

TORRIDGE METHODIST CIRCUIT

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

January/February 2022 - Issue 123

Welcome to Edition Number 123

**Contact e-mail address is newsletter@torridgemethodistcircuit.org.uk or
bucklanddave1953@btinternet.com**

This is the 20th 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.

This edition of the Newsletter from mid-January until the end of February

Circuit Contact details: -

Superintendent Minister – Rev Rob Blackhall – 01805 628041 – robertjblackhall@gmail.com

Minister – Rev Andrew Vidamour – 01237 478453 – vidamour@mybroadbandmail.com

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Circuit Administrator – Sarah Richards – 01237 472649 – sarahrichards185@gmail.com

Circuit Safeguarding Officer – Jacqui Watson – safeguarding@torridgemethodistcircuit.org.uk

As well as the Circuit Facebook page – **Torridge Methodist Circuit**, we have a private Facebook Group where we care share thoughts, prayers & other material on **Torridge 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, for Frank Watson & Sarah Richards 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

The Circuit Services continue to take place weekly on Zoom using the Services that are printed in the Circuit Newsletter. The Services are on Sunday Evenings starting at 6.30pm – but the ‘doors will be open’ at about 6.15pm. 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

FROM REV ROB BLACKHALL – SUPERINTENDENT MINISTER

Dear Friends,

Can I first wish you and yours all the best for the New Year. None of us knows what lies ahead. We are currently living through very difficult times. There are significant challenges caused by the pandemic; and we are yet to see a clear way through. Although, there seems to be light at the end of the tunnel, the future remains uncertain for us as individuals, as a society and as a Church. I am not sure that we have yet to realise the full trauma that the last nearly two years has placed on us all.

It is certainly a time to be loving and caring towards each other; to be considerate of the needs of others; and to look after each other's well-being. It is a time, too, for being kind to ourselves. Having said that, haven't all these been part of our pastoral responsibility to one another in the Church of Christ Jesus?

That of course includes those who are not within our fellowships. What is our mission in this place and this time?

I hope that we can continue to pray and reflect on this as we continue our discussions about the way forward in our circuit.

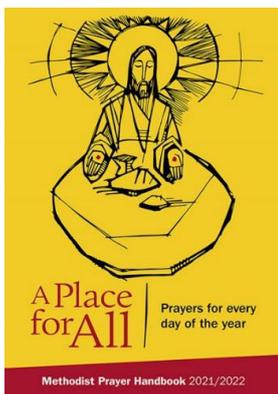
On a personal note, can I thank you for your prayers and kind comments following the death of my mother Jean just before Christmas. She was a wonderful mother; of course, I would say that! Her death was sudden despite the health challenges she faced. I believe that we have lost someone very special; and I hope that we can reflect that in the Funeral and Thanksgiving service that we are preparing. Following a family cremation that will be at Walsall Central Hall at 12noon on Friday 21st January. I know I can count on your prayers and support.

It has been, as many of you know, a shattering experience. But we move forward in faith and trust.

Once again, many thanks.

Please look after others and yourselves

God Bless Rob



PRAYER

The Methodist Prayer Diary for this year is a rich resource for use in our own and Church Prayer life. Copies are available from the Methodist Publishing House.

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

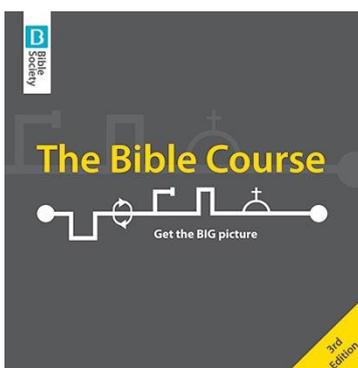
Also, you can find a pray of the day at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/prayer/prayer-of-the-day/>

THE BIBLE COURSE FOR GROUPS

An eight-session course helping you explore the BIG story.

Whether you're well versed in Scripture or new to the Bible, The Bible Course offers a superb overview of the world's best-selling book. The course will increase your confidence, equip you to read the Bible better and help you to see its relevance to daily life. Over eight interactive sessions, it combines video teaching, group discussion, personal reflection and daily readings.

Meeting people in groups, where everyone shares their thoughts and experiences, lies at the heart of The Bible Course as everyone learns from each other.



A typical session includes:

Welcome from the Course host

15-minute teaching video

25-minute discussion time

15-minute teaching video

10-minute personal reflection to finish

Daily readings between sessions

'If you are looking for a course to help your Church or small group engage and understand the story of the Bible, can I encourage you to look at The Bible Course. The Bible is the only book that we can read in the company of the author which is an incredible thought. The Bible Course will enrich you and you will discover truth, wisdom and guidance.'

J. John – Reverend Canon

BIBLE COURSE

Tues 25th Jan	Wed 26th Jan	Bible Course 1 - Introducing the Bible
Tues 1st Feb	Wed 2nd Feb	Bible Course 2 - Creation and Covenant
Tues 8th Feb	Wed 9th Feb	Bible Course 3 - Exodus and Promised Land
Tues 8th Mar	Wed 9th Mar	Bible Course 4 - Judges and Kings
Tues 15th Mar	Wed 16th Mar	Bible Course 5 - Exile and Prophets
Tues 22nd Mar	Wed 23rd Mar	Bible Course 6 - Jesus and the Gospels
Tues 29th Mar	Wed 30th Mar	Bible Course 7 - Acts and the Church
Tues 5th Apr	Wed 6th Apr	Bible Course 8 - Revelation and Review

DATES - January 2022

Thursday 20th @10am Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service at Alwington Parish Church

Tue 25th @7pm	Bible Course 1	Zoom
Wed 26th @2pm	Bible Course 1	Torrington/Zoom
Thurs 27th @7pm	Holocaust Memorial Day Service	

TBA LP peer Groups

February 2022

Tues 1st @ 7pm	Bible Course 2	Zoom
Wed 2nd @2pm	Bible Course 2	Torrington/Zoom
Tues 8th @2.30pm	Parkham Church Council	
Tues 8th @7pm	Bible Course 3	Zoom
Wed 9th @2pm	Bible Course 3	Torrington/Zoom
Thurs 10th @10am	Bideford Church Council	
Tues 15th-Thurs 17th	District Retreat	Torquay
Monday 21st @7.30pm	Langtree Church Council	
Tuesday 22nd @10am	Northam Church Council	
Tuesday 22nd @7pm	Buckland Brewer Church Council	
Wed 23rd @2.30pm	Littleham Church Council	
Wed 23rd @7pm	Milton Damerel Church Council	
Thurs 24th @2pm	Lake Church Council	
Thurs 24th @7.30pm	Torrington Church Council	

FROM REVD ANDREW VIDAMOUR

Dear Friends,

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (sometimes known as the Parable of the Two Sons), found in Luke 15: 11-32, is one of the best known of the parables of Jesus, and also one of the most moving and challenging.

It is very moving because it involves a homecoming, and that can be one of the most emotional experiences. Both my mother's and my father's families have lived for generations in the Channel Island of Guernsey, and whenever I return there I feel a lump in my throat. So it is hard to imagine how my parents felt when they returned to Guernsey as schoolchildren in 1945, after being evacuated to England for five years during the German Occupation of the Channel Islands. Both their fathers had stayed in the island, along with many other relatives, and I am sure that the welcome they received was as warm as the one given by the father to his son in the story told by Jesus.

Yet this welcome was for a different reason: this son had not only been away from home, but he had also wasted his father's money and not surprisingly he fears his father's anger. But there is no question of punishment, only of mercy, as the father welcomes his son with open arms and with generous hospitality, just as God in Christ welcomes us graciously, whatever mistakes we might have made, as we confess our sins and as we seek to make a new start (with God's help), as some of us have perhaps been seeking to do with New Year resolutions recently.

As a classic prayer puts it: 'Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.'

So this parable is both powerful and inspiring, but it is also challenging as we see in the attitudes and behaviours of the two sons. The younger one wasted his gifts and opportunities for a time before returning home, but the older one also hardened his heart to his father's love, if in a different way. Outwardly dutiful and loyal, he became inwardly envious and resentful of his brother and so distanced from his father also. Perhaps he wanted to keep his father's love for himself – in any case, his own love turned sour and threatened to poison all the family relationships.

There is no conclusion to the parable, of course: the story might be given any one of several endings, as the future is open to choice and change, and in our lives the challenge is not only to work to avoid these strained relationships but also, when they do occur, to work for healing and reconciliation as God gives us the strength to do so. That is a challenge for us all in 2022: to take as our vision and inspiration those words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount: 'Blessed are the peacemakers'.

Andrew Vidamour

FROM FRANK WATSON – LAY PASTORAL ASSISTANT

Dear Friends,

The Christmas decorations have been packed away and a safe place has been found for all the gifts received. Now we look forward to seeing what 2022 has in store for us.

Major world events include; HM Queen Elizabeth celebrating her Platinum Jubilee; the 24th Winter Olympics; 22nd Commonwealth Games and 22nd Football World Cup. These are of course alongside many different countries holding political elections, some of which will be watched with great interest around the world.

But what for us personally? What do we want from 2022? What significant events do we have in our lives?

New Years resolutions are a popular thing to start off the year, but how many people stick to them. As Christians what could our resolutions be in relation to growing our spiritual life. Could be take more time in prayer throughout the day? Could be spend more time studying our bibles?

I always find that the most difficult thing about keeping resolutions going is motivation and a will to keep to them. Having a structure or plan on how to keep going is always a good idea.

So as a suggested structure to keep a resolution of growing our spiritual lives in 2022 going. Can I remind you all about the resources around A Methodist Way of Life.

