Egremont **Methodist** Church

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## Quarterly Newsletter

# September - November 2026


**Minister:**

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**01900** 823273

# Harvest

Soon it will be harvest, and I reproduce below one of my favourite harvest hymns. I love the last verse especially.

**Alec Bounds**

For the fruits of all creation,
thanks be to God;
for the gifts to every nation,
thanks be to God;
for the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe-keeping,
thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done;
in the help we give our neighbour,
God's will is done;
in our world-wide task of caring
for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,
thanks be to God;
for the good we all inherit,
thanks be to God;
for the wonders that astound us,
for the truths that still confound us,
most of all, that love has found us,
thanks be to God.

**Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)**

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# The Kindness of Strangers

On the recent Warm Space trip to Keswick by coach Douglas and I decided to take the open top bus to the end of the Borrowdale valley. The plan was to walk from Seatoller to Seathwaite and back - a short distance of about 2 miles - and return to Keswick by bus. However, things did not go to plan. Nearing Seathwaite I had an accident resulting in a bashed back of head and bleeding elbows. Although shocked I was able to get up and carry on. I knew that I wasn't too badly hurt.

What followed next was the 'silver lining 'attributed to every dark cloud.

It was a lonely, narrow road and we were the only ones on it apart from a couple of farmers tending their animals. A gentleman from a nearby campsite realised our predicament and came to help. He was very kind and offered the help of his wife's first aid kit to clean up my wounds. He owned the site and his whole extended family spent most summer weekends in Borrowdale. He took us to the family tent where we met his wife Asha, along with aunties, uncles and many beautiful children. The situation was explained and we were given a comfortable chair, a warm blanket, a cup of tea and a cake for sugar in case of shock. Asha cleaned up and dressed my elbows and offered to drive us back to Keswick or even to Beckermet if necessary. What overwhelming kindness! We felt embraced by love and the episode of the accident shrank into nothingness.

The family were Muslim and it was a privilege to chat with them. Asha spoke about her religion, and we spoke about ours, and there were many similarities. This family was born in Britain, but they also talked about the fear they now feel because of the racist element prevalent in our country. I hope that our encounter showed that there are those who accept the ethnicity of other races and respect the faiths which they follow. Their presence here adds a richness to life in Britain. God is the Creator. He didn't only create white British Christians. He created humankind and that includes everyone.

Our experience in Borrowdale will stay in our hearts for a long time. We have made friends with this lovely Muslim family, and we have promised to go back to see them again in September. We look forward to that.

**Linda McDevitte**

# Good Food

Food and refreshments play a major role in our church life and Egremont Methodist Church is well-known for its hospitality. As part of our mission, we are both a Fairtrade Church and an Eco Church. This means we consider the ethical and environmental impacts of our activities, which includes the food and drinks we provide.

I had assumed this was fairly normal for churches, so I was shocked by a recent article in the Methodist Recorder which said a multi-denominational survey by Green Christian found only 1 in 8 churches always take ethical issues into account when serving food or drink. Less than half said they normally serve Fairtrade tea or coffee, only a quarter provided vegetarian options and even less ever used local, free-range or organic food.

While there is always more we can do, I was pleased to feel our church is very strong in all of these areas. A big thank you to everyone who buys and prepares and serves the food and refreshments we enjoy so often. It is good to know that through these we are living out our mission of care for people and planet.

**Katie Bell**

# Our Solar Eclipse Viewing Party

Back in April, I put ‘Eclipse 2026: A Methodist Day of Outreach (12 August) – Community Viewing Event?’ on the Mission Meeting agenda. I was met with some interest and some suspicion! Anyway, we decided to investigate the possibility of a viewing party. Someone suggested St Bees beach as a good location. Nick had already been booked by Seascale Methodist Church, so it was planned that Samm and Emma would support our party.

Via the Coast to Fells Mission Community, we worked together with St Bees Priory, including Rev Dave Flitcroft, to prepare for the event, holding a couple of special meetings. I roped Gillian in to organise publicity and some children’s crafts. We decided to ‘splash out’ on 100 solar eclipse glasses, and to appeal for empty cereal packets to make pinhole viewers.

