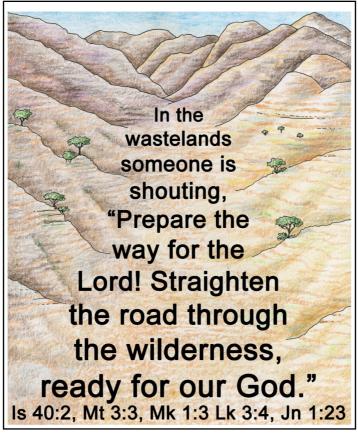
The Messenger

The magazine of the Bridge Church, Otley





The official Magazine of the Bridge United Reformed Church, Otley

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Email: jason.mccullagh@otleybridgechurch.org.uk

Messenger letter

Dear Friends,

What will 2025 be like, I wonder? Much of it will be shaped by events beyond our control and I imagine that many of the stories which have shaped 2024 will continue to shape 2025.

Perhaps a better question to ask is what we will take into this new year?

As we prepared to celebrate Christmas we at The Bridge, like many others, lit Advent candles, four candles, always produces a smile, one for each Sunday in Advent. These candles can hold various meanings and we thought about hope, love, joy, and peace. In our worship we reflected on the fragility of these treasures, and we looked at how we can nurture them. On Christmas Day, when we lit the final candle for Jesus, we celebrated how these treasures find expression in him. Hope, love, joy, and peace, this is what we can take into the new year.

I am not one for making New Year's resolutions, they are too easy to forget, but I do make a commitment that I will try and do something and try to live in such a way that I make a difference. My thoughts are now focused on how I might be the bearer of hope, how I might share love, show joy, and foster peace.

I will not be able to bring an end to the wars that scar our world, nor heal the divisions that shape our politics, but I think I could make a difference to those around me.

If we begin with those around us that can spread and make a difference to the family that we belong to and the community that we live in. Who knows where it might go from there?

I wish you a very happy New Year may it be filled with hope, love, joy and peace and may they radiate from you and make a difference to others.

Jason

MINISTER'S REGISTER: 1st December 2024 – 9th February 2025

FUNERALS

5th December Mr Chris Mallows The Bridge Church

Rawdon Crematorium

17th December Mrs Mavis Evans Rawdon Crematorium

18th December Miss Sybil Shepherd The Bridge Church

6th January Mrs Shirley Stokes Rawdon Crematorium





PREACHING PLAN 16th February – 13th April 2025

Sunday 16th February – Sixth Sunday of Epiphany Mrs Sheila Ackerman Jason is on holiday

Sunday 23rd February – Seventh Sunday of Epiphany Taste and See Service

Reverend Joe Amoah

Sunday 2nd March – Transfiguration Sunday

This Service is still to be arranged. Jason is preaching elsewhere

Sunday 9th March – First Sunday in Lent 10:30am

Mr John Eveleigh Jason is leading Junior Church

6:00pm

Reverend Jason McCullagh Deuteronomy 26.1-11 and Luke 4.1-13

Sunday 16th March – Second Sunday in Lent Parade Service

Reverend Jason McCullagh Genesis 15.1-6

Sunday 23rd March – Third Sunday in Lent Taste and See Service

Reverend Jason McCullagh. Luke 13, 1-9

Sunday 30th March – Fourth Sunday in Lent – Mothering Sunday

Reverend Jason McCullagh Luke 15. 103, 11b-32

Sunday 6th April -Fifth Sunday in Lent - Passion Sunday Sacrament of Holy Communion

Sacrament of Holy Communion Reverend Jason McCullagh.

Psalm 26 and John 12.1-8

Sunday 13th April - Palm Sunday

Reverend Jason McCullagh Luke 19, 28-40

FAMILY CHURCH WEEKEND

THE HAYES CONFERENCE CENTRE, SWANWICK, DERBYSHIRE.

FRIDAY 19TH TO SUNDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER 2025



We are beginning to plan for our first Family Church Weekend since 2019 – we have a date, and a venue – now we just need you!!

If you would like to come and be part of a great weekend we need to know by Sunday 16^{th} March 2025 – and we will need a deposit of £30.

The weekend will include plenty of all-age group work, free time, and we will organise visits to local attractions and family worship.

