

Brunswick News



August - September 2026

Learning to Notice

We live in a world that rarely encourages us to slow down. Everything seems to demand our attention, and usually all at once. Faster transport, faster communication, faster food, faster entertainment. We have become remarkably good at moving quickly, but perhaps less practised at simply noticing.

Recently, I did something I'd never done before. I went to hear one of my favourite DJs, David Holmes, playing at my local social club. The unusual part wasn't the music - it was that I went on my own.



At first, it felt slightly awkward. What do you do when you arrive by yourself? Where do you stand? Does everyone know you're on your own? It didn't take long to realise that nobody was paying the slightest bit of attention to me. They were there for the music, just as I was.

As the evening unfolded, I found myself doing something I hadn't expected. I stopped thinking about myself and started paying attention. To the music. To the atmosphere. To the people. To the joy of hundreds of strangers sharing a common experience. There was a surprising sense of community, even among people who had never met.

That experience stayed with me because, at the same time, I've been reading Timothy Morton's *All Art Is Ecological*. One of Morton's central ideas is that ecology isn't just about protecting nature. It begins with learning to notice the relationships that already exist around us. We are deeply connected to one another, to the places we inhabit, and to the natural world that sustains us.

It struck me that this isn't a new idea. Jesus often invited people to begin not with answers but with attention. In the Sermon on the Mount he says: "Look at the birds of the air... Consider the lilies of the field..." (Matthew 6:26-28)

Before speaking about trust, anxiety or God's provision, Jesus invites his listeners simply to look. The birds and the flowers become teachers, reminding us that the Divine presence is often discovered in the ordinary rhythms of creation.

Over the last few months in my other role at the coast, we've been exploring nature through the seasons. We've talked about growth, change, storms, healing and the beauty of the natural world. What has become increasingly clear is that nature isn't simply a backdrop to our lives. It invites us into relationship. A walk in the woods, the changing colours of the trees, birdsong early in the morning, blackberries ripening in the hedgerows, these are not just pleasant experiences. They can become moments of encounter if we are willing to slow down enough to notice them.

The slow movement has long argued that many of the best things in life cannot be hurried. A strawberry picked in season, ripened by sunshine, tastes very different from one forced to grow out of season. In much the same way, character, faith and relationships cannot be manufactured. They develop slowly, nourished over time.

Perhaps this is why the Bible so often speaks of fruit as a sign of the Divine's work within us. Fruit grows naturally from a healthy connection to the vine. It cannot be forced, only nurtured.

As we move through the summer months, perhaps we might take Jesus' invitation seriously. Look at the birds. Consider the flowers. Notice the people around you. Pay attention to the places you pass every day. In a culture that values speed, simply noticing may be one of the most spiritual things we can do.

Who knows what we might discover when we begin to look a little more closely?

Peace and Light, *Rob*

Paul's Sabbatical

I thought it would be helpful if I shared a little about my forthcoming sabbatical which I shall be taking over two periods. These will be: 19th September - 19th November and then 11th January – 14th February (2027). As we are blessed to have a Ministry Team at Brunswick, there will be natural cover from Bill & Rob over these two periods but also we will have the added support of other Circuit Ministers as and when they may be needed.

One of the aims of my sabbatical will be to give time to considering other church models where there is a cross-cultural dimension as we have. This will, I hope,

include one or two visits to meet and talk with people. As many of you know, my mother is also hoping to move up to live in the North-East and, as she has Alzheimer's, I hope to be able to give her particular support as she moves from a village where she has lived for over 60 years. Thank you for the warmth of the welcome you always give to her when she joins worship with us.

I shall be working closely with my sabbatical support group to ensure that any necessary cover will be put in place but if you do have anything which you would like to raise with me in connection with the periods when I shall be away, please do come and see me.

Every blessing
Paul

This is a short series from BBC Radio 4 that has aired recently. It is very interesting, challenging, and also hopeful!

Church Going

Rev Giles Fraser is a priest in the Church of England, concerned about the current state of church attendance. His parish is doing well but like most priests, he's nervous about the numbers and notes the overall decline in worship since the sixties. He considers the poem 'Church Going' by Philip Larkin as his starting point. It imagines what will happen to these buildings, and to Christian faith, when we stop going to church entirely. Is Giles now a missionary in a world that is indifferent to what he has to say? With this thought, he sets off to work out where we are, talking to people on the ground and experts in the field.

In the first episode (of three), Giles finds out how fellow clergy cope with the stress that comes with falling numbers, witnesses the last service at a Methodist church in Northumberland, returns to Oxford where he trained as priest and finds out why we have so many churches in the first place.