A few days before the event, we heard from ITV Border that they wanted to attend, and one day beforehand we also heard from the BBC! I arranged for them to interview Rev Emma Holroyd and Rev Dave Flitcroft (Vicar of St Bees Priory). I started to think that this event might be quite attractive to rather more people than we had planned for…

On the day of the party, Gillian was getting requests to the church Facebook page for eclipse glasses. I began to realise that the event was going to be quite big…

We started to set up at 4pm. We noticed that there were a lot of people already there, and some asked us what we were doing, asking if we were selling any eclipse glasses (which were going for >£20 per pair on the day). We said we would be giving eclipse glasses away for free from 5-30pm. At about 5-15pm a queue began to form, stretching into the distance! I realised even more that the event was going to be huge!

Soon after 5-30pm I had given out all 100 eclipse glasses, and the queue seemed to be no shorter! So some people were disappointed, but then a queue formed to make pinhole viewers, which needed a lot of support from Gillian, Chris, Karen, Katherine, Shona (plus friend) and Anne, who were kept incredibly busy helping adults (and a few children) make pinhole viewers out of empty cereal packets.

The car parks were full, and we were later informed that there were about **two thousand people present** altogether! There were people from Liverpool and Manchester, who had sought the most westerly point in the north-west of England. The event was humongous!

As most people didn't have eclipse glasses, I lent mine out on a temporary basis to a large number of people, who were genuinely grateful, and intrigued by what they could see through the glasses.

This is what people were looking at:

The bright arc in the photo isn't the moon; it's the part of the sun that *isn't* hidden by the moon, which looks black in this photo.

Just after the peak eclipse, Rev Emma Holroyd reflected on the eclipse and its spiritual meaning, referring to the darkness that we sometimes experience, but that there is hope of light to come, through Jesus. She led people in a prayer.

As we were packing up, a grandma came to tell us how thankful she was that we had arranged the event. She was quite emotional. That sort of response makes the event very worthwhile.

There were clips from St Bees on regional BBC & ITV news programmes on the day and the day after. Emma managed to get a spiritual dimension into her interview. As you can see (from a photo of our TV), she has been assigned to our church by ITV Border!

Rev Dave Flitcroft wrote afterwards 'It was great to be involved and amazing example of what God, churches working together, and a bit of advertising can accomplish.'

It remains for me to thank stewards and those who attended the two planning meetings: Gillian Bounds, Rev Dave Flitcroft, Alistair Bell, Dcn Samm Morris, Rev Emma Holroyd, Emma-Jane Taylor, Andy Lennox and Mike Banks. It was worth it!

**Alec Bounds**

[Editor: Susan Clements (née Crawford) wrote the following piece for the 150th anniversary, and it was available in the exhibition in a folder along with other people's memories. But you probably didn't have time to read it that weekend! It's a fascinating insight into times gone by…]

# Almost one hundred years of the Crawfords

My family history concerning Methodism in Egremont reaches back to 1930 when my Mother, Brenda Birbeck (7) and her family moved from the parish church to The Castle Methodist Church because the parish church was too cold!

My father, David Crawford, the seventh of nine children born into a Methodist family, attended Lowther Street Methodist Church in Whitehaven. He began preaching at 15, was recognised as a preacher at 18, developed his skills during WW2 and was a local preacher for 65 years.

My parents married at The Castle Methodist Church in August 1947, wearing their Sunday best. Their reception was in the Sunday School, and a challenge during rationing.

*Uniting churches?*

After a fire in the organ at The Main Street church and a tornado which took the roof off the manse on The Villas, a decision was made to unite the two churches. My grandmother, Florence Birbeck and my Father were trustees and fought for The Castle to be kept because it was undamaged, but The Main Street, though damaged, was larger, and had more congregation.

The Castle was sold to the Masons and the organ moved from The Castle to Main Street. Some of the congregation didn't return and were never seen in the church again (e.g. the organist, Mr Harold Richardson, the Sunday School Superintendent, Mr Wilkinson, the Bells who were the caretakers and Mrs Rayson). For 6 weeks, as a protest, my family didn't attend church. As a young child, I remember phrases like - they don't do things properly, they haven't a choir, there's no one who can bake, the communion cloth isn't starched, there are no socials and they are very poor singers!

