

Holy Week and Easter across the circuit

Worship for Easter Day

Goodrington (Grange Road) – 10.30am** and 6.00pm
 Palace Avenue, Paignton – 10.30am**
 Southfield (Cecil Road, Paignton) – 10.30am**
 Central (Tor Hill Road, Torquay) – 8.00am**, 10.30am** and 6.30pm**
 St Andrews (Exe Hill, Shiphay) – 10.30am
 Victoria Park (St Marychurch Road) – 10.30am
 Brixham (Fore Street) – 8.30am**, 10.30am and 6.30pm
 Flavel (Mayor's Avenue, Dartmouth) – 10.30am
 Kingskerswell (Water Lane) – 11.00am**
*Services marked ** will include Holy Communion.*

Brixham

Brixham Methodist Church, Fore Street

Sunday 25 March, 10.30am
 Palm Sunday worship – The Triumphal Entry
 Monday 26 March – Thursday 29th March, 12.00 noon
 Holy Week Worship
 Monday – Cleansing of the temple
 Tuesday – Jesus's Teaching
 Wednesday – Jesus anointed at Bethany
 Thursday – Preparation for the Last Supper
 Thursday 29th March, 7.30pm
 The Last Supper (Communion)
 Friday 30 March
 10.30am Good Friday Reflection, followed by
 11.15am Churches Together in Brixham Walk of
 Witness from Fore Street to the Quay

Kingskerswell

Kingskerswell Methodist Church

Friday 30 March, 5.30pm
 Good Friday Service (with Central Choir)

Torquay

Central Church

Monday 26 March – Thursday 29th March, 9.30am daily
 Prayers
 Friday 30 March
 10.30 am Good Friday Service
 12.00pm Torquay Walk of witness

Paignton

Friday 30 March, 11.45 am
 Walk of Witness – Christians Together in Paignton
 (starts from Christchurch, Torbay Road)

Goodrington Methodist Church

Thursday 29 March, 7.30 pm
 Maundy Thursday Labyrinth – interactive prayers,
 readings, reflections and communion for Holy
 Week

Palace Avenue Methodist Church

Wednesday 28 March, 2.30 pm
 Fellowship with Communion
 Friday 30 March, 10.00 am
 Good Friday Service with Central Paignton
 Churches



Praying across the circuit



This quarter, please pray for our ministers, local preachers, circuit leadership team, and local churches at Goodrington, Palace Avenue and Southfield.

Palace Avenue hold a prayer meeting on the third Monday of alternate months at 10.30am (19 March, 21 May) 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. Members and supporters are 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.

Goodrington are holding a day of prayer from 7.00am to 7.00pm on Tuesday 1 May.

Please send good news stories of worship, fellowship, mission and evangelism to Torbay Methodist Circuit Office by no later than 8th May 2018 to be considered for inclusion in the next issue of *Connected*.

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The Methodist Church

Introducing ... the most controversial man who ever lived!

*Who was Jesus? Why did he die?
 And was he really alive again after he died?*

Who was Jesus?

It's probably never been easy to share faith with others but it certainly seems to be getting harder. According to one survey in England, 40% of people no longer consider Jesus to be a historical figure. Even a definition of 'Jesus Christ' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 'an oath used to express irritation, dismay, or surprise.' It's fair to say that the various books bound together in the Bible that mention Jesus, the Gospels, indeed the whole of the New Testament, are books written from a certain angle. That's not to say they are not true, of course. But even without the New Testament, we can be relatively confident that Jesus actually lived. He is mentioned by both Jewish and Roman historians. The very existence of the Christian writings, which in some places admit they are written with the purpose of bringing people to faith in Jesus, constitute some sort of evidence. Most if not all of the books of the New Testament appeared within the lifetimes of witnesses. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives further information: 'Jesus conducted a mission of preaching and healing (with reported miracles) in Palestine in about AD 28–30.'

Why did he die?

While it is common to attempt to separate the ethical teachings of Jesus from his religious claims it is not really possible to do so. Jesus lived out his teaching so that even as the greatest among his contemporaries he readily took the role of servant. The teachings of Jesus (parables such as the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son; or bodies of teaching such as the Sermon on the Mount) astounded both his followers and his critics but interwoven with these were amazing power and claims – power over the wind and waves, the authority to forgive sins and one-ness with God, the Father, in heaven. It was the criticism of Jesus' by his enemies, that 'you a mere man, have made yourself God,' which would lead to his betrayal and execution. It is possible to see this as a tragic end and yet Jesus consistently taught that this was the fulfilment of his destiny and mission. It is most unlikely that Jesus was either lying or self-deceived. This leaves only the option that his death was for the purpose that he revealed himself, namely, 'to give his life as a ransom for many'. 'Ransom' carries the notion of captivity or imprisonment. Christian teaching is that men and women are held captive by their unbelief, disobedience, regular inability to do what even they themselves adjudge to be right, and, ultimately, by their own mortality, which despite our best efforts exhibits itself with age and concludes with death. Jesus' amazing claim is that his death somehow brings the possibility of freedom from all that would hold men and women captive.

