

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

Embracing Faith: our Methodist heritage today

In October 1735, John Wesley set sail for Savannah, Georgia, with his brother Charles and two other men from the Oxford 'Holy Club'. Despite being an ordained minister of the Church of England, John was going as a pastor and missionary in the hope of learning the true nature of the gospel and so saving his own soul.

Not long into the three-month voyage, John became impressed with some fellow passengers from Germany – Moravian Christians seeking religious freedom in the New World. John began learning German so he could talk with them. When the ship ran into fierce storms, he saw their calm assurance, and was convinced they had a kind of peaceful trust in God that he lacked.

When he arrived in Georgia, John met the Moravian leader, August Spangenberg. Spangenberg asked John some searching questions about his faith – but while Spangenberg seemed satisfied with John’s answers, John knew he had fudged them.

John's time in Georgia was disastrous: the European settlers rebelled against his rigorous Methodist ways, the Native Americans were not the stereotypical 'noble savages' he had imagined, and his beloved Sophy married someone else. Finally, a dispute with Sophy over giving notice to attend Holy Communion resulted in a legal battle with her uncle, the local magistrate. Knowing his time in Georgia was up, John made a hasty departure for home. On the homeward journey, he was despondent: his missionary endeavours had been a failure, and he was afraid, unsure of the future and desperately frightened of dying.

Soon after arriving back in England, John met another Moravian, Peter Böhler, who convinced him that the message of the Bible and the Reformation was that the believer was made right with God through faith alone (not faith and something else).

Throughout the spring, John believed that he could only be at peace with God through personal saving faith – but also felt he lacked such faith. Moreover, when he preached this message in London's polite parish churches, he caused such offence that he was forbidden to preach there again.

The crisis deepened, until on 24 May 1738, John reluctantly



attended a devotional meeting in Aldersgate Street. He was listening to an unnamed reader reading part of Martin Luther's Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans, when – as he described in his diary – he felt his heart strangely warmed. He felt he now trusted in Christ alone for salvation and felt assurance that his sins were forgiven.

The following spring, John began preaching in the open air, much against the conventions of the time. He preached the message of salvation for all through personal faith in Jesus Christ, and he organised all those who responded into societies – the forerunners of today's Methodist Churches.

John Wesley's experience remains an important example of a journey to assurance of saving faith for us today. Methodists have never believed that there is only one type of conversion experience (the New Testament contains a variety of conversion experiences), but we continue to believe that leaving the old life (whatever it may have been like) and embracing the new life of faith and discipleship is important for every follower of Jesus.


We have been invited to celebrate our heritage and remind one another of the gospel message by holding a special circuit and ecumenical service on Wednesday 24 May at 7.30pm at Paignton Parish Church, Church Street, Paignton TQ3 3AQ. The preacher will be Revd Paul Smith. More information about groups practising the hymns is available through local churches or the circuit office.

Find us on social media

Many churches — including some in our own circuit — are now using social media to keep their members and local communities up to date with what they are doing.

You can find us on Facebook...

[@torbaymethodistcircuit](https://www.facebook.com/torbaymethodistcircuit)
[@PaigntonMethodistChurch](https://www.facebook.com/PaigntonMethodistChurch)
[@flavelchurch](https://www.facebook.com/flavelchurch)
[@Brixham200](https://www.facebook.com/Brixham200)
 Central Church Torquay

...and on Twitter...

[@CentralChurchTq](https://twitter.com/CentralChurchTq)
 ... and we hope to see you there!

Go tell it on the mountain (and in Torbay!)

Local preacher Barbara Vond talks to Nick Pannell about her Christian life in Torbay and the privilege of sharing the gospel with others.

I cannot remember a time when I did not know Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I was brought up in a strong Methodist family and talking to God was as natural as talking to anyone else. Reading and sharing the scriptures and having discussions were a normal part of life: faith and church were never an add on. In the words of the children's hymn, "A little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right". Preaching also seemed natural to me: as a little girl I would take services for the family in our living room.

I publicly committed my life to Christ when I was 13 years old at Palace Avenue Methodist Church under the ministry of Revd Owen Clutterbuck. He was a brave man who invited the young people to gather and discuss his sermon after the evening service. I learnt so much from that group, which was known as "Youth Squash". Perhaps some of you remember it?

At Palace Avenue we had Junior Church. We would go into the hall and take our own service, and an adult would be invited to do the talk. Once a year, we held a youth service. I helped in it in the first year, and then at 15 I preached my first sermon. It was five minutes on "Jesus Our Friend."

At the age of 33 I was asked by several people why I did not become a local preacher. Having prayed about it and talked with my minister, I began my training, but due to family problems decided I could not continue. However, about two years later I was encouraged by another preacher, Alice Elliott, to try again – and I did.



It was a struggle, and it was not until Revd Stephen Wright came to the Methodist Church at Fore Street, Brixham, that he finally pushed me through the exams at the same time as another lovely lady, Molly Brooks.