Here is the link to the series of programmes:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m002yvr9>

Church News

Joint Service

Sunday 6th September marks the start of the new Connexional year and it felt a good opportunity to make a statement of togetherness and community spirit. In order to celebrate the wider community at Brunswick and mark an intention to further develop those relationships, we are sharing in a joint service which will be held with both the Chinese congregation and Recovery Church. Invitations will also go out to the other groups that use the building throughout the week. In order to symbolise the fact that no one group is leading the service, it will start at 11am rather than 10.45am or 1pm. It would be wonderful to have a wide spread of representation at this service which promises to be a joyous occasion. If you would like to participate in the service please do let Bill know. We will be having food together in the hall after the service.

Our **Coffee Shop** is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10:30am until 1pm. During August the Coffee Shop will only be open on Saturdays.



Quiz Afternoon! After the success of the quiz in March this year, we will hope to have as good a time again, on Saturday 6th March 2027 in the afternoon. More details to follow!

NOVUM Festival 7-9 August

Since mentioning this at our Annual Meeting, there have been several venue changes. A Room in Bloom will now take place at High Bridge Works, 39 High Bridge, NE1 1EW, and not at Brunswick. However, another project within NOVUM is The Secret Parade which will introduce a series of small permanent artworks embedded within the exterior brickwork of Brunswick Church. The work will form part of a wider Newcastle city centre art trail, inviting community groups and Brunswick's congregation to participate in creating a lasting public artwork woven into the fabric of the building.

For more details about the Festival, look at the website: <https://novumnewcastle.com>

Annual Church Meeting 2027

Our Annual Church Meeting next year will be on Sunday 25th April during and after morning worship.

Church Council Meetings

Church Council: Tuesday 13th October 2026 at 7.15pm; Tuesday 23rd February at 7.15pm.

Lunch

The usual Light Lunch will take place on Sunday 2nd August in Room 3 after morning worship. On Sunday 6th September there will be a Bring and Share Lunch in the Hall following our United Service. All Welcome!

Induction Service

The Induction service for Rev Ed Butlin will be held at Trinity Church, Gosforth on Saturday 5th September at 2pm followed by refreshments in the Tyne Hall. Please do join Trinity's congregation for this special service to welcome their new minister, at which all are welcome.

The **Great North Run** takes place on Sunday 13th September, so be prepared for public transport disruption!

Congratulations!

As some of you will know, I have been attending the RLSS Lifeguard course over the past month and I would like to share the good news that I passed, although after my last visit to the pool, it might be me that needs saving! Thank you to all those who have supported and cheered me on - it's greatly appreciated, and we did have a lot of fun on the course, too. Martin B



News by email

If you would like to receive Brunswick News magazine and/or the Sunday Notices by email, please contact Fiona in the Church Office on fiona@brunswickmethodist.org.uk

Brunswick Away Day 22nd May 2027

At our Annual Meeting in May it was suggested that we could think again about having a Church Away Day, having had to cancel the one planned for June 2020 because of the pandemic. As a meeting, we expressed interest in this, so it has now been booked, and we can look forward to spending a day together at Cullercoats Methodist Church on Saturday 22nd May 2027, from 10.00am to 3.30pm! Obviously, plans and preparations are in the early stages, but, as already shared with the Church Council (see the Minutes of 18th June), we hope to use the day to reflect on fruitfulness and growth in our congregation. More details to follow! In the meantime, put the date in your diary!



Cullercoats Bay



Cullercoats Methodist Church



Cullercoats Methodist Church

Forthcoming Worship Services

Date	Time	Preacher
2 nd August	10.45am	Rev Paul Cleever-Thorpe – Holy Communion
9 th August	10.45am	Mr Rob Wylie
16 th August	10.45am	Mr David Stabler and Mr Frank Lai
23 rd August	10.45am	Deacon Bill Topping
30 th August	10.45am	Rev Paul Cleever-Thorpe
6 th September	11.00am	United Service (Recovery Church, English- and Chinese-speaking congregations)
13 th September	11.00am	Rev Paul Cleever-Thorpe – Holy Communion
20 th September	10.45am	Mrs Chris Carroll and Mr Paul Major
27 th September	10.45am	Deacon Bill Topping
4 th October	10.45am	Rev Alison Wilkinson – Holy Communion
11 th October	10.45am	Deacon Bill Topping – Harvest Festival
18 th October	10.45am	Margaret Storey
25 th October	10.45am	Mr Rob Wylie and Deacon Bill Topping

Please note: our services on 6th and 13th September will both be starting at **11.00am**

The **Great North Run** takes place on Sunday 13th September, so be prepared for public transport disruption!

