

CONNECTED

Newsletter of the Torbay Methodist Circuit—Issue 17: December 2020

“Many parts form one body” (1 Cor. 12:12)



The Methodist Church

The Light shines in the Darkness

As we approach the end of what has probably been our most difficult year since the end of hostilities in the Second World War we do so with the promise of a Covid-19 vaccine.

The Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, said that NHS workers will rise to the challenge of being ready to ‘inject hope into millions of arms this winter.’ On the vaccine, Shadow Health Secretary, Jon Ashworth said it is a ‘moment of great hope in a bleak, dismal year that has shattered so many families.’

The common word in both statements, from government and opposition, is ‘hope’. How we need hope! No doubt we all join in *hoping* that the vaccine will be with us sooner rather than later, that it can be safely administered to the population, beginning with the most vulnerable, and perhaps more than anything else that it will work. And then, *hey presto*, we can all go back to ‘normal’ – really? Is that the best we can *hope* for?

My initial instincts have already been proved right. People have put up Christmas decorations a lot earlier this year. I don’t mind that at all. I wish they would leave them up after Twelfth Night as well, though few people normally do. Are the premature decorations an indication that, collectively, we need cheering up? I think they probably are – and I think those who think we need cheering up are probably right.

Christmas is about hope and it is also about cheering people up – more accurately it is better than that; it is about ‘joy’.

Add to that ‘love’ and ‘peace’ and you are beginning to get to a description of Christmas in four words. What person of goodwill does not want our world, our nation, our society,



our communities, our families to have ‘hope’, ‘joy’, ‘love’ and ‘peace’? But the meaning of Christmas is a much more than that.

In the modern world, we are inclined to take electric light for granted but it is a relatively recent invention. The common electric light bulb has only been readily available for less than

100 years. Consequently, in the ancient world, the idea of a light that shines in the darkness was a much more powerful image. That’s the message of Christmas – ‘the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it’ – a

reference to the birth of Jesus. This is not hope in the arm, but hope, joy, love and peace in the heart – by faith in Jesus, the promised Saviour, the Son of God, the man who died and rose again.

I wish you hope, joy, love, peace and faith this Christmas.

John Haley
Superintendent Minister

Torbay Methodist Circuit Churches:

Paignton: Goodrington, Palace Avenue, Southfield

Torquay: Central, St Andrew’s, Victoria Park

Brixham

Contact us

During this period of restrictions the office is closed to visitors.

Temporary phone 07380 638244

office@torbaymethodistcircuit.org

www.torbaymethodistcircuit.org

Action for Children

Action for Children was founded over 150 years ago and may be still known by some as ‘The National Children’s Home’. It is the Children’s charity of the Methodist Church. All those



years ago, the Reverend Thomas Stevenson, a Methodist minister, saw a need to care for the ‘street’ children and there is still a need for so many children, young people and their families to be helped to this day. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected everyone to a lesser or greater degree but for families struggling to keep a roof over their heads or food to eat, it has been a nightmare time.

Early in the pandemic, AFC realised the number of

struggling families would be increasing, and the ability as a charity to raise money through their usual fund-raising channels would diminish. AFC launched an Emergency Coronavirus Appeal raising over £650,000 and the staff have worked hard to keep 99% of the services open by moving as many as possible online or using the telephone.

AFC have also been meeting with the Department for Education to make sure children are not considered an afterthought during the pandemic.

AFC retains its close connection with the Methodist Church and recently have sent out their offering of ideas for churches to use at Christmastime – let us hope some Nativity plays and Prayers will be used in as many churches as possible!

Tessa Goodwin
AFC Representative

Christian Aid at Christmas

Katrine Musgrave has recently started working for Christian Aid in Devon and Cornwall writes:

I recently relocated from Gloucestershire, so this move to the southwest marks the beginning of a whole new chapter for my family and me. Churches and supporters have given me a warm welcome and I am delighted to be able to serve you in all you do to **Give, Act and Pray with Christian Aid**.

When crisis threatens, love builds hope. Neighbourly love has built hope and solidarity across our communities in Devon and Cornwall during the Coronavirus epidemic, and love for our global neighbour can bring hope and resilience to people living in poverty, on the frontline of the climate crisis.

This Christmas, Christian Aid invites you to stand united with communities facing drought in Ethiopia, and millions more battling climate change around the world. Thank you for your remarkable creativity and resilience this year, continuing to work with us to support our neighbours facing the triple burden of climate change, poverty and pandemic. Please join us through giving, acting and praying this Christmas – love brings hope, and hope for a better future is the greatest gift we can give this season.