The full cost of the weekend is as follows;

Adults	£228
Children under 16	Free

If you would like to stagger your payments over the course of 2025, we will have an 'easy payment plan in place. So, if you would like to go please speak to either Chris Beckwith or Enid Taylor.



Birth

Love and congratulations go to Jessica and Rob Spivey on the birth of their first baby, Aurelia Grace on the 3rd of January 2025 at Harrogate Hospital. Aurelia is the first Granddaughter for Alison and Dean Finlay and first Great-Granddaughter for Angela and Michael Rhodes and surprised all her family by arriving 10 weeks early, weighing 3lb 12oz. After spending a little while in the specialist baby unit in York, Aurelia progressed well enough to be moved back to Harrogate Hospital on the 14th January, making life a little easier for her family. Hopefully it will not be too long until she finally is able to be taken home.

Engagement

Our congratulations to Nick Butler and Natalie Field following their engagement on the 13th of December 2024, they are planning to marry some time in 2026. It was a delight to share a wonderful buffet lunch which they had generously provided for everyone to help them celebrate after worship on the 19th January. It was a lovely time of fellowship and gave us all a chance to celebrate with them both, and including little Ruby of course!

Wedding

We were pleased to hear that Daphne Potter was well enough to be able to travel to Wortley near Sheffield to attend her son's wedding. Jonathan and Hilary were married on the 7th December 2024 and Daphne thoroughly enjoyed their happy day.

Anniversaries

Congratulations also go to Jean and Geoff Padgett who will be celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary on the 14th of February. Jean and Geoff were married on the 14th of February 1975 at Guiseley Register Office and that was followed by a blessing at St John's Parish Church in Menston. We hope you enjoy however you will be celebrating your special day and send our love to you both.

Gwen Hughes has achieved 50 years of membership, after being brought into membership here on the 5th of January 1975. Our love and congratulations go to you Gwen on such an achievement.

Do please continue to pass on items of good news you wish to share with any of the pastoral elders, thank you.

Margaret Armitage

FRANK & JEAN DALE

In the last few months the Church learnt of the deaths of Frank in October, and then his wife Jean in January. Frank and Jean, with their daughters Karen & Julie, moved to St Richards Road, Otley in the late 1960s and became involved with what was then Otley Congregational Church, becoming church members in 1970. Frank worked for the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB), along with quite a few other Bridge Church members.

The Dale family threw themselves into the life of the church and when the eldership was expanded following the formation of the URC, Frank was elected an elder in March 1973. He was Chairman of the Every Person Challenge (EPC) Committee for a number of years, when EPC was at the centre of church life. In September 1987, the Bridge Church gave him leave of absence from the eldership to lead, alongside the Rev Andrew Francis, the

Inner West Leeds Project of the United Reformed Church.

Following the privatisation of the electricity industry the CEGB was broken up and as a result, in 1990, the Dale family moved to Gloucestershire.

We hold Jean and Frank's family in our thoughts and prayers and give thanks for all that they brought to the life of the Bridge Church.

Andrew Howard

NEW YOUTH, CHILDREN & FAMILY ENABLER APPOINTED - SERVING THE EIGHT CHURCHES IN OUR MISSION & CARE GROUP.

Just before Christmas we heard the good news that Tony Harris has been appointed as the Wilderness Hub worker serving the eight churches in our Mission & Care Group.



Tony was born in the Midlands and is married with four children - all boys.

Tony took up his post on 27th January, and he will be visiting the Bridge Church during his induction – we very much look forward to meeting and working with him.



Editors note: apologies but this letter should have been published in the last edition of The Messenger.

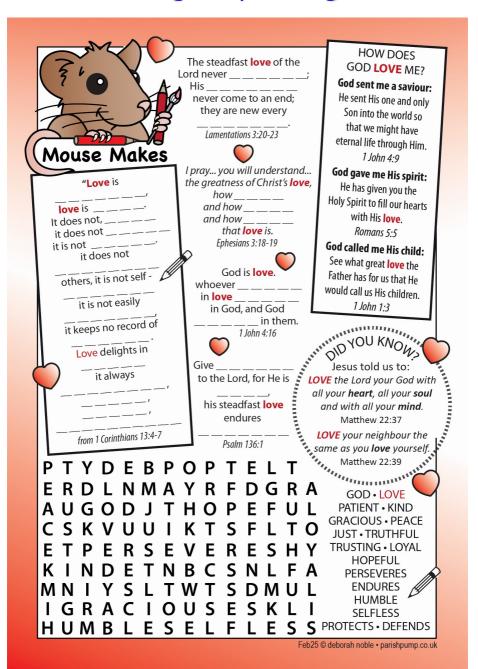
Dear Friends

I would just like to thank the congregation for all their thoughts and prayers while we have been having an eventful time. I would also like to thank you all for the beautiful flowers, they were so appreciated.

