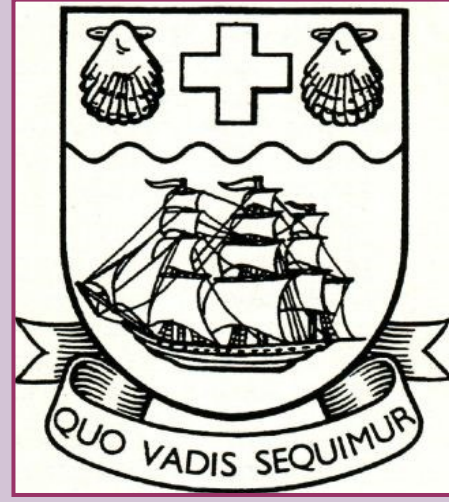


Nine out of Eleven

Nine out of eleven of the team (pictured below) went on to be Methodist ministers. The Wesley College, Bristol, football team (1980-81) included Jeff Short and John Haley (can you spot them?). The year after they were joined by Geoff Dunbar, Stephen Wright and Brian Hunt—who would all later serve in the Torbay Circuit. John Haley, who completes ten years of service in Torbay (the last seven as superintendent minister) at the end of July 2022, will be succeeded by Jeff Short. Jeff, who has spent the last twenty-two years of his ministry in Stoke-on-Trent, will start work in the Torbay Circuit in September.



Reflections on Revd John Haley's time in Torbay

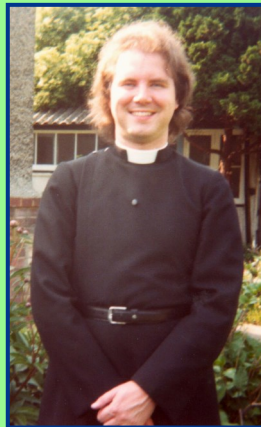
It's hard to believe that John came to the Circuit ten years ago! John entered into work with energy and enthusiasm and it wasn't long before he became Superintendent Minister. Since then we have seen many changes but we have also been built-up along the way.

Change is difficult to cope with but John has helped us to look forward and embrace new ways of working and being church. We have been greatly fed by his preaching and teaching and inspired by his love for Jesus. We have been helped in our times of need and many of us can testify John was there at exactly the right time and place.

John leaves the Torbay Circuit much stronger than it was when he arrived. We have signs of new growth and we are on the cusp of exciting new projects - all thanks to that minister of thirty-nine years called John! So we all wish him (and Janet too for we know he couldn't manage without her!) every blessing as he begins on a new adventure.

Kathryn Trotman (Circuit Steward)

When I think of John what often springs to mind is four green and white letters, P.A.F.C. (Plymouth Argyle Football Club). Those letters sum up four areas of John's ministry among us.



P is for Professionalism. John has always put in the time and effort and I wondered if he would slow down during his final year. To his credit there was no let up. P also is for pastoral care. Very many people have expressed to me their thanks for his gift of being alongside and for his help and care especially in difficult times.

A is for Administration. I can't help but be envious of John's ability to be on top of all that is needed. I wish I was as efficient in keeping up to date and indeed planning for the future.

F is for 'Feeology' (sorry but I needed to highlight this particular gift) I have benefitted throughout my friendship with John from his orthodox theology.

He is consistent in being able to communicate and live out his belief and love for Jesus. His sermons have been clear, consistent, and challenging.

C is for Companionship. I had no hesitation when I was asked to join the Torbay Circuit and renew my acquaintance with John after working with him in Plymouth for six years. I have benefited from his support and care and continue to value our professional and personal relationship.

Doug Rix (Circuit Minister)



Photographs: *Far left:* Revd John Haley in 1984 after a wedding. *Left:* At the founding of a new Boys' Brigade Company in September 1984

Please send good news stories of worship, fellowship, mission and evangelism to Torbay Methodist Circuit Office by no later than 6 September 2022 to be considered for inclusion in the next issue of *Connected*.

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CONNECTED

Newsletter of the Torbay Methodist Circuit—Issue 21: July 2022

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

Our forever home!

After thirty-nine years of living in houses provided by the church, this summer, my wife and I will be moving to our own property. Someone kindly said, ‘You’ll be moving to your forever home!’ I don’t know if my inner feelings were displayed in a look of horror on my face. Let me explain.

Just before my twenty-first birthday, when I was a law student in my third year at Leicester, I made a big decision. I did not accept my place at the College of Law and instead decided that I would offer for Christian ministry. It was a complete change of plan and it was a rather scary step to take.

I first expressed my own Christian faith as a 12 year old. In my teenage years, my faith development often lagged behind my overall development. As a student I began telling others about my faith in Jesus Christ and through this sensed a developing call to Christian service.

After completing my law studies, I worked in the offices of Plymouth Argyle Football Club, while offering to train as a Methodist minister. I was sent to Wesley College, Bristol, and after three years took up my first appointment at Mitcham (Surrey), which is very much part of Greater London.