Molly and I became fully accredited Local Preachers in April 1991 at Fore Street, and I think I am right in saying that we were the first to use the music group. The church was packed and it was an inspirational evening that I will never forget.

I feel my calling is to preach the gospel, so that others may come to love and know

the Lord Jesus Christ as I have done – because with Christ on our side there is nothing that we need ever doubt. We praise God for the good and we trust when things are hard. It is a wonderful privilege to preach the gospel, and I trust God will enable me to carry on for a long time to come. For me, there is no better place to serve God than in the churches of the Torbay Circuit, which I love.

Growing spiritually

From Adrian and Geraldine – members of Wesley's Chapel in Central London.

We regularly visit Dartmouth and have in the past worshipped occasionally at the Palace Avenue Sunday morning services. Much more recently we started to attend the 6.00pm Sunday service at Goodrington where we have always received a warm welcome.

We were immediately struck by the quality of teaching and really enjoy the fellowship and times of prayer and praise. We always come away from the meeting with more understanding of the scriptures.

When we drive back to Dartmouth after the service we invariably chat about the Bible passage we have just studied and feel that we have grown spiritually since we have been coming to Paignton.

As the word of God says: 'They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer' (Acts 2.42).



Looking forward at Goodrington

October 2016 marked fifty years of worship at Goodrington Methodist Church. When the church community was planning the celebrations they also wanted to look forward. The church's vision is to add fifty new members in the next ten years.

To help Christians old and new to grow spiritually, members and friends are encouraged to worship, pray, explore and study the Bible together – and so on Tuesday evenings (7.30–9.00) Worship (2B1), Teaching, Exploring and Praying sessions make up the church's *Tuesdays Together* programme.



Goodrington member Maddy Jeffery says this about the Sunday evening services: "Sunday evening services at Goodrington have become celebrations with such a joyous atmosphere. Possibly this is because all those who attend do so because they really want to be here. We are so grateful to be enlightened by in-depth learning about the Bible, the music group do us proud with their excellent contribution, the time of 'Testimony and Prayer' has become very important to us in sharing and giving thanks when Jesus Christ touches our lives, our happier and sadder times and concerns. However many people attend, the evening still feels a very intimate time of worship."

At Goodrington, the busy programme also includes a walking group, which meets at the church on the second Saturday of each month at 9.20am for a walk in the local area. All are welcome, and the next walks are on 8 April (Torcross) and 13 May (Bystock Pools). For more information about the walking group, contact Colin on 845064.

It's church, Jim, but not as we know it!

Our vision is for a church open all the time ... a church people want to visit again and again ... a place where people feel at home and can belong before they believe ... a place where people can encounter God and find a friendly welcome and someone to pray with ... somewhere prayer is always happening ... basically inviting people into God's front room ... and, of course, good coffee!

A Methodist minister gave us a word of prophecy last year:

"There is **Favour** for the **Flavour** of **Flavel**". Initially we took this as an encouraging word indicating we were on the right track with the direction Flavel was taking; now we are taking it more literally and **FLA♥OUR** has become the name for our "church-in-a-coffee-lounge-in-a-church" project.

We are hoping and praying that this place will become the hub of the community, where people will feel free to hang out, check their email, read a newspaper, write their latest novel ... but mainly to connect with each other and with the church.

We plan to launch in May 2017, and in the meantime we are busy planning, applying for grants, and fixing the building – beginning with the plaster and paint falling from the west gable.

While building work takes place, we have closed the church building and decanted our normal activities to other venues. On Sundays we worship in the Flavel Arts Centre, which is built on the site of the original Flavel church dating from the early 1700s. The Friday toddler group meet in the nearby Foss Street Chapel, as does our Thursday discipleship group, and the faithful folk at Foss Street kindly do not charge us.

Our weekly coffee mornings are hosted at the Salcombe Dairy, by the Boat Float: we still have our homemade cakes, and the coffee morning is proving very popular. We are seeing lots of Favour!

We have started training 12 volunteers from the congregation who will make up the initial ministry team. Once the **Flavour** coffee lounge opens, they will be on-hand to chat to folk, pray with them, and signpost them to other services in the town. One member of the church is training to

be a Master Barista – so that he can train others. The aesthetics team have deliberated and furniture is on order: the sketch illustrates what they've come up with.

Please join us in praying that our applications for a Certificate of Lawfulness from the SHDC planning department, for grants and funding, and to the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee and the Synod Property Committee, are all successful.

Please also pray for a solution to the crumbling plaster on the west gable and a volunteer labour force

to help strip the loose plaster and paint; for the ministry team; that people will come along, and that they will feel at home; and that the Kingdom of God will be extended here.

We give thanks for the money already pledged that has enabled us to start this project.

Karl Stone

Karl and Deb Stone are Pioneer Workers with Flavel United Church (Methodist/URC) in Dartmouth.



Taking the Bible to her heart

Joan Hancock shares with Nick Pannell her thoughts on reading the Bible by herself and with others.



