

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

The **Methodist Church**

‘I love Jesus!’ says Shelomi



I am a 20-year-old student from Sri Lanka. I was able to begin my studies in accountancy and finance at a university in Sri Lanka but then I had the opportunity to come to England to complete my BSc in Plymouth. My father did not have the money for my tickets but sold his car to pay for my first flight! I arrived in England in October 2021 and am counted as a second year student. I am sorry to say that I felt very lonely in my early months here and my parents were praying that I would find some Christian friends and a good church.



In order to finance my studies, I have to work two evenings a week in an Esso petrol station and two nights (overnight) in a factory. On my very first evening in the petrol station I met a cheerful customer who heard my accent and asked me where I was from. When I said, ‘Sri Lanka,’ he said that he had been minister of a church in South London where people read the Bible in Tamil (one of the languages of Sri Lanka). I told him that my father (pictured with me, above right) was a pastor. He looked straight into my eyes and asked, ‘and what about you?’ I just had to reply, ‘I love Jesus!’ You may have guessed by now that my customer was Revd John Haley. He directed me to a local church, arranging for people to watch out for me, and the Sunday after that I was a guest with his family and attended the evening service at Southfield, where I gave a short testimony. I was so happy to have new Christian friends and for that all to happen on my first night at Esso was truly a miracle!



Life as a Christian in Sri Lanka can be very hard. The main religion of Sri Lanka is Buddhism and our church has been attacked by Buddhist monks, who would like to see Christianity eradicated from Sri Lanka. On one occasion, we were warned by the police that the Buddhists were going to organise an attack on our Sunday service. The police recommended that we cancel our service but my father would not hear of it. Our congregation (pictured left) numbers about 150 people and, as expected, our service was attacked and we were hemmed in, defended by a cordon of police around

the compound in which the church is situated. As we sheltered in the church, we were able to watch one of the national television broadcasts, which was showing the attack live on television – that was amazing!

Introducing Su Garrod

Su Garrod needs little introduction to members of the Torbay Circuit as she has been with us for more than twenty years. Nevertheless, Su visited all our churches earlier in the year as she began her new role as Pastoral Assistant in January. Su has been getting to know what is happening and identifying opportunities both to support existing groups and develop new work.

Su is already involved with toddler groups at Goodrington and St Andrew’s, getting to know and building relationships with the children’s carers and offering practical help. She is also spending a couple hours a week at Paignton Community Larder talking with visitors and making them feel welcome. Su distributed Valentine’s and Easter leaflets which were well-received. Su led a Lent Course at Palace Avenue and has recently completed a course in Mental Health First Aid. Su is now learning British Sign Language.

Su’s first career was in catering and hospitality. She previously worked with the Circuit as a Children’s and Family Worker before taking up a post supporting adults with learning disabilities. Work which she had done for ten years before joining our team.

Su has two grown-up daughters and four grandchildren. She is married and her household is completed by a cat and two guinea pigs. Su enjoys reading (mostly non-fiction and poetry) painting and baking. A friendly person with a ready smile, Su enjoys meeting friends and talking about faith, the Bible and Jesus.



Please send good news stories of worship, fellowship, mission and evangelism to Torbay Methodist Circuit Office by no later than 10 May 2022 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

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Please be patient, God isn’t finished with me yet!

‘I’m as good a person as the people who go to your church,’ said a woman as she passed me by on the busy high street.

‘I am sure you are,’ I replied, ‘but are you as forgiven?’ She went away without a word, leaving me to wonder if ‘Sorry’ really is the hardest word?

‘I can worship God just as well sitting on the beach or walking on Dartmoor as I can in church,’ said a man (rather angrily I might say), as he came towards me.

This one is more difficult. ‘If you are thinking of God as creator,’ I said, ‘I think you’re right. I always think of God the creator when I look up at the sky on a clear, crisp night. But it is important to think of God as Saviour too – and I think the best place, though not the only place, to do that is in church.’ He didn’t seem very pleased with me – I don’t think he thinks much of God as Saviour.