A Methodist Way of Life

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

As far as we are able, with God's help:

Worship

- We will pray daily.
- We will worship with others regularly.
- We will look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world.

Learning and Caring

- We will care for ourselves and those around us.
- We will learn more about our faith.
- We will practise hospitality and generosity.

Service

- We will help people in our communities and beyond.
- We will care for creation and all God's gifts.
- We will challenge injustice.

Evangelism

- We will speak of the love of God.
- We will live in a way that draws others to Jesus.
- We will share our faith with others.

**May we be a blessing within and beyond God's Church,
for the transformation of the world.**



So may I wish you all a blessed 2022.

God bless, Frank.

CELTIC MORNING PRAYER & COFFEE MORNING

These will resume in a couple of months – thanks to all you came along & joined in
Dave Watson

SAFEGUARDING INFORMATION

Online Training Programme 2022

For all face-face dates please contact your District Safeguarding Officer or in the case of the Foundation course the Circuit Safeguarding Officer (Jacqui Watson)

Jacqui would like to know if anyone books onto the Advanced & Foundation Courses & when you have completed it – please let her have sight of your certificate for her records.
Please book via Eventbrite – Follow the online instructions

ONLINE: Advanced Module – Creating Safer Space

Register by 2nd February 2022 for a Gathered Session on Wednesday 2nd March 2022 at 7pm
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/online-version-advanced-module-safeguarding-training-registration-159105702439>

ONLINE: Foundation Module – Creating Safer Space

Tuesday 8th February 2022 at 7pm
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/copy-of-methodist-foundation-module-safeguarding-creating-space-registration-159103780691>

Thursday 12th May 2022 at 9:30am

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/methodist-foundation-module-safeguarding-creating-space-registration-159103937159>

LOCAL PREACHERS

You might have seen in the LN South West Newsletter that there is to be another Online Local Preachers Study Day on Saturday 26th February 2022, from 10am til 3pm, featuring Revd Dr Jonathan Pye, Chair of the Bristol Methodist District and a further discussion of ethics. Several of the participants asked for this, and I hope it is of wider interest too.

If you are interested in taking part, you can find the details and a sign up on the following Eventbrite link.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sw-region-local-preachers-online-study-day-exploring-ethics-registration-239942924747>

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

CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICE for SUNDAY 23rd JANUARY 2022

Call to Worship:

Today, Lord God, we come before you as is our custom; as was the custom of Jesus growing up in Nazareth. We await your Word to us now, just like those who waited while he spoke in the synagogue after his ministry had begun. May we hear your call and stand with him and with one another, to serve freely in the work you have given us. Amen.

Hymn: 'Come, let us join our cheerful songs' (810 HAP / 743 STF)

Prayers of Adoration and Confession:

The heavens proclaim your glory, Lord; creation resounds to your praise. Your law is perfect, reviving the soul; your decrees are sure, making wise the simple.

*You are our light and salvation, the strength of our lives. We come before you and offer you our worship. Blessing and honour and glory and power be yours for ever and ever. **Amen.***

God of all mercy, we confess to you that we are sinners and members of a sinful race. In silence we acknowledge before you the sins of which we are aware.

(Silence)

We also confess to you our secret faults, known to you alone.

(Silence)

*Gracious God, assure us of your love and forgiveness, we pray, that we may know your joy and peace and worship you now in spirit and in truth. **Amen.***

The Lord's Prayer

Psalm: 19

Hymn: 'All praise to our redeeming Lord' (753 HAP / 608 STF)

Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31a

Bible Reading: Luke 4: 14-21

Hymn: 'Come, Lord, to our souls come down' (470 HAP / 493 STF)

Sermon

Our two New Testament readings are complementary in their meanings, and both are indispensable.

In Luke, Jesus picks up some words from Isaiah expressing the Messianic hope: both hope for the Messiah's coming and hope for what the Messiah would do and the difference this would make, especially for those in particular need in various ways.

This is a radical vision, and Jesus applies it to his own calling by God which had been reaffirmed at his baptism. Jesus was to make clear, as the previous Jewish prophets had already done, God's bias to the poor in every sense: Jesus was to bring good news to people suffering every kind of poverty (financial, emotional, social, cultural, physical, medical, educational and other).

And so Jesus arouses opposition, not only because he was 'a prophet in his own country' ('who is he to say and do that?' we may imagine people saying), but also because he was out to upset the 'status quo', to challenge social and other norms and the views of ruling elites, and even in a small provincial town all this was disturbing and unsettling.

This 'manifesto' Jesus takes on is couched in first person language ('the Spirit of the Lord has anointed me...'), but as in the Suffering Servant Songs of Isaiah there may well be a sense in which the 'I' here is a 'we': the Messianic hope is to be embodied by God's people as a whole, not only by one person.

And St Paul takes this a step further as he develops his picture of the Church as the Body of Christ, picking up an image from some Roman authors, where the nation (for example) is described as a body – and so we get the term ‘body politic’ still in use today (where ‘politic’ means ‘public life’).

But Paul’s radical tweak of the traditional picture lies in the fact that, in Christ, all are equally important as members of the body: even the parts which may seem weaker or ‘dishonourable’ have a place and a role. There is no judging by appearances: all are welcomed and valued and encouraged to be involved.

Here we may see the outworking of the option for the poor in Isaiah and Luke: those who may be spiritually or literally poor, blind or imprisoned (for example) may find new riches, vision and freedom in God’s love, but they also have a part to play in Christian service and in helping others to know God’s grace as well, in sharing the goodness and mercy of Jesus with others.

And this includes us: we too may be in need in some ways; we too may be reached by the grace of God embodied in a unique way by Jesus; and we too may be active members of Christ’s Body, the Church, indwelt and inbreathed by the Holy Spirit.

What are your needs? What are your gifts? **Amen.**

Silence

Hymn: ‘Father of everlasting grace’ (300 HAP / 378 STF)

Prayers of Intercession:

God of Love, we share with you our care and concern for the world.

We long and pray for peace wherever there is violence and conflict...

We remember those countries facing suffering caused by natural disaster and climate change...

We pray for the many refugees and migrants in the world...

What the news media don’t tell us is that you are already working at full stretch in each of these places, and that your presence is known wherever mercy and compassion are shown and peace is sought. Help us to remember that where people are hurting, you too are wounded; and where people are responding in love, you are in the midst of them.

*Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.***

We pray for the Church, as we delight in its spiritual heritage. We celebrate the stories of faith and the miracles of love you have made possible. We proclaim with serious joy a child’s birth, a saviour’s death and a victor’s Resurrection.

And yet we repent of the small-mindedness, negativity and arguments sometimes to be found in the life of the Church. Continue to show us, Lord, how to be a community of the friends of Jesus, blessed by that friendship and seeking to be a blessing to others. So may your kingdom come afresh through your people.

We pray for the renewal of the Church...

*Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.***

We pray for people going through difficulties today.

We have on our hearts those who are ill...

We have on our hearts in financial need...

We have on our hearts people whose relationships are under strain or have broken...

We have on our hearts people who’ve been forgotten in prison, on the streets, or in long-term psychiatric care...

*Merciful God, remind us that every person is as unique and valuable to you as the disciples were to Jesus. Help us to treat each other with the respect and honour we would reserve for you. Heal the sick, we pray, give dignity to the fallen, and draw us all into the fellowship of the redeemed. Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.***

*We pray for ourselves, for you commanded us to love our neighbour and ourselves equally. We offer you our gratitude for so much and our need for so much.
In silence now we thank you for particular things... (pause)
And we ask you for particular things we really need... (pause)
Gracious God, please take and us and our gifts for your praise and glory.
Lord, hear us. **Lord graciously hear us.***

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

Hymn: 'God's Spirit is in my heart' (315 HAP / 404 STF) or 'I, the Lord of sea and sky' (663 STF)

The Blessing:

*Go from here with a pocket full of free gifts to give to those you meet.
Give freely of your love and concern as a token of the greater love of God.
Give freely your time and effort as a token of the sacrifice of Jesus.
Give freely your help and friendship, as a token of the upholding Spirit.
And may all you give and all you do cause others to seek the true gift of the God who blesses without end.
To that end, the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rest and remain with us and all people, now and always. **Amen.***

HAP: Hymns and Psalms - STF: Singing the Faith

CIRCUIT COVENANT ZOOM SERVICE for SUNDAY 30th JANUARY 2022

Call to Worship: StF 439 Abba Father

StF 562 O God, what offering shall I give?

