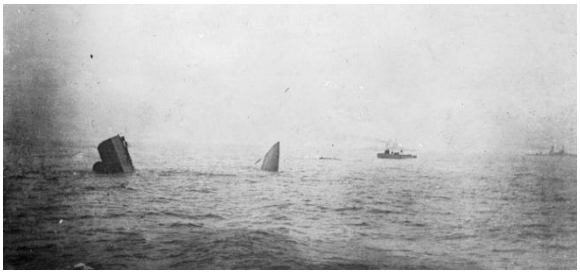
WEY VALLEY – WEEKLY CIRCUIT LETTER – 4 November 2026

Barrie Tabraham

'Remembrance thoughts'

In June 2016 Joan and I embarked on our second cruise, this time to the Baltic. On the 1st June we passed, co-incidentally, over the exact area where the **Battle of Jutland** had been fought precisely 100 years before. Arguably it was the greatest naval battle that took place (some say Leyte Gulf in October 1944, but people still disagree about that) but the thing that stands out for me is that the Germans lost 11 ships and 2551 men, while the British lost 14 ships and no fewer than 6097 men.



Two things strike me about those figures. The first is that almost all of the dead were *young* men – many, actually teenagers. The second thing is that – unlike the war graves commemorating those who fell during the trench warfare of 1914-18 – there is nothing to mark the graves of those eight and a half thousand men who died at sea in that battle.

There is an old German naval song: *Auf dem Grab eines Seemanns blühen keine Rosen.* The English translation is roughly: ***On a sailor's tomb no roses bloom.*** Perhaps, most poignantly, when the German battleship *Scharnhorst* met her end in the Barents Sea in December 1943, only 36 of the crew of 2000-odd were picked up by waiting British destroyers. They were singing this song as they froze to death in the arctic waters. The full version is this:

There are no roses on sailors' graves,
Nor wreaths upon the storm-tossed waves,
No last post from the Royals band,
So far away from their native land,
No heartbroken words carved on stone,
Just shipmates' bodies there alone,
The only tributes are the seagulls sweeps,
And the teardrops when a loved one weeps.

I offer it here, not just because (as many of you know) I spend a lot of my spare time studying modern naval history, but because as we near Remembrance Sunday (at the time of writing), it made me think about the way we mark the 'final rites of passage', as it were, and how we deal with death in a way that is both realistic and compassionate.

When I left teaching and entered the ministry, it was generally the rule that a person's funeral service took place at the church, followed by cremation or burial, after which the family and those attending the committal would return to the church to join with the other mourners. In Methodism, 'wakes' – when the deceased is displayed in an open coffin – were rare, in my experience, at least. These days it has become more common to reverse the order and have a thanksgiving service at the church *after* the committal. I like this better, because it gives us the opportunity of giving thanks for the person who has died and, notwithstanding the feelings of grief and loss, to celebrate the Christian hope and assurance of new life God has promised us.

However, it seems to me that the age in which we live does not handle death and bereavement very well. We each do this in different ways, of course. Joan's family have graves in Swansea which are lovingly cared for; in contrast, my own mother said to me that she never visited her parent's graves, "*because they're not there*" – and these were words spoken by a devout Christian who loved both her parents deeply.

Does it matter? As Christians we believe that the departed dead are more than just memories, and the **humanist funerals** that I have attended, whilst often being sensitive and beautifully conducted, have come across (to me) as actually quite sterile. And naïve, too. The recent advertisements for 'natural funerals' tend to adopt this approach. However, to suggest as some do, that the most important thing is to celebrate the memories of loved ones, is to fail to recognise that ultimately, memories fade and for the vast majority of us, within just a few generations, it will be as if we had never existed.

But what a sad and depressing approach to death! We might excuse this humanist approach when it comes to a person passing away after a long and relatively happy and fulfilled life, but what about those who die in war, for example – whether as civilians or as combatants? And how do we mark the 'rite of passage' in a way that enables us to recognise our loss and the genuine grief we experience, yet celebrate the ultimate joy of God's gift of new life? The writer of **Psalm 103** hit the nail on the head when he wrote:



As for mortals, their days are like grass;
they flourish like a flower of the field;
for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.

But then he adds:

But the steadfast love of the Lord
Is from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear him . . .

It is *that* truth indeed – the presence of our Risen Lord whose love is stronger than death, and who promises us eternal life – which separates us from those for whom death is simply a tragic end of our existence.

In these brief musings, I have only scratched the surface of a huge area of concern. We grieve for all the departed, whether their deaths are commemorated on tombstones, or in marble at war memorials, or for those who have died at sea and have no graves. Our hearts go out to all who struggle to cope with bereavement, and we ask God to help us deal with death with the same love and humanity that Jesus did when he wept over the death of Lazarus.