When we look at the awful mess the world is in, it’s easy to forget that we are caught up in it and even when we realise that we share in the chaos, we can feel so helpless. People often ask me why God doesn’t do something about the troubles of the world. I think he does – but for some reason, he seems to want to do it one person at a time. Are you troubled about the state of the world, or maybe even about the state of your own life? To know God’s forgiveness begins with being truly sorry and wanting things to change. This is traditionally called ‘repentance’.



Good Friday and Easter Day (plus Easter Monday of course) is a popular holiday weekend. It seems that each year, fewer and fewer people remember what it is all about. Good Friday is the day that believers remember that Jesus died on the cross to secure their forgiveness. His rising to new life on Easter Day (the

resurrection) shows the triumph of good over evil, of light over darkness, of life over death. While there is evidence for Jesus’ death and resurrection, trusting in what it means is a particular kind of believing. We call it ‘faith’.

I like the slogan, ‘Please be patient, God isn’t finished with me yet!’ It’s a reminder that we are not yet the people that God would have us be. Is it possible to live as God would have us live, to love as God would have us love, to become the people that God would have us be? By the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, I believe it is – we call it ‘holiness’.



I didn’t start by saying that I was going to write about ‘forgiveness’, ‘faith’, and ‘holiness’, because I was concerned that some people might not read any further. Well done on getting to the end. We are all about ‘forgiveness’, ‘faith’, and ‘holiness’. Do you know that you are forgiven? Do you have faith in Jesus Christ? Are you giving your life to God, day by day, so that he can shape you into the person that he would have you be? That’s what it means to be a Christian.

John Haley
Superintendent Minister

New Secretary

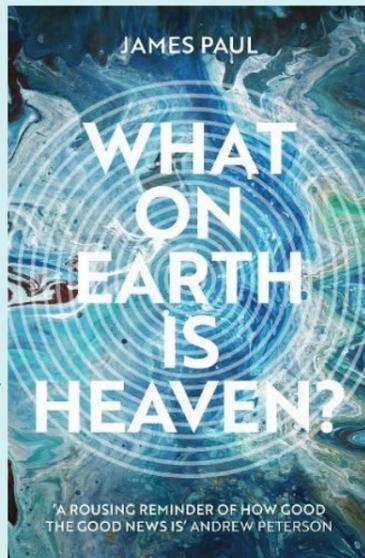
Our new Circuit Administrative Secretary is Annette Hinde (pictured here with her Golden Retriever, Molly), who began work with us at the end of March and is excited about working with everybody.



In her spare time, Annette enjoys nothing more than the great outdoors and delights in exploring our local coastal paths, long treks on Dartmoor, sea swimming, and kayaking. She also volunteers behind the scenes for a local theatre.

What on Earth is Heaven?

Are you excited about heaven? Will it be a place of fluffy clouds, angels and cherubs playing harps? A place where we sing praise songs or traditional hymns for ever, according to our choice. Is faith just about securing a place in heaven?



In this exciting and easy read, James Paul explores the truth of what the Bible says about heaven and its relevance for our lives here and now.

James Paul is Director of the English branch of L'Abri Fellowship but before this he practised as a doctor and specialised in hospice care. Many of the questions raised in the book are ones people asked him when their loved ones were terminally ill. Christians believe that Jesus offers us eternal life as we put our

trust in his saving grace. James Paul has searched the Bible but also used insights from writers such as C.S.Lewis and J.R.R.Tolkien that will not only get you excited about heaven but also transform your priorities here and now.

Heaven isn't a place 'up there' but the dimension of reality where God's will is done. We don't so much escape to heaven but bring the Kingdom of Heaven to our patch on earth.

A wonderfully inspiring new book that I highly recommend for you and your friends. (Reviewed by Alan McIlhenny).

James Paul: What on Earth is Heaven? IVP is available through the Circuit Office at £7.99.

Ministry in Zimbabwe: Sunlight through the Clouds



Think of how, on a cold, dark winter's day, we long for a break in the clouds overhead and a glimpse of the blue sky and sunlight beyond.

Now think of a nation which for three decades has been barely

surviving under the 'grey skies' of authoritarian rule - and how they must long for a glimpse of the 'sunlight' of freedom - and you are thinking of Zimbabwe.