Having realised the battle had been lost, we returned to church, with stipulations. No one would be a trustee, my sister and I wouldn't go to Sunday School, and we would arrive on time and leave immediately. A form of protest and deep divides which thankfully didn't last too long!!

Once I no longer went to SS in the afternoon, and my Mother had realised hymns were being chosen, which we didn't know, she decided Sunday afternoons would become choir practice time. She had a good singing voice and played the piano to a good standard so wet afternoons were devoted to exercising our lungs. Times change but my family never seemed to accept that they were part of a new community. It was always "them" and "us". They made no attempt to "unite".

*Memories of Church Life*

I have tried to remember the most memorable occasions within the life of the church. As a very young child, Joe Blinco (originally from Hensingham), the official evangelist of the British Methodist Conference, brought a Billy Graham Crusade to Whitehaven. Although it was long past my bedtime, each evening for a week, a bus took church members from outside the Egremont church to Lowther Street for a very lengthy service.

Church "Sales of Work" in the Market Hall were not to be forgotten - messy bran tubs, delicious teas with slabs of apple pie, a sweet stall and a second-hand toy stall. There

were reminders not to slide on the highly polished floors or down the banisters. Of course we were obedient! We were given money to spend and were always excited by the sweet stall. I was sometimes chosen to present either a bouquet to the person opening the sale or a buttonhole to the minister who had made an opening speech. Grandma embroidered tablecloths, and knitted baby clothes for weeks beforehand while my mother machined peg bags, aprons and pinafores. For several weeks before, Grandma went out "begging". She knocked on doors asking for donations for the sale. The reaction was mixed! I was intrigued by the way stalls were decorated. Canopies were erected and adorned with frills and pleats of brightly coloured crepe paper.

The annual toy service just before Christmas gave the WRVS plenty of toys to give to children in need. The Harvest Festival brought everyone together to decorate the church with flowers and fruit. We made a sheaf of corn from bread and packaged the fruit into small boxes for sale.

*Sundays*

"Sunday is a day of rest". Words I heard repeatedly. I wasn't allowed to read or play indoors, only to sit quietly on a chair. I wasn't allowed to play outside with other children and when they called, my Mother gave them a lecture about Sunday being a day of rest. Of course, there wasn't much time for rest. It was a frenetic day of rushing around trying to keep to schedules. It was a mile from home to The Castle church and that meant six miles of walking. A lot for little legs. At Main Street, Sunday School was during the morning service, one less journey, and the church was nearer.

Preachers often didn't have a car and came by bus. After preaching, they would visit another church in the afternoon or evening and needed a meal before travelling on. Consequently, we often had someone for lunch. My sister and I were reminded - children should be seen and not heard.

There were certain preachers who I remember quite clearly for rather odd reasons. Nan Pryde's first sermon was on the subject of crosses, the different types and their origins. She used a flip chart, the first time we'd had a visual aid during a service and therefore making it far more interesting. John Bentham couldn't preach in the morning because he was involved in the Sunday School. He worked for the Royal Mail on the night train, and slept in the afternoon. Occasionally, he had a weekend off and was able to preach at night. There was the Bird dynasty from Parton. John and Annie Bird only preached from the Old Testament. Their brother Stanley emigrated to America and became a minister, but he also preached here during his annual holiday. Ruth, though not a preacher, held several positions within the church. My Father also believed it was important to choose the Old Testament and never to stray from the set service. A couple from Blackpool came on special occasions. He preached and she sang solos. Their services were lengthy, requiring more than one glacé mint from my Grandmother to sustain me through the sermon!

*Family Life*

I wasn't allowed to go to any youth group. My Mother didn't want me "wandering the streets at night" or "meeting boys socially". No amount of persuasion would make her agree and homework became another reason.

As I entered my teenage years, the evils of alcohol were repeatedly explained both from the perspective of the Methodist church and that of my parents. They were pleased to emphasise that there wasn't any alcohol in their home. Really?? Rum was not seen as alcohol. It was seen as an essential ingredient or flavouring and there was a large bottle in the pantry. It was an important part of a recipe. Like most West Cumbrian homes, it was in a lot of foods and in my home, it flowed freely! At Christmas, Easter, and baptisms, there

was rum butter. Also, Christmas cake, Simnel cake and Rum Nicky. Plum pudding needed rum sauce and even butter icing needed a drop on special occasions. The rum butter bowl sat proudly in the china cabinet waiting for a special occasion.