Prayer of Approach

*Almighty God,
We are here as a group of people,
But we are here as individuals as well.
You know everything about us,
And You love each one of us.
Help us all to be eager to know You better,
So that we may learn from You,
Know You better, and love You more.
For Jesus' sake. **Amen***

Prayer of Praise

*Lord, we praise You
Because in Your great love,
You sent Jesus to live amongst us.
He told us how much You love us,*

*And showed this love
By dying on the cross for us.
Lord, fill us with Your joy
So that our joy may be complete.*

*He told us that He wants us to be as close to Him
As a branch growing on a vine.
If we stay this close to Him,
Our lives will be healthy and fruitful.
Lord, fill us with Your joy
So that our joy may be complete.*

*He wants us to follow Him,
To ask the kind of prayers that He would ask,
And to obey You, just as He did.
If we do these things,
We will stay in His love.
Lord, fill us with Your joy
So that our joy may be complete.
Amen*

Prayer of Confession

*Lord, Your word tells us how to behave towards You and towards others; But we have come to confess that our behaviour is not always as You would want it to be.
This is what God says: I will be their God, and they will be my people.
This is what we say: I will be my own person and go my own way.
This is what God says: I will put my instructions deep within them, And I will write them on their hearts.
This is what we say: I will ignore the voice of conscience if it expects something of me that I find disagreeable.
This is what God says: They will not need to teach their neighbours, saying 'Know the Lord', for everyone will know me already.
This is what we say: I'm sure I'm a better Christian than she is. I could teach him a thing or two.
Lord, You are steadfast in keeping Your promises, but we break ours to You time after time.
Forgive us that we forget Your teaching so easily, and go our own way, instead of Yours.
This is what God says: I will forgive their wickedness, And I will never again remember their sins.
Thank You Lord, that because of Jesus, our sins are forgiven. Help us to listen to You more,
And to do what You say, so that our lives may be pleasing to You. For Jesus' sake.
Amen*

Exodus 23:1-11

Comment

The commandments have been given, regulations for festivals and community life have been set out - this has all been offered to the people, and they have agreed to do all that the Lord requires. The stage is therefore set for Moses and the other elders to go before the Lord on behalf of the people and accept the Covenant. This is a solemn undertaking, requiring elaborate preparation and sacrifices. The people hear again the terms of the Covenant, and again agree to it, so Moses sprinkles the blood from the sacrifices on to the crowd. This marks a change in their relationship with God: earlier, the elders were made to stand at a distance while Moses went up to the Lord,

but now they are able to see God in glory without being struck down, and to eat and drink together in his presence.

StF 471 Lord, I come to you

Romans 12:1-2

Comment

Romans is a step-by-step argument, dealing with the arguments of a hypothetical Jewish opponent. Not only does the Jewish understanding of what God wanted fall, but their objections to the Christian claims of what he was doing in Christ are shown to be groundless. Paul has worked his way through his argument, showing how the death and resurrection of Jesus has changed everything, has opened up for us a life changing possibility, and now invites us to live out our new relationship with God. Unlike the superficiality of Temple sacrifices, this is a new way of life, offering all we are to God as a self-sacrifice, to the extent of living in contradiction to a world mired in sin. Only by standing so completely in the new way will we be the people God wants us to be, and so ourselves by windows into his grace.

Mark 14:22-25

Comment

The last supper was already a celebration of salvation: it was the Passover meal, which celebrated and re-affirmed God setting his people free from slavery. Jesus now gives that salvation a new foundation: his coming death will open up the new Kingdom to all. Eating together in table fellowship has always been special to the Jews: this is a new, deeper and more inclusive table fellowship - we share the bread and wine together with Jesus and all his followers.

A talk

We all make promises

There are different kinds of promises that we make in different situations. How does God's promise that He will be our God and we will be His people compare to these?

A promise for a particular situation: I'll come and see you play football; I'll make a cake for the church tea; I'll meet you on the corner at 3pm. All these are promises that apply for the moment – the moment passes and they no longer apply. The church tea is over and there's no longer a need to make a cake. The game is played, and I can tick it off in my diary. But if the moment has passed, so too has my opportunity. If I was busy doing something else, then you might be waiting on the corner for quite a while before going home. What's more, I will have a lot of apologising to do, and you might be wary about taking my word for it that I will be there on another occasion.

God's promise means that he is concerned with the large things and the small things in our lives. Prayers for church teas, for fair play in games and for friendships are heard by Him, and the way that we treat people matters to Him. We can tell ourselves that some of these little promises don't matter – but they matter to the people we let down, and when we let them down, we let God down too. God wants us to be faithful in small things as well as large, because that is what He is like – and to prove it, with a universe to manage He is concerned with you and me! But unlike the friend I let down, who might have taken offence at my carelessness, God's promise means that He always gives us another chance. He wipes out our mistake as if it had never been and we have a fresh start.

A promise for a season in life. Anyone a brownie or guide, or a cub or a scout? Or anyone part of the BB or GB? Do you know your promise? How about any older people who used to belong? Do you still remember your promise? Do you still keep it? There may be some who do; but others who, when they left, felt that it was something that no longer applied to them. Or there may be other clubs or societies that we have belonged to, and we promised to keep the rules, but no longer feel bound by that promise. There were promises that I made when I was younger; to always tell my mum where I was going and when I'd be back for instance. I don't do that now. Sometimes, of course, people can become involved in groups that do them harm. We may find ourselves involved with others who are doing wrong, and end up making promises not to tell when really others should know. Then, because we know that promises should be kept, we find ourselves in a terrible dilemma. God's promise means that He is concerned with every season of our lives. The Bible tells us that He knew us when we were still growing inside our mothers. His promise made to us is not just for a season; it's not a promise that we grow out of. Nor is a promise of which we need be ashamed. There has been a national campaign going on recently – called Not Ashamed, it encourages us to tell others about Jesus.

A promise for keeps. These are promises that we intend to keep for ever. Promises that we make for ourselves or for a baby at Baptism are like that, and so are promises made at marriage. Other promises we make before God are like that – confirmation, covenant, ordination; they are all for life. But are they?

We reach a point when we decide to keep them – before that we didn't keep them because they didn't apply to us. We even break these solemn promises, sometimes deliberately, sometimes through carelessness. God's promise really is for keeps. We remembered earlier that God knew us before we were born. Jesus also says, 'You did not choose me, I chose you.' When we come to decide for God, we discover that He has always known us and loved us, even if we haven't been aware of it. God does not decide whether to be faithful or not. To be faithful is part of his character. And since He promises us the gift of His Holy Spirit, not only does He keep His promises to us, but He gives us a helper so that we are better able to keep our promises to Him.

Covenant Introduction

God made a covenant with the people of Israel, calling them to be a holy nation, chosen to bear witness to his steadfast love by finding delight in the law.

The covenant was renewed in Jesus Christ our Lord, in his life, work, death and resurrection. In him all people may be set free from sin and its power, and united in love and obedience.

In this covenant God promises us new life in Christ. For our part we promise to live no longer for ourselves but for God.

We meet, therefore, as generations have met before us, to renew the covenant which bound them and binds us to God.

StF 549 Come let us use the grace divine

COVENANT

Sisters and brothers in Christ, let us again accept our place within this covenant which God has made with us and with all who are called to be Christ's disciples.

This means that, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we accept God's purpose for us, and the call to love and serve God in all our life and work. Christ has many services to be done: some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour, others bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests, others are contrary to both; in some we may please Christ and please ourselves; in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ, who strengthens us.

Therefore, let us make this covenant of God our own. Let us give ourselves to him, trusting in his promises and relying on his grace. Eternal God, in your faithful and enduring love you call us to

share in your gracious covenant in Jesus Christ. In obedience we hear and accept your commands; in love we seek to do your perfect will; with joy we offer ourselves anew to you. We are no longer our own but yours.

I am no longer my own but yours. Your will, not mine, be done in all things, wherever you may place me, in all that I do and in all that I may endure; when there is work for me and when there is none; when I am troubled and when I am at peace.

Your will be done when I am valued and when I am disregarded; when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking; when I have all things, and when I have nothing.

I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose.

Glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. May it be so for ever. Let this covenant now made on earth Be fulfilled in heaven. Amen.

HAP 269 - O Jesus King most wonderful

As we have entered this covenant not for ourselves alone, but as God's servants and witnesses, let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Loving God, hear us as we pray for your holy catholic Church:

make us all one, that the world may believe.

Inspire and lead all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world:

establish justice and peace among all people.

Have compassion on all who suffer from any sickness, grief or trouble:

deliver them from their distress.

We praise you for all your saints who have entered your eternal glory:

bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Let us pray in silence for our own needs and for those of others . . .

Silence

Lord our God, you have helped us by your grace to make these prayers, and you have promised through Christ our Lord that when two or three agree in his name you will grant what they ask.

Answer now your servants' prayers according to their needs; in this world grant that we may truly know you, and in the world to come graciously give us eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

StF 489 All I once held dear

The blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon us and remain with us for ever. **Amen.**

CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICE for SUNDAY 6TH FEBRUARY

This Service includes resources from 'OPEN DOORS' regarding North Korea

Introduction. Prologue

Meditation

STF. 3 Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory.

Prayers.

Adoration....Susan Lenzkes....".You wrote your glorious name....."

The following Prayers are from the Roots Magazine for this date.

Approach.

*As we draw near to you, Lord God, we remember how you approached your first disciples by the lake; we follow you as they did captivated and in awe at being caught up in your story. **Amen.***

Confession.

*Lord, we confess that we fear getting in too deep. When we feel you drawing us to you, calling us to leave the safe confines of life as we know it and plunge into the depths of life with you, we are afraid. What will you ask of us, Lord? For we are ordinary people; we have no tongues to talk in clever parables, we have no miracles to perform. And, the fact is, we're quite content as we are; we're happy to serve you from the wings, we don't want the spotlight. Yet you have drawn us into your story, and you call us to be all that we can be. We confess that we are afraid of our potential; afraid to unleash your power within us. Forgive us, and grant us the courage to overcome our fears and follow you. **Amen.***

Assurance of forgiveness

*Our Father in heaven forgives us for being less than we might be; for following half-heartedly when his son calls, skulking in the shadows, afraid of the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us, and the world, and to bring out the extraordinary within our nature. Accept then this forgiveness, and this call to shine; step from the shadows now and follow. In Jesus' name. **Amen.***

Praise and thanksgiving

*Father, we praise you for allowing your kingdom to break through into our lives; for the things that to you are ordinary, but to us are extraordinary; and we thank you that you have called us to be part of your story, ordinary people caught up in the extraordinary tale of your plan for salvation, the base metal of our tarnished natures turned to gold in your hands. **Amen.***

Think of your church. - Now imagine that you can't meet in person.

That won't be a big stretch of the imagination, given recent times!