Traditionally, Methodist ministers are ‘itinerant’ – we don’t expect to stay in one place for too long. After Mitcham I served in St Agnes (Cornwall), Barry (Wales), Inverness (Scotland) before returning to Devon and serving at Plympton and more recently Torbay.

It will be good to live in our own house (near River Tamar, pictured left) and hopefully to be settled for a long time – but I don’t think of it as my ‘forever home’. ‘Home’ is more than a house, isn’t it? More than fifty years ago, I set my sights on a ‘forever home’. That is to be with Jesus.

Some years ago I remember reading, ‘be careful who you are following, because where they end up, you will end up too!’ That struck me forcibly. I haven’t always been the best follower of Jesus, there have been times when he’s had to come back for me, but I know where I am going.

John Haley
Superintendent Minister

Congratulations: Twice Over!



The new President of the Methodist Conference (elected annually), Revd Graham Thompson (left), was previously serving as Chair of the Plymouth and Exeter Methodist District, a role to which he was appointed following his service as Chair of the East Anglia District. Before offering for the Methodist ministry, Graham worked as an accountant. All who know Graham and his wife, Alison, will wish them well in his year of office, which will include extensive travelling not only in Great Britain but also representing British Methodism in other countries.

Ian Lister (right), a regular preacher within the Torbay Circuit, was recently one of three finalists in the Sermon of the Year Competition hosted by *Preach* magazine. Ian studied at the University of Sussex and later worked as a software engineer in Surrey before returning to his roots in Devon. It is possible to watch Ian’s entry here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiEEwtcF2Fc> (to watch just Ian, join the video at 15’50”) but a shortened version is included in print on the following page. Ian is well-received wherever he preaches – though he does now have something to live up to!



Welcome the Stranger (by Sermon of the Year 2022 Finalist, Ian Lister)

On a beautiful sunny day, it's hard to imagine that there are places in the world where people live in fear for their lives as battles rage and shells rain down around them. War, not welcome, is often the sad and devastating language of this world and goes hand-in-hand with a currency of power: who has the most troops, the most tanks, the most weapons; who can exert the most force to get their own way.



God's kingdom is more powerful than all, yet it grows silently amidst the kingdoms of this world. Nowhere was that more evident than in Jesus' humble birth, an event that passed by largely unnoticed. Thirty years later, Jesus was tested in the wilderness and tempted to dazzle people with miracles but Jesus chose the slow, painful path of walking alongside and sharing in our sufferings. In so doing we see the heart of what it means to welcome the stranger because in Jesus, God made himself approachable.

Many of the welcomes we experience are superficial, but a genuine welcome can take us by surprise: the neighbour who invites us to dinner or the person who notices we are alone and makes the effort to talk to us. A genuine welcome makes us feel that we are in a place of safety, a place that feels like home. That feeling of being at home with ourselves and with Jesus is what allows us to welcome the stranger, offering the other person the space, time and freedom to be fully themselves [1].

Jesus gained a reputation as the friend of sinners because his welcome wasn't reserved for the outwardly religious. Indeed such people often received a rebuke rather than a welcome, whereas those who came without an agenda, not leaning on their own goodness – they found the welcome of unconditional love and grace. Jesus welcomed people with such freedom that they could walk away, reject, even betray him. Jesus' welcome is founded on genuine love, even when it is not reciprocated, because only with such freedom can real love and faith have chance to take root and flourish.

Soon after Russia invaded Ukraine there were pictures in the media of a protestor in Russia, bearing a placard that peacefully expressed his opposition to the war. He was arrested. The voice of moderate, quiet protest wasn't welcome but his fearless actions send a loud message to those in power and the wider world. His actions reminded me of Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem. Jesus, on a mission to save the

world, entered that city not with an invasion of military might and power, but riding on the foal of a donkey, a humble creature of peace. Jesus challenged the status quo and a short time later the welcoming shouts of 'hosanna' changed to shouts of 'crucify'.

Jesus knew what would happen when he entered Jerusalem but he trusted his Father and walked the path of obedience all the way to the cross. We might not readily associate the cross as a place of welcome, but there in his dying moments with arms outstretched, Jesus opened the way for all to come to the Father and revealed the full power of God's love and desire to welcome us home. We so often make ourselves strangers to God, but through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus extends God's welcome to all who will receive it.

The world's ways are frightening, but perhaps more alarming are the thoughts and emotions we find lurking in ourselves. The seeds of conflict, resentment, fear and anger can grow very quickly, whereas the seeds of love, peace, forgiveness, and grace require careful nurturing and continual cultivation. But that is the work of God in us. Jesus said: "I am the vine; you are the branches" and called us to remain in him that we might bear much fruit. Amidst all the shocking news of recent times we have seen seeds of hope in the response of people opening their homes to Ukrainian refugees and generously donating supplies – literal examples of welcoming the stranger.



Now, more than ever, it is so important that we follow Jesus' example and welcome the stranger because whenever we do so, there is one less stranger and one more friend. Each time we welcome the stranger we break down the barriers that divide and make it harder for fear and hatred to take root. Each time we choose peace, each time we choose not to give in to anger, each time we choose to stand up for what is right and extend forgiveness; the kingdom of God advances, one small step at a time.