Oh, and also Noah would like to send a quick message to thank you for the warm welcome he received when he was in church for the Remembrance service, and he is looking forward to being back at Christmas.

Sue Dockar

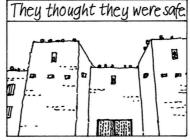
Young Peoples Pages

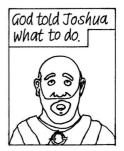


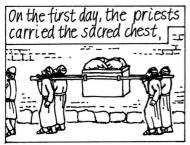
A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Joshua chapter 6 verses 1-27 Joshua led the Israelites across the river Jordan. They camped near the town of Jericho and prepared to fight.









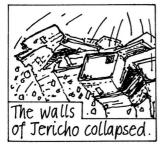


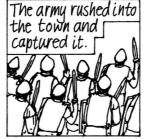














The Doctor and the Patient





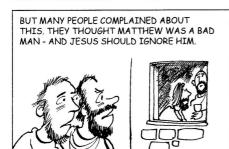


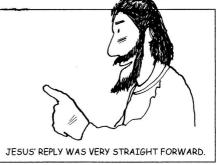
BUT SOME WERE EXTRA SPECIAL. THESE WERE HIS 'DISCIPLES'.

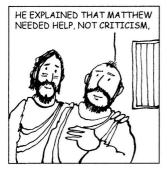














Pastoral Visiting Team

Not everyone will be aware that for some years now we have had a Pastoral Visiting Team. Our team has recently had a couple of changes to the members, and we thought now would be a good opportunity to just highlight our presence. The team is co-ordinated by the Pastoral and Fellowship elders, and they supplement the pastoral care given by the elders and by Jason. This could be in the form of a telephone call or a visit. The team is currently made up of:

Karen Gardiner John Parker Michael Rhodes Liz Wilkinson

If you think you would benefit from being contacted, please do let any of the members of the team know, or by contacting any of the Pastoral & Fellowship Elders or Jason. Just to clarify, the current members of the Pastoral & Fellowship Elders and their contact details are listed on the back page of The Messenger

Thank you, Margaret Armitage

New Members

During our service on Sunday 2nd February two new members were formally received into membership. Welcome Janet and Les Marsden, who are pictured with Christine, their elder and with Jason, our Minister and John, our church secretary.



What's the Big Idea? - An Introduction to the gospel of Luke

Luke is the third of the synoptic gospels. The gospel and Acts were both written for Theophilus, a Roman official, who acted as Luke's patron to ensure that his gospel was copied and distributed. It was intended for a wider audience, to help both Gentile believers and unbelievers understand who Jesus is and that the gospel is intended for the whole world.

Luke's account of Jesus' life and ministry can be divided into 4 main sections: the coming and early life of Jesus (1:1-4:13); Jesus' ministry in and around Galilee (4:14-9:50); His ministry (mainly teaching) on the road to Jerusalem (9:51-24:53) and His final week in Jerusalem (19:28-24:53).

For Luke, the key focus is how God's plan of salvation for the world is fulfilled in Jesus. Therefore, he writes an orderly account ranging from the birth of Jesus to His ascension. He is a strong champion of the outsider. As an outsider himself (a Gentile writer in the NT) he shows how Jesus includes those who are typically seen as outsiders by the religious establishment of His day. This includes women, the poor and sinners (incl. tax collectors, prostitutes and shepherds!), as well as showing how Gentiles, Samaritans and Jews are all included in God's plan of salvation. Luke also emphasises the importance of prayer in Jesus' ministry and the role of the Holy Spirit.

A key verse which reflects this perspective is found when Jesus encounters the tax collector Zacchaeus, 'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost' (19:10). Whenever we find ourselves on the outside of God's life and love, as Zacchaeus, Jesus comes to find us and welcome us afresh into His kingdom.