O love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee:
I give thee back the life I owe,
that in thine ocean depths its flow
may richer, fuller be. (George Matheson ,*StF* 636)



A Prayer: (from the MWB)

Father of all, we pray for those whom we love, but see no longer. Grant them your peace; let light perpetual shine upon them; and in your loving wisdom and almighty power work in them the good purpose of your perfect will.
Loving God, grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the world, peace; and to us and all the faithful, life everlasting.
In the name of Christ, Amen.

Peace be with you all,

Barrie Tabraham

Resources/Good News



Advent and Christmas Resources

The Methodist Church's Advent and Christmas campaign for 2026 is called

Don't be Afraid

You can read more on the campaign, find worship resources and posters by following the link below.

There's also a video with ideas on how to engage your community this Christmas.

Advent and Christmas Church Resources - The Methodist Church

National Stress Awareness Day, Wednesday 4 November

Learn to spot symptoms, practice self-care, and seek balance in your life for better mental health.

What is stress? | Types of mental health problems | Mind

STOUGHTON METHODIST CHURCH

(On the corner of Stoughton Road and Grange Road)

COFFEE CORNER

Tuesdays from 10 am – 12 noon



6th October
13th October
20th October
27th October

3rd November
10th November
17th November
24th November

2026



Enjoy Coffee & a Chat, Coffee & a Game, or Coffee & a Book
The choice is yours!
Everyone welcome – bring a friend!

You are invited to a

COFFEE MORNING

in aid of

Flame Trust

on Thursday 12th November

10.30am to 12pm

at Merrow Methodist Church



Delicious home made cakes – Bring your friends and family!



Saturday 14 November
6 – 8 pm

Trinity Methodist Church

Brewery Road

Woking GU21 4LH

Bring a dish of food to share (savoury or sweet),

and your plate and cutlery and a mug/tumbler.

<u>All are welcome! Teams of 6 on the night.</u>

FUNDRAISING FOR TEARFUND

tearfund.org
Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE
020 3906 3906 info@tearfund.org /tearfund

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tearfund



Saturday 21st November 2026
2pm

At Walton Methodist Church Hall
A maximum of 6 people per team
Refreshments being served at half time.
Email:
waltonmethodistchurchsecretary@virginmedia.com
to book your place!

tearfund.org/quiz
Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, United Kingdom
+44 (0)20 3906 3906 info@tearfund.org /Tearfund

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SHARING HOPE

at Christmas

- a series of reflections for Advent

The Christmas message is one of hope, but how do we find it and share it with others? Our lunchtime Advent Reflections this year look at ways in which everyday life can provide an opportunity to relate to that message and the hope it offers. Our speakers will be focussing on a film or a TV programme and suggesting where it provides such an opportunity.

St. Mary's Quarry St Guildford GU1 3UP

Thursdays: 12.15 for 12.30

26 November: Rosemary Lee

3 December: Darlene McCarley

10 December: Andrew Wheeler

+++++

17 December: Carols at Lunchtime: Paul Glass

The Reflections will be followed by a Bread & Soup lunch



A joyful start to Christmas

Carols for All





Saturday Nov 28th

7.00- 9.00 pm

Horsley Methodist Church

(next to W. Horsley Village Hall)

Come and sing your favourite carols with a break for refreshments and mince pies.

Phone requests to

01438 282474

ADVENT CAROL SERVICE

at

Merrow Methodist Church

Sunday 6th December 6.30 pm



Advent *is a time of . . . .*

- *Expectancy*
- *Waiting*
- *Hope*
- *Preparing*

for the coming of the King.

Come on 6th December to a service of **readings** and **Advent carols**, to celebrate this short, special season of Advent, during we can prepare ourselves for the joy of Christmas and all that it will bring.

Hot drinks & biscuits will be provided after the service



Join us this Christmas

Churches Together
in Byfleet
Advent Group 2026

For more
information and
resources:

https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/christmasresources/

All Saints, New Haw
Woodham Lane KT15 3DH
Tues 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd December
7.15pm for refreshments
7.30pm start.

St Michael's Church, Sheerwater
Dartmouth Avenue, GU21 5PJ
Wed 2nd, 9th, 16th 23rd December
9.45am for refreshments
10am start.

The **Methodist** Church

itsawayoflife.org.uk/Christmas

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WEYBRIDGE MALE VOICE CHOIR
INVITE YOU TO THEIR

CHRISTMAS Concert

FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER, 7.30PM

St. James' Church, Weybridge, KT13 8DB

With special guests

St. James' Primary School Choir

Retiring collection for

white lodge

Adults - £15 Under 12s - Free



Tickets from Choir Members, by QR Code or ticketsource.com/weybridgemvc

Tea/Coffee and Cake

Pay as You Feel

every Saturday, 10.00 - 12.00pm



Addlestone Methodist Church

(Next to Subway on Station Road)

Free Prize Bingo & Games Mornings

on 1st and 3rd Saturdays of month!



We always need donations and volunteers to keep serving the Addlestone community. Please help us!

Play Chat. Connect