Brunswick Methodist Church

Should you wish to make a financial contribution to the work of our church you can make a donation by bank transfer using the bank details below. All contributions would be gratefully accepted. Thank you.

Lloyds Bank

Brunswick Methodist Church

Sort code 30-93-71 Account Number 00254644



Walk and Talk 2026 邊走邊說 2026



Join us for a Saturday morning walk in and around our fantastic city.
星期六早上與我們一起在這座奇妙的城市散步。

This is a great way to meet new people and get some fresh air and enjoy some conversation along the way.
這是結識新朋友、呼吸新鮮空氣、並享受交談的好方法。

Meeting at 10.30 am, our aim is to be finished by midday. Starting and finishing at Brunswick
10.30 am集合，我們的目標是中午前完成。在**Brunswick**開始和結束。

Each walk will have a refreshment stop en route.
每次步行途中，都會有一個茶點站。

9th May	10th Oct
13th June	14th Nov
11th July	12th Dec

This is hosted by our International Student Centre and our city centre Methodist Churches and is open to all
該活動由我們的國際學生中心和市中心衛理公會教會主辦，並歡迎所有有興趣人士參加。

For more information contact Rob Wylie through the church office:
email : fiona@brunswickmethodist.org.uk

欲了解更多資訊，請透過教會辦公室聯繫 **Rob Wylie**.
email: fiona@brunswickmethodist.org.uk

***Circuit Prayer Walk 巡迴區禱告步行**

Sunshine and Showers: Prayer

The Methodist Church asks the question: **"Are you looking for ways to refresh and re-energise the way your community prays?"**

Prayer is fundamental to our faith. It is how we communicate with God and the fuel that powers our worship, evangelism, mission and discipleship. Like sunshine, prayer brings warmth, joy and light to hidden places. Like rain, it nourishes us, helping our faith to grow and flourish.

Yet, for many of us, prayer can also be one of the most challenging aspects of following Jesus. It is full of mystery and paradox. Sometimes prayer feels effortless; at other times it can seem difficult or uncertain. Rather like the classic British weather forecast of "sunshine and showers", our prayer lives can be varied, surprising and full of God's unexpected presence.

With this in mind, we are delighted to announce that Brunswick Church will be launching a new **Prayer Group**. Initially meeting once a month on a Sunday morning before worship, the group will explore a variety of ways to pray. Together we'll discover creative ideas and different forms of prayer, share experiences, encourage one another, and spend time praying together.

Our first meeting will take place on **Sunday 27th September at 10.00am** in the **Prayer Room at Brunswick Church**, finishing in plenty of time for morning worship. Our hope is also to meet monthly online, on a weekday evening, for those who would like to pray together.

Whether you are confident in prayer, just beginning your journey, or simply curious to explore new ways of praying, you are warmly invited to join us. Everyone is welcome, and the welcome will be very warm indeed!

As Paul encourages us:

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 (NRSV)

We hope you'll come along and discover the blessings of praying together.

Alyson Hampshire

Long Running Dedication

A dedicated 71-year-old Methodist has been honoured for his commitment to raising funds for Action for Children, taking part in an amazing 41 Great North Runs in aid of the charity.

David Stabler, from Newcastle upon Tyne, thinks he must have raised almost £80,000 and huge awareness for Action for Children in the many years he has been taking part in the half-marathon challenges.

His commitment to the charity has now been recognised, winning the prestigious Supporter Award at the Stephenson Awards organised by the Methodist-founded charity. Held annually, the awards celebrate the achievements of children, young people, carers, volunteers, staff, and supporters who contribute to safe and happy childhoods through Action for Children.

The Great North Run is a 13-mile route from Newcastle upon Tyne to South Shields and proves a hardy challenge for even the fittest runners. This year the event takes place on 13 September and will likely draw the usual huge crowds of runners and spectators.

David, who attends Brunswick Methodist Church in Newcastle, said: “Winning the award means a great deal to me, it is a very real privilege. I am now 71 and have supported Action for Children for most of my life. But it is incredibly sad that the work of Action for Children is still needed in the 21st century, actually even more so. I was very moved by the award event, especially to hear about the Young Super Stars.

“I think that last year was my 41st GNR – for at least 38 of them I have run in aid of Action for Children. I did run to support one small church in our circuit in the early days. This year will be the 46th Great North Run - it started on 28th June 1981. This year will be my 42nd and yes, I shall run in aid of Action for Children.”