NEXT MESSENGER

Material for the next edition of the Messenger should be in the hands of the Editor by Sunday, 30^{th} March and will be available for collection on Sunday, 14^{th} April 2025 If possible, please send by e-mail to:

messenger@otleybridgechurch.org.uk

Women's Meeting

We started the run up to Christmas on Monday 2nd December when Margaret Crossfield entertained us. She made several Christmas posies which were later raffled off. She demonstrated how to make bows and made posies from red, pink and white roses with eucalyptus, rosemary and other greenery. She told us little rhymes and generally made us laugh with her amusing commentary!

Jason kept the theme with a prayer and hymn. We sang for the birthday girls, and afterwards had tea and biscuits.

The lucky posy winners went home with their prizes.

At the last meeting before Christmas on Monday 16th December, Jason opened the meeting with his choice of carol, 'Hark the Herald Angels sing'. This had been voted the Bridge Church's favourite carol by members and friends. Jason told us the history of the carol, and at one time it had twelve verses.

Then the 'Ladies Please' choir entertained us with a selection of songs and carols, which we were invited to join in! They sang their wonderful descants and with Dorrie Clarke at the helm and Mike at the piano, it was a lovely start to the festive season.

Pam Bradley

Unfortunately our meeting on Monday 6th January 2025 was cancelled because of bad snow!

On Monday 20th January 2025 we had Malcolm Johnson talking to us about Children's Favourites in the 1960's, we heard records ranging from Bernard Cribbins, Charlie Drake, Adam Faith to Clive Dunn.

The presenter was "Uncle Mac" for many years then Ed Stewart took over. Some singers died in their 40's and some were still alive in their 90's! Sadly, we found out that some artists had very dubious backgrounds and so our opinion of

them changed! We had a lovely afternoon of nostalgia and joined in the tunes.

Carol Smith

Please note the change of programme for 3rd March, which was due to be the AGM which will be held at a later date.

BRIDGE CHURCH LENT CHALLENGE 2025

We are, once again, challenging members to support, throughout Lent, the Shine Project in the West Bowling area of Bradford.

For the last few years, during the 6 weeks of Lent we have collected a mountain of groceries and supplies for the Shine Food Bank – and this year we want to do the same.

The Shine Project is based at St Stephen's Church in West Bowling, serving one of the most deprived areas in the country.

Shine deliver a range of projects, as well as the Food Bank to serve their local community.



Can you buy an item each day in Lent and bring it to church with you, and Sunday by Sunday we'll see the pile grow!

Please see Shine's poster, or pick up a flyer to see the items that they are in most need of!

Lent this year starts 5th March.

SYBYL SHEPHERD - A TRIBUTE

A eulogy for Sybil was delivered by a cousin. These are tributes made by Jason and some of Sybil's Church friends which Jason read.

Sybil Shepherd was a deeply loved member of this church. She became a member on 3rd October 1965 and has given devoted, and selfless service, ever since. She sang in the choir, she served as an Elder, she was the very definition of pastoral care, and she prayed. Even when she was not able to worship here, due to her declining health, she still wanted to know what was going on, she still asked after people and, in what was to be our final conversation, she asked me to send her love to her Church family. It was a privilege to serve her as her Minister.

In June 2019 I took Sybil and Dorthy Clegg to visit Dorothy Catling, a member here who had moved away to a Home in Sheffield. I knew Dorothy and so was greeted warmly when I walked into the room, Dorothy Clegg followed and was greeted warmly but then Sybil came into the room and Dorothy Catling's face lit up, in a way I will never forget, and said: Sybil! Dorothy and I were not really required as these two friends enjoyed each other's company once more. I knew on that day what a special person Sybil was.

There are others who have known Sybil longer and more deeply than I and so today I am pleased to share their memories as we, her Church family, pay tribute to her.

I begin with Dorothy Clegg: "Sybil was a completely honest and thoroughly good person. She was a loyal friend who never spoke a bad word about anyone. I really got to know her well when my husband was poorly and I was still working and she would spend many an afternoon keeping him company, and he always enjoyed Sybil's calm conversation. She also shared companionship with Hilda Wright, (Jennifer's Mum) and Mirella's father in the same way. Sybil loved being busy in the Church, helping where needed and singing in the choir, and she was a good pianist too. She did not like shopping or cooking but was happy to meander round the countryside in her little car finishing with a good meal out.

