorry, still struggling with the weather here), the different kind of food or decorations - Christians, in every part of the world, we are celebrating Jesus’ birth.

This Christmas, as I gather with my family at our big table, I’ll be thinking of our Yarm Methodist Church and of all the lovely people who welcome me so warmly.

Happy Christmas to everyone!

“You will find as you look back upon your life that the moments when you have really lived are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of love.”

Henry Drummond

Andrea Stark

Thinking of Christmas food:

Did you know? By replacing potato chips with grapefruit as a snack, you can lose up to 90% of what little joy you still have left in your life.

I can always predict what’s inside a Christmas parcel. It’s a gift.

How much did Santa’s sleigh cost? He bought it at Christmas, so it was on the house.

What does Santa call the reindeer who can’t see? No eyed deer!

Three phrases that sum up Christmas are: “Peace on Earth”; “Goodwill to all Men”; “Batteries not included.”

What is every parent’s favourite Christmas carol? Silent Night.

CHRISTMAS IN ARGENTINA

Hola. My name is Andrea, and I have been living in Yarm with my husband Alan since March. I notice that in England, Christmas preparations have started as early as October. In my country, Argentina, we are a little more disorganised in, well, almost everything. It is summer time, so in December we start meeting with friends, distant relatives, work colleagues, and with football or tennis partners or whatever activity you do, in outdoor coffee shops or in parks. And so we are not only busy with Christmas preparations, but also organising our summer holidays which start in January, and of course New Year's celebrations as well. Food is very important. We celebrate Christmas, birthdays, baptisms, graduations etc., around a big table, with lots of food or our "asados", barbecues.

There are as many Christmas celebrations as there are families, so I'm going to tell you about ours. At this time of the year, our custom is to cook a lot. Everyone brings something to share at the table. I usually bake. And my mum will decorate the table, she is very good doing this (and yes, she doesn't like cooking, my grandma was the amazing one). Even one of my brothers, Diego, who is single and shares my mum's dislike of cooking, will bring some ice cream or a bottle of wine. Everyone shares their best dishes. And in my country we have panettone, an Italian Christmas cake that contains dried fruit and nuts. We celebrate at my mum's home, where a big table is always there, waiting for us: my husband, my brothers, sister, in-laws, sons, daughter, nephews, niece, aunts and now my nephew's fiancée. Under the table, Pipa and Oreo, the family dogs. And of course, sometimes, friends. Everyone is welcome.

In Argentina, we celebrate Christmas Eve until very, very late at night. On the 25th, after going to church, we will share a lunch of all the leftovers and some new treats. Yes, lots of food again! Gifts are usually given on the 24th. Since during December it is the custom to donate food and boxes with gifts for poor families, we give one another simple gifts. Very simple ones.

DOROTHY'S JOURNEY

The fairly recent service welcoming new members into our church set me thinking of my own journey into membership. It's been a long one!

I was born in Wingate, County Durham, in May 1926. My early connection into Methodism was as a three-year-old at Sunday school, in what is now the Village Hall, Yarm Road, Eaglescliffe, when my family moved there from Wingate. In my teens, I became a member of that church then, after a break of two years away at college, I returned home and with my mother joined the choir!

About two years later, Yarm church invited Eaglescliffe members to join their badminton club, which was very popular at the time. I was keen to learn a new game, and so began my first connection to our church. Talking of connections, once I could connect shuttle to racket, I started to enjoy the game! (And went on to play badminton for many years).

After a year or two (time passed slowly in those days), one Friday "John" offered me a lift home, and the following week his brother did the same! What was going on? However, it was the brother, Les, who continued with the lifts, which eventually developed into a relationship, followed by an engagement and a wedding, in May 1953. The latter was, of course, held at the Eaglescliffe church, and I believe we were the last couple to be married there before it had to close.

I had become a farmer's wife! How would I cope? I'd had no experience of farming, but somehow, I settled into it, and we had 62 happy years together. We raised three sons. The middle one and *his* son now run the farm, where I usually have Sunday lunch, after church.

I have now lived in retirement for nearly 39 years, and with much help from family I have managed to stay in my own home in West Street. Incidentally, in my younger days I collected for NCH, was secretary for Friday Fellowship, helped to make the pew cushions and organised Sunday morning coffee/tea.

(For those of you who remember the late Mary Smith, she also attended the Eaglescliffe church, and the late Joan Graham's father was organist there and played at our wedding. The Rev. John Wright, who tutored me into membership, returned to officiate at the wedding.)

Between Eaglescliffe and Yarm it's been quite a few years. Can I claim to be the oldest member with the longest membership?

Dorothy Dale



YARM WELLNESS

OUR CHURCH PROJECT 2023-2024

The founder and chair of Yarm Wellness is Cheryl Scollay, and its aim is to support isolated communities and those struggling with their mental health. The idea came to her through Covid, seeing the problems of social isolation in the Yarm, Eaglescliffe and surrounding areas.

The Wellness Centre is situated in High Church Wynd; it was a local authority building but was underused. During the pandemic it had been a food distribution hub from where food hampers were sent out to families in Stockton Borough. Those volunteers who had helped with this project had the idea of using the hall as a Wellness Centre. They were hugely supported by local businesses who donated, for example, flooring and a kitchen. Tanni Grey-Thompson heard about the project and is a patron. Most businesses on Yarm High Street offer help, for example by donating food items.

There are many different activities which go on in the hall seven days a week. One of these is the Wellness Choir, made up of about 30 people, and they have held a concert for Ukraine.

To help both men's and women's health, arts and crafts sessions are held. The craft and chat sessions are so popular that there is a waiting list.

Men's groups are important as suicide rates for men are high. GPs will deal with the medical side of a problem, but they can also do "social prescribing" by referring socially isolated patients to the Wellness Group. In fact GP receptionists can contact Yarm Wellness if you say you want "social prescribing".

There is a great need of support for those with cancer, particularly as the wait for a scan can be 12-16 weeks which causes a lot of anxiety. Macmillan funds yoga sessions at the centre for those on the cancer pathway. Talking is important for the anxious and many are given hope through their contact with Yarm Wellness.

SING A SONG OF YORKSHIRE

To the tune "Sing a Song of Sixpence"

Sing a song of Yorkshire from the Humber to the Tees
Of horses, wool and terriers, of pudding and of cheese.
I know no other county where the land is quite so fine,
England's lovely county. And I'm proud to call it mine.

Where shining purple heather stretches far across the moor,
and the lapwing's cry above me takes the place of traffic roar,
And peace comes drifting gently, there's no place I'd rather be
than this land of hills and valleys, from the Pennines to the sea.

So when I've done my roaming, and when my step grows slow,
When heart and mind assure me that the time has come to go,
Then let me rest in Yorkshire, for it's there I want to lie
'neath sun and wind and heather
. and a gleaming Yorkshire sky.

Submitted by Mark Hall

In the interests of fairness, I have to say that other counties do exist, and I was inspired to pen the following lines (Ed.)

Cheshire's famous for its cheese,
Give me some to savour, please.
It's also famous for its cat,
But that is quite enough of that.

PS I couldn't think of a good rhyme for "salt mines".

Maybe those of you who were not born in Yorkshire could offer some thoughts (better than mine) on your own county of origin?

Paul Gerhardt (1607 – 76) wrote
*Thee, O Lord with heed I'll cherish,
Live to Thee, and with Thee
Dying, shall not perish;
But shall dwell with Thee for ever,
Far on high,
In the joy
That can alter never*

I find that the older carols are mostly more sentimental, whilst some of the newer ones can be more serious and, in some cases, gritty. These words by Kenneth Pickering put a different slant on things.

It begins
*"Jesus, homeless infant in the Middle East,
Refugee in Egypt as a child,
Lost amongst the crowds at the Temple Feast,
Dissident imprisoned, and reviled,"*

And concludes
*"Lord of stars and angels, of our gold and myrrh,
Lord of both the ignorant and wise,
Teach us that to sing of love is not enough
Lead us to the action love implies".*

How I love that baby, whose birth we celebrate, and the Father who gave us that precious gift. I rejoice that Love did indeed come down at Christmas.

J. Howells
Nov 2023



The centre has a link with Teesside Dementia Link Services, an organisation we know through their use of our Church for coffee mornings.

Other sessions are for coffee, cake and company. Once again, local businesses donate cakes and scones. Other opportunities for socialising while eating are a veterans' breakfast and a pensioners' lunch. Wellness walks are popular, as are classes such as Pilates and Yoga.

There are plans for the future involving using space under the viaduct archways. Under one arch they hope to build a Man Shed, under another the plan is for some raised beds with seating, and under the third, space for seated exercise.

Those who run Yarm Wellness are volunteers and their success means they have a great deal to do. You can see the extent of their weekly programme by going online to yarmwellness.co.uk and clicking on Timetable, or looking at the Church Project noticeboard in the Wesley Hall. They are always looking for more volunteers to help with their excellent service to the local community.