Beyond David's fundraising, he also serves as a trustee for three charitable trusts that provide significant support to Action for Children's work in the north-east. These trusts fund a range of essential services, including children's homes and Breaking the Cycle, providing specialist domestic abuse counselling programmes.

He is also active in the local church as a local preacher, district property officer and church treasurer.

David plans to run again next year and has urged others in the Methodist Church to find ways to support Action for Children.

Action for Children started life as the National Children's Home (NCH), founded after a Methodist minister, the Revd Dr Thomas Bowman Stephenson, saw some children living rough under the arches of Waterloo Station in 1869 and stopped to listen to their stories. He was passionate about social justice and when he moved to London, he challenged the Methodist Church to take action to help children living on the streets, leading to the creation of the NCH. In 1994 it became NCH Action for Children and in 2008 was renamed Action for Children.

For further information on Action for Children or to donate, visit their website at: [actionforchildren.org.uk](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

This article appeared on the Methodist Church website on 23rd June 2026 – <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/our-stories/long-running-dedication/>

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Beth and Bharat's Wedding

On 26th June about 15 members of our congregation were delighted to attend Beth and Bharat's wedding - it was a very happy occasion! Beth and Bharat would like to thank everyone who came to the wedding, and the whole congregation for supporting them – they both feel very blessed.



BRUNSWICK CLUB PROGRAMME
September 2026 to February 2027

**Meetings are held in the Hall
on Tuesdays between 10.30 and noon**

Date	Speaker	Subject
Sept 8	Marion Anderson	Bernard Gilpin – Forgotten Angel of the North
15	Alan Spoors	Bywell – A Village of Mystery
22	Sue English	Impressions of Madagascar and Africa
29	Peter Weighell	Short Stories and Poems in Dialect
Oct 6	Ray Calbourn	Mount Stuart
13	Liz Finch	Belsay – A Journey Through Time
20	Steve Shippen	Does Life begin at Fortyish?
27	Steve Lowe	Does Life begin at Fortyish?
Nov 3	Peter Walsh	Victoria Viaduct
10	Freda Thompson	A Night at the Pictures
17	Paul Knight	Who is my Neighbour: Stories of Tyneside
24	Malcolm Smith	Robert Stephenson
Dec 1	Alistair Hain	Mindfulness and Meditation
8	Carol Service	
2027		
Jan 5	Geoff Hughes	How the World Celebrates New Year
12	Peter Annable	Outstanding in His Field
19	Liz Finch	Goddard House - Built on Love and Chocolate
26	Prof Neville Harris	Last of the Summer Wine
Feb 2	Martin Disbray	Frankenstein and Lord Byron
9	Robert Moon	Three Queens – The Christian Names of Queen Elizabeth
16	Gwen Keating	Visitors to Newcastle
23	Peter Reynolds	Travel by Camera

No charge for first time visitors



North East Methodist History Society

The autumn lecture will take place on 10th October at North Billingham Methodist Church (Marsh House Avenue, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, TS23 3ET) at 2.30pm. The speaker will be Rev David Lees and the subject will be the History of Methodism in Shetland. This meeting will be followed by the AGM of the Society.

Newcastle upon Tyne District Spring Synod

The Newcastle upon Tyne District representative spring synod took place at Strathmore Road church. It was led by District Chair the Rev Jona Sewell. He explained that synod would be trying to see 'the big picture'. Former Vice-President of the Methodist Conference Carolyn Godfrey and Liddy Buswell, who had been part of the Methodist peace pilgrimage to South Korea, were visiting speakers.

Ms Godfrey shared reflections from her year as Vice-President, including thoughts on the places she had visited and the people she had met. These were ordinary people doing everyday things for God. Those present were asked 'What is the ordinary thing that you can offer to God this week?'

She brought with her a blanket made up of separately crocheted squares. Those who had contributed had the same pattern, the same yarn and the same size crochet hook but everyone crocheted with a different tension so the squares were uneven. However, once they were sewn together, it all seemed to work. Similarly, the Body of Christ thrives when each brings their own gifts. No contribution is wasted and everyone has a part to play.

Ms Buswell explained that last year she had been selected to be part of the Methodist peace pilgrimage to South Korea. The team was made up of one third Koreans, one third Americans and one third from other countries. The experience

had been challenging, but also beautiful and had profoundly shaped her faith. She posed the following questions: How do we condemn war without glorifying it? How do we shed light on darkness, on things that our institutions cover up? How do we avoid 'othering' people who are different from us? How do we navigate our own privilege in discussions, particularly around peace? Synod members were urged to pray for peace in the peninsula, be careful about how they refer to North Korea and to be aware of how war is discussed, particularly around Remembrance services. Could commemorating peace be a consideration?