CONNECTED

Newsletter of the Torbay Methodist Circuit—Issue 6: March 2018

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

Was he really alive again after he died?

A quick visit to moonpig.com confirmed my worst fears. Moonpig, which offers personalised cards and gifts, had a whole page of Easter cards with 65 choices. Among the daffodils, eggs, bunnies, chicks, ducklings, puppies and cupcakes were just four more overtly religious cards, three with crosses and only one with the good news 'He is risen!' I wondered if it would make a good discussion point to send a



card with a question mark 'He is risen?' rather than an exclamation mark 'He is risen!' I realise that in modern England only four out of 10 people think that Jesus ever existed. As the death

of Jesus is the best attested death in the ancient world, we can safely run with the assumption that most of those who believe he existed will accept that he died. The Gospel narratives certainly want the reader to be in no doubt about this as they record the burial of Jesus in some detail. But while death and burial are part of the human experience, a dead person rising to life – to all intents and purposes a different quality of life – is outside of our experience. The contentions that Jesus did not really die, that his friends moved the body (for what purpose?), that his enemies moved the body (to what end?) or that his followers were somehow the victims of wishful thinking or of corporate hallucination have been considered at length and largely dismissed. The real challenge is to come up with consistent answers to all three questions.

Near the end of the fourth of the four Gospels (John), the evangelist states his purpose, 'these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name' (John 20:21). *Who was Jesus?* The Messiah, the Son of God. *Why did he die?* That those who believe in him might have life. *Was he really alive again after he died?* The verse only hints at the answer with the present tense 'Jesus is the Messiah' (I think it is legitimate to use Messiah, Christ and Saviour interchangeably). The message of Easter and the preaching of Pentecost, which follows seven weeks later, is that Jesus died for us, and has risen again – the latter being important to show not only his authority over death and the grave but also his ability to deliver on all his promises. The famous Easter hymn includes the lines, 'Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb.' Jesus is alive and by faith we can meet him!

Rev'd John Haley
 Superintendent Minister

Women's World Day of Prayer

The first Friday in March traditionally sees the day of the annual Women's World Day of Prayer. This year, however, the snowy weather led to the postponement of many services, including those at Brixham Methodist Church and Central Church Torquay.

Women's World Day of Prayer has its origins in days of prayer organised by women of several denominations in the US and Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The led to the first Women's World Day of Prayer in 1926, when the women of North America shared this with their partners in mission in other countries.

In 1928, Grace Forgan from Scotland was at an international missionary conference in Jerusalem when she learned of the world day of prayer, and brought it home with her to the UK. Services were first held in Scotland in 1930, England in 1932, Wales in 1933 and Ireland in 1934.

Each year, the service is prepared by women from a different country; in 2018 it was the turn of women from Suriname, in South America. This year's theme was 'All of God's creation is very good'. The service is ecumenical, and definitely not just for women!



Daddy's Diaries

On Saturday 10 March, Goodrington Methodist Church hosted a performance of Daddy's Diaries by Jane Bower, a professional actress, teacher and writer, and a member and elder of Emmanuel United Reformed Church, Cambridge.

Jane writes:

Throughout WWII my father Leonard Bower kept a diary. Still a highly intelligent conversationalist at 97, his talks with me and the memoirs he wrote – the emotions of which contrast strongly with his pragmatic and practical diaries – offer a mix of humour and poignancy; always a wit and a wordsmith, Dad's turns of phrase bring delight and pain by turn. Sustained by a quietly strong Methodist faith, his was a war of contrasts – he was a gifted clarinettist and repairer of planes, trained illustrator and instructor of fighter pilots. And he was falling in love.

Daddy's Diaries is inspired by the discovery of Len's diaries in a box. The piece includes the inescapable legacy of WWI, the family's unexpected link with Germany, Len's memories, illustrations and original recordings to create a picture of one man's journey towards peace.

The church also gave out facsimile copies of the edition John's Gospel distributed to British service personnel during the first world war.

Additionally, a donation from the evening is going to SASRA. More information about SASRA can be found at <https://www.sasra.org.uk/about-us>



Susanne & Swen

Susanne and Swen live in Germany's Black Forest, and are members of the Evangelical Church in Germany. They also attend the Anglican Church in Freiburg when the weather on the mountains of the Black Forest allows them to travel.

They have been visiting Devon for 20 years, and send this message:

'Last holiday we searched for an accessible Methodist church and found it in Paignton. So we went there to the Sunday Evening Meeting and had a very warm welcome. Revd John Haley welcomed us in German and so we felt right at home. On Sunday we visited the Sunday Morning Service at Goodrington Church.

