

BUXTED METHODIST CHURCH

The regular Sunday Morning Services, held at Buxted, will be led as shown below:

February Services 2025

| | | | | |
|------------------|-------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 2 nd | 10:30 | Steward | | |
| 9 th | 10:30 | Rev Sheila Foreman | Minister | |
| 16 th | 10:30 | Rev Andy Melvin | Minister | Holy Communion |
| 23 rd | 10:30 | Wendy Parker | Local Preacher | |

March Services 2025

| | | | | |
|------------------|-------|--------------------|----------|--|
| 2 nd | 10:30 | TBA | | |
| 9 th | 10:30 | Rev Sheila Foreman | Minister | |
| 16 th | 10:30 | Rev Andy Melvin | Minister | |
| 23 rd | 10:30 | TBA | | |
| 30 th | 10:30 | TBA | | |

An evening service (6:00 PM via Zoom), normally hosted by Rev Barbara Evans-Routley, will continue to be broadcast throughout 2025.

Activity Dates for February 2025 and March 2025

| | | | |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------------------------|
| 3 rd | February | 2:00 PM | Emmaus |
| 8 th | February | 10:30 AM | Coffee Morning |
| 8 th | February | 2:00 PM | Art Group – Valentines Day |
| 26 th | February | 10:30 AM | POP-IN |
| 3 rd | March | 2:00 PM | Emmaus |
| 8 th | March | 10:30 AM | Coffee Morning |
| 8 th | March | 2:00 PM | Art Group – Spring Time |
| 16 th | March | 11:45 AM | Spring Church Council |
| 26 th | March | 10:30 AM | POP-IN |

Art Group

The theme chosen for February is 'Valentines Day'.

The theme for March will be 'Spring Time'.

The theme for April will be 'Easter'.

Spring Church Council

The Spring Church Council Meeting will be held following the morning service on Sunday 16th March.

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The article below, written by Stafford Mortimer, has been reproduced from THE TIMES dated Saturday January 18th 2025.

Reading it I was struck by the facts about Van Gogh's early life initially as a teacher, then attempting to become a missionary before finding his great calling as a painter. All facts that I was not aware of.

VAN GOGH'S EXPERIENCE CAN HELP US TO FIND OUR VOCATION



Stafford Mortimer is a Methodist local preacher

Vincent van Gogh undoubtedly found his vocation as a painter in the end, but at the age of 20 he had a different one in mind - that of preacher!

How far he was proved to be mistaken in his early intention is illustrated by the National Gallery's superb exhibition *Van Gogh: Poets and Lovers*, one of the gallery's most successful exhibitions in recent times, which comes to an end tomorrow [Sunday 19th January 2025]. Yet for many attending the exhibition, which displayed some of Van Gogh's best-known works, was akin to a religious experience.

Van Gogh's own experience may help us to decide our own vocations.

When he came from the Netherlands to England in 1873, aged 20, he was at the height of his religious fervour. He had a religious upbringing: he was the son and grandson of Dutch Reformed pastors and as a young man he prayed and read the Bible every day. Like his brother Theo, he also appreciated art from an early age.

An uncle who was an art dealer obtained a job for the shy and sometimes moody Van Gogh at the Hague branch of Goupil, a large continental dealership. In 1873 it promoted him to a new Covent Garden showroom, where he was quick to add English to his fluency in French and German. The post did not last long.

Van Gogh lodged in Brixton and fell in love with his landlady's daughter, who revealed she was secretly engaged. He became melancholic and inclined to "religious fanaticism", according to his future sister-in-law. Perhaps that is why Goupil recalled him, put him in its Paris branch and after a while dismissed him.

He returned to England three years later to work as a schoolteacher. His first post had a whiff of Dickens' Dotheboys Hall (*Nicholas Nickleby*): his bedroom was bug-infested and a promised salary did not materialise. He found another school at Isleworth, near Richmond-upon-Thames, run by a fatherly Congregational minister. Through him Van Gogh assisted in Sunday school and Bible groups and, to his joy, preached his first sermon. Stepping into the pulpit at Richmond Wesleyan Methodist Church was, he wrote to Theo, like coming out of darkness into light. "I must preach Christ crucified. I must live the Christ life," he declared.

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His next spiritual ambition was to become a missionary in London, moved by the plight of the poor he first encountered in newspaper illustrations, read about in the novels of Charles Dickens and saw for himself when he visited slums. Failing to find a post here, Van Gogh sought ordination in the Netherlands but church authorities refused theological training to this scruffy zealot who insisted on giving away his possessions to the needy. He did secure a role as lay evangelist to coal miners in an unlovely region of Belgium.

It was not a success!

While not doubting his sincerity, the men and women who toiled below ground were not moved by his rambling, ineloquent talks. His contract was not renewed and he was advised to find another vocation.

Another one found him. It had been growing beneath the horizon of his religious fervour. Encouraged by Theo, Van Gogh had begun sketching scenery and progressed to detailed drawings of peasants and workers. Failing to find a religious role, he left the mines to pursue life as an artist which, after years of dedication and work, bloomed into golden genius like one of his sunflowers.

What lessons about vocation can we take from all this?

We may see that there are three relevant strands:

First, Van Gogh's desire to be an evangelist was a highly emotive one.

Second, it became clear that there were specific talents he possessed and others he lacked.

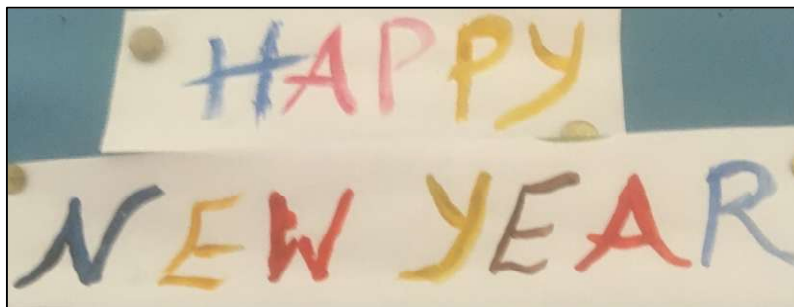
Third, he received from his family a strong faith that survived his spiritual upheavals, as shown by his letters and such paintings as **Pieta** and **The Good Samaritan**.

In seeking our own calling, we may need to be guided not only by our passion but also by a realistic assessment of our abilities. In this the judgments of others can help. The Dutch Reformed Church was surely right to bar an ineffective speaker and volatile personality from becoming a pastor. Theo, however, recognised his brother's true talent and supplied patient and generous encouragement. What is most important for us, as for Van Gogh, is a foundation of faith on which we can stand, come what may.

One remark indicates that he did come to a realistic recognition of his destiny - in this life and perhaps the next. Musing on the little caterpillar that becomes an ethereal butterfly, he told Theo: **"A white worm must eat lettuce roots to attain its transformation, and I think that a painter must paint. Perhaps there will be something after that."**

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Displayed pictures from the Art Group



Polar Bear – painted in 20 minutes flat!