



West Devon
Methodist Circuit

NEWSLETTER

November 2024 – Jan 2025

***“GRACE AND PEACE BE YOURS IN ABUNDANCE THROUGH THE
KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND OF JESUS OUR LORD.”***

2 PETER 1v2

Celebrations at Boasley



Boasley has celebrated ten years of Soup and Sweet lunches, it has become a real community hub over that time. When you think about the location of Boasley Chapel and the fact that it is not in a village, it is amazing how many people are reached through this ministry. The question of “Who makes up the community” is like the question asked of Jesus, “Who is my neighbour?” The answer of course, is everyone.



Today there are people who have been coming along for all those ten years plus others who are on their first visit. There is a warm welcoming atmosphere as the hall fills up. Table service is efficient, provided by volunteers from the Chapel as well as two pupils from the school opposite. Everyone is enjoying themselves. The pupils' professionalism

was impressive, prompting the thought that if they wanted to work in the hospitality sector in the future, this was a really good experience for them.

"It's like a party, you meet people and make friends. I've been supporting it for years, it's always a joy," says Winifred from Northlew. Another lady on her second visit said, "I came back and immediately someone waved across the room welcoming me."

Diana Sizmur (who makes a gorgeous pumpkin soup!) is always interested in how people find their way to the Soup & Sweet. "Some come through friends and relatives, someone came through seeing a notice at the bus shelter. People come from Holsworthy, Okehampton and all around. It's wonderful."

There is a choice of six soups "We had nine at one stage, but it was a bit much!" laughs Diana, and lots of sweets plus tea or coffee. Boasley is blessed with several amazing cooks who give their time and talent in the service of others. The Chapel is alive with the buzz of conversation, friendships being created and affirmed, and the goodness of God being demonstrated through love and hospitality. It's simple but powerful stuff, and for a donation of just £5.00, incredibly good value.

The next Soup and Sweet is on Thursday 21st November 12.00 – 2.00



Northlew

Every Saturday there is a coffee morning from 10.00 – 12.00 at Northlew Methodist Chapel Hall which includes a cake sale, but the first Saturday of the month also includes an indoor market. This has been going for less than a year and has proven to be a great success.

There are stalls with all sorts of produce, eggs, preserves, haberdashery and even an Avon stall to name a few. The atmosphere is relaxed and welcoming with a long table in the centre and stalls around the edge. Ros, who has the haberdashery stall, was one



of the instigators of the market, a newcomer to the area from Cornwall, she loves Northlew and has quickly become involved in the community. "What is lovely, is that people from all backgrounds come here. For some, it's the only time they venture out to have a social time with others. We easily get over fifty people, there is seating in the Chapel for people to take their refreshments if it's too crowded in the hall. I love it."



In the summer there is a community table so people can bring excess produce from their gardens to share with others.

Outside the back of the Chapel is the 50/50 shop, a large wooden shed which is an Aladdin's cave of treasures. One could easily get lost in there for a while, there is something for everyone.

The next market will have plenty of gift ideas for Christmas, so get along early on the 7th December.



"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

Helen Keller

INFUSION

children | youth | families



The theme for the Methodist Youth Assembly this year was being wrapped up in God and the West Devon group had a great time at the NEC Birmingham from 4 – 6 October. 3Generate aims to connect young people with God, each other and the world through various venues, activities, discussions and more. Our group particularly enjoyed the climbing and caving in the (not so) outdoors venue, silent disco worship in the tech hub, discussions about calling and theology in the discovery centre, dancing in the theatