

LITTLE VOICES

A new initiative for parents and toddlers is now up and running at our Victoria Park Church. The local community was asked through a social media platform, *Spotted Torquay* on Facebook what people in the Plainmoor area needed. Something for toddlers was one of the many requests.

Run by Denise Brine, the group has received some wonderful feedback and is proving to be very popular. For more information please enquire through the Circuit Office.



SINGING BY HEART

Starting on 12 December, a brand new venture, 'Singing by Heart' is a musical session of singing well-known songs, for people living with dementia and their carers. Support from other singers is *very welcome*. The sessions will run at Victoria Park Methodist Church from 2.00 pm to 3.00 pm and tea or coffee will be available after.

The group, also run by Denise Brine, will be held every second Thursday of each month and only costs £1. Further information from Denise or the Circuit Office.



DON'T LOSE WHAT YOU LOVE

The circuit missions event at Central Church in October, 'Show the Love', borrowed its title from the *Climate Coalition Campaign*. Gifts for the Torquay and Paignton Community Larders and the Brixham Foodbank were placed around the communion table. Revd Gordon Chambers led prayers and hymns and spoke of water-gathering in his garden and caring for his piece of woodland.

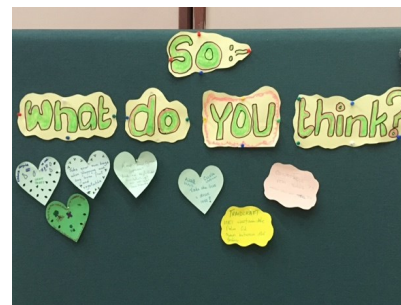
David Curry, the Exeter Diocese Environmental Officer gave a talk, 'Caring for God's Acre', in which he pointed out that the Amazon Forest cannot really be described as the lungs of the Earth. Lungs take in oxygen and give out carbon dioxide – the forest does the opposite work. Millions of tiny plankton in the oceans also collect carbon from the atmosphere. When we are disconnected from nature we suffer spiritual as well as physical damage, as our sense of wonder is under threat.

As well as a variety of stalls including, *Traidcraft*, *Beekeepers*, *New from Old*, *Friends of the Earth* and *Tor2*, green hearts were used to decorate a board, each heart including a thought,

question or suggestion. Some of these were - *Keep our green spaces, no high rise buildings on or near the sea front, too much thrown away, take your own shopping bags, reduce, recycle, re-use, walk, cycle, go by bus, drive less.*

There are so many people to thank – including the catering team at Central Church. Donations were shared between Torbay Beekeepers' Association and A ROCHA UK, a Christian charity working for the protection and restoration of the natural world through practical involvement in nature conservation projects and ecological research, campaigning on biodiversity issues and engaging with churches, schools, communities and individuals. A day to educate and inspire!

Helen Barrett, Chair of the Circuit Mission Committee, is a local preacher and a member at Brixham Methodist Church



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

7 February 2020 to be considered for inclusion in the next issue of *Connected*.

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The Methodist Church

CONNECTED

Newsletter of the Torbay Methodist Circuit—Issue 13 December 2019

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

Let's Celebrate Together

*Chestnuts roasting on an open fire,
Jack Frost nipping at your nose,
Yuletide carols being sung by a choir,
And folks dressed up like Eskimos.*

*Everybody knows a turkey and some mistletoe,
Help to make the season bright.
Tiny tots with their eyes all aglow,
Will find it hard to sleep tonight.*

On a blistering hot day in the summer of 1945, with the Second World War having just ended, songwriter Robert Wells thought if he could immerse himself in winter he could cool off. And so, with the help of Mel Tormé, the most-performed Christmas song was written and in the spring of the following year it was recorded by Nat King Cole, the first of many to sing the familiar words.

The song clearly focuses on the things that Robert Wells enjoyed most about Christmas – roasted chestnuts; cold, crisp days; beautifully sung Christmas carols; people dressed for winter; turkey; mistletoe; and children's eyes glowing with anticipation. What do you enjoy most about Christmas? What about making your own list?

Pigs in blankets – they're just the best part of Christmas dinner; and prawn or spicy chicken *vol-au-vents* – they remind me of the four Christmases that I worked for Plymouth Argyle; and sherry trifle – as a lifelong teetotaler I like to have a big portion of that! And that quiet time, on Christmas Day, when the children had gone to bed and the guests returned home and we could sit by the coal fire.

And the chink of the milk bottles on the doorstep that announced the dawn of Christmas Day when I was a little boy; and Plymouth Argyle 4 – Fulham 0, with Fulham's Bobby Moore substituted at half-time as Argyle raced ahead; and nurses bringing snowballs on trays into the ward during the Christmas (1962) that I spent in hospital, and the outrageous present a member wore to the Christmas service in Barry; and the flying *Malteser* that turned a Christmas *Celebration* in Plympton into David and Goliath!