The tragic irony is that this is a beautiful and sun-blessed country, but its corrupt, self-serving leaders have deprived the people of the human flourishing God intends for them. A pall of darkness hangs low over the land, the WFP reporting that an estimated 5.3 million people are food insecure and 2-5 million in extreme poverty. Nearly one in four children under 5 suffer chronic malnutrition.

This is the dark background against which the ZVSF project must be viewed. Moreover, our team suffered their own moment of real darkness when, in September, Pastor Albert Chatindo died. An inspirational leader and beloved partner, he was worn down and worn out by his own unrelenting efforts to champion the cause of the poorest and most vulnerable. So what was the team to do without him?

We deeply mourn the loss of a dear friend. Yet at the same time we have been encouraged by signs of hope breaking through the darkness. Clearly the Lord has not withdrawn either his calling to this work, or his blessing upon it.

First, two very able Pastors from Albert's own ministry team have come forward to take their place in our ZVSF team. Pastor Bkeki Siziba (on the right in the photo below) and Pastor Robert Chatindo (on the left) bring experience and energy to our team, together with a passion to continue Albert's pioneering work.

Then ZVSF was entrusted by another Zimbabwean Charity working to restore human rights with the responsibility for distributing 5 tonnes of open-pollinated (OPV) seed maize to destitute families. This is a real game-changer because future crops can be grown from the seed it produces. A measure of the dignity of self-help is restored to these desperate people, and something of their joy can be seen in the photo (left).

And so we press on, energized by the God of justice and privileged to play however small a part in his plan to bless some of the most vulnerable in Zimbabwe with his compassion. Our warmest thanks to all our supporters in this Circuit who are engaged with us in this project through their prayers and generous giving (to find out more contact the circuit office).

Graham Shaw

Chair of Trustees: ZVSF



Help Ukraine!

The refurbished church at Victoria Park was the venue for 'Help Ukraine!' – a day of fund-raising to support people remaining in Ukraine through 'All We Can', and refugees in Poland, through the United Methodist Church of Poland. Opening at noon with soup (vegetable or stilton, leek and potato) and continuing with cream teas and a mouth-watering selection of cakes, the day raised over a £1,000. Sunlight streamed through the church windows on a glorious spring day and friends from circuit churches and other visitors enjoyed a worthwhile day. It was the first event in the newly carpeted church, which now has chairs not pews, giving much-needed flexibility. All being well, it will be the first event of many as the church opens its doors to the community.



Churches across the circuit have also given generously to the circuit appeal to help Ukraine.

Photographs: Above: Maureen Williamson shares afternoon tea with Ewa and David (Maureen's son) and their friend, Norma.

Below left: passers by look straight into the refurbished church; below centre: Lee Cochran shares the cream tea with some enthusiasm.

below right: baskets of flowers and tablecloths and serviettes picked up the national colours of Ukraine.



Making progress step by step

Revd Krzysztof Klusek, visited the Torbay Methodist Circuit from Poland, in September 2019.



He writes from his new church at Chodzież, a parish of the United Methodist Church, Poland.

Warmest greetings to sisters and brothers in the Lord Jesus. Thank you for your support and your generous hearts, and for your sensitivity and compassion. Here in Poland, our Methodist parishes are receiving refugees from all over Ukraine, as the country is attacked by the orders of President Putin. We give thanks to God that we are

making progress step by step. In my parish we have three families staying with us. They are registered here so they can use the Polish Health Service and the children are able to attend school. Sadly, we feel this is likely to be only the tip of a very large iceberg. We have people who simply left everything at home in Ukraine. The early days were marked by panic and fear – some of them wondering if they would still be bombed. It will be a challenge for the Ukrainians to learn Polish but we are doing our best to help them. The people need support and counselling. Our people collected some clothes for the small children. When we gave them to the Ukrainian mothers they just burst into tears. Please continue to keep us in your thoughts and prayers. We are very grateful for everything. Love from Poland, Krzysztof



Photographs of Ukrainian refugees from Bila Cirkev and Lviv being cared for by Methodist friends at Chodzież Poland