But now imagine that you don't know who the other members of your church are, and that it would be dangerous if you did and dangerous if anyone found out that you are a Christian. How would anybody find out ? People in your neighbourhood would be trained to spot you. Looking for signs that you met with other believers.....they'd be trained to spot if you inadvertently hummed a Christian songeven your children might be trained to inform on you to their teachers if they see reading from a black book.

This is the risk faced by Christians every day in North Korea. Since 2002 it has been the most dangerous place in the world to follow Jesus.

"If you are arrested as a believer - in most cases your life is over. you will be sent to a detention centre and interrogated and tortured for a few months. If you survive that prison and aren't executed, they will usually take you to a labour camp for political prisoners. Nobody is ever released from these camps.and it's not just you. Every member of your family would be found guilty by association, and face the sane punishment."

Persecution is increasing.....but ,miraculously ,so is the church !

Across the river is China. Open Doors field workers run secret safe houses where Christians who have managed to escape can be helped.

Peter is one such person. He meets North Korean Christians and provides them with physical and spiritual help to give them encouragement and strength. He and his fellow workers are also in deadly danger as there are spies everywhere.

Our prayers make an enormous differencethrough our prayers God pours out His grace. The Word of God is very much the foundation for our lives and prayers....as we absorb God's truth, so He can guide our thoughts .

Matthew 6. Verses 19-21, 25-34.
PoemMatthew.....by Malcom Guite

Greater love has no man than this; to lay down one's life for one's friends. The conditions that Open Doors workers operate in can be extraordinarily harsh.

It's sometimes below -30 degrees in winter, says Peter, and winter lasts for six months. I remember one night ,it was one o'clock on the morning and it was below -28 degrees. I was supposed to meet a local contact...but he didn't answer my calls and he wasn't where we'd arranged to meet.....for three hours I tried to contact him. At about four o'clock my phone rang. It was his number. When I answered I heard a strange voice asking, Who are you ? This is hothead sort of call fieldworkers dread. Peter was so shocked that he felt as though he had been struck on the head. Immediately he threw his phone down and smashed it with a stone and threw it into a drain. He stood around for the rest of the freezing night ,with nowhere to shelter, and caught a bus out of the city at the first opportunity. Later, Peter heard that his hoped for contact was being investigated by agents from North Korea.

Even as they go through tribulations, North Koreans still look to God in trust. Our prayers and help can give them the assurance that they are not alone nor abandoned .

Prayer.....written by a secret believer.

Lord! We give thanks to you that we have become the seed of the gospel. Thanks to you we are in the land that is North Korea. We thank you that we can sow seeds with tears in our eyes while we dream about the green pastures that Christ will lead us to.

Whether we live or die, we do it with our faithful fellow workers, who have such a strong faith, a faith that is continuously refined.

*Please use us. We are Christ's army and want to bring the gospel to the end of the world. Anoint your witnesses and spread your blessings. Let me be your worker for the Glory! Hold my hands and may they be obedient wherever you may lead me. Let me be your joy, and a good Christian. Lord, Don't you know everything about us? Don't you see everything that is in us? Lord! We love you. I will follow you until I die! **Amen.***

STF. 160. Powerful in making us wise to salvation

Mark 5. Verses 1 - 20.
Poem. Mark.....Malcolm Guite

Timothy's story.

Timothy from North Korea grew up scared of Christians. When he escaped the country, he was taken in to a house that had a Bible and across on display. t terrified him. This was a safe house, but he didn't yet know that.

The day he crossed the river with others it was shallow enough to walk.....he was in his teens. He walked over some mountainous terrain and into a Chinese city. As he walked through he was amazed.....,it was so different from what he had seen in his short life. It was spectacular, different colours of light, people wearing different clothes from each other.....the propaganda he had been fed at home said that North Korea was the best country in the world!!!!!! about suddenly it seemed drab and dated .

He was in China in order to survive. He had grown up as a street child because of the famine in the 1990s.....and he wasn't allowed to join the army because of status, so he had no hope for his future.

What he didn't expect was that he would be led to Jesus.

He was housed in an apartment with two rooms and he shared a space with seven or eight children.....all North Korean orphans. When he saw the cross he was terrified because, to him, it signified that he was cursed. In North Korea they are taught that Christianity is mainly a spy group.....and through it kids would be captured and sold into trafficking. Because he was so frightened, he didn't remain in that house for long. One thing that a missionary had said to him stuck in his memory.....even if he was captured and sent back to North Korea ,and was in difficult and dangerous situations ,he would still be able to call out to God.

He did this.....but nothing happened. So he was convinced that he had been lied to. Eventually he was arrested and imprisoned and met another Christian ,who yet again encouraged him to pray again and to read the Bible.....he was convinced that he would eventually be killed.....so he prayed many times....he promised God that if he was freed he would follow him all of his life. Eventually ,and exceptionally ,he was freed and sent to another country.....from there he eventually made his way to the United Kingdom.....where he now lives and has become an advocate for the secret church in his home country.

Safe houses are vital in their role as places of refuge, education and sheer loving tender care ,where the bruised and battered North Koreans can be ministered to in the name of Christ. The threat of discovery and destruction are very real.....yet they are stepping stones for many to freedom and to regaining the strength to return to North Korea and build the church. These too depend on our prayer support.

Prayer.

1. Give thanks for the role that safe houses play in equipping the North Korean church.
2. Pray for the protection of all safe houses in China, and pray that all those who serve through them will continue to be equipped, encouraged and empowered in their roles.
3. Pray that the North Korean church will continue to grow, despite the extreme persecution Christians face.

STF 399 When deep despair casts out all light

Luke 1. Verses 46 - 55

Poem. Luke.....Malcolm Guite

The story of Bae.

If you were to see Bae during the day, you would assume that her work was picking crops. Every morning, in the village she's forced to live in, Bae spends her day working in the fields. If she has any time for a short break, she heads for the woods where she forages for food ,as she is desperately hungry and close to starving. But her real work begins at night.

She puts blankets over the windows of her house , lights a small candle and gets out a book.....she is one of the North Korean church. She hasn't always lived in that village but was sentenced with her husband for owning a Bible. She feels that she is one of the lucky ones as she wasn't killed! It is believed that there are about 400,000 Christians in North Korea, but they have to keep their faith hidden.....the authorities dictate what people think and believe and determine what work they should do. Bae is thankful to be alive.

Unbelievably, she did once manage to escape, and in China was able to live in a safe house. She was so used to leading her church in whispers, that to be able to sing and say prayers aloud was a joyful experience . She experienced fellowship there that she was unable to experience in her home country. You wouldn't blame her if she had thanked God for her freedom and never looked back. But she refused to stay there and returned home with precious food and a Bible, which she shared with underground believers.

Here is a letter from Bae.

Dear friends, we are well and peaceful with the Father's grace and your concern. We give thanks to the Father who is doing almighty works. I am so overwhelmed to write you this letter, we received the greatest love and concern which cannot be returned back. We live firmly in the suffering march, as always.

Whenever I open my eyes in the morning, I feel the presence of our Father. Right now, we only receive materials from you - but we expect the day to come when we can return those back in God.

From the perspective of other people, our life is like a cursed life; however, this suffering is a blessing from our Father who has allowed it in our life because it is a short cut. He knows our suffering and listens to our prayers. We thank our Father who has done such great things to prepare life for us, we who receive His amazing grace, keenly realise and understand His words : " Man does not live by bread alone but by every word comes from the Father." That means any life that follows His Word is Blessed.

The thing I give thanks for the most is that Father God uses me to work as His servant. I do desire to dedicate my life until death, to glorify Him.

Brother, I have one request please send our gratitude and appreciation to those who sent these support materials to us. I bow to them with a thankful heart.

Let's stay healthy and fight strongly for gospelised North Korea.

Take care.

Bae, your sister in Christ.

Prayer.

*Thank you to the God who loves North Korea. You are always with the North Korean believers when they suffer. You feel their pain you comfort them and give them wisdom to survive. You provide their daily bread. God, the North Korean churches have been surviving for a long time. They are relying only on You in their difficulties. use them to transform North Korea. Let them be a voice to the world and share the gospel to the world. Let us be obedient to God's calling. As supporters and missionaries, let us be part of God's ministry. We praise and worship God who never gives up on North Koreans. **Amen.***

STF 628. Faithful One so unchanging.

John 15. Verses 5-9, 16-21.

Poem John.....Malcolm Guite

Radio ministry.

the voices are scratchy, and sometimes cut out altogether, and the only to tune I is in the middle of the night. But for the secret listeners of a radio ministry broadcast into North Korea no.....because it's remarkable that such a thing is even accessible to them. The Bible is illegal here, and daring to believe in a higher power than the nation's despotic ruler could lead to death for you and your family. It's hard to imagine how anyone could hear the gospel, let alone grow in their faith. But the airwaves are one place it's difficult for the authorities to control - and secret believers are making the most of it.

Each night Christians can listen to worship, sermons and other Christian programmes. "Thank you for the radio programmes . We get strengthened and encouraged in our spiritual life." shares a believer in a secret message .

Unsurprisingly there are challenges. The authorities attempt to disrupt the frequencies, whilst radios can be difficult to access or fix. But the greatest threat is being discovered with a radio, as it can lead to arrest, imprisonment or worse. Yet, such is the longing for spiritual food that believers are willing to take the risk by having one. Amazingly one programme featured messages from Open Doors supporters around the world . This deeply moved many secret believers, powerfully reminding them that they are not alone.

Pray

1. Pray for the protection of secret believers who listen to the radio programmes
2. Pray that the programmes will reach more believers and continue to powerfully encourage them in their faith
3. Pray for continued inspiration, wisdom and good health for the team leading the ministry.