She worked very happily at Johnson's Nurseries (pre- Steven Smiths) and was always glad to help anyone with weeding etc. in their own garden. She always looked forward to the annual visit to Hodsock Priory for their snowdrop display, sitting by the huge log fire in the woods. Sybil was no shrinking violet and was once heard giving a right dressing down to an official at Wentworth Woodhouse when we arrived for the opening of a new conservatory only to find it closed. But the laugh was actually on us - we should have gone to Wentworth Castle!

Catherine Holmes also had a long friendship with Sybil and shares these memories: Sybil and I became good friends over a number of years. We shared a birthday (I was three days older and if Sybil became bossy I joked that she had to behave as I was three days older). We made a point of going out for afternoon tea to many different places - one year we went to Leeds City Varieties to see The Good Old Days - Sybil knew all the words to every song as music was one of her passions as we sang along to the music of the '50s and '60s, we laughed but did not dance!! She loved to play her piano especially hymns as she was a dedicated Christian.

She loved to visit places where she grew up and went to school, it made her especially happy when her cousin Geoffrey visited and took her out to familiar places from her youth. They also shared a similar birthday date.

Lots of people knew Sybil over the local area and loved her dedication and kindness, which was beyond words. We decided that we would be known as Ruth and Catherine as we grew older, but we could not turn back time! Some of Sybil's other interests included horse racing and snooker - to watch not play. On one of our visits to Bradford whilst we were standing near some crossing lights a young, very smart Asian gentleman stood in the middle of us taking our arms, one on each side of him and we crossed the road.

We headed for Bradford Cathedral where we met a group of ladies who were working on a new cover for the altar, they invited us to have a cup of tea with them and we then left to go to a lovely restaurant for afternoon tea. So many memories that I have cherished from our time together which will stay in my heart.

Christine Pollard says: "I had the privilege of serving as a pastoral elder with Sybil. We often visited people together, she was so caring and kind to those who were ill and housebound, I learnt a lot from her. When she wasn't visiting, she was always willing to provide transport for people to church and to meetings. Sybil, in her guiet way, did so much for many people, a true Christian lady who had great faith.

Gill Chapman described Sybil as a good friend full of kindness and discretion.

Sybil Shepherd has been a valuable and much-loved member here and what these four friends have shared has been repeated to me many times since she died. She was a true Christian disciple, whose whole life reflected her faith. We will always cherish her memory here

Sybil Shepherd died on 17th November 2024 aged 80 years. Her funeral service was held at The Bridge Church on Wednesday 18th December 2024.



We have had some really lovely meetings coming up to Christmas beginning with the 'LADIES PLEASE' singing group in November, they gave us a selection of coming up to Christmas beginning with well known and popular songs. December is always a special with a

lovely Christmas dinner (provided by our volunteers who always cook lovely food) and we had music from the 'UKELADIES' group from the Trefoil Guild always popular with our members, they played a selection of Christmas music.

January was rather different as the weather was against us and I felt it was advisable to cancel the speaker. However, Jason and Noah stepped up and gave us a 'How are you settling into your first year at University?' interview giving us some insight into student life. This was followed by Jason's account of his visit, some years ago, to Taiwan. It was very impressive especially as they both had had only 5 minutes warning that we needed a 'stand in' speaker!!

Enid Taylor

CHURCH DIARY - FEBRUARY - MARCH 2025

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 17^{th -} 'Don't lose your horse' - an Irish adventure— Kath Padgett.

March 3rd - 'May contain Turkish delight' - Rev. Mirella Moxon

March 17th - 'The life of Dame Cecily Saunders' - Denise Adlard.

March 31st - Winter in Mongolia - Michelle Morris.

Food and Friends 1st Wednesday of each month at 10.30 a.m.

March 5th and April 2nd.

T Club - 4th Thursday of each Month

February 27th - AGM and Fish and Chip Supper. March 27th - Pura Vida Costa Rica - Susan Preston.

Supper Club—3rd Thursday of each month at 7.30 p.m.

February 20th - A Traveller in France - Bernard Sutcliffe S March 20th - Changes in Journalism over the years - Mark Dexter.

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

 10^{th} February, 24^{th} February, 10^{th} March, 24^{th} March and 7^{th} April.

Messy Church - 1st March.

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Comments and statements printed in the Messenger are not necessarily the opinions of the Editor or the Bridge United Reformed Church (Otley)





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