*Sunday School*

I was a Sunday School teacher for 38 years, until the Sunday School was closed. Rita Bell sent birthday and Christmas cards for three years to children who were baptised in the church. She then visited the families to invite them to come to Sunday School and offered them a lift. They also had an invitation to the Christmas party.

Sunday School trips were guaranteed to bring wet weather. There were trips to Upperby Park in Carlisle, Haverigg, Silloth, Morecambe and Allonby.

Certain Sunday School teachers were devoted for many years. Mrs Bawden and Mrs Daniels (both teachers at Bookwell), Mr Bentham and Mrs Rita Bell. I didn't particularly enjoy the Sunday School Anniversaries where we stood up and recited verses from children's hymns and sang for a small congregation of parents on a Sunday afternoon in summer.

*Funerals*

My father’s funeral service was held here 23 years ago with rather a large congregation. The balcony was full and the creaking was rather unnerving. Mobile phones had just arrived, but no one was aware they could be silenced. The service was accompanied by the melodic tones of incoming calls.

One memorable funeral was that of Mrs Poulter, a very popular, hard-working church member. She was very young when she became a widow and had no children. For many, many years she had Mr. Ball, Head of Wyndham school as a lodger. She was crossing the road outside the church when a young driver failed to stop at the junction and knocked her down. I cannot come out of church and cross the road without thinking about her.

*More recent times*

I cannot forget the quiet, non-invasive, caring support I received from church members after the death of my husband. They carried me through some very difficult times, and I felt so glad to be part of such a caring community.

The church modernisation several years ago was a step forward. We became The Meeting Place, a most appropriate name. My Mother, as the oldest church member, cut the ribbon on the official opening day. She was very proud to be chosen. We lost the font, the pulpit, the altar and the pipe organ.

So, here we are, my sister Sharon Woollard and I, still following the Methodist church. We were both baptised on a Sunday afternoon with only our parents present, as was the custom at the time. Our names are on the Cradle Roll and I still have my baptism certificate. My daughter Ruth was baptised here in January 1983 during a morning service. Sharon and I were both married here, two months apart by the Rev John Williams. My membership was removed by Eddie Wilson and I was unable to hold any office because I didn't actually live in Egremont. How times have changed. My sister is at Keswick and has held several circuit positions. I am still here at “Main Street", tolerant of changes and prepared to support the church in any way I can.

**Susan Clements**

[Editor: The following article was submitted to the *Methodist Recorder* soon after the anniversary weekend. The *Methodist Recorder* published the article soon enough, but edited a few details such that it was no longer correct! Here is the submitted version:

# 150th Church Anniversary Celebrations

On the weekend of 16th and 17th May 2026 Egremont Methodist Church celebrated its 150th anniversary.

Preparations for the weekend began in earnest in January although Revd Richard Teal, previous Chair of Cumbria District and past President of the Methodist Conference, had agreed to come and take both a morning and afternoon service long before then.

On the Saturday morning the weekly coffee morning was extended to run for four hours rather than two and besides serving the usual tea, coffee and toasted teacakes, bacon butties were available together with jelly and ice cream. The bacon butties proved very popular with extra bacon and rolls having to be bought during the morning. The inside and outside of the church were beautifully decorated with flower arrangements, bunting (decorated by some of our user groups and the local homeless shelter) and a birthday banner.

Members had worked hard to put an exhibition together of the church's history including personal material and reminiscences along with material copied from the archives. There were also displays from three other churches, Castle Methodist, Thornhill and St Bees which had joined with Main Street, now known simply as Egremont Methodist Church, when they closed. One of the highlights of the exhibition was a video from a Circuit Service in the 1990's featuring some very young-looking ministers and members, some of whom have now gone home to glory.