Short meditation.

STF 665 Make us your prophets Lord

Verse 5 to be read and to lead us into the **Lord's Prayer**.

Short meditation.

STF 696. For the healing of the nations

Blessing

*God the Creator has made you,
God the Son has saved you,
God the Holy Spirit has made you holy.*

*So let us
Go out into the world, renewed, and refreshed,
to serve the God of love in obedience and trust.
Let us tell the world that our God reigns.
Let us tell the world that our God loves.
Let us tell the world that our God offers life for ever more.
In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.***

CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICE for SUNDAY 13th FEBRUARY 2022

Call to worship

We are blessed to be here today.

We are blessed to be together today.

We are blessed to be a family.

We are blessed that God is with us.

Let us enjoy his blessing as we worship today.

StF 346 - Christ is the World's Light

Prayers

A prayer of Approach

*Lord God, we kneel before you with heads bowed
and hands open for your blessing,
that our minds may be infused with loving thoughts
and that we may use our words and our hands to bless others. **Amen.***

A prayer of adoration

*Father, we worship and adore you
for the light you bring to this dreary time of year,
when we long for spring.
Thank you for the blessing of every shoot and bud,
the reminders of your presence
and your ever-circling, ever-giving love. **Amen.***

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

*Lord, we thank and praise you for all the many blessings in our lives.
For food and shelter, for family and friends, for the measure of health we have,
and the many comforts we take for granted.
Thank you also for your plain speaking; these blessings are not merited by anything we have
done, just as the problems of many – of those who hunger, and are homeless, and sick – are also
undeserved.
So, Lord, in giving our heartfelt thanks, we ask that we might be a blessing to those
whom the worldly-wise often curse. **Amen.***

A prayer of confession

Lord, we confess that curses come to our lips more readily than blessings. Our thoughts are critical rather than looking for the good. We condemn others and turn away before we think what we might do to turn things around and draw blessings from a situation.

*So, Lord, we ask for your forgiveness, and we turn to you for a blessing of light upon the dark confines of our thinking. Bless us with your way of seeing, so that our lives might be a blessing to others. **Amen.***

Assurance of forgiveness

Sometimes our mindset has been so misguided, and for so long, we fail to see how you can forgive us. Mired in dark thoughts that hastily curse and rarely bless, we are ashamed when a ray of holy light reveals the dust and ashes of our lives.

*Yet with you, Lord, there is forgiveness and redemption, the chance to turn our thoughts around, and bless with the blessings that come from you. Thank you, Lord. **Amen.***

StF 494 - Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Scripture **Jeremiah 4 vv 1 – 10**
 1 Corinthians 13 vv 1 – 13

StF 495 - Dear Lord and Father

Scripture **Luke 4 vv 21 – 30**

Thoughts on the Readings

Led by the Spirit

Old Testament Jeremiah 1.4-10

The passage from Jeremiah outlines Jeremiah's calling at a young age into the prophetic ministry. He is unsure of his ability for public speaking, but God knows that Jeremiah will go where he is sent and speak the words that he is given. This deep knowledge of his character does not rest on some aptitude test that Jeremiah has undertaken, but on God's knowledge of him from before his birth. It does not mean, either, that Jeremiah's experience of being a prophet will be an easy one, only that it will be central to who he is and not something that he will be able to give up. Notice the physical imagery used to describe his commissioning: 'Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth'. Note, too, that his calling will involve both tearing down and building up. For Jeremiah, he is destined always to do this in a way that is out of step with the society around him, preaching disaster when people are feeling confident (26.8-9), and renewal when people feel that all is lost (42.7-10).

New Testament Luke 4 vv 21 - 30

In this sermon from Jesus he makes it clear that he is not going to perform miracles to order – he pictures the people saying to him, 'Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum' (v.23). Knowing him, even from boyhood, does not give the people of Nazareth the right to tell Jesus what to do, or to keep him as their pet prophet.

Jesus also refers to two Old Testament stories, the widow at Zarephath (1 Kings 17.8-16) and the healing of Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings 5.1-19). Not only were both of these Gentiles, but the stories occur in the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, when the people of God were under judgement from God for the way that the land was governed. By using these examples, Jesus is drawing attention to the fact that God sometimes favours Gentiles, and that a true prophet goes where the Spirit directs, and so does not hand out favours to family and friends. Jesus implies that the people of his own day are living under the same threat of judgement as those who lived in the time of Ahab and Jezebel, and may not be God's choice for miracles or blessings. The people react with fury, showing that their admiration for him was narcissistic rather than a genuine willingness to learn from him. The people are so enraged that they plan to execute him. It is typical of Luke's depiction of Jesus that, like a calm and authoritative hero, Jesus 'passed through the midst of them'.

'Love is all you need,' sang the Beatles, and 'money can't buy me love', as they got wealthier by the day. This chapter from 1 Corinthians is frequently read at weddings — though it's unlikely that what either brides or Beatles mean by 'love' is what St Paul had in mind. We all know that money cannot buy love, but we might ask if love is 'all you need'?

A poll about Christians who made an impact outside the churches in the last century would almost certainly reveal that we are judged more by our deeds than by our words. Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Niemöller were German pastors in the 1940s who believed that faith had to be incarnated in political action. Bonhoeffer was executed and is now one of the ten twentieth century martyrs represented on the west front of Westminster Abbey. Among the others are Janani Luwum and Oscar Romero, bishops killed in Uganda and El Salvador respectively, because of their political opposition to tyrannical regimes, and Martin Luther King, whose famous 'I have a dream' speech helped to re-define the aspirations of African-Americans. He died by an assassin's bullet. Trevor Huddleston was an Anglican bishop who opposed racism and the cruelty of apartheid in South Africa. Each of these showed how Christian love can be a dangerous liaison, not a mere pious slogan or romantic ideal. Through their lives they demonstrated what love is: they showed how love works.

Niemöller escaped execution, became a prominent peace activist and wrote a poem which has become famous in various versions:

In Germany, they came first for the Communists
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist; and then they came for the trade unionists
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist; and then they came for the Jews
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew; and then ... they came for me ...
and by that time there was no one left to speak up.

Where are you being led by the Spirit? I realise that it is sometimes difficult to know just what God wants of us and yet if we listen carefully enough we will hear his voice. Sometimes through a hymn, a Bible reading or sometimes from a total stranger who perhaps has been told by God to speak to us. May this new year bring closer contact with God and may he bless all that we do and say.

StF 350 - I Cannot Tell

Prayers of Intercession

Lord, we pray for those whose hope is for this life only, especially those who are facing their own death, or that of a loved one. Enlighten them, we pray; pierce their darkness with rays from heaven that they might find faith and see beyond.

We pray also for those whose faith has taken a blow due to circumstances – those who have fallen sick, or become unemployed, or who suffer the pain of broken relationships. Amid all their loss, Lord, remind them of the promise of resurrection, and the reality of lesser resurrections that point the way to it – restoration of health, new opportunities, and the rekindling of love – all leading to rebirth of hope.

*We bring before you a world of people with past regrets, bowed down by concerns in the present, and fears for the future. Help us all, we pray, to be uplifted by the reality of Christ's resurrection, which leads to a bright tomorrow beyond all our tomorrows. **Amen.***

The Lords Prayer

StF 696 - For the Healing of the Nations

A sending out prayer

*Lord, as we step into this week,
help us to cultivate our relationship with you.
We want to be rooted in you.
Show us our barriers to receiving your blessing.
Help us not only to recognise how blessed we are,
but also show us ways that your blessing
can overflow to others through us.*

*The Blessing of Almighty God Father Son and Holy Spirit be with us and those whom we love this day and for evermore **Amen***

CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICE for SUNDAY 20th FEBRUARY 2022

Call to Worship:

Loving God, you create and you sustain. You are with us in the rhythm of work and rest, in the pattern of praise and silence, in the balance of silent prayer and spoken word, and in the spontaneity of friendship and love.

*You are with us all our days. Make us aware of your presence now as we crown life with worship. In the name of Jesus whose renewing life we celebrate this day. **Amen.***

Hymn: 'The God of Abraham praise' (452 HAP / 91 STF)

Prayers of Adoration and Confession:

Heaven and earth are full of your glory, almighty, eternal, most holy God. You deserve the adoration of every creature; you are worthy of worship and honour and love.

*Accept the praise we offer; and grant that, as we hear your word and rejoice in the presence of your Holy Spirit, we may glimpse your glory in the face of your Son Jesus Christ, in whom we make our prayer. **Amen.***

Lord our God, be gracious to us and heal us, for we have sinned against you. You have called us to be holy as you yourself are holy. We confess the impurity and unrighteousness of our lives. We have exalted ourselves when we could have been humble.

We have given in to temptation when we could have resisted; and pleased ourselves when we could have pleased you. Lord, have mercy upon us.

(Pause)

You have called us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. We confess that we have been angry when we could have shown compassion, we have been selfish when we could have been generous, we have been indifferent when we could have helped. Lord, have mercy upon us.

(Pause)

*Lord our God, be gracious to us and heal us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.***

The Lord's Prayer

Psalm 37: 1-11 and 39-40

Hymn: 'The King of love my Shepherd is' (69 HAP / 479 STF)

Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 15: 35-38 and 42-50

Bible Reading: Luke 6: 27-38

Hymn: 'Powerful in making us wise to salvation' (479 HAP / 160 STF)

Sermon

'We are an Easter people', Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformer, said of the Christian community, and our New Testament readings point us to two aspects of this.

In 1 Corinthians 15, we find St Paul's reflections on the mystery of the Resurrection of Jesus and how this relates to those who seek to follow in his way. We are given a picture of Jesus as 'the second Adam' who brings a different kind of life to humanity.

