

# TORRIDGE METHODIST CIRCUIT

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### October 2020 - Issue 109

Welcome to Edition Number 109

**Contact e-mail address is [newsletter@torridgemethodistcircuit.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@torridgemethodistcircuit.org.uk) or [bucklanddave1953@btinternet.com](mailto:bucklanddave1953@btinternet.com)**

This is the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Edition of the Newsletter, which we hope you will find useful during this period of uncertainty & distress in our homes, families, communities, nation & the wider world.

Any comments or items you wish to share, please contact the editor, Dave Watson by e-mail; phone 01237 451437 or to 6 Greenings Road, Buckland Brewer, Bideford, EX39 5LU.

Circuit Contact details: -

Superintendent Minister – Rev Rob Blackhall – 01805 628041

Minister – Rev Andrew Vidamour – 01237 478453

Circuit Administrator – Sarah Richards – 01237 472649

As well as the Circuit Facebook page – **Torrige Methodist Circuit**, we have a private Facebook Group where we care share thoughts, prayers & other material on **Torrige Methodist Circuit Group**. If you wish to join please push the Join button & I can add you.

Please pray for our Ministers, Rob Blackhall & Andrew Vidamour and all involved in the varied life of the Circuit; for those connected to the various Chapels & the communities in which they live & work.

#### **CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICES**

There is a plan for a Circuit Service, to take place weekly on Zoom, which will use the Services that are printed in the Circuit Newsletter. The Services will start at 10.30am on Sundays – but the 'doors will be open' at 10.20am. The contact/entry details will be send out during the preceding week & the Service can be accessed via a computer/laptop with camera/microphone, I Pad/Phone or using a 'normal' phone. Even if you have a device with camera/microphone & do not wish to be seen – you can join in without the camera on.

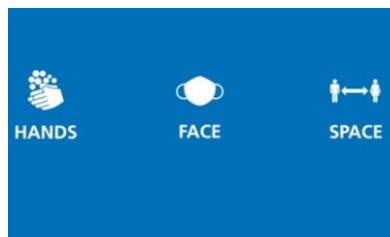
If you do not receive an email or want further information – please contact Sarah Richards, Circuit Administrator on 01237 472649 or [sarahrichards185@gmail.com](mailto:sarahrichards185@gmail.com)

#### **FROM REV ROB BLACKHALL – SUPERINTENDENT MINISTER**

Dear Friends

I would like to share with you some thoughts about the past few months and the coming months that I shared with the Circuit Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> September.

Keep safe



Every blessing - Rob

## **Mission Statement**

*We are the Christian people of the Methodist Torrridge Circuit, working to deepen our love of God through worship, service and nurturing new disciples of Jesus Christ.*

We live in uncertain and unprecedented times. I seem to be saying that quite a bit recently. But it is true. We have known nothing like this. We are living through a very nasty global pandemic. It is a killer and it is still with us.

Our first thoughts must surely be with those who have lost lives and their families, those who have been so badly affected by the virus; not forgetting those who have faced real and debilitating mental health issues.

Nor the people who have served the common good, who so often don't get the credit they deserve.

Let us be quiet

Re-opening Churches is not impossible, but it is difficult and there is a process to go through to keep people safe. We have to go through that process. I know some find that frustrating.; but we must be careful; and we need to do the paper work required. But we have to make our buildings, what the government call "Covid secure", while recognising that nothing can be 100%.

Things are constantly changing; it is difficult sometime to keep up, as things have been known to alter within hours. This happened yesterday. The Government announced a ban on gathering over 6. It then emerged that this didn't apply to Church services; although it does to other gatherings. Currently, lettings groups over 6 cannot happen in person; and neither can meetings such as this. Meeting by zoom is not ideal. It is much more tiring and lacks the warmth and fellowship of meeting in person. But quite frankly even if we were allowed to meet as such a big group there is nowhere big enough to social distance and to enable people to communicate easily. Can you imagine wearing a face mask for two hours!

The second think I want to say is to rejoice that there are, or at least were, many good things going on in the circuit – that we should never loose sights of that. From worship, with up to 200 plus people worshipping across our Chapels – you add it up; the average attendance across 14 chapels as recorded last year was 266! Isn't that amazing. I wish we would thank God for those we have, rather than bemoan those who don't. There are many other Churches in this area who would give a great deal for 266 to be present in their worship.

Bible Study, initiatives like PhiX at Parkham – if you haven't been to a Friday night in Parkham, once a month, then hopefully there will be an opportunity to go shortly. Parents and Toddlers, regularly at Milton, just started at Buckland Brewer – where we have become very aware of the need. Youth work in our chapel in Torrington, small beginnings, but it is happening. We had started to talk of a Messy Church at Northam when everything went pear shaped.

And during the lock-down, I am absolutely convinced that there has been more Bible reading, more praying, greater pastoral care, than before. **THAT MUST CONTINUE AND IMPROVE.** Let's not go back to the old ways. Yes, it is frustrating we cannot meet in Church, face to face. And zoom is a poor substitute. But over 20 joined in the first session of the letter to the Philippians this week, Tuesday evening and Wednesday afternoon.

But, let's return to the virus. What has it done? I think it has shown from a world, country and Church point of view that things need to change. Things were not right before, and things are going to be different.

Let's take this circuit, as this is our business tonight. At present the thought of 14 chapels having a Sunday morning service are quite frankly impossible. Lynne's forthcoming retirement, and some LP's indicating that they no longer are able to contribute, and the general pressure on the plan anyway, makes a full plan, certainly in the medium term look doubtful. We have lost about 30 appointments.

Talking of 30, we have, unbelievably, 30 pieces of real estate in the circuit. Do we really need that? And how are we best going to look after the property we have to have? And keep up the graveyards.

We need to think about working together much better.

**The central question is what are we here for?**

**What is the Church for?**

**Is the Church for itself or others?**

Is re-opening Churches about what WE need, or how we can serve our neighbours?

What are we here for?

What is our Mission, our purpose?

Now is not the time for standing still.

Yes, there are serious questions facing us.

At the end of the month, Lynne will retire. In other words, there will be a reduction in Ministerial Staff. But our work and our mission has to expand.

We have a stark choice.

Standing still is not an option and actually means moving backwards.

All these issues have been accelerated by Covid-19 – questions we have to face as a circuit were coming anyway.

Are we geared for Mission or something else; choice is yours.

## **TIME FOR GOD**

We all spend too much time dashing around – too much time doing the endless jobs that need doing. But when do we take time to be with God? Isn't there a time for just stopping and taking time to "be"?

As a staff we are concerned that there is always things to do in our Chapels and for our Chapels – property to be checked and forms to be filled, money to be counted. All that is part of our stewardship and the responsibility we take on, even if it seems a bit onerous at times.

**But time to stop and stare, time to reflect, time to be with God?**

Of course, there is, but this will not happen unless we are intentional about it.

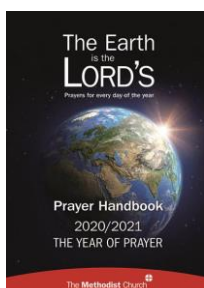
So, we are suggesting that once a month at least one of us will go to a particular Chapel and spend some time there. There will be no set agenda, no formal part, but just an opportunity to take time. Maybe read a book (and it does not have to be a Christian book), maybe pray, maybe talk, maybe sit in silence – whatever is helpful and appropriate.

Obviously at the moment we cannot go to a chapel, but we will endeavour to take time out.

A time for spending with each other and with God. A time for not doing Church business, but taking time – Join us from 10am – 12noon on Zoom on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October.

## BIBLE READINGS IN OCTOBER

For those of you who do not have a Prayer Diary (always a good publication to aid our private devotions) here are the readings for the month of October.



Day	Reading	Psalm	Hymn (Singing the Faith)
Thurs 1	Genesis 7:1-17	132	71 Even as the world began
Fri 2	Genesis 8:1-22	133	416 There's a wideness in God's mercy
Sat 3	Genesis 11:1-11	134	205 It came upon the midnight clear
Sun 4	Matt 21:33-46	80	247 I danced in the morning when the world was begun
Mon 5	Hebrews 1:1-6	135:1-7	14 Sing to him in whom creation
Tue 6	Hebrews 2:5-18	135:13-21	542 We praise you, Lord, for Jesus Christ
Wed 7	Hebrews 3:1-6	136:1-9, 23-26	107 I sing the almighty power of God
Thurs 8	Hebrews 3:7-14	138	502 I know that my Redeemer lives
Fri 9	Hebrews 4:1-11	139	498 God of all power, and truth, and grace
Sat 10	Hebrews 4:12-13	141:1-5	319 Christ triumphant, ever reigning
Sun 11	Matthew 22:1-14	23	401 Come, sinners, to the gospel feast
Mon 12	Hebrews 4:14-16	142	593 Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour
Tues 13	Hebrews 5:1-10	143:1-8	323 I will sing the wondrous story
Wed 14	Hebrews 6:10-20	144	628 Faithful One, so unchanging
Thurs 15	Hebrews 7:1-3, 15-17	146	56 King of Glory, King of Peace
Fri 16	Hebrews 7:25-8:6	147	300 Hail the day that sees him rise, Alleluia!
Sat 17	Hebrews 8:6-13	148	156 From the breaking of the dawn
Sun 18	Matthew 22:15-22	96	319 Christ triumphant, ever reigning
Mon 19	2 Tim 4:15-17	145	664 Lord, you call us to your service
Tues 20	Hebrews 9:1-3, 11-14	149:1-5	428 I've come to wash my soul in the living water
Wed 21	Hebrews 9:15, 24-28	150	732 Day of judgment! Day of wonder!
Thurs 22	Hebrews 10:1-10	2:1-8	208 Let earth and heaven combine
Fri 23	Hebrews 10:11-18	3:1-6	335 Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Sat 24	Hebrews 10:19-25	4	148 Come, let us with our Lord arise
Sun 25	Matthew 22:34-46	1	32 Meet and right it is to sing
Mon 26	Hebrews 11:1-7	5:1-8	481 The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want
Tue 27	Hebrews 11:8-19	6:1-9	457 Author of faith, eternal Word
Wed 28	John 15:17-27	117	677 Christ is made the sure foundation
Thurs 29	Hebrews 11:32-40	8	518 Father, hear the prayer we offer
Fri 30	Hebrews 12:1-24	9:1-11	378 Father of everlasting grace
Sat 31	Hebrews 13:1-21	11:1-5	549 Come, let us use the grace divine

Daily reflections and questions to ponder may be found at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/the-bible/a-word-in-time/>

Also, you can find a pray of the day at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/prayer-of-the-day/>

## **WHEN YOU HAVE READ THE PASSAGE FOR THE DAY WHY NOT SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH A FRIEND?**

### **PRAYER MEETING**

The next Circuit Prayer meeting by Zoom will be Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October at 7pm.

<b>October Events</b>	
Mon 5 <sup>th</sup> 7.30pm	Langtree Church Council
Tues 6 <sup>th</sup> 7pm	Leadership
Tues 6 <sup>th</sup> 2.30pm	Parkham Church Council
Wed 7 <sup>th</sup> 10-4	District Supervision Day
Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> 10-12	Time for God
Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> TBC	Alwington Church Council
Thurs 8 <sup>th</sup> 7.30pm	Torrington Church Council
Monday 12 <sup>th</sup> 7pm	Alverdiscott Church Council
Thurs 15 <sup>th</sup> 7.30pm	Buckland Brewer Church Council
Sat 17 <sup>th</sup>	District Fundraiser
Tues 20 <sup>th</sup>	Ways of Worship
Thurs 22 <sup>nd</sup> 10am	Northam Church Council
Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup>	Bideford CC

### **WAYS OF WORSHIP**

We are starting up the programme again, but this time on zoom. We would encourage anyone interested in the worship life of our Circuit to come along, but especially Local Preachers and Worship leaders.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October at 7pm.

Frank Watson is going to present a piece of worship that he has done for his Local Preachers studies on Calling. I hope that will lead us into a discussion of our own calling as disciples of Jesus Christ. Calling is clearly not limited to preachers, as I am sure we will discover.

So, come along and join in.

Look forward to seeing you there.

### **BIBLE STUDY**

One of the frustrations of the Covid-19 crisis is not been able to meet to do the things we usually do – Bible Study being one of them. But of course we should be reading our Bibles and learning together. It has been good that a group has gathered together online to enjoy fellowship and hear from our scriptures.

We think that it would be good to carry on – and to do the parallel patten of Tuesday evenings at 7pm, and Wednesday afternoon at 2pm.

Due to Church Councils we shall not have Bible Studies in October, but pick it up again in November. I invite you to put the dates in your diary. The only clash is with the Circuit Meeting on 24th November and we will make alternative arrangements.

So dates for your diaries

Tuesdays at 7pm on November 3rd, 10th, 17th

Wednesdays at 2pm on November 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th.

### **ADVENT COURSE**

Tuesdays at 7pm on December 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd

Wednesdays at 2pm on December 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd

In 2021

Tuesdays 7pm on January 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th

Wednesdays at 2pm on January 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th

Subjects and leaders to be decided; but would welcome ideas and volunteers!

### **DAYS OFF**

Now that Lynne has retired there is going to be more for Sarah, Andrew and myself to do. Please be patient as tasks are going to have to be prioritised, and there will be delays in dealing with some things. Worship, and pastoral care will remain our priority.

We all need to look after ourselves, especially in the current environment.

Please can I remind you about days off:-

Andrew – Monday

Rob – Friday.

Sarah does not have an official day off but weekends are a precious family time.

These days off are liable to change as funerals often take place on a Monday or Friday. Of course, both Andrew and I will receive calls on our days off in an emergency.

Thank you for your understanding in this respect - Rob

### **FROM REVD ANDREW VIDAMOUR**

Dear Friends,

In his book 'Clear Waters Rising', Nicholas Crane describes his epic 17-month journey on foot from Cape Finisterre (on Spain's Atlantic coast) to Istanbul across the mountain ranges of Europe. This fascinating account reminds me of the love-hate relationship we often have with mountains: we may well stand in awe of them, and they are sometimes a struggle to climb, but their grandeur may also be inspiring and the view from the summit may compensate for the effort in getting there.

And we find the same complexity when we contemplate the symbolic and actual mountains in the Bible, which often feature at turning-points in the story or as a focus for change. Not least, presumably partly because of their height as well as their beauty, they are sometimes symbols of the present and coming reign of God, as for example in the poetic passage beginning: 'On this mountain the Lord of Hosts will prepare a banquet of rich fare for all the peoples, a banquet of wines well-matured...' (Isaiah 25: 6)

Then there is Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Books of the Law from God during an extended retreat: this was an awesome task and responsibility, and yet we are told that his face 'shone' when he came down from the mountain (Exodus 34: 29), and he was inspired by his mountain-top experience to help put God's Law into practice.

We recall too the experience of Elijah on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19), and Jesus himself encountering God in a profound way on Mount Tabor. Here, in this moment of Transfiguration, Jesus is confirmed by God in his ministry and mission in the line of Moses and Elijah, and in this Jesus is so transformed that to his friends, Peter, James and John, it was as if 'the appearance of his face changed and his clothes became dazzling white' (Luke 9: 29). Again, no doubt Jesus was empowered by this mystical vision of God's love as, after this, he is given strength to 'set his face towards Jerusalem', ready to suffer for what he taught and did.

And so it may be with us as we climb the mountain of faith – 'the ascent to truth' as it is sometimes called. In this, we are sometimes challenged and tested, but as we seek to remain true to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, and to allow that wisdom to saturate our lives, and as we seek to live by the pattern of the death and Resurrection of Jesus, God sustains us in many ways with food for the journey, with faith, hope and love, with comfort and companionship – and the view from where we are will sometimes be out of this world.

Grace and peace to you all - Andrew Vidamour

## **WEEKLY SERVICES TO USE ON ITS OWN OR WITH THE ZOOM SERVICE**

### **SUNDAY 4<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2020**

**Call to Worship:** *Eternal God, we come to worship. We come with our worries, our needs, our joys, our hopes. We come with all that has happened to us this past week. Come to us, loving God, in our need and meet with us, that we might offer all that we are to your service, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

**Hymn: 'Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (16 HAP / 88 STF)**

#### **Prayers of Adoration and Confession**

*Let us in silence centre our minds on God.*

*(Silence)*

*How great is your being, eternal God; how majestic is your name. You hold all things in existence; you are the fountain of life, the source of all good, the desire of our hearts and the ground of our hope in Christ Jesus. All praise and glory be yours alone, for ever and ever.*

*God of compassion and mercy, you call us in your word to live by your grace through faith in your loving mercy in Jesus. Forgive us for misplacing our trust. Forgive us for depending on our own understanding and our own wisdom. Forgive us for relying on our own good deeds, and our own strength.*

*Help us to trust in you alone, and increase our faith that we may guard and share the good treasure entrusted to us, with the help of your indwelling Spirit, and press on towards the goal that you have set before us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Psalm: 80: 7-15**

**Hymn: 'Spirit of the living God' (295 HAP) or 'Be still' (20 STF)**

**Bible Reading: Philippians 3: 4b-14**

**Bible Reading: Matthew 21: 33-46**

**Hymn: 'Christ be my leader' (709 HAP / 492 STF)**

**Reflection:**

Paul does not often mince his words, and we find this in our passage from Philippians. He is exploring where his spiritual confidence lies, and he concludes that his true security rests in God's love in Jesus Christ.

This brings his pilgrimage to fulfilment, in a sense, but there is more to come, and Paul uses strong language to express this aspiration: 'I press on' he says, 'straining towards what lies ahead', and 'I press towards the finishing line'.

There is a breathless urgency in this picture taken from the athletics arena where the runner is exercising every muscle to reach the line as quickly as possible – not necessarily to win but, as Paul says elsewhere, 'to run the race'.

This is the old Corinthian and Olympic spirit where to take part and to try as hard as possible are the main aims. Or, as the modern poet T.S. Eliot put it: 'For us there is only the trying. The rest is not our business'.

This is a question of personal integrity, at least, but there is more here: Paul says he wants to 'know Christ and the power of his resurrection', and this reminds us where our full victory lies as we share in the riches of God's eternal mercy and peace in Christ.

**Questions:**

What inspired Paul to run his race?

What might it mean to 'know Christ and the power of his resurrection'?

What may give us confidence in the Gospel?

**Hymn: 'When I survey the wondrous cross' (180 HAP) / 'From heaven you came' (272 STF)**

**Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession**

*Generous God, we remember and give thanks for your blessings either in the quietness of our hearts or in spoken words, as you lead us...*

*(Pause)*

*Holy God, we bring our prayers of concern to you.*

*We pray for the peace of the world and the healing of the nations. We think of countries such as Lebanon in great need for many different reasons, and we pray your wisdom, guidance and compassion for those in leadership in such situations, and for speedy relief from suffering.*

*Lord, in your mercy/Hear our prayer*

*God of compassion, we pray for all people affected by the coronavirus pandemic in different ways: those who suffer with the illness, those who grieve, those who are concerned for loved ones, those who care, those who are trying to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. We pray that you will encourage, heal, sustain and comfort according to need, by your grace.*

*Lord, in your mercy/Hear our prayer*

*God of peace, we pray for the Church, at this time of separation and disruption. We give thanks that some services are now able to happen in Church buildings, and we ask the continued direction of the Holy Spirit as we seek your way forward in worship and service not only where we are but as the Body of Christ throughout the world.*

*Lord, in your mercy/Hear our prayer*



*Merciful God, we hold in your loving presence all who are in pain of body, mind and spirit, in particular those known to us.....*

*(Silence)*

*We commit each one to your care and keeping, and we ask your peace and strength for all in pain, and for those who care for them.*

*Lord, in your mercy/Hear our prayer*

*And finally, we pray for ourselves in a moment of silence...*

*Lord, in your mercy/Hear our prayer*

*We make all our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Hymn: 'O Jesus, I have promised' (704 HAP / 563 STF)**

**The Blessing:** *Bless us, God the Father, you who have created us. Bless us, God the Son, you who have set us free. Bless us, God the Holy Spirit, you who make us holy. O blessed Trinity, keep us in body, soul and spirit to life eternal. Amen.*

HAP: Hymns and Psalms - STF: Singing the Faith

**SUNDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2020**

**Call to Worship:**

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am God

I am the Lord that health Thee

I am the Lord that health Thee

I am the Lord that health Thee

In thee in, O Lord, I put my Trust

In thee in, O Lord, I put my Trust

In thee in, O Lord, I put my Trust

Be still and know that I am God

**Prayer of Approach**

*Lord God, we never know what the future holds or where life will take us next.*

*We never know what is just around the corner and what the outcomes of things will be.*

*But we know that whatever follows on from this moment, you are here with us, by our side, above and beneath us, entwining your life with ours, surpassing all human understanding.*

*In this moment, bless us and awaken us to your abiding presence. Amen.*

**StF 25 / HAP 653 God is here as we his people**

**Prayer of Adoration**

*Lord God, faithful and loving,*

*we do not always feel like rejoicing.*

*Even as we gather to worship you,*

*our minds are sometimes distracted and elsewhere,*

*weighed down by the burdens of our lives.  
Help us, in this moment, to find it within our hearts  
to REJOICE in your constancy and loving care for us.  
People of God, let us rejoice.  
In Christ's name. Amen*

### **Prayer of Confession**

*Eternal God, so often we give up if something goes wrong or doesn't go our way.  
So often we are overwhelmed by our own problems that we forget to look out for others.  
So often we are consumed with negatives and endings that we lose sight of the positives and  
beginnings.  
Eternal God, forgive us for our self-centredness, our blindness and our deafness, and reawaken  
your Spirit within us. Amen.*

### **Isaiah 25:1-9**

#### **Comment**

### **StF 335 /HAP 243 / MP 575 Rejoice the Lord is King**

### **Philippians 4:1-9**

#### **Comment**

### **Matthew 22:1-14**

#### **Comment**

### **StF 416 /HAP 230 /MP 683 There's a wideness in God's mercy**

#### **Talk**

Nobody ever said life would be easy. There are always hard and dark times, no matter how deep our faith. Paul suggests, in his letter to the Philippians, that it is okay to be afraid of dark or difficult times. Acknowledge the darkness; just don't let it rule. What darkness(es) do we face? Where is the light that we can look to?

When we are in a tough place, we really don't feel like praising God. But praising when we don't feel like it can be immensely rewarding. Paul tells the Philippians to rejoice even as they face uncertainty. And this week's Isaiah reading is one long poem of praise from a time when it would not have been easy for God's people.

The Philippians are about to find themselves alone. Paul and his co-workers have supported them throughout their early days, and he has every faith that they will manage once 'released into the wild'. He tells them that even though he will not be there, God will be. And God will remain close and guard their hearts and minds. For anyone moving towards independence for the first time – and at this time of year there will be plenty of young people doing exactly that, as they head for college and university towns and cities – it is a scary business. But just like a concerned parent, God dares to let us go – along with much encouragement and wise words of advice.

The Philippians faced a time of uncertainty. The future may have looked bleak to them. Paul encourages them to rejoice rather than worry. It is a question of attitude – as the American writer Dale Carnegie put it, in a book called *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*: 'Two men looked out from prison bars, one saw the mud, the other saw stars.' Paul wants the Philippian church – and all who follow Christ – to look for the good in everyone and everything, and to fill our minds with all that is right, and beautiful, and just (4.8). How does this contrast with what we are fed daily through the press, TV and social media?

## **Discussion**

What darkness(es) do we face? Where is the light that we can look to?  
How can we see and celebrate Good News with so much bad news around us?

## **StF 696 /HAP 402 For the healing of the nations**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

*O God, we come to pray not for ourselves, but for each other – for those we know and those we don't, for situations we understand and for those that confound us.  
The news tells us of trauma and heartache across the world and we try to grasp the intensity of it all.*

***Bless, O Lord, all involved in the hurting and the healing.***

*We hear of death and dying, of grieving and weeping...  
We hear of pain, scarring and disfigurement...  
We hear of anguish and confusion...  
We hear of those in need of help, and those who struggle to find it...  
We hear of the grieving and the sorrowful...  
We hear of the lost and the alone...  
And we know, Lord, there are myriad others known only to you.  
***Bless them all in their hurting and their healing. Amen.****

## **The Lord's Prayer**

## **The Peace**

## **StF 418 We have a Gospel to proclaim**

## **Blessing**

## **SUNDAY 18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2020**

**Call to Worship:** *Eternal Light, shine into our hearts, Eternal Goodness, deliver us from evil, Eternal Power, be our support, Eternal Wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance, Eternal Pity have mercy upon us, that with all our heart and mind and soul and strength we may seek your face and be brought by your infinite mercy to your holy presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.***

## **Hymn: 'O for a thousand tongues to sing' (744 HAP / 364 STF)**

### **Prayers of Adoration and Confession:**

*Praise be to you, O God, the origin of the universe, by whose wisdom we are created and sustained.*

*Praise be to you, O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose love we are redeemed and forgiven.*

*Praise be to you, O God, the source of all holiness, by whose Spirit we are made whole and brought to perfection.*

*Praise be to you, O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.*

*God our Shepherd, we confess that we have wandered from your paths. Like sheep we have gone astray; we have turned to our own way. We have lived as if we had no need of you. We have shut you out of our lives.*

*We have done what is wrong and failed to do what is right. We have ignored the poor and helpless and neglected to feed the hungry.*

*(Silent confession)*

*For the sake of your Son, who died for us, forgive our persistent sin, and lead us in paths of righteousness, for Jesus Christ's sake. **Amen.***

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Psalm: 45: 1-7**

**Hymn: 'When all thy mercies' (HAP 573 / 97 STF) / 'As the deer pants for the water' (STF 544)**

**Bible Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10**

**Bible Reading: Matthew 22: 15-22**

**Hymn: 'Your words to me are life and health' (482 HAP / 164 STF)**

### **Reflection:**

We sometimes hear about role models (good, bad and indifferent), and these may be not only for young people but may be there for us at any stage of our lives: we may aspire to emulate people we especially admire and respect, whether they are alive or dead, and whether or not we know or have known them personally.

In our reading from Thessalonians, Paul says that 'You followed the example set by us and by the Lord', and this has been partly how the DNA of Christian faith and life have been passed on: through personal examples of goodness, humility, prayerful and practical love and compassion, and so forth.

*(Pause to consider such people in your own experience)*

The medieval writer Thomas a Kempis wrote a devotional classic called 'The Imitation of Christ', and elsewhere Paul urges us to 'let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 2:5). However, sometimes it can help to have intermediaries, those who live (or have lived) in a Christ-like way and so inspire us and others in the same path for different reasons and in different ways.

So Paul helped to encourage the Thessalonians as Christians, though this meant for them 'grave suffering', as well as joy in the Holy Spirit. Likewise, those who inspire us may not have (or have had) an easy life, and the Thessalonians too may well have known of Paul's hardships.

So it is with us: we share in Christ's sufferings so that we may also share in his glory.

### **Questions:**

Who are your role models in the Christian way?

Why do you see these people in this light?

What, in turn, inspired them?

**Hymn: 'Father of everlasting grace' (300 HAP / 378 STF)**

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession**

*Loving God, we give thanks for your blessings in prayers spoken and silent....*

*Gracious God, we pray for your world and your people.*

*We pray for those in the news today....*

*Lord, hear us/Lord, **graciously hear us***

*We pray for our Church community, and for the Church of Christ throughout the world, especially where Christians suffer torture and persecution for their faith....*

*Lord, hear us/Lord, **graciously hear us***

*We pray for those we know who have important issues to face and decisions to make...  
Lord, hear us/Lord graciously hear us*

*We pray for those experiencing stress in any area of life, in particular those known to us....  
Lord, hear us/Lord, graciously hear us*

*We pray for those who are waiting for something important – a birth, a job, a visit, a hospital appointment, a word of forgiveness, whatever it may be. And in this we remember too those who are lonely, longing for love and friendship....  
Lord, hear us/Lord, graciously hear us*

*We make all our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Hymn: 'Lord, your Church on earth is seeking (774 HAP / 410 STF)**

**The Blessing:** *'God the Sender, send us; God the Sent, come with us; God the Strengtheners of those who go, empower us, that we may go with you and your blessing, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

HAP: Hymns and Psalms - STF: Singing the Faith

**SUNDAY 25<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2020**

This week is One World Week -Working together for a just, peaceful and sustainable world. This year the theme is: It's our world. Let's make it better. We will reflect OWW in our prayers.

### **Call to Worship**

*Come. Love the Lord your God,  
with all your heart,  
with all your soul and with all your mind.*

**StF 99/ HAP 329/ MP 7 All creatures of our God and King**

### **Prayers**

*Creator God*

*For our world of beauty and plenty, we praise you-  
For the earth, the seas, the plants, the animals and all the wonders of the universe.  
We stand before you in awe and wonder in all that you have created.  
Thank you for your generosity - a world for all to share.  
Create in us a desire to come together as One World, for Now is the Time to Act.*

*Redeemer God*

*Have mercy on us for our over-consumption of the world's resources,  
For our lack of responsibility in devastating the habitats of your creatures,  
For our thoughtlessness in filling the world with our rubbish,  
For the pursuit of economic growth which leaves our brothers and sisters in poverty.  
Forgive us our selfishness that has led to this climate crisis, and bring us together as One World,  
for Now is the Time to Act.*

*Sustainer God*

*Be generous in your gifts of wisdom, understanding and courage to help us see:  
the interconnectedness of climate, nature and our lifestyles,  
our responsibility to secure a future for our children  
and the urgency to act now  
Inspire us to change personally, in our local communities, as nations and at a global level for we  
are One World, climate changes everything  
and Now is the Time to Act - AMEN*

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Psalm 1**

### **StF 78 /MP 170 Give thanks with a grateful heart**

### **1 Thessalonians 2:1-8**

### **Matthew 22:34-46**

### **MP 1085 Let the weak say I am strong**

### **Reflection**

The apostles were maltreated at Philippi for 'advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans' and pursued by a mob in Thessalonica for 'acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus' (Acts 16.21; 17.7). Their emphasis on the philosophical ideal of speaking the truth courageously despite opposition, on speaking 'not to please mortals, but to please God', fits being called by God 'into his own kingdom' (2.12). 'We might have made demands as apostles of Christ' refers to their entitlement, rooted in Jesus' words as he sent the twelve to proclaim the kingdom (Matthew 10.5-15), to support from their churches (1 Corinthians 9.4-12). But Paul and his companions worked for their living alongside the Thessalonians (2.9), and their intimacy is expressed using the female image of a nursing mother. A Jewish man and a Roman citizen, Paul expected to inflict rather than experience suffering. In following Jesus, he experienced hunger and hardship (2 Corinthians 11.23-28), bringing him close to the underprivileged majority of society living in the 'extreme poverty' of the Christians in Macedonia (2 Corinthians 8.1-2) and now 'very dear to us'. This seems to have made him more empathic with women, subject to male oppression in Jewish and Roman society. From his image of the nursing mother he is moved to speak of the centrality of self-giving to the preaching of the gospel, a self-giving at the heart of his understanding of God in Christ (e.g. Galatians 1.4). The stereotypical representation of strength has little or nothing to do with gentleness. Strength is more typically portrayed as being about power, and about a determination to achieve one's own will regardless of others. Yet, on his website 'A Home for Gentle Rebels', UK-based musician, writer and podcaster Andy Mort asserts that gentleness is strength because it remains constant and clear-minded across all manner of situations. He describes ways to develop strength founded in gentleness. The image of the nurse tenderly caring for children is a great picture of gentleness. Yet that tender care requires strength and determination and sometimes even 'tough love'.

Christians are not immune from suffering. In his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer contrasts cheap grace and costly grace. Grace is costly not just because it has come about through Jesus giving his life upon the cross, but also because of the demands that it makes upon followers of Christ. 'It compels a person to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him. This may result in suffering but God will provide the strength necessary to endure.'

Charles Wesley's hymn 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild' is now often seen as dated and inappropriate. However, critic and theologian GK Chesterton's view was that the imagery was true but incomplete. It is worth reading quietly through Matthew 22.34-46 and asking the question: What sort of man is Jesus? He must have had an awareness that the Pharisees were trying to trap him. Yet he is patient with them. His response is gentle and mild explaining his understanding

of the Scriptures. At the same time, he is stating his beliefs and showing strength of mind and character in so doing. That steely strength needs to be added to the gentleness to begin to grasp the full picture of Jesus.

St Francis de Sales wrote that nothing is so strong as gentleness, and nothing so gentle as real strength. The gentleness that Paul describes comes from strength. He had undergone the life-changing experience on the Damascus road, struggled to become accepted as a leader of the Christian community and become a travelling evangelist. Sometimes his views can appear trenchant. He had to be strong and yet as a result of all that he had endured, he knew that he himself was precious to God and that gave him strength, which he showed in gentleness to God's other precious children. This is a dynamic that can be powerfully used in our own lives.

## **StF 518/ HAP 436 /MP 132 Father, hear the prayer we offer**

### **Discussion**

What is strength in the light of Paul and Jesus?

How/when does care for someone require strength?

### **Prayers of intercession**

*NOW IS THE TIME TO PRAY for every church community in the world, that we all continue to persevere, as Christ taught us, in our prayers to the Father, the just judge. May our common cries for the needs of the world, this One World Week, be heard and shine out bringing justice, equality, inclusiveness and peace for all people.*

*Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer***

*NOW IS THE TIME TO PRAY for the whole created world; people, animals and plants. Help those in positions of influence and power nationally and internationally to a greater understanding of how to safeguard our environmental resources and the courage to speak up for vital action whether it be welcome or unwelcome.*

*Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer***

*NOW IS THE TIME TO PRAY for our own local community: councillors, business owners, shop keepers, faith and school leaders, charity workers, campaigners, community volunteers and all who work and live in our town. Help us respect each other in our diversity to come together to support each other in building a just, more equal, inclusive and peaceful place that safeguards our local environmental resources for future generations.*

*Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer***

*NOW IS THE TIME TO PRAY for all those suffering from the effects of climate change and pollution, particularly, the indigenous peoples whose way of life is now threatened, subsistence farmers who can no longer rely on rain for their crops and island peoples whose homes are flooded by rising sea levels. Comfort them in their distress and offer them assistance in finding new ways forward.*

*Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer***

*NOW IS THE TIME TO PRAY for ourselves, that in the final judgement we are not found wanting. Through our study of Scripture and our prayers, lead us to a deeper understanding of our responsibilities in working towards one world shared for everyone. Give us the strength to persevere, like the widow before the unjust judge, when we, too, need justice.*

*Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer***

## **StF 503 Love divine all loves excelling**

## **A sending out prayer**

*From the security of this place, with friends and family and our faith community, be with us, eternal God, as we step into the world of 'mixed-up all-sorts'. May we be kind and caring to all people, no matter how they treat us. May we be true to ourselves and hold our heads high, sharing your love and your care with all those we encounter - **Amen**.*

## **Blessing**

### **HARVEST 2020**

The following is a reflection written by Matthew Forsyth, Churches and Volunteers Officer at 'All We Can' – some of which he used when he joined our Circuit Harvest Festival on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September. 'All we can' is the Methodist Relief & Development Agency working with partner agencies in several countries.

Have you ever had unexpected guests at a meal time? Imagine having five thousand people turn up for Sunday lunch. If you were suddenly asked to provide for thousands of people would you react like Philip or Jesus? Would your practical mind work out that this would be an expensive meal and one that you certainly couldn't afford? Or would you calmly trust that all you needed was already there?

If we are honest, we would all admit to being more like Philip than Jesus. How accurate he is when he exclaims: "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" A very costly bite!

Perhaps if Philip had been given enough warning he might have put a financial plan in place; been saving a little bit each month and carefully preparing for this expenditure. But he didn't have any warning. Jesus knew that this large crowd was hungry and he wanted to meet their needs. For Philip, it was a monumental ask. How could you feed all these people without enough money?

In this story, Jesus shows us how extraordinary things can happen. A young boy is brought to Jesus who has five small loaves and two small fish: plenty for the boy but surely not nearly enough for the crowds too. You can imagine the young boy's nervousness at being brought to Jesus, the one they were all there to see and listen to. To be brought to him and given the chance to help. Perhaps he glanced around when he was beckoned over, sure that they had made a mistake. He was just a boy. But Jesus uses this ordinary boy and ordinary lunch to do something extraordinary. Not only does he provide enough food for all the people gathered there but there is an abundance left over. A miraculous turn of events. Jesus takes an ordinary amount of food and changes it into something remarkable.

For those celebrating Harvest today: Today, we walk in the footsteps of this young boy. We have brought our gifts of food to Jesus to be used in our local foodbank. We have brought ordinary tins, and packets of food which will do an extraordinary amount of good. Page 5 All We Can Change Begins with a Bicycle Sometimes we can think of generosity in the style of Philip. It is a big act. It requires much from us. It will be costly. But the essence of this story is that all Jesus requires of us is our willingness to bring to him our ordinary offerings. It is in Jesus Christ that the ordinary will be made extraordinary. This model of generosity is woven throughout the Bible. God takes ordinary people and uses them for extraordinary things. We, as ordinary as we are, are beckoned



into relationship with the creator of the world. The one whose hands flung stars into space takes our hands and wants to walk with us

So, when we look at something as every day and ordinary as a bike, we can look at it through the lens of Jesus. How much more is this bike capable of? What can it do for the one who it belongs to? For Nawalat, the young girl in Uganda, this ordinary bike will allow her to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse. The monumental change in her life begins with an ordinary bike and the potential to do something extraordinary in the future. It will allow her family to gain some financial security by having a means of transport for income generating activities. It will have an extraordinary impact on her life.

Change begins with a bicycle for Nawalat. Change begins for us when we bring our offerings to God and our willingness to give him ourselves. What ordinary gift are you bringing today which will be made extraordinary?

Gifts can be made online at the Gift Section of the 'All we Can' Website.

### **Christian Communities in Conversation.....[www.ccic-sw.co.uk](http://www.ccic-sw.co.uk)**

The aim of this District project is:

“To grow a new generation of people who are confident and excited about having spiritual conversations based on experiences of life, living and encountering God”.

CCiC Core Conversation Groups are the intentional spaces where we work to enable this to happen. We have a growing team of facilitators who have been equipped and enabled to facilitate these safe, focussed, diverse, inclusive conversation groups where people can explore their understanding of their own faith and the spirituality of others around them. It is in these groups that we learn how to have more meaningful conversation with others, improve our conversation skills and take what we are learning out into our own settings and communities where we continue to grow in confidence and excitement about the spiritual conversations we are having.

Our facilitators receive regular coaching to enable them to grow in their own practice and they also belong to a Community of Practice where they can share with others.

If you are interested in our progress to date or would like to get involved, then  
Take a look at the latest videos?

In the first video you will hear some of our facilitators sharing their enthusiasm about what the CCiC journey has meant to them and how they have grown through the conversations they have been enjoying with others.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vM6\\_gfZjLb4&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vM6_gfZjLb4&feature=youtu.be)

The second video is an interview with Emma Nash, Mission and Community Engagement Officer for the Connexional Evangelism and Growth Team. Emma came to visit the CCiC project, met with the facilitators and took part in a core conversation group. You can hear her reflections on that experience and some thoughts about how this might fit with the wider God For All strategy in this short video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtakmYKb8i8&feature=youtu.be>

For more information visit the CCiC website: [www.ccic-sw.co.uk](http://www.ccic-sw.co.uk)

Follow us on Twitter via the CCiC website

If you would like to know more about how to get involved then contact:

Jo Simpson, District Evangelism Enabler, [evangelism@pemd.org.uk](mailto:evangelism@pemd.org.uk)

### **What has happened so far?**

The CCiC Community of practice grown out of the initial residential sessions consists of those who are growing into the role of group facilitator, and those who are engaged with the project in other ways. We currently have eight active facilitators and the aim is that each will run a series of six week conversation sessions as part of their development. They are supported by the community of practice and use reflective practice methods with a competency framework to guide their growth. Coaching sessions are provided to all facilitators to hone self reflection and solution finding skills.