In March 2023 Cheryl represented Yarm Wellness when she went to 10 Downing Street to meet Rishi Sunak and local MP Matt Vickers to be recognised as a Community Champion. In July the scheme received a Stockton Adult Carers Support Award from the Mayor of Stockton in recognition of the support given to carers in the local community.

Dr Dave Hindmarsh of Eaglescliffe Medical Practice writes: "Having local community support is a vital addition to Mental Health support. Yarm Wellness allows ongoing support as a valuable asset for helping patients on a mental health pathway. The open access allows ease of referral and the benefit of not restricting the timeline for treatment allows patients to naturally flow into mentorship of newer patients."

Support sessions are offered free to the community, so donations are needed for running costs such as insurance, cleaning, facility management and even toilet rolls. This helps ensure the centre can be free at the point of entry to those in need, providing a warm, safe space. Donations help to change lives.

I hope you will agree that this is a cause well worth supporting as our Church Project.



MEET MY FRIENDS THIS CHRISTMAS

You may have heard of my friends Joyce Greatly and Good Will. They have been in my mind for quite a while recently. I tend to recall them at Christmas-time. I wonder why? Also, I may have mentioned my friend Gusto to you. I came across him at Pentecost this year. He breezed into the room and seemed to affect everybody there, in a very positive way. When I say he breezed into the room, it was more like a rushing mighty wind, but not in a particularly frightening way. He seemed to flit about the place from person to person, but every time I have met him, he has left a lasting impression and influence on everybody he has come into contact with.

Just this month, I have made a new acquaintance, Carol. She has got a lovely soprano voice, and she loves singing Christmas hymns and songs. She knows them all. It's lovely to hear Carol singing with Gusto – such a beautiful blend of voices.

Good Will is a tall, well-built man with a very pleasant demeanour. Joyce Greatly is a larger-than-life character, living the high-society life, yet very much down to earth as well. Gusto is a stocky and strong-looking person, yet light and nimble on his feet. Carol, I don't know so well yet. She is slender and a homely sort of character. This is not a setting-the-scene for a Christmas time whodunnit. Far from it. They are not that sort of people. Basically, they live in harmony (and unison) with each other, meeting up regularly. However, I can imagine them making their way onto the pages of one of Reverend Richard Coles' novels, though not as the perpetrators, of course.

I am looking forward to meeting my friends all together this Christmas. Carol is hoping to bring along her sister, Melody, who I understand are like two peas in a pod. They both have lovely voices, and are very musical. My four friends are planning some sort of presentation to share with me at Christmas. They thought of dressing up as the Four Wise Men, or rather the Four Wise Persons, but couldn't decide on a novel approach to the story, or even what the fourth gift could be. Their latest idea is to sing a quartet. This seems more up their street. I believe they have chosen an item to sing, but, as yet, they can't decide which of two tunes to use, a problem I can fully understand. I mentioned that Carol is a soprano. She likes to sing the tune, and is a good leader to the others. Joyce Greatly is a contralto with quite a booming voice. She will have to tone-down a bit to blend the ensemble. Good Will is a tenor and has musical sparkle and a good ear, so I'm sure he will do well.

to the grandeur of the Christmas section of Handel's Messiah, - "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion", "For unto us a child is born", "Glory to God" and the Hallelujah chorus. I wonder how deep Handel's faith was, to inspire him to write this monumental piece of music.

Everything from the 7th century, -
"A great and mighty wonder" written by St. Germanus 1, 634 – 734AD, translated by J. M. Neale in the 19th Century, to the 20th century Calypso Carol, "See Him Lying on a bed of straw", words and music by Michael Perry.

With its catchy tune, and calypso rhythm this is a joy to sing, and it contains some expressive words to describe our Lord.

*Prince of glory
Saviour of the world
Salvation to the soul*

And, the very meaningful last verse,
*"Mine are riches from your poverty;
From your innocence, eternity;
Mine, forgiveness by your death for me;
Child of sorrow for my joy".*

There are so many lovely words, and beautiful tunes all inspired by the same wonderful event. The birth of our Lord Jesus into this world as a tiny, helpless baby.

Often I have just enjoyed the Christmas atmosphere, the singing, the familiar words. Most carols celebrate the birth. A lot cover the whole story, - shepherds, angels, Magi, Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. Many also highlight the poverty of his birth, - "Away in a manger no crib for a bed", and the future He faces, - "Though an Infant now we view him, He shall fill his Fathers throne." And "Mine, forgiveness by your death for me"

But as a more discerning adult, I have found an appreciation of the depth and beauty of many of the words.

My Faith, Music and Christmas

As we approach the Christmas season, I am looking forward to singing some of my favourite church music - Christmas carols.