Adam is depicted in Genesis as the first human being 'of the flesh' ('Adam' is from the same Hebrew root as 'dust from the ground'), but we are also told that he (and us) are made in the image of God, and Jesus makes this reality crystal-clear (as we see for example in John 1: 1-14). Jesus (literally 'Saviour') is 'the heavenly man', one who helps to infuse our earthly life with God's love through the Holy Spirit.

We see this especially in the life, example and teaching of Jesus, but especially in his death and Resurrection which set the seal on the new way of life he helps to pioneer, a way characterised by self-sacrifice, forgiveness, peace, compassion and the quest for justice.

The death of Jesus is the supreme example of this self-giving love, and the Resurrection is God's vindication and affirmation of all Jesus was, said and did in his earthly life – and so he is 'the

heavenly man', one who gives us the hope and vision of new possibilities for our everyday lives now as well as in the life of heaven.

The Resurrection of Jesus may open doors to a new quality of life and understanding for us, and it may give us energy and purpose to help build bridges in different ways and to help re-form all that so desperately needs renewal in our world.

And so in these and other ways we shall 'wear the likeness of the heavenly man', as Paul puts it. In our Luke reading, Jesus gives us some examples of what heavenly life (or 'heaven in ordinary') may look and feel like. The keynote of this passage is 'Love your enemies', reflecting the compassion of God, that which, perhaps, is central to a world shaped by the reality of Easter.

But who are our 'enemies'? Do we have any personal enemies? Does the Church have enemies? What brings about these states of enmity? And how do we go about loving our enemies especially if (as may easily happen) communications have broken down?

Jesus speaks much about 'doing good': sometimes perhaps words are unnecessary: actions may speak louder than words. Such 'well doing' may not be spectacular: maybe sending a card or a gift, doing a favour, offering help, showing appreciation, giving encouragement, holding someone in prayer – these are a few examples of what it may mean in practice to love our enemies. Given that enmity may often arise from different opinions and understanding, it may also be peace-making to respect the views of someone with whom you disagree (unless those views are destructive or dehumanising).

This is one aspect of that 'agape' love the New Testament introduces as being distinctively Christian (and so typically Easter-ish and central to 'heaven in ordinary'). 'Agape' typically gives of itself generously and without discrimination, not expecting a return or a reward. These are indeed the first-fruits of the Resurrection of Jesus. **Amen.**

Silence

Hymn: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God' (138 HAP / 254 STF) or 'When I needed a neighbour' (STF 256)

Prayers of Intercession:

Almighty God, the nations rise and fall. In the changes in the fortunes of nations, communities and groups we see our experience writ large. With sadness we acknowledge that the story of much of our history is of victory going to the strong, and suffering falling on the innocent and the weak, and we share your anger and concern at this.

*Merciful God: **Hear us in our prayer this day.***

Give us faith, that in times of difficulty we may be saved from pessimism and despair, that the tears we shed over our history may be more for others than ourselves. Give us a generous, all-embracing faith that welcomes the world to our hearts, so that our discipleship may add to the salvation of the world and ourselves.

*Merciful God: **Hear us in our prayer this day.***

We pray for the broken-hearted, the shocked, the stunned and the beaten, that our tears and our faith may flow for those who are beyond weeping or believing. We pray especially for those we know in any kind of need, for the peace and loving presence of Christ for each one, in a time of silence...

(Pause)

*Merciful God: **Hear us in our prayer this day.***

We remember how Jesus prayed for the city and the people who would destroy him. We pray for grace, that we may surprise ourselves in acts of love towards our enemies. We pray for the embittered, the resentful, the hateful, the fearful, and those who hold so fast to pain that they cannot welcome forgiveness, hope or love. We pray especially for healing and renewal for those we know...

*Merciful God: **Hear us in our prayer this day.***

*Teach us, O Lord, to mingle our tears with your tears, that the trials and distress which accompany our living may become one with your divine suffering which alone will save humankind. It is you alone who will wipe the tears from every eye. It is to you, in the name of Jesus your Son, that we pray. **Amen.***

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

The Blessing:

*Bless us, O God, the doors we open, the thresholds we cross, and the roads that lie before us. Go with us as we go, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and welcome us home. **Amen.***

HAP: 'Hymns and Psalms' - STF: 'Singing the Faith'

CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICE for SUNDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2022 – CUTTACK SUNDAY

Call to Worship: Psalm 99

Hymn: Immortal, invisible, God only wise (StF 55)

Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving

Father, this time two years ago, the world began to change as the pandemic took hold. It set us on a path we could not have imagined, a rollercoaster of fear and despair. We thank you for being with us every step of the way.

Thank you for the times when we witnessed the best of humanity; for those who selflessly worked to save lives, produce vaccines and keep the country running; for those who raised funds and spirits.

For every time you sent someone or something to lift us up, O Lord, we give thanks and praise; for every day you helped us to carry on when the tunnel was long and the light at the end of it dim, we praise your holy name.

*The world has changed, and we have been changed; let us take what we have seen and learned to light our pilgrim way ever more. **Amen.***

Prayer of Confession

*Father, we confess that we are always desperate for mountaintop experiences. **We want our faith to be fueled by awe and excitement.***

We admit that our faith becomes jaded when life is difficult or just mundane.

We want to feel spiritually uplifted all the time.

Forgive us, Father, for failing to keep the faith when we descend from the mountain.

Forgive us for failing you when everyday life returns.

We recommit ourselves to walking with you every inch of the way, every moment of the day, whether it be fair or foul, knowing that you will be faithful to us even when we lack faith in you. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

O God of all patience and forgiveness, thank you for bearing with us when in your grace you grant us spiritual highs but to our pleasure-seeking humanity, they are never enough.

*Thank you for forgiving us for not holding the moment like a divine spark, safe within cupped hands to light the way in darker times. Instead we let it go and stumble on, yet still you forgive us and raise us up time and time again. **Amen.***

Hymn: Lord, I come to you, let my heart be changed, renewed (StF 471)

Preface to The Epistle

Paul's interpretation of the veil that Moses put over his face is different from that given in the book of Exodus. Paul says that by means of the veil, Moses was hiding from the people the fact that the glory reflected in his face was fading. In this interpretation, Paul is trying to show that the knowledge of God in Judaism is veiled. Unlike Moses, Christians can openly reflect the glory of God, because they are being transformed by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Epistle: 2 Corinthians 3:12 - 4:2

Preface to The Gospel

Luke has already claimed that Christ's glory will be seen through his sufferings and death. This glory is now confirmed by the transfiguration, in which Moses and Elijah appear as the representatives of the Jewish law and prophets. It is in accord with the interests of this Gospel that prayer should be the setting of this story.

The Gospel: Luke 9:28-36

Hymn: Jesus on the mountain peak (StF 259)

Sermon

Hymn: Lord, you have my heart and I will search for yours (StF 559)

Prayers of Intercession

O God of healing and holiness, we bring before you the leaders of our world in need, and ask that they would have the discernment to listen to each other and to you, that there may be justice and peace.

We bring to you the leaders of the Church and other religious organisations and communities, especially Revd Graham Thompson, our District Chair, and Right Revd Surender Kumar Nanda, Bishop of the Diocese of Cuttack, and ask that they would have the discernment to listen to each other and to you, that there may be vision and unity.

We bring to you those with responsibility for health care – doctors, nurses, administrators, ancillary workers and more, especially remembering today The Christian Hospital, Berhampur, it's Director, Dr Nanda and all his staff, – and pray that they may be strengthened and encouraged by encountering you in their work.

We bring to you those with healing needs (especially...), and pray that they will hear you and feel peace; that they will encounter you and feel healed; that they will know you and feel loved.

*In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.***

Hymn: Lord, the light of your love is shining (StF 59)

The Blessing

Christ Jesus, the splendour of the Father and the image of his being, draw us to himself that we may live in his light and share his glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

THE CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL, BERHAMPUR

HISTORY

The Hospital began as a clinic for women and children established by an American missionary - Dr. Nina Ottmann in 1900. Persistent requests and encouragement saw the work expand. Land was donated and, in 1907, the "Christian Hospital for Women and Children, Berhampur" started with four beds.

Alongside the Hospital, the training of young Indian girls as nurses also began in 1907. In 1924 the Out-Patients Block was opened and until 1967, there was a steady improvement in the services of the Hospital - its physical structure, equipment, the services offered, educational facilities, etc. It was in 1967 that financial and other support - mainly from overseas - came to an end and since then it has been a struggle to maintain the Hospital with inadequate local resources.

The Hospital is part of the Church of North India's Synodical Board of Health Services, within the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Cuttack. Sadly, this does not mean that funds flow from the Church to the Hospital but good and effective oversight is in place.

CONTEXT

The Hospital is located in the Ganjam District, which is in the southern part of Odisha, India. 78% of the population live in rural villages. The population is made up of predominantly Dalit or Tribal people who are at the bottom of the social scale. Illiteracy is particularly high and workers rely on the daily economy (75% agricultural) for their earnings.

A combination of ignorance, illiteracy, cultural difficulties, poverty, poor nutrition, poor habitation, poor sanitation and unhappy social practices, lead to chronic ill health. With less importance given to girls, early marriage and/or early work, the statistics for anaemia in pregnancy are high and, consequently, infant morbidity and mortality and maternal mortality is high.

Although there are Government health units and other private institutions in Ganjam, many of the people depend upon the Christian Hospital, Berhampur for better and compassionate care at an affordable cost, sometimes travelling large distances on foot to get the help they need. Healthcare

in India is costly and whilst the Hospital has a table of fees, it does not turn anyone away because they cannot afford to pay. They ask everyone to pay what they can afford.