The stories of new conversations and connections is encouraging and the “spin offs” that come from having practiced civil conversation skills range from people feeling they can engage more confidently to changing the way meetings are run to make them more effective.

We have learned much in this first stage and are now looking ahead to engaging two more cohorts of people during 2020 which is a positive development.

### **How to get involved?**

The CCiC project is expanding and we are looking towards 2020 to recruit and grow a new cohort of people who want to get involved and be part of changing the culture we operate in.

We are looking for people who:

- Find energy engaging with other people and are open to what they can learn.
- Are enthusiastic about exploring questions rather than imposing answers.
- Have a curiosity about the stories of other people’s experience of encountering God.

There is a Facilitator Enabling Residential from 5-7 March 2021 – so if you would like to join this District Project & become a Facilitator then

Contact Jo Simpson the District Evangelism Enabler on 07951 230521 or email her at [evangelism@pemd.org.uk](mailto:evangelism@pemd.org.uk)

### **Christian Aid Smartie Tubes**

If you still have a smartie tube (even if it only has three 20ps in it!), please could you return it to Lindsey Brading or Diana Yendell? Feel free to push it through the letter box or give us a call and we will collect it from you. Thank you.

Lindsey Brading	14, Green Gardens, Northam	01237 471619
Diana Yendell	23 Highfield, Northam	01237 477836

### **A LETTER FROM MAUREEN FARLEY AT ALWINGTON**

Some may know that my dear friend, John Cottrell, passed away on July 9<sup>th</sup> after struggling with ill health for several years, but John never gave into it, even up until the day before he died.

When I first met John, he was a member of Torrington Chapel & living at Sheddymore Heights, Huntshaw. Later as his health deteriorated, he was no longer able to live at Huntshaw & not able to drive any longer, so he moved temporarily to his daughter, Sandra’s in Northam and then to his sister’s home in Limers Lane.

I would collect John at first from Hunshaw & then latterly from Northam – that is when we realised it would not be practical to come over to Torrington, so we changed membership to Alwington, were we went as often as John was able nearer the end.

The family, Sandra & John's son, Martin and family, who live in Surrey, would like to thank everyone for their kind cards & thoughts at this time and also those who were able to be at the funeral on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> July at the Crematorium. We appreciate all then support from the different Chapels in the Circuit – especially Rev Andrew Vidamour & Nancy Hall-Tomkin

We praise God for his life, for his example and for all those of us who were fortunate enough to know & love him.

PS – Sorry, John did have special friendship with John Dennis & Philip Squire during prayer meetings – plus I believe that John was Treasurer at one time

His strong faith kept him going, especially latterly, still determined to do things for himself

The Lord was watching over him.

### **THE DRAMATIC CONVERSION OF ST PAUL'S, SLOUGH**

This is report of the changes that this church in Slough have made recently – this church had close ties with the Shebbear Methodist Circuit, so will be familiar with many in that part of the Torridge Circuit.

A congregation camping in a huge barn far too big for its needs.

Does it have a familiar ring to it? Like so many of its kind St Paul's, Slough, is a very large, Victorian-style, 20th century church that had lost its former grandeur in a big way. But through the sale of some land for housing and fundraising, the church raised £1m to turn the church into a place fitting as an offering to the glory of God. Like the saint it is named after, it witnessed a dramatic conversion. Jeremy Bell, of CRE exhibitors JBKS Architects, explains how:

St Paul's is enormously high and was so hard to heat that in the 1960s a flat-roofed interior structure was built to provide a smaller hall that was easier to heat hall, entirely within the west end of the church.

The result was an out-of-proportion piece of nave and a dowdy flat west end hall, with plastic fold-back doors. Inevitably the roof of the hall room had accumulated old chairs and cardboard boxes.

The whole place had lost its former grandeur in a big way. Dusty utilitarian lights, ice-cold draughts and a rickety screen balanced on disused choir stalls. It all gave the impression of the congregation camping in a huge barn far too big for its needs.

However, the congregation is very much alive and represents the wide diversity of Slough itself, adding spice to this vibrant community.

After more than a decade the team (consisting of tireless vicar Revd Mike Cotterell, church warden Chris Broadbent and JBKS Architects) finally saw the work complete in March 2020. It is stunning, and a modern interpretation of the original. All the former beauty is magnified by amazing lighting and colour, but it has been augmented by some remarkably successful features.

The chancel has been blanked off by a magnificent full-height glazed screen with a huge wooden cross holding it up. Far from being a partition, it is a sparkly glam structure in which are reflected the stained-glass windows which appear like exciting holograms suspended in space. The white stone colours have been up-lit, allowing them to contrast and accentuate the warm brickwork.

The lovely arts and crafts wall decoration has been restored and in places, repainted. It adds such a quality of delicate tactile decoration. There are additional frameless glass screens to form a chapel at the west end. Again, they sparkle.

The main feature is that the whole focus of the worship is now sideways in the nave, which is wide enough, and accommodates a gracious curved dais. Everyone is gathered around, in one space.

The chancel is not lost. It is gloriously still at its axial east, and still features the old high altar and the richly painted reredos. However, the chancel is now the place of fellowship and gathering for a coffee and a chat after the service. Perhaps it is fitting that this part of the church, once reserved for choir and clergy, has been given over to the warmth of personal relationships. After all Jesus said: 'Love one another – by this will all men know that you are my disciples' (John 15:12).

May the restored beautiful church at St Pauls Slough equip the congregation to love one another in the sumptuous new space and thereby make disciples.



The completed conversion of St Paul's