




Christmas across the circuit



Worship for Christmas Day

Midnight Communion – Sunday 24 December
 11.30pm – Central, Torquay
 11.30pm – Brixham Methodist Church
 11.30pm – United service at Paignton Parish Church

Christmas Morning
 10.00 – Palace Avenue Methodist Church, Paignton
 10.30 – Family service at Central, Torquay
 10.30 – Victoria Park Methodist Church
 10.30 – United service at Brixham Baptist church

All churches have Sunday morning services at their usual times throughout the Christmas season (except that there is no service at Kingskerswell on 24th December, or Flavel on 31st December). Special Christmas services are:

Paignton

Goodrington Methodist Church
 Friday 8 December, 4.00pm Messy Christingle (service starts at 5.00pm)
 Sunday 17 December, 6.00pm Carols by Candlelight
 Sunday 24 December, 6.00pm Carols by Candlelight
 Sunday 31 December, 6.00pm Carols by Candlelight

Palace Avenue Methodist Church
 Sunday 17 December, 6.00pm Carols by Candlelight

Southfield Methodist Church
 Thursday 14 December, 7.30pm Carols and Faith Supper
 Sunday 17 December, 10.30am Carol service
 Sunday 24 December, 10.30am Carols and Christmas Communion

Brixham

Brixham Methodist Church, Fore Street
 Sunday 17 December, 10.30am Nativity
 Sunday 17 December, 6.30pm Carol service
 Sunday 24 December, 6.30pm Candle of Hope service

Kingskerswell
Kingskerswell Methodist Church
 Friday 8 December, 2.30pm Carol concert
 Sunday 17 December, 10.30am Carol service


Dartmouth
Flavel Church
 Sunday 17 December, 4.00pm Carols

Torquay
Central Church
 Sunday 3 December, 3.00pm *Light up a life* Rowcroft service
 Sunday 3 December, 6.30pm Advent service
 Sunday 17 December, 10.30am Nativity service
 Sunday 17 December, 6.30pm Carols by Candlelight
 Monday 18 December, 12.00pm Community Christmas Lunch
 Sunday 24 December, 5.00pm Nativity


St Andrews Methodist Church, Shiphay
 Sunday 17 December, 10.30am Carol service
 Sunday 24 December, 3.00pm Children's carols and nativity service

Victoria Park Methodist Church
 Sunday 17 December, 10.30am Carol service





Praying across the circuit



This quarter, please pray for our ministers, local preachers, circuit leadership team, and local churches at Brixham, Dartmouth, and Kingskerwell.

Palace Avenue will hold a prayer meeting on the third Monday of alternate months (starting on 15th January) at 10.30am for half an hour, praying for local, national and international concerns as well as for Palace Avenue. Everyone is encouraged to come along and pray together, but no one will be expected to speak unless they wish to! Coffee in the church foyer will follow.

In response to various concerns, **Palace Avenue** will also be launching a Year of Prayer at their Covenant service on 7th January. Members will be encouraged to pray at home for five minutes each day (preferably at either 9.00am or 9.00pm) for guidance about Christian witness in the centre of Paignton.

Southfield continue to hold monthly Friday groups to pray for all the circuit churches and other concerns. Also during the winter months there will be special emphasis on praying for the homeless and rough sleepers.

Please send good news stories of worship, fellowship, mission and evangelism to Torbay Methodist Circuit Office by no later than 9th February 2018 to be considered for inclusion in the next issue of *Connected*.

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CONNECTED

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

The true light that gives light to everyone

Many of us used to moan about shops being decorated too early for Christmas, but now it seems as if early decoration has spread to a number of private houses as well. It was only mid-November when I spotted the first Christmas tree in someone's window. Traditionally, Christmas trees were brought into the house and decorated on Christmas Eve – but now, with the popularity of artificial trees, it is possible to enjoy them for much longer.

No one is sure exactly when the Christmas tree tradition started, but the credit frequently goes to the German Reformer Martin Luther. Several German members of our own royal family, such as Queen Charlotte (wife of King George III) and Prince Albert (husband of Queen Victoria),

certainly did much to popularise the custom of having decorated Christmas trees in Britain. At first Christmas trees were decorated with candles, which was really very hazardous, but with electric light came strings of fairly lights.

It is as difficult to disentangle aspects of our modern Christmas celebration from their pagan roots as it is to separate it from materialism and over-indulgence. Our Christmas celebration also has things in common with the festivals of light of various world religions. In early autumn,

Hindus all over the world celebrate Diwali, a festival that is also significant to Sikhs and Buddhists. Jews celebrate Hanukkah in early December. But there is something special about Christmas that makes it unique.