As a child I loved "Away in a Manger". I'm not alone in that, I'm sure.

As a teenager, rather naughtily, I found it somewhat amusing and ironic how true the words of "In the bleak mid-winter" were.

In the bleak mid- winter, - yes, it really was that year.

Frosty wind made moan – yes, it did blow a gale,

Earth stood hard as iron, - It was, rock solid.

Water like a stone – pipes frozen solid in the outside loo!

Snow now had fallen, snow on snow – knee deep!!

Long ago. – no, not long ago, - yesterday.

(Schoolgirl Giggles)

But as I grew up, and matured, I came to love the words of Christina Rossetti's lovely poem, especially the last verse:

"What can I give him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb,

If I were a wise man, I would do my part,

Yet what I can, I give him,

Give my heart."

Also, from Christina Rossetti:

*"Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine,
Love was born at Christmas, Star and angel gave the sign"*

I have always loved expressing my faith and love of Jesus through music and singing.

Everything from the simplicity of "Mary's Child" –

("Born in the night, Mary's child

Clear shining Light, Mary's child

Truth of our life, Mary's child

Hope of the world, Mary's child)

Gusto, the bass, should be a good foundation for the group. If Melody joins them, I'm sure she will want to sing soprano with Carol. You can never have too many sopranos. However, I've heard that Melody plays several instruments as well, which would be useful, though I love a cappella singing.

I am so fortunate in having a really good group of friends. They are all such very, very nice people. May I wish you a Happy Christmas, and add the wishes of my friends, also. Remember to rejoice greatly, have a Christmas of goodwill to all, sing your carols with gusto, but, of course, melodiously!

Michael Salmon, Christmas 2023



The minister was a Sudoku fan so the congregation had to work out the hymn numbers for themselves.

from Parish Pump

Pen portrait of a new Church Council Secretary

Born on the island of St Lucia, I spent the first years of my life in the West Indies and British Guyana where Dad and Mam were missionaries for eight years. Memories remain of splashing in warm, crystal clear pools and holidays in Barbados before a return to the reality of the English weather, aged 4, with a rude awakening to deep snow on moving to Corbridge in the mid nineteen-sixties!

Growing up in Leadgate and Saltburn, with Dad as Methodist minister and Mam as a very involved minister's wife, gave me a sound foundation for my faith which further developed when I headed to Newcastle University to study for five years in dentistry. I made some good friends, both on the dental course and at Methsoc, many of whom I keep in touch/meet up with to this day.

As our family home was by then in Durham City, I was married at North Road Methodist Church to Michael, whom I'd met at Sixth Form College in Guisborough and who also went to Newcastle University.

We made our home in Yarm in 1986, with Michael serving in Cleveland Police and me working in special care dentistry in Tees Community Dental Service.

I transferred my membership from Durham to our church in Yarm and it was lovely to catch up again with many people from the Redcar, Saltburn and Guisborough Methodist Circuit who had worked alongside Dad during his ministry there and had also moved to the Yarm area!

I had great pleasure working for 35 years in Tees Community Dental Service and have happy memories treating patients in the various Health Centre dental surgeries around the whole of Teesside.

Treatment was also provided at James Cook and North Tees Hospitals with patients under general anaesthetic so that full dental treatment plans could be carried out at one session for adults and children.

I completed my working career as Clinical Director of the service and have spent my working life providing dentistry to others with varying com-

I completed my working career as Clinical Director of the service and have spent my working life providing dentistry to others with varying complex needs which has been very fulfilling and frequently humbling.

We had our daughter Grace in 2000 and she came to church with me from a few weeks old and has grown up to appreciate friends of all ages in the church, especially when she came along with me to help with various rostered duties.

I know a number of our congregation are amused at my current blend of rostering on door duty, reading and coffee duty - sometimes all on the same day - as every other Sunday morning Michael, Grace and I visit Michael's 97 year old father in his care home.

Over the years I've served at Yarm as a pastoral visitor, attended the mission committee, served as a church steward and as a circuit and church council rep and helped in our Sunday crèche, making many friends along the way.

I have recently been asked to take on the role of Church Council Secretary so I find that, instead of working alongside extremely competent secretaries supporting me during my working life, I am now serving the church using computer skills acquired through osmosis from the former and becoming adept in regularly begging help from a daughter who it seems has grown up with a wealth of technological knowledge since she was born!

I expect people will bear with me in this respect and I look forward to serving our church in this new way and will be a willing learner - but in reality I expect I'll also wing it or muddle through things on a daily basis.

Little change for Judi Breckon there then!