When I was a child, my family were members of the Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland and I grew up with the Bible in our home. While attending Londonderry High School, I was invited to attend the Girls' Crusader Bible Class. This was very Bible orientated. The two leaders were lovely Christians and had a great impact on me.

I married, moved to Essex, and began to attend the Methodist Church. One evening the sermon was based on Isaiah 53. Verse 6 struck home: "All ye like sheep have gone astray". There and then I began to follow Jesus.

When I was teaching, I loved to take assemblies and read Bible stories to the children. Since moving to Paignton and joining Palace Avenue Methodist Church I have continued to read from and explore the Bible.

A few years ago Revd John Haley introduced me to *Life Every*

Day Bible reading notes by Jeff Lucas. Last month I was reading about meals. No fewer than 10 meals are recorded in the book of Luke. Meals were events for sharing. Nowadays we tend to eat off a tray in front of the TV! Jesus and his disciples loved to eat and drink together. This kind of event mattered.

More recent Janet Haley invited me to attend Goodrington's *Tuesday Exploring* evening. It was quite different from anything I've ever done. The evening was based on a passage of scripture. There was a DVD and various 'corners', including a reading corner where we could study the passage at three levels: easy, medium or difficult. I enjoyed the evening and I am looking forward to the next one.

I occasionally read the Bible lesson in the service at Palace Avenue. In preparation, I read it through several times each day so that I understand it, and I always try to read it carefully and clearly so that the congregation may take it to their hearts.

Reading and studying the Bible helps you to apply it to your life every day. It helps you to gain insight, understanding and practical application of God's word.

Holy Week and Easter: special services

Monday 10th	9.30am	Morning Prayer (Central)
Tuesday 11th	9.30am	Morning Prayer (Central)
Wednesday 12th	9.30am	Morning Prayer, with Quiet Morning of reflection and prayer until 12.30 (Central)
	2.30pm	Holy Week Communion (Palace Avenue)
Maundy Thursday	9.30am	Morning Prayer (Central)
	7.30pm	Easter Labyrinth with Communion (Goodrington)
	7.30pm	Maundy Thursday Service of reflection and Communion (Central)
	7.30pm	Maundy Thursday Communion (Brixham)
Good Friday	9.30am	Good Friday Service (Central)
	10.00am	Central Paignton Churches United Service (Winner Street Baptist Church)
	10.30am	Christians Together in Brixham Good Friday service at Brixham Methodist Church
	11.30am	Christians Together in Brixham Walk of Witness departs Brixham Methodist Church
	11.45am	Christians Together in Paignton Walk of Witness departs Christ Church
	12.00pm	Christians Together in Torquay Walk of Witness departs Torquay Town Hall
	5.30pm	Community hymn singing followed by Good Friday service at 6.00pm (Kingskerswell)
Holy Saturday	10.00am	Central Paignton Churches Messy Church (Victoria Street)
Easter Day	6.00am	Central Paignton Churches Beach Service on Paignton Beach (south of pier)
	8.00am	Holy Communion followed by breakfast (Central)
	8.00am	Holy Communion (Brixham)

All our churches have services on Easter Day at their usual Sunday service times.

Youth Genesis: new Drop-in at St Andrews

The Prophet Isaiah writes “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow” (Isaiah 1:17). This verse often springs to mind when planning the work that we do at *Youth Genesis* – especially as a large number of the young people that we work with face injustice and oppression, come from troubled homes, struggle at school, or are lonely and socially isolated in some way.

The focus of our ministry at *Youth Genesis* is to work with young people aged 11-25 by showing welcome, kindness, and support, and by helping them through some difficult life challenges. Through our Youth Clubs, Youth Drop-Ins and Streetbase work, we work with around 130 teenagers each week in Torbay, and it’s a real joy to provide a service in our churches for those who are looking to be valued and supported.

Since *Youth Genesis* began in Brixham in October 2007, we

have set up projects across Torbay – and elsewhere in Devon too! Largely supported by the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church, *Youth Genesis* is helping to connect our churches with the local community.

Our latest success has been the setting up of a new Youth Drop-In at St Andrew’s Methodist Church in Shiphay, Torquay, where we are seeing between 20 and 30 teenagers each Friday. Activities available include football, pool, circus skills, arts and crafts, table tennis and games. We’ve also discovered that a number of the young people have fantastic singing voices so are planning to set up a singing group!

Please continue to pray for our work with young people, especially as many of the social issues that we are working with across Torbay can be quite challenging. If you are interested in volunteering with us, please contact me at jon@youthgenesis.org.uk.

Jon Oliverio

Jon Oliverio is Youth Work Co-ordinator at Youth Genesis.



Left: Members of the Youth Work Team at St Andrew’s Methodist Church



Right: Fun and Games at the Youth Drop-In at St Andrew’s.

Please send good news stories of worship, fellowship, mission and evangelism to Torbay Methodist Circuit Office by no later than 10th May to be considered for inclusion in the next issue of *Connected*.

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