But wait a minute ... at a birthday party, surely the first concern has to be for the one celebrating the birthday. How can Christmas be celebrated properly without reference to Jesus, 'the Christ'? We need Christ in Christmas. I remember the humble farmer in the Tamar Valley who, when an educated man was parading his knowledge observing that Christmas Day is at best only the official birthday of Jesus Christ, who was probably born in October (when shepherds are in the fields) and about four to six years earlier than the sixth century calculation that fixed today's date, simply responded, 'When I am up with the cows at four o'clock on Christmas Day, I just kneel on the floor of the milking parlour and say, "Happy Birthday, Jesus."'

And the choir from Mitcham singing carols in the wards of the Wandle Valley Hospital, while the teenagers talked to the long-term geriatric patients; and the delight on the face of a teenage girl who had jumped from the top of a multi-storey car-park as I gave her a teddy bear in the Royal Cornwall Hospital, Truro; and reading and re-reading with young and old alike the sacred text of shepherds and angels and wise men and contemplating with awe and wonder the heavenly message, 'Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord' (Luke 2:11).

Saviour, Lord, King?
For us? For me?
Truly a celebration.
Happy Birthday,
Jesus!

Revd John Haley

**Superintendent
Minister**



www.torbaymethodistcircuit.org

BE STILL AND WAIT ON GOD Extracts from *Reflections and Prayers*

BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD



Read - Psalm 46:10

Reflect

The Hebrew definition of 'be still' is to stop striving, to let go, surrender.

Letting go can be frightening – it means letting go of control - it means trusting God.

When we let go, we turn our struggles, past hurts, past mistakes and worries over to God to allow His loving Spirit to fill us and set us free.

The wider world asks us to be busy. God asks us to be still so that we can receive love, peace and guidance.

Clench your fists for a few seconds. Now open your hands and rest them with palms upwards.

Pray

Dear God, when my hands are formed into tight fists, I cannot open my hands to receive anything. Help me to let go when I am afraid or feeling overwhelmed by problems and challenges; so that I may open my hands to receive your peace, Your love, Your courage, Your blessings. I let go and trust you. I will not fall flat - You will catch me. Thank you Lord.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS WORD

Romans 12:1-2

Living sacrifices

Ephesians 4:31-32

Children of light

James 2:14-24

Faith and Deeds

Matthew 7:1-5

Judging others

Colossians 3:12-14

Holy Living

Lord, speak to me by Your Spirit and Your written word.

SITTING AT JESUS' FEET



Read - Luke 10:38-42

Reflect

Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to what He was saying. But her sister Martha was pre-occupied with all the things she had to do.

Like Martha, we can become too busy with day-to-day activities to read our Bibles and listen to what God wants to say to us and teach us.

Jesus reminded Martha – and us – of what to be concerned with—that we must focus on our relationship with Him. Now imagine yourself resting at the feet of Jesus.

Pray for openness to hear Him speak; take time to listen, as Mary did.

Now imagine that at this moment Jesus is looking at you and speaking. What is He saying?

Pray

Lord, I want to learn to sit quietly at Your feet, without the thoughts that distract me, so that I may know You more.

Teach me, Lord, how to be still. Bring order and calm to the chaos of my mind. Quieten my soul so I may listen to what You have to say to me. I want to spend time in joyful meditation with You. Amen.

PATIENT FAITH

Read - 1 Samuel 1:20

Reflect

Think about the story of Hannah and her patience and how her faithful prayers were answered in God's time.

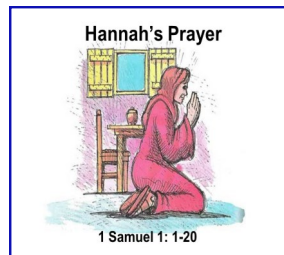
Reflect on situations in your life, or in the life of someone you know, that require patience.

These may be difficult circumstances, ongoing illness or a long-held prayer that has not yet been answered.

Use the verse in 1 Samuel to inspire your prayers and to encourage you in your patient waiting and expectation. Think especially of those things that you need to trust God to fulfil, or for Him to deal with in due time.

Pray

Lord, my patience is often lacking and my timetable often does not match Yours. Help me to understand Your timing. Forgive me for my doubting, and help me to trust You more. Father God, I ask for help to develop patient faith, as I wait expectantly for answers.



Thank You for those prayers answered after a time of waiting. Amen.

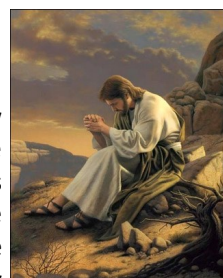
MAKING TIME FOR GOD

Read - Luke 6:12

Matthew 14:23

Reflect

Think about how Jesus always made time to be with His Father when He was weary. He



showed us what to do. We need a daily time of solitude to pour out our hearts to God, ponder His Word, and prepare to follow His directions. It is the best place to find strength to press on.