The exhibition wasn't just about looking back though. A continuously running PowerPoint showed the recent history of the church from and including the renovations of 2012 and various ongoing outreach activities from Burns Suppers to Quiz Nights and from our involvement with activities on the street during the year to Christian Aid Big Brekkies. There was also a section on the future of the church including the plans of the Church Eco Group to introduce air source heat pumps and solar panels.

On the Sunday morning Revd Richard Teal led a traditional service. When introducing him the church steward recalled what a support and encouragement Richard had been to the church during his time in Cumbria. The service began quietly with the singing of "Jesus stand among us" and ended with the enthusiastic singing of Wesley's "Love Divine". Members were privileged to read the lessons and join in with the interactive parts of the service which was based around Matthew 16:16-20, Jesus calling Peter the Rock. During the sermon Richard spoke about the three different kinds of rocks, questioning which Peter was most like and more importantly challenging us to think which we were most like. Everyone had a small stone to hold, and we were invited to consider our hopes for the future of the church. After a few moments of quiet reflection, the stones were placed by a lit candle at the foot of a small cross, committing the future of the church to God.

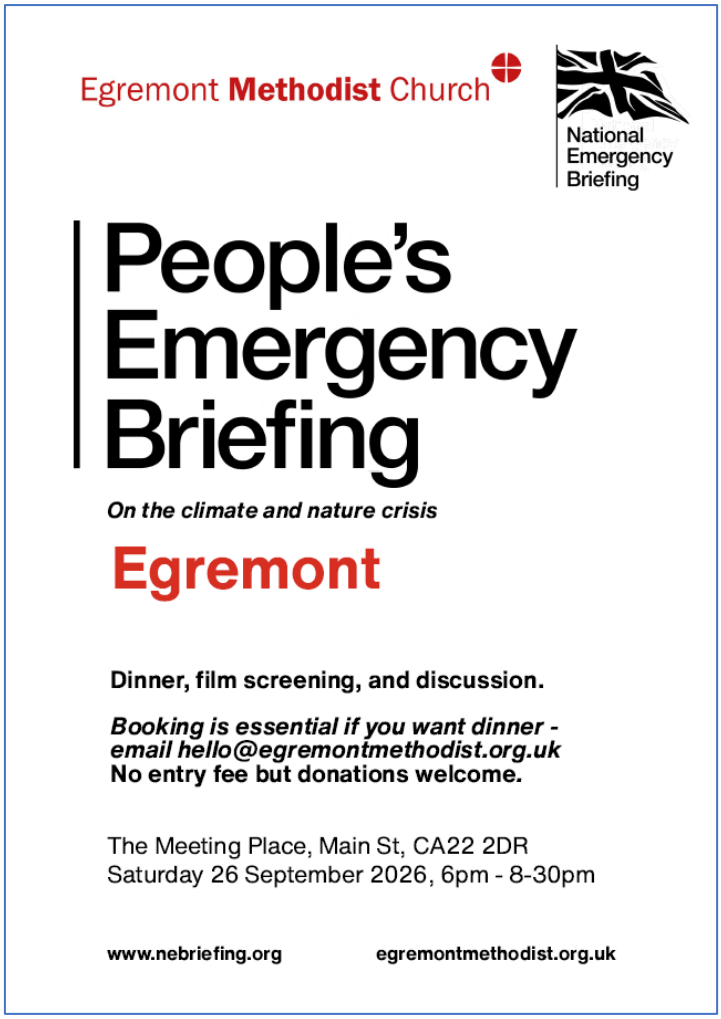
For the afternoon service we were joined by other Methodist churches and friends from the local Mission Community Churches. On this occasion Phoenix Praise led the worship. This time we began with "Sing of the Lord's Goodness" and were delighted to include "Build Your Kingdom here" both fitting and rousing hymns. Acts 16:6-34 was the focus of Richard's sermon when he spoke of how God's saving grace was available for all citing Lydia, a female slave girl, and Paul and Silas's prison guard. Besides this second challenging sermon of the day, Richard and his wife Sue spoke of their time in Kenya and how they intended to help the young girls in the Methodist School there. This part of the service included a very moving video of Richard speaking to a young girl called Joy.

After the service, Sue was invited to cut the anniversary cake before everyone enjoyed a traditional Methodist tea, the like of which has probably been served in Egremont for the last 150 years.