STATISTICS

The following statistics are of the patients who have been treated in the Hospital in recent years. (Covid-19 caused a falloff in numbers.)

Particulars	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Out-Patients	57804	58699	70374	67234	57213
In-Patients					
Paediatric	678	601	612	668	164
General	1015	724	543	772	361
Maternity(Deliveries)	4522	4429	4331	4303	3903
Sick new-born babies	4106	4097	3839	3844	3651

CURRENT NEEDS

The Governments of India and Odisha have enacted new rules to be followed by all hospitals. A hospital complying with the rules is allowed to provide its services. Hospitals with old buildings are struggling to meet the new regulations, such as the National Building Code and Fire Safety measures. The Christian Hospital is unable to comply with the new requirements and so the 'license to function' has not been renewed since it expired in 2017. The Hospital has been allowed to continue to operate but risks being closed at any time.

The survival of the Hospital is at stake. The solution is to meet the new regulations by rebuilding the old, core buildings of the Hospital so that they conform to all legal requirements. Plans have been laid to construct new hospital buildings which will house all in-patient facilities and the bed strength will be increase from the present 120 beds to 170, along with the addition of some more specialised services. As there is no space inside the hospital premises, the old building (built in 1907) is to be demolished and new buildings constructed on the site. The Hospital does not have the funds to meet such significant need and is looking to friends and well-wishers for support.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

1. New building with four floors in two blocks. However, the plans have been phased so that the whole project is not held up if all the funds are not secured.
2. Equipment and furniture for the new building and services.
3. Renovation of some old buildings to relocate support services.
4. New staff quarters for accommodation of more staff required for new services.

The entire project is proposed to be completed in four phases and - hopefully - completed within five years.

PEOPLE

The Hospital is led by the Director, Dr. M. K. Nanda. He has given over twenty years of service and sacrificed many lucrative opportunities to further his career, believing that God has called him to use his skill, knowledge and faith for the benefit of the people of the area. He is hugely respected within ecclesiastical and medical settings. He often goes from meetings with the Hospital Management Team to perform surgery or advise on a patient's progress at the bedside. Many in the Ganjam District owe their lives to Dr. Nanda and his staff.

The nurses training college is a very important aspect of the Hospital's work. Students are trained to a high standard and, once trained, are often sought by other institutions. Such training equips and empowers women by giving them professional skills and responsibility. Such empowerment has the knock-on effect of improving standards in their own homes and communities.

DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP

Our partnership with the Diocese of Cuttack had led to a small number of visits by people from the District to the Christian Hospital. It is an impressive organisation built on prayer and the generosity of many. It operates high standards (in Indian terms) and puts the needs of its patients first, at all times. The witness of the Gospel in that part of India will be greatly diminished if the Hospital has to close.

Plymouth & Exeter District Methodist Women in Britain and the South Devon Circuit have already decided to support the Hospital and are fund-raising. Several individuals have also made contributions so that, to date, over £10,000 has been sent to support the work.

The need is great and we cannot hope to raise the many hundreds of thousands of pounds needed to rebuild much of the hospital but we can play our part. And those who have visited the Hospital, talked with Dr. Nanda and the Bishop of the Diocese of Cuttack, are confident that every penny raised will be used for the benefit of the people of the area in and around Berhampur.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

On 3rd January 2021 the first spade was turned to begin rebuilding the Hospital, as part of a special ceremony when God's blessing was sought on all who work in the Hospital and guidance for the future because the project has been started before all the funds have been found.

BIDEFORD AND NORTHAM NEW YEAR BIBLE STUDY

At the home of Diana Yendall in Northam - Phone 01237 477836 or 01237 425361

The Topic will be 'The book of P r o v e r b s' & takes place weekly on Friday at 2pm from 14th January & will be Led by Julia Spencer

Proverbs: Learning to Live Wisely. William Mouser Life Builder Study

We Welcome fresh people to our group where we learn from each other!

Purpose and Theme

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

2 for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight;

3 for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair;

4 for giving prudence to those who are simple - knowledge and discretion to the young—

5 let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—

6 for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

Invitations of Wisdom and Folly

9 Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars.

2 She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table.

3 She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city,

4 "Let all who are simple come to my house!" To those who have no sense she says,

5 "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.

6 Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight."

7 Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults; whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse.
8 Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you; rebuke the wise and they will love you.
9 Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

11 For through wisdom[b] your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.

12 If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.

13 Folly is an unruly woman; she is simple and knows nothing.

14 She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city,

15 calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way,

16 “Let all who are simple come to my house!” To those who have no sense she says,

17 “Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!”

18 But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.

Introduction

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Proverbs 9: | The Choice |
| 2. Proverbs 7: | The Simple |
| 3. Proverbs 13:19; 17:12; 18:2&7; 20:3; 26:11 | Avoiding the Fool. |
| 4. Proverbs 13:10, 20; 14:12; 1:12; 21:30; 25:12 | Finding Wisdom. |
| 5. Proverbs 6: 12-14; 16:30; 17:4; 18:8; 26:23; 29:5 | Bad Words |
| 6. Proverbs 10:19; 15:23; 16:24; 17:10; 24:26; 25: 11-12 | Good Words |
| 7. Proverbs 6:6-8; 13:4; 15:19; 22:13; 24:30-34; 26:14-16 | The Sluggard |
| 8. Proverbs 10: 4,15,22; 13:8; 18:11,23; 19:4; 21:6; 30: 8-9 | Wealth and Poverty |
| 9. Proverbs 14:21, 31; 19:6,17; 21:13 | Giving |
| 10. Proverbs 11:3; 14:12; 15:22; 16:9; 21:5,31; 27:1 | Planning the Future. |

BUCKLAND BREWER

There was a problem with the Live Streaming System but the problem has been identified – we will now Live Stream on the Buckland Brewer Methodist Church You-Tube Channel and not on the Facebook page.

The Weekly ‘**Time Together**’ **Toddler Group** has resumed at **Buckland Brewer Methodist Church** with both Methodist & Anglican volunteers being present. We meet on Monday’s from 9.30am to about 12noon, The cost is £1.50 per family & the numbers have been steadily increasing – families do not just come from Buckland but from neighbouring communities – they often come as friendship groups – so if anyone is aware of any Babies & Toddlers, who with their parents, grandparents or carers are looking for a ‘chilled out’ session of play & chat with tea/coffee/biscuits – just point them in the direction of Buckland Chapel – Dave Watson 07484 223515 or bucklanddave1953@btinternet.com

The **Wednesday Weekly Coffee Morning** has also resumed at **Buckland Brewer Methodist Church** from 10am-12noon – this is for **ALL** but especially for those who have moved into the parish/village since lockdown or anyone who would like to meet others in the community over a mug of tea/coffee with Tradecraft Biscuits & possibly Cake!! – details from Dave Watson (see above)

NORTHAM CHAPEL NEWS

We’d like to wish all our friends across the Circuit a very Happy New Year!

Here at Northam we are planning a slow start to the year mindful of the high number of Covid cases across our communities.

We are grateful to be able to meet in chapel each week and thank our Ministers and Local Preachers who make this possible. We are getting more used to the new sound and visual systems we invested in last year and hope to put them to good use in both the chapel and the hall in the coming years.

We continue to have an informal coffee morning on Saturdays at 10am to which anybody is welcome. We are blessed to have a spacious and airy hall and by adhering to the policies put in place we feel quite safe to meet in person at the moment.

Messy Church will begin again on February 6th at 4pm, this month our story is 'the lost coin' and we have lots of craft and activities which explore the meaning behind this story. Please feel free to encourage any grandchildren or families you know to come. Booking is necessary because we limit numbers to keep us Covid safe. Contact Lindsey to book. (07813 130475)

We are delaying the start of our fortnightly fellowship meetings until February. These meetings attract higher numbers and so we proceed with caution and poised to postpone if Covid figures rise too high. We attract a good number of 'fringe' people to the fellowship meetings and it is good to connect to our community in this way. Maggie leads our sessions so beautifully and we are grateful for all the work she and her 'band of helpers' put in to make these afternoons so interesting and fun.

For similar reasons the Men's forum are not thinking of starting up again until sometime later in February.

The choir continue to meet each Wednesday, ably led by Jenny and again we hope Covid won't put an end to their activities.

Thinking back over Christmas we were blessed with some wonderful services and although we are not back to 'full strength' numbers wise, we did attract some new people who we hope to see more of in the coming months. The collections from our two main services (Carol service and Christmas day) will be going to Action for Children which we hope will in turn bless families less fortunate than ourselves.

We look forward to the opportunities that this New Year may hold, God is good and will find a way where no way seems to be.

RURAL CHRISTIANITY

Does it have a future in the Torridge Circuit?

Despite the success of Buckland Brewer Chapel and Parkham Chapel, in being able to do much more than survive, nobody can doubt that Rural Christianity in the South of the Circuit is under threat of becoming invisible.

Who would be most impacted by the lack of a Christian presence in the countryside? It could be said, the ones who need it most! The farmers on small family farms. And others who depend on them for their own flourishing or even survival.

What needs to be done about it?

Following the example of Buckland Brewer and Parkham – for a start we need to build relationships across denominations, across ages, across the rural/urban divide. How can we do

that in the South of the Circuit? How can we be salt and light? How can we provide lively worship and a message of hope to those who are seeking it? How can we fulfil Our Calling?

Is an ARK part of the answer?

We certainly need an ARK if we are to survive! Have we the vision and determination to build one? Or ...

Might we find an ARK has been started already by those with vision in the past and we just need to adapt and improve it to make it capable of being **so much more** than just a survival vessel?