The triumph of light over darkness, good over evil, knowledge over ignorance, and hope over despair is something worth celebrating. The Christian tradition, however, emphasises that this victory is not impersonal but



personal, and is accomplished by Jesus Christ, by his obedience even to death on a cross and by his resurrection. Jesus does not merely represent the light of the world: He famously claimed, ‘I am the Light of the World’ and continued, ‘whoever follows me will never walk in

darkness but have the light of life’ (John 8:12).

Illuminated Christmas trees and seasonal candles certainly brighten up a gloomy time of year – but let's not miss the person behind the symbolism and the birth of the Saviour who is Christ the Lord, which is the real reason for the celebration. And let's go on into the New Year not walking in darkness but having the light of life.



*Revd John Haley
 Superintendent Minister*

Blessing through blankets

Following on from my last article about our Blankets for the Homeless project, I'm thrilled to say we now have ladies at Brixham and Victoria Park who have joined us in knitting squares for blankets. In the last six months we have made 25 single-bed-sized blankets, plus several hats, scarves and pairs of mittens, which have all been donated to the Leonard Stocks Centre in Torquay. The manager of the centre is very grateful, and will be pleased to accept as many blankets as we can make. The items are given to rough sleepers.

If knitting squares is not your thing then perhaps you can help by knitting or crocheting hats or scarves. Autumn is well under way and it's not getting any warmer! As you will see from the photo we now have a special woven label which we sew to every blanket or garment. Thank you so much for 'Doing something practical'.

*Susan Gibb
 Cabbage Patch Crafters, Palace Avenue Methodist Church.*

Colours of Zimbabwe

This was the theme of the highly successful Circuit Missions Event held at Central Church on 14th October.

We learnt much about the country and the Zimbabwe Victims Support Charity from the Revd Graham Shaw, who worked as a Mission Partner in Zimbabwe for 16 years and whose love for the country shone through. We were very moved by the facts, stories and pictures and over £600 was raised for the charity.

Stalls were provided by Circuit churches and there was lots to buy – including inspirational Christmas presents! A wonderful buffet lunch was provided by the amazing Central team and it was so good to meet as a Circuit to renew friendships and to make new ones. Watch out for other Circuit happenings – they are definitely worth supporting so please come!

*Kathryn Trotman
Circuit steward and member
at Brixham Methodist Church*



Greetings from Germany



Pastor Bernd Seifert visited Goodrington Methodist Church while on holiday. He writes:

The protestant parish of Niederjossa-Hattenbach-Mengshausen covers three villages (and three churches!) in the federal state of Hesse in central Germany, about 130km north-east of Frankfurt. For 21 years, I have lived and worked in this place, together with my wife Anne and our three daughters – Kathleen, Lisa-Marie and Malin – who are involved in the work of our parish in many ways.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundation of our work. We want to reach and win many people for the gospel and faith in our Lord Jesus through our evangelistic work.

Because of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Germany, we have been celebrating lots of different services and holding special campaigns. We have also been basing our parish on the truths *solus Christus, sola fide, sola gratia, sola scriptura* ('only Christ, only faith, only grace, only the Holy Bible'), which were newly found by Martin Luther. This is certainly no routine matter in our time and in the contemporary political situation, but due to this it is all the more necessary!

For our parish, this has been a motivation to participate in the mission *ProChrist*, which is hosted all over Germany and in parts of Europe every two or three years since 2000. The next time *ProChrist* takes place will be from the 11th to the 17th of March 2018. After that we will arrange a teaching course in faith (Alpha Course), which we hope will be a consolidation of the things we learned and heard through *ProChrist*, and also help people to continue following the way of Jesus Christ.

We are glad that we can feel connected with many parishes worldwide through the work we do in our parish, and especially we are glad to feel connected with the Methodist Church in Paignton.

God bless you! With kind regards

Pastor Bernd Seifert and family

www.kirche-niederjossa.de



Christmas Labyrinth



Once again, the Christmas Labyrinth will be set up at Goodrington from 11th December. The stations focus on the Nativity story: starting with Isaiah calling on the people to 'Prepare the way for the Lord' and the Messenger from God appearing to Mary, stories of hope lead to the Bethlehem stable where, for a short time, a manger became God's throne and shepherds and wise men encourage us to consider what is the most precious gift in our lives.

Children from local schools visit the labyrinth each year, and follow with their own special 'passport'; adults can look more deeply into the meaning of the nativity with their own handbook.

More details are in local church notices, on www.goodringtonmethodist.co.uk and on the Paignton Methodist Churches Facebook page.