Synod business included agreeing a new rolling-funding model for District roles; the continuation of the Assistant Chair role following a review; and, subject to Conference approval, the merger of the East Durham and Chester-le-Street circuits to become the Hope circuit.

A travel survey was carried out to help calculate the carbon footprint and members were also encouraged to share what they are doing with the spaces around their buildings as part of the Church Green Spaces competition.

Project officer with the Evangelism and Growth team Cameron Lee-Hume explained the idea of having a day each year dedicated to outreach and faith sharing. He explained that on 12th August 2026 a partial eclipse of the sun should be visible from the UK, with about 90% of the sun covered. The suggestion is to hold a community viewing event where churches can meet members of their community and practise sharing their faith.

It was a full and varied synod, leaving all those present better informed and with much to think about.

Christine Armstrong
Secretary to Synod

Taken from the Methodist Recorder, 29.05.2026

President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference 2026-27



The Revd Mark Slaney currently serves as Chair of the Scotland District and the Shetland District. Mark preached his first sermon at the age of 15. Prior to his ordination 24 years ago, Mark served 10 years in youth work plus jobs as a builder's mate, cleaner and van driver.

The Revd Mark Slaney says, "I am delighted and I feel honoured that the Conference has chosen to designate me as President for 2026. I am really looking forward to meeting as many Methodists and ecumenical partners as I can, as well as representing the Methodist Church in Great Britain and abroad."

Caroline Stead is a local preacher in the Yorkshire West District, where she is also the Synod Secretary. She is also an accompanist to a minister in training, serves on the Discerning Ordained Vocation (DOV1) Committee and on Chairs' nomination panels.

Caroline Stead says, "I am humbled and excited that the Conference has chosen to designate me as Vice-President for 2026. It is a privilege to serve the Church in this way and meet new and old friends around the Connexion."



President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, 2027-28



President Designate

The Revd Dr Jennifer Smith is a Methodist minister serving as Superintendent of the City Road Circuit. The Circuit incorporates Wesley's Chapel and Leysian Mission, the London church opened in 1778 for John Wesley, founder of Methodism. She also chairs the Global Relationships Committee of the Methodist Church in Great Britain and has a particular interest in the global work of Methodism in education. She has served across the Districts, Connexion, with overseas partners and is a regular contributor on BBC Radio 4.

Dr Smith said: "There has never been a more important time for our church to be a healing presence in our communities as we seek God's purpose for our future. It is an extraordinary privilege to be part of that work with Daniel and the whole of the Conference."



Vice-President Designate

Daniel Keen is an accredited local preacher and has served as a representative at Conference five times. He has been a member of the Conference Business Committee for three years and held various roles in the Church.

Daniel is a former teacher and now a pre-registration pharmacy technician and on the board of trustees for an academy trust in Stoke-on-Trent.

He is also strongly committed to heritage and to learning from it. Daniel said: "It is a great honour to be given the opportunity to serve the Church in this way. I am excited to work with Jennifer to further the Methodist cause and champion our values to all. As the Methodist Church looks forward it must not forget its history and roots – particularly in terms of social justice."

Taken from the website of the Methodist Church

Methodist attendance remains close to 100,000

Nearly 100,000 people were taking part in Methodist worship each week, while digital engagement continued to grow, according to a report to this year's Methodist Conference.

The triennial membership returns showed average weekly attendance in 2025 of 99,813 people, including more than 10,000 worshippers joining services online.

Attendance remained broadly stable across the past three years, with 2025 figures slightly higher than in 2024 and only marginally below those recorded in 2023.

The report also highlighted growing digital engagement. More than 364,000 worship resources were downloaded during the past year, social media audiences exceeded 65,000 and the Connexional website attracted more than half a million new visitors annually.

Thirty per cent of users were aged under 35.

The report pointed to signs of local growth, noting that 43 per cent of churches recorded confirmations, gains or transfers during 2025, while 21 per cent recorded overall growth.

However, membership continued to decline.

Adjusted figures suggested Methodist membership fell from 145,303 in 2023 to 129,697 in 2025. The report said membership had approximately halved over the past 20 years.

Despite that decline, the report argues that growing digital engagement and evidence of growth in a significant minority of churches offered grounds for hope.

Taken from the Methodist Recorder, 12.06.2026



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Submissions for future editions are welcomed

**Please forward these to Ruth Colclough or Fiona Wells
(fiona@brunswickmethodist.org.uk) by the 19 September 2026.**

**You should state clearly if the contribution is original
or indicate the source for copyright purposes.**

Due to limited space we cannot guarantee to include all submissions.

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