Can Lake Chapel at Shebbear be the ARK?

What has it got to commend it?

1. Its Rural position, but amazingly accessible from many directions
 - A) Shebbear is central not just to the rural southern half of the Torridge Circuit. It is central to the large **rural ARC**, covering parts of Devon and Cornwall, where no single city, or town, is large enough for everyone to feel connected to it.
 - B) Lake Chapel is now owned by and is in the grounds of Shebbear College. Shebbear College caters for young people from 3 to 18 years old. Its **residential facilities** have been used in the past during the school holidays, which enabled the Shebbear Circuit to host a diverse group of all ages from a Slough multi-cultural Anglican church.
 - C) Shebbear College has also hosted the Shebbear Study Day for many years and people attended from all denominations, and from as far away as Tavistock and Barnstaple, on a Saturday, and the school catered for it at lunch-time.
2. Its Size (and shape!) The Chapel and the Schoolroom are both large and Ark-shaped! But could usefully be linked architecturally.
3. Its present facilities are a Carpark, Prayer Room, Schoolroom, large worship area, and very basic toilets and kitchen.
4. Its links are established with young people from a wide area.
5. It is a unique, historic, locality, with links across the globe.
[Lake Farmhouse close by was the birthplace of Bible Christianity (1815). The College and the original chapel were built by the early Bible Christians, who also spread their faith across England and to Canada, Australia and China. The Graveyard boasts the graves of many Presidents of the Bible Christian denomination. Bible Christianity joined with Methodism in 1907 and became part of the new United Methodist Church as it is today. The college holds many precious records of the Bible Christians, which at present are inaccessible.]
6. It is a place where revival has happened in the past.
7. It has a Sustainable Future – it is not dependant on a small, elderly, local congregation to man it and fund it.

With such an ARK at Lake in particular, we can build capacity, for being a light to young people, and new Christians; but also capable of being the salt - rescuing the Lost, the Least, the Broken, including the Lost, the Least and the Broken amongst young people in the farming community across a wide area.

The Vision for the future of the Circuit should include a sustainable ARK at Lake within the ARC. We should not just put effort into saving a typical rural chapel with a diminishing, elderly congregation.

Things which could easily be improved at Lake are accessibility, toilets, kitchen, comfort, energy efficiency. **Accessibility should include those with learning difficulties and age-related memory loss.**

All of these things are essential to make Lake a fit vessel for the future.

There are other things which could be added to develop its potential:

1. Display areas for Bible Christian resources and history, and Methodist resources and history, and the local Celtic Christianity influence ...
2. Showcase for the work of the Market Chaplaincy Teams (co-ordinated by Andy Jerrard); **and** the work of Connect in supporting four School Chaplains in the rural heart of Devon, including Ruth Jones in Holsworthy; **and** the work of the Arthur Rank Centre in supporting rural ministry throughout the country.
3. Showcase for local sustainable agriculture, and food outlets in the locality which use local produce. Reference could be made to the stained-glass window rescued from a bombed church in Plymouth celebrating the birth of Bible Christianity by depicting the small family farmers of that era. Perhaps the only such window in the country?
4. Make something of major local ecumenical social outreach – Harbour Project, Street Pastors, Food Bank (and include innovations at Bude, Launceston, Barnstaple). But also advertise what a local network of village churches and chapels have to offer.
5. Adaptable worship space, sound system etc., some comfortable chairs.
6. A worship band, with a core from Shebbear College, enlivening community worship and capable of attracting young people.

An additional worthwhile idea could be, to provide, or find, **accommodation for visitors**, wanting to **experience** the peace, beauty, and natural life of the countryside, or to undertake discovery **Trails or Pilgrimages**. Possibly a “Green” campsite with compostable toilets etc. (The fields at Suomi Bungalow?)

And at an appropriate time appoint someone to develop a **Rural Chaplaincy Team** (made up of lay people and clergy from every possible denomination in the area) based at Lake but able to work across boundaries, denominations, and age groups. Possibly linking with the Holsworthy Market Chaplaincy Team. And possibly to encourage other such teams where they would be a useful addition, across the whole of the rural ARC and beyond.

If enough people catch this vision - Rural Christianity can, and should, have a future here in the Torridge Circuit, and elsewhere!

Maureen Ellis – Black Torrington

The following is the Plan for January & February

HC= Holy Communion PC= At Parish Church
MC= Methodist Church C& F= Coffee and Fellowship
Café= Café Worship SB=Sunday Breakfast

Post codes of Chapels

Alverdiscott – EX31 3PT	Alwington – EX39 5BU
Bideford (High Street) – EX39 2AN	Black Torrington – EX21 5QF
Buckland Brewer – EX39 5LP	Langtree – EX38 8NF
Littleham – EX39 5HW	Milton Damerel – EX22 7DJ
Northam – EX39 1BS	Parkham – EX39 5PG
Shebbear – EX21 5SJ	Sheepwash – EX21 5NA
Thornhillhead – EX39 5NT	Torrington – EX38 8AL

	Jan 2	Jan 9	Jan 16	Jan 23	Jan 30
	Christmas 2	Ordinary 1	Ordinary 2	Ordinary 3	Ordinary 4
Circuit Zoom	6.30pm	6.30pm	6.30pm	6.30pm	6.30pm Covenant
Alverdiscott 11am 5pm	Spencer		Harris		
Alwington 11am				20th @10am PC Christian Unity	Vidamour HC @3pm
Bideford 10.30am	Withall	Potter	@Northam Covenant	Vidamour HC	Macbeth
Black Torrington Friday 3pm			Vidamour 14th @3pm		F Watson 28th @3pm
Buckland Brewer 10am (PC) 10am (MC)	HC (9.30am)	Withall	Anglican preacher	Blackhall Covenant	D Watson
Clovelly					
Langtree 11am	D Watson	Parish Church	Potter		Blackhall HC
Littleham 10.30am	Hall-Tomkin		@Northam Covenant		
Milton Damerel 11am			Blackhall		
Northam 10.30am	F Watson	Harris	Vidamour Covenant	Hall-Tomkin	Price
Parkham 11am		SB	Withall	@Buckland Covenant	Vidamour
Shebbear 10.30am	PC	Blackhall Covenant	C&F	Harris	Hall-Tomkin
Sheepwash 11am	Ley				
Thornhillhead 11am		Burgon HC			
Torrington 10.30pm	Blackhall Covenant	Macbeth	Price	Spencer	F Watson

Jan 23 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Nehemiah 8.1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 12.12-31a; Luke 4.14-21

Jan 30 Forth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah 1.4-10; Psalm 71.1-6; 1 Corinthians 13.1-13; Luke 4.21-30

	Feb 6	Feb 13	Feb 20	Feb 27
	Ordinary 5	Ordinary 6	Ordinary 7	Ordinary 8
Circuit Zoom	6.30pm	6.30pm	6.30pm	6.30pm Cuttack
Alverdiscott 11am 5pm	Blackhall HC		Blackhall	
Alwington 11am				
Bideford 10.30am	D Watson	Price	Vidamour HC	Harris
Black Torrington Friday 3pm		Blackhall HC 11th @3pm		Spencer 2th @3pm
Buckland Brewer 10am (PC) 10am (MC)	HC (9.30am)	Spencer	Anglican preacher	Blackhall
Clovelly				
Langtree 11am	LA	Parish Church	Withall	
Littleham 10.30am	Vidamour HC		Potter	
Milton Damerel 11am		Watson		
Northam 10.30am	Spencer	Vidamour	Burgon	Withall
Parkham 11am	Ley	SB	F Watson	Vidamour HC United
Shebbear 10.30am	PC	C&F		Ley
Sheepwash 11am	Burgon HC			
Thornhillhead 11am		Harris		
Torrington 10.30pm	Potter	Blackhall HC	Harris	Hall-Tomkin

Feb 6 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 6.1-8,(9-13); Psalm 138; 1 Corinthians 15.1-11; Luke 5.1-11

Feb 13 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah 17.5-10; Psalm 1; 1 Corinthians 15.12-20; Luke 6.17-26

Feb 20 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Genesis 45.3-11,15; Psalm 37.1-11,39-40; 1 Corinthians 15.35-38,42-50; Luke 6.27-38

Feb 27 Sunday before Lent

Exodus 34.29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3.12-4.2; Luke 9.28-36,(37-43)

A covenant with God

*I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will,
rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing,
put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you,
or laid aside for you,
exalted for you,
or brought low for you;
let me be full,
let me be empty,
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. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.'*
The Methodist Covenant Prayer

Methodists hold an annual Covenant Service, at which we celebrate all that God has done for us, and affirm that we give our lives and choices to God.

Most churches hold the service in the New Year, but some hold them in September, at the beginning of the Methodist year.

The traditional Covenant prayer (shown above) makes it very clear that this affirmation is a serious one that embraces the whole of our life, in all its parts. Most people find it quite tough to say, and really mean it. But the prayer is so central to the Christian life that other Churches have also adopted it.

In our culture we tend to prize our ability to make decisions and choose our own path in life. It can feel very hard to give that up. But this prayer is like a love poem. It is about surrendering to God in love and joy.

Reflecting on the life of Archbishop Desmond Tutu

The Revd Sonia Hicks, President of the Methodist Conference, said:

"As a Black Christian, I grew up aware that the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu did not allow the presuppositions of other people to define his own self-identity and self-worth, even under apartheid. That awareness fuelled my desire for a more just and inclusive world for all. I pray for those mourning his loss today and hope that his work for justice in South Africa and the world over continues to burn bright.

"As the late Archbishop said:

'There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in.'"