We may talk to God daily in prayer, but if we then dash off to start the day, we will not hear when the Lord answers. We need to have two-way conversations with God.

God loves to hear us speak to Him, but He also wants to answer us. Reflect on the difference it makes to your day when you begin by quietly reading God's word and talking to Him. Ask Him, 'What is the plan for today?'

Pray

Gracious God, You know how much I need You. You know my ways, how easily I can rush about, trying to solve the problems of my life. Help me, to make time to spend with You; to praise You and thank You for Your blessings; to tell You of my worries and my fears and to listen when you answer. Help me to stop trying to do it all myself. May I rest in your strength, and be still. Amen.

CHRISTINE IN POLAND

'make disciples of all nations' Matthew 28:19 (NIV)

In autumn 2018, our Goodrington Church hosted a visit from Revd Krzysztof Klusek, who at the time was minister of the Methodist congregation at Gliwice (pron. *glee-veets-eh*), a small industrial town in the south of Poland. Krzysztof was keen to keep in touch with me, not least because of my work with *Initiatives in Christian Education* (ICE), and wanted me to visit him and do some work in his parish.

Over the Easter period I spent two weeks in Gliwice as a 'missionary' (John Haley's words not mine) – an amazing experience! I took lessons in a language school, led Bible studies, shared my testimony, gave reflections at the Sunday services and worked with a group of women from *Aglow* – an ecumenical group that meets once a month at the church. I was able to plan a lot of things at home, but I was not prepared for all that I was asked to do. I had to rely heavily on God to help me and by faith and through prayer he guided me to bring a message to the people. Of course I needed interpreters as I had no knowledge of the Polish language – a new and strange experience in itself!



Inside the Church in Gliwice

It was not all 'work' during my visit. I visited the former Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp – a humbling and harrowing experience. It was difficult to comprehend the suffering and loss of life.



The square in Gliwice

The historic salt mine at Wieliczka was also an opportunity not to be missed – an incredible underground experience where everything is carved in salt and preserved by appropriate temperatures.

Worshipping in another country is not easy. Even when I recognised familiar tunes or the words of the Lord's Prayer it was difficult to participate in worship fully. However, there was a sense of peace and joy being in God's presence, knowing we were all God's children. When we were invited to pray in our own languages (Russian, Ukranian, English, as well as Polish) it reminded me of the experience of the apostles at Pentecost.

In August, I returned to Poland for three weeks. I was invited to go to a three day United Methodist Conference in Warsaw, which was attended by over 300 people and led by a group from Oklahoma (USA). There, I had the privilege of meeting Revd Davide Carbonaro, minister of the Methodist Church in Łódź (pron. *woodge*) as well as renewing acquaintances in Gliwice and taking part in the Sunday morning service there.

Both my visits started and ended in Kraków – a beautiful city with its vibrant square and royal castle at Wawel, reflecting that this was once Poland's capital city. I fell in love with this lovely country and its very hospitable people, who welcomed me into their homes and their hearts. I loved the food, especially the *pierogi* (dumplings) and felt God was leading me all the time. I am looking forward to future visits to Poland, to rekindle friendships already made and to make new friends, as Krzysztof has recently moved and is now minister of the churches at Czarnków (pron. *charn-koof*) and Chodzież (pron. *hodge-ee-ezh*), two small towns in north-west Poland.

Christine Hargreaves is a Circuit Steward and a member at Goodrington Methodist Church

Torbay Winter Night Shelter is a church project that has been running successfully in Torquay and Paignton for the past five years and has gained the accreditation of Housing Justice. Each January, February and early March an evening meal, a safe bed for the night and breakfast is offered for up to 12 homeless guests. A listening—ear and signposts to other supportive organisations can also be given.

This winter seven churches in Paignton are each offering hospitality for one night a week in January and early February. Churches in Torquay will be covering the rest of February and early March. Volunteers are required to help and some training can be given.

Each night three groups of volunteers are needed to cover the three shifts:- 6.30 pm – 10.00 pm, 10.00 - 7.00 am and 7.00 - 8.45 am (which includes helping with breakfasts) It is also possible to do the whole night 6.30 pm - 8.45 am.



Help is also needed to provide an evening meal, normally for 16 people. Help with expenses is available for this.

The project is invaluable to the homeless during winter and anyone can be involved.

You can contact T.o.W.N.S. through Facebook or call the Project Manager Mark Gridley on 07712892735.

Come and join us for 'Reflections and Prayers', part of our Tuesdays Together programme at

Goodrington Methodist Church. Please see our website for details. Maddy Jeffery and Susanne Turner.