The Roman empire is long since gone, nations rise and fall, but God's kingdom continues to grow, with every heart changed and transformed by the love of Jesus; the love that welcomes us and will not let us go. Amen.

[1] You Are The Beloved, Nouwen, Henri J.M., 2018, Hodder. p. 54

The text above is a shortened form of the original which was first published in *Sermon of the Year 2022, Welcome The Stranger*, produced by *Preach* magazine and the *Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust*

Turning Heads at Victoria Park

Our church at Victoria Park is now home to a project from *Turning Heads*, a community interest company working across Torbay providing opportunities and activities for families and people who are disabled, isolated or who are in search of employment. *Turning Heads* started in 2018 and have been based for the last year at The Windmill Centre in Hele, running a community café and various day services.



Alan Tilley, Director of *Turning Heads*, says, 'we are really excited about our next venture, which will start in



September and involve working closely with the church. We will be providing recipe boxes and running family cooking sessions.'

This new venture forms part of the Torbay Food Partnership encouraging the cooking of healthy food to improve people's health and wellbeing. Cooking sessions will allow *Turning Heads* to work closely with people in the Plainmoor area and beyond. Part of the aim is to get families and friends to enjoy cooking and spending time together.

Redemption Found: 'Accessible and readable'

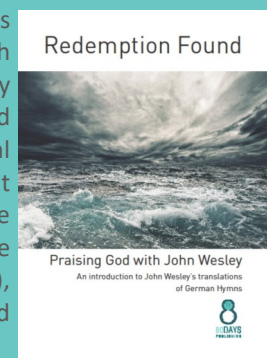
In this accessible and readable book, there is a helpful introduction to the life of John Wesley. There is also a closing chapter in which John Haley summarises the power contained in John Wesley's verses to connect with the Spirit of God and to receive his forgiveness and reassurance 'through the worthiness and righteousness or Christ'. In short, 'God is not remote but with us, not unknown but knowable.' The old hymns discussed in the book are not as popular as they used to be, often not helped by dated tunes, but they touch the heart with a power which few worship songs deliver today. John Haley worked with musician Wendy Beardall-Norton to try and change this and the featured hymns have an accompanying digital CD. The booming drum I hear is that God's grace and forgiveness are sufficient. We need to trust the buoyancy of the water (of his mercy), as a swimmer does, not thrash around for fear of drowning.

Let the last word rest with John Wesley who not just led the most important religious revival of recent centuries but gave us the language to help us connect with God through the inevitable struggles and disasters which befall us:

*Though waves and storms go o'er my head,
Though strength and health and friends be gone
Though joys be withered all, and dead,
Though every comfort be withdrawn,
On this my steadfast soul relies,
Father, Thy mercy never dies.*

Nick Pannell

Redemption Found is available through the Circuit Office.
Cover: Courtesy of 80 days Publishing.



Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

Platinum Jubilee Celebrations were in full swing at Victoria Park with a Devonshire cream tea, which also included singing traditional, national songs and a quiz. The newly refurbished chapel was well filled and the event was greatly enjoyed by all who were able to attend.



The church was decorated on a red, white and blue theme and even the cakes had a 'Union Jack' flavour. Everyone received a leaflet, 'The Queen's Platinum Jubilee 2022' by Roger Carswell which quoted from the Queen's Christmas Day speech of 2011:

Although we are capable of great acts of kindness, history

teaches us that we sometimes need saving from ourselves - from our recklessness and greed.

God sent into the world a unique person - neither a philosopher nor a general, important though they are, but a Saviour, with the power to forgive.

Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families, it can restore friendships, and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God's love.



Children Growing at St Andrew's

Our small but lively junior church at St Andrew's has been following the *Roots* syllabus. A recent story was Mary pouring oil over Jesus' feet and wiping it with her hair (John 12:1-8). The children used cotton wool soaked in different fragrances (perfume, orange, Olbas oil, coffee) to try which they liked best. They also learned about ways to thank people, as Mary was thanking Jesus for raising her brother Lazarus from the dead. The children made cards to say 'thank you' to someone – for gifts or for grandparents looking after them.

The children have learned more about Holy Communion and in one of our all-age services our minister Revd Doug Rix focused on the armour of God (Ephesians 6:14-17). One child wore a belt for the belt of truth, another a top for the breastplate of righteousness. A hat was used for the helmet of salvation and some slippers for the gospel of truth. The Bible in the hand was the sword of the Spirit.

Children distributed flowers on Mothering Sunday and rode a 'hobby donkey' around the church on Palm Sunday, while others waved palms and sang 'we have a king who rides a donkey'. On Easter Day we heard the story of the resurrection of Jesus and made Easter gardens with crosses and a tomb. We planted cress seeds which would grow to new life. In our Easter egg hunt in the garden – there's still one egg hiding in the garden somewhere.



Sue Masheder