To find out more, please call 01925 573 769, email hello@christian-aid.org or visit www.caid.org.uk and click ‘Appeals’. You can also make a request for a Christian Aid speaker at your church (in person or online); when we are able, we would love to come and share worship with you and tell you more about our work.

Methodist Women in Britain (Plymouth & Exeter District) present:

No Zoom at the Inn

(a very 2020 Nativity)

This year we can't do a traditional nativity, so we are turning to technology to bring you a nativity via Zoom!

Join online at 4pm, Sun 13th Dec

Be part of the performance!

Wear a crown or a Santa hat! Bring a candle or a star.

Sing along with the carols! (we will send you a song sheet)

Bring along a piece of "good news" on A4 paper to hold up to the screen!

(This could be a piece of personal good news, something that has happened locally or in the world, or anything that makes you smile)

Download Zoom at www.zoom.us - It's very simple & we will send you instructions when you book

Book your virtual seat at elainebanks21@gmail.com

We’re not sure what form it will take this year but we will be celebrating the eternal hope we have in Jesus, the baby born in Bethlehem! So as we prepare ourselves during Advent for His coming please book the date below and make sure you’re ready to watch “No Zoom at the Inn”. There’ll be some familiar

faces in the recording: but perhaps not as you know them!

It's coming - Christmas is definitely coming!



Let's build hope this Christmas

Please send good news stories of worship, fellowship, mission and evangelism to Torbay Methodist Circuit Office by no later than 27 January 2021 to be considered for inclusion in the next issue of *Connected*.

Torbay Methodist Circuit Office, Goodrington Methodist Church, Grange Road, Paignton TQ4 7JT

01803 846020 office@torbaymethodistcircuit.org

Office Hours: Tuesday–Friday 9.30am–1.00pm

Printed by Manor Print Shop, Old Torquay Road, Paignton TQ3 3QZ

Zoom Together

Tuesdays Together is an important feature of our spiritual life at Goodrington and we are exploring new ways of being together—including Zoom. We still meet on Tuesdays (7.45 pm). This term we have been focusing on a series of studies *Start Again* by Phil Moore (Genesis 1-11) who applies the Bible powerfully to our current situation. Phil Moore broadcasts a daily 10-minute devotion on YouTube and these are followed up on the Everyday Church website. Friends from North Devon and London join us and we would be delighted if you would like to join us. You can join on PC, laptop, tablet or phone. Contact Wendy Forman directly or through the circuit office.



The Christian Message on facebook and YouTube Steve Wild and the seasons of Advent and Christmas

Steve Wild presents a *Daily Reflection*—3-4 minutes each day. In the autumn, Steve moved quite slowly through the Sermon on the Mount each day. A past-President of the Methodist Conference, Steve is well-known for his passion for sharing the good news of Jesus. He never misses an opportunity to share the gospel message with everyone he meets. His reflections get to the heart of the Gospel with sincerity and humour. In December, Steve will be reflecting on the seasons of Advent and Christmas. These *Daily Reflections* are not to be missed.

Jeffanory

Jeff Lucas, Christian preacher, writer and broadcast presents a live reflection on facebook at 1pm from Monday to Friday each week. Jeff speaks with sound Biblical insights interspersed with humour. He is well known for his daily Bible notes and Christian books and it is worth taking ten minutes to stop and listen to his reflection each day.



In contact with the President and Vice-President

Our superintendent minister, John Haley, was in college with our President Revd Richard Teal, while Mrs Carolyn Lawrence is married to a minister currently serving in Ivybridge. There is a broadcast live on facebook every Monday at 12.45pm. Richard and Carolyn lead a time of reflection and prayer as well as talk about the things they have been doing during the past week.



If you are not able to access these devotions when they are broadcast, they are all posted on the Goodrington facebook page, which also has links to prayer, Bible study and music.

New opportunities at Brixham

Brixham Methodist's outlook was well summarised by Lee Bray writing to Christians Together in Torquay:

In Acts (16) we read of Paul and Silas being imprisoned for "promoting unlawful customs". The Bible tells us that around midnight, as they were praying and singing hymns to God, an earthquake shook the prison and "all the doors flew open and everyone's chains came loose".

How do we see God at work as the pandemic continues? Is the gospel confined or do we see God opening new doors of opportunity to show and share the good news of Jesus? Later in his life Paul wrote to Timothy that for the sake of the gospel he was (once again) "chained like a criminal". But, he continued, "God's Word is not chained!"

Covid-19 has certainly curtailed many of the freedoms we normally enjoy, but it has also created new opportunities to demonstrate the love of God to those who are in chains of all kinds.

"So let's not get tired of doing good. At the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up" (Galatians 6.9).