We have always had a very affectionate [welcome] in England in the Methodist Church in Devonshire. We have won long-time friends. Without the community connection to a Methodist Church in England, our holiday would be only half as nice!'



So, what exactly is a prayer labyrinth?

At Goodrington Methodist Church, a labyrinth (properly speaking 'a complicated irregular network of paths in which it is difficult to find your way') is easy to follow.

It consists of a series of stations, where those participating normally sit on their own or in small groups. At each of these stations, there is something to read, something to think about and something to do. For example, in the Christmas labyrinth, participants were invited to read a short account of John the Baptist, think about what might hinder the 'way of the Lord', and then symbolise removing that by putting a pebble into a bucket.

The Maundy Thursday Labyrinth begins at about 7.30 pm – you can start as soon as you arrive, and make your own journey from Palm Sunday to Easter Day. The Labyrinth includes Holy Communion and concludes in the community room with a hot drink and a hot cross bun.



Happy birthday Southfield!

Over the weekend of 17-18 March, Southfield Methodist Church will be celebrating the chapel's 200th anniversary as a place of Christian worship.

On 17 March, a blue plaque will be unveiled by Torbay Civic Society, in the presence of civic and ecumenical guests, and all are invited to attend the brief ceremony at 10.30am.

On Sunday 18 March at 10.30am, the President of the Methodist Conference, Revd Loraine Mellor, will be sharing in worship at Southfield with Revd John Haley, Superintendent of the Torbay Circuit.

Southfield is the oldest nonconformist place of worship in Paignton. It has been a place of Methodist worship since 1884, but it began as an independent chapel in the Congregational tradition in 1818.

In 1816, a small group of Congregationalists had begun to meet in Kirkham Street. Their meeting flourished and grew, and soon local landowner Richard Hunt provided a plot of land for a chapel to be built. Foundation stones were laid on 24 February 1818, and on Thursday 5 November 1818 – less than nine months after building began – the completed chapel was dedicated for 'the worship of Almighty God and the preaching of the gospel'.

The congregation grew, and eventually decided to build a much larger chapel on a site in Dartmouth Road. This chapel – the former Paignton United Reformed Church – opened in 1875. The original chapel, together with the schoolhouse and burial ground, were sold to the trustees of the small Bible Christian group in Paignton on 18 January 1884. Buying the chapel was an immense act of faith for the groups of 23 members, but the congregation grew and the chapel has been a place of Methodist worship ever since.

The Bible Christians were one of the smaller Methodist groups which eventually joined together to form the Methodist Church as we know it today. Founded in 1815 when lay evangelist William O'Bryan left the Wesleyans and began to gather Methodist societies across North Cornwall and North Devon, the Bible Christians remained heavily concentrated in the South West.

The Bible Christians were firmly Methodist in their theological principles, but within the Methodist movement they were distinctive in some ways. They emphasised Biblical education, and favoured an administrative structure which drew on Presbyterianism. Most notably, women – including Ann Freeman and Catherine O'Bryan served in preaching, ministerial and evangelistic roles.

In 1907, the Bible Christian Connexion joined with the Methodist New Connexion and the United Methodist Free Churches to form the United Methodist Church. A larger union of the United Methodists with the Primitive Methodists and Wesleyan Methodists in 1932 formed the modern Methodist Church.

As part of the anniversary commemorations, a new edition of the history of Southfield chapel (originally written by Revd John Searle over 25 years ago) has been produced by Catherine Stead in the circuit office, and will be available from Southfield from 17 March.

Anniversary events will be continuing throughout the year and it is hoped that news and further information will be in future editions of *Connected*.



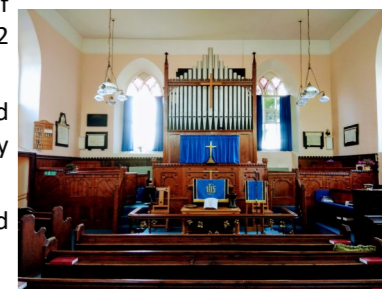
Revd Loraine Mellor



The original Southfield chapel



Southfield Methodist Church today



The Bible as you've never seen it before...

The Knitted Bible comprises 34 scenes depicting stories from the Old and New Testaments, knitted by the members and friends of St George's URC Church, Hartlepool. For ten years, the display has been touring churches and inspiring people across Britain.

The exhibition is coming to Rowbarton Methodist Church in Taunton, at the distant edge of the Plymouth & Exeter Methodist District, from Friday 15th to Thursday 21st June, as part of their 125th Anniversary Celebrations.

It will be open free to the public on weekday afternoons 2-4pm and on Saturday 16th 10am-4pm – and members at Rowbarton are hoping to welcome friends from across the District who are nearby, passing –or want to make a special trip.

More information is available from the church, who can be contacted on rowbarton@hotmail.co.uk. You can also see more of the Knitted Bible at www.facebook.com/The-Knitted-Bible-284690865063214.