*Wendy Forman
Goodrington Methodist Church*

Tuesdays Together!

Early in 2016, Goodrington members considered plans for the next 10 years. In particular, we had a vision to receive 50 new members in that time. Inspired by the Bible verse, 'they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer' (Acts 2:42), we decided to start a devotional programme on Tuesday evenings (*Tuesdays Together*) with an emphasis on teaching, fellowship and prayer. Our programme ran during term-time from September 2016 until July 2017 and included *Tuesday Teaching* (a Bible study group), *Tuesday Praying* (a group for prayer), *Explore Together* (an interactive way of looking at the Bible together) and *2B1* (a time of fellowship, singing and learning new songs).

Tuesdays Together has become part of a regular devotional pattern for many who attend, and we were pleased to begin again this September. There are no embarrassing or difficult moments, and no-one is expected to do anything that makes them uncomfortable (like praying aloud or answering tough questions). It's all relaxed and informal – and everyone is welcome. All groups are from 7.30–9.00 pm.



*Carol Lemming
Goodrington Methodist Church*

Operation Christmas Child – Shoebox appeal

Goodrington Methodist Church was introduced to the Shoebox Appeal by Kathleen Stocks, one of our members, at our Ladies Evening Group. Kathleen read out a letter from a child who had received a shoebox at Christmas. The church agreed to support the appeal and in 2015 some 50 boxes were taken to Central Church in Torquay – which is the collection point for all the boxes in Torbay. From here they are transported by lorry in large containers to the docks and distributed to Eastern Europe.

In 2016, we collected 57 boxes and we aimed to collect even more in 2017. We were delighted to succeed by collecting a total of 60 this year!

Our Wednesday Fellowship group were involved in collecting shoeboxes for many years – and eventually we decided to involve the whole congregation.

This year, church members responded magnificently to the invitation to donate items for the Christmas shoeboxes, and we collected several big boxes and bags full of suitable things, which we passed on to Goodrington church to be added to their collection.

*Vivien Westmoreland,
Palace Avenue Church*

I bought a multicoloured hairbrush in Sainsbury's. When the checkout operator commented, I told her that it was for my shoebox. She was very interested, so I told her more about the boxes we are filling at church, and how they are sent to needy children all over the world. She was very keen, and said that she would have to get a box for herself and fill it. She went on to say that she would encourage other staff members to fill boxes too. It's amazing what one hairbrush can do!

*Wendy Forman
Goodrington Methodist Church*



The shoeboxes from this area were transported to Romania. We are grateful to members of Palace Avenue Methodist Church for the items they have donated which have been incorporated into our boxes.

These shoeboxes are a wonderful opportunity to show the love of Jesus to those who receive them, but putting them together can also be a great mission opportunity: shop assistants often remark on items that are being purchased, giving an opening to talk about Operation Christmas Child, about Jesus, about why we choose to pack a box (our love of Jesus and the recipients), which church we attend – even to give our testimony as the Spirit leads us.

A special Shoebox service was held at Central on 19 November, when members there presented the boxes they had assembled.



We are fortunate in this area to have Sara Artingstall, who is Operation Christmas Child/Samaritan's Purse Regional Manager South & South West, living in Paignton. She is happy to visit churches who may like to get involved, give talks to groups and give support in any way she can. (sara.aringstall@samaritans-purse.org.uk)

As the boxes are collected, blessed and transported may God bless those who have donated, contributed and delivered them to Eastern Europe. May the children who receive them know the love of Jesus Christ.

*Kathleen Stocks and Christine Hargreaves
Goodrington Methodist Church*

Covenant services

"I am no longer my own but yours. ... Let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, exalted for you, or brought low for you; let me have all things, let me have nothing: I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours."

John Wesley held the first Covenant Service in 1755, and it soon became a Methodist custom to hold the service at the beginning of each year. The service is an opportunity to celebrate what God has done for us, and reaffirm our commitment to him as individuals and as a community of believers.



The Covenant Prayer is a bit like a renewal of wedding vows: as we pray it, we ask God to help us continue to live out the commitment we have already made to him, and commit ourselves (with God's help) to continuing our relationship with him. It's a difficult prayer to say and truly mean, and represents an enormous commitment – but this is part of what makes it so valuable and significant.

Covenant services will be held on 7th January at Palace Avenue (10.30am), Brixham (3.00pm) and St Andrews (10.30am); on 14th January at Goodrington (10.30am), Central (10.30am), Flavel (10.30am) and Kingskerswell (11.00am); and on 21st January at Southfield (10.30am) and Victoria Park (10.30am).