Our initial response was to consider our members' practical needs. From there we looked to create new opportunities to demonstrate the love of God. Pastoral care is happening in many ways - phone calls, cards and kind acts. We then moved into supporting our spiritual needs – praying over the phone and sharing details of streamed services. Our weekly letter

helped us to feel connected. We appreciated being able to resume services albeit in a restricted way.

Covid-19 has certainly curtailed many of the freedoms we normally enjoy, but we have new opportunities to demonstrate the love of God, and we are not getting tired of doing good. Like Paul and Silas we are still praying and singing hymns – even if the singing isn't in public!



The Joanna C sank three miles off the coast at Seaford

At this time of year our thoughts and prayers are with all bereaved families including those of Adam Harper (26) from Brixham and Robert Morley (38) from Pembrokeshire, who were lost when the Brixham-registered trawler, Joanna C, sank off the south coast on 21 November. We also give thanks for the work of our emergency services, including Coastguards and RNLI.

Change at St Andrew's

From September St Andrew's opened for services under government restrictions at the new time of 3.00pm. This enables the minister, Revd Doug Rix, to be with the congregation more often. With all the procedures in place, despite not being able to sing or stay for coffee after the service, although it is necessary to pre-book a place, the church can accommodate just over 20 people. It was good to be able to have Scriptural guidance and to bless each other again. In October, new flooring was fitted in the sanctuary. We hope this will be appreciated by the Toddler Group and Bay Brass, who we are hoping will restart when circumstances permit. Our 'new look' and the

Sanctuary appears bright, spacious and more modern. We have continued to support each other by phone, email and our Zoom sessions and with our media operator's increasing technical proficiency, we might be able to have a virtual Carol Service!



Foggy Days at Victoria Park



Lee Cochran fogging

In the early autumn our Sunday Services recommenced at Victoria Park in accordance with the government guidelines. Our congregation expressed their satisfaction with the precautions taken which included, among other things, fogging the building. As people felt safe and happy, attendances were better than expected. In the November lockdown our pastoral assistant resumed making weekly telephone calls to all our members and friends.

When the lockdown is lifted, once again the building will be prepared and any necessary adjustments made.

Then it will be time to fog and thoroughly clean the building with a view to continuing Sunday worship as soon as the restrictions allow us to do so. We hope to have a restricted Carol Service on Sunday 20 December at 10.30am (though it seems unlikely that we shall be permitted to sing) and a Christmas Day service at 10.00am but, because of the regulations, no service on Sunday 27 December. Everyone is welcome to our services but visitors should book through the circuit office.

Room at Central's Inn

Following on from the success of bringing weekly worship to the Central family from the beginning of lockdown, first by Zoom, internet access and the written word, the Church for opened for worship from September, with worship styles adapted to meet changing circumstances.

A weekly 'join in' email has been circulated since April, and is proving very popular and keeps everyone in touch. Those without email are being included by means of 'phone calls' - a veritable jungle telegraph!

Plans are in place to celebrate Advent and Christmas. Subject to government regulations, you are invited to 'Carols and Christ at Christmas' on Sunday 20 December at 6.30p.m. led by Revd Val Price, and to 'O come all ye faithful' on Christmas Day at 10.30a.m. led by Revd Peter Williamson.

You will be met by an experienced welcome team who will guide you through the familiar procedures for attending larger groupings of people – so please arrive in good time. Both these services require you to pre-book your seats by phoning Margaret Newman on 01803 607984. We don't want you to find yourself with no room at the inn!

Peace and blessings from all at Central.



Thoughtful Carol Readers at Palace Avenue

Since March, we have looked after each other pastorally by phone or email and when allowed by visits - all greatly appreciated. Our church reopened in September after a lot of work to make the building Covid compliant. Numbers attending have been restricted and it has been necessary to book. Everything seemed strange to start with but all seemed pleased to be back in church and together again, albeit at a safe distance. We soon got used to the "new normal" and creative ways of offering worship with many people commenting that reading a hymn made them think more about the meaning of the words. November saw us return to lockdown with the hope of reopening in December, when we plan to have our annual Gift Service with the items donated going to Foxhole Community Centre for distribution to those in need.

We hope to have a Service of Christmas Music and Readings on the evening of Sunday 20 December (booking required) although it will seem strange not to sing carols. We will hold a service on Christmas Day if we can.



Online worship at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster introduced viewers to the Eagle Project in São Paulo, Brazil. Not so long ago, the young hairdresser in this picture was an armed robber. Now with the help of Christian ministry and psychodrama sessions, he is on a new track. To find out more about the work of British-born Cally Magalhães and her husband, George, visit www.theeagleproject.co.uk or see her testimony:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNMvsKngRm0>