We end by expressing our sincere thanks to Richard for joining us on the Sunday. He played such a vital and important role in the 150th celebrations of the church. The services were pivotal to the celebrations and they were excellent. He had obviously put much time into preparing them and his gentle, humorous and passionate delivery was much appreciated by all. There have only been very enthusiastic and positive comments since. The two services were very different, but both were challenging and compelling listening. A fitting start to the next 150 years of Methodism in Egremont.

**Gillian Bounds**

# The People's Emergency Briefing




We are hosting a viewing of the People's Emergency Briefing film on Saturday 26th September starting at 6pm.

Climate and nature breakdown will affect every constituency in the country, from health and food systems to infrastructure, security to economic stability. This crisis is more serious and immediate than many understand.

There is strong evidence that bold, urgent action will improve lives and livelihoods, but the window of opportunity is narrowing as we delay. This 50-minute film will combine authoritative scientific content from a Westminster event in November with reactions from members of the public and some more familiar faces - designed to help audiences process the information on a more human level. It will deliver the frank facts about the threats, but also the enormous benefits if Government leads genuine emergency action.

Dinner will be provided, followed by a discussion after the film has finished.

If you would like dinner, you need to tell Alec Bounds directly or at boundsuk@gmail.com.

All are welcome (children must be accompanied). There will be no entry fee, but donations for our Net Zero project will be gratefully received (after paying for food expenses).

**Katherine Lennox**

# From the Editor

***Thank you*** to all those who have submitted articles for this edition. If you are reading a paper copy of this newsletter, please send your email address (if you have one) to boundsuk@gmail.com, saving on paper and ink. And you will get the next newsletter earlier than waiting for a paper copy. Articles do not necessarily represent the official views of Egremont Methodist Church.

**Alec Bounds**

# Harvest Festival

This year the Harvest Festival will be on Sunday 20th September led by Alec Bounds. As has become our tradition we will be asking for donations of tins and packets for Foodbank. Details of items they particularly require at any one time can be seen on the Foodbank bin in the foyer. Thank you for your support throughout the year.

**Gillian Bounds**

# Crab Fair

For the last few years, we have had a stall on the street during Crab Fair where we have offered free children's crafts. This has not been particularly successful, so this year we are trying something different. We will have a table just outside church showing a range of crafts and offering one. People will be invited inside where there will be more craft tables and the usual tea and coffee. We will see how this goes. If you would like to help and have your DBS check then please speak to Gillian.

**Gillian Bounds**

# Egremont Methodist Church Dates

**Regular events**

Sundays, 11am to approximately 12 noon, Church Service at The Meeting Place.

Most Mondays, 7-30pm: **Open House Fellowship** at Emmaus, Wodow Rd, Thornhill. Includes worship, discussion of text in the Bible, refreshments, prayer. Phone Alec or Gillian Bounds, 01946 823659.

Wednesdays, 11am-1pm, **Warm Welcome Space** at The Meeting Place.

Saturdays, 10am – 12 noon, **Coffee Morning** at The Meeting Place.

The Meeting Place is used by several community groups during the week – see the poster on the Information board in the Meeting Place.

**Special Events**

*All events at The Meeting Place unless otherwise stated.*

Saturday 12 September, **Coffee Morning** run by Parkinson's UK.

Saturday 19 September, 10am-12-30pm, **Children's Crafts for Crab Fair.** Children must be accompanied by a parent/carer.

Sunday 20 September, 11am, **Harvest Festival.**

Saturday 26 September, 6pm-8-30pm, **Film: The People's Emergency Briefing**, followed by a supper. We need to know how many to cater for, so tell Alec well in advance if you're planning to attend. The film sets out the implications of climate and nature breakdown for health, food systems, national security and the economy. A review: 'I'll be honest - I'm sceptical of climate doom- mongering… But this film is different. Really different…Stark facts, yes. But also a genuine sense of agency and even optimism."

Sunday 8 November, 10-45am, **Remembrance Sunday**. Join the Act of Remembrance at the town's War Memorial, followed by a service at the Parish Church.

Saturday 28 November, 10am-1pm, **Christmas Coffee Morning**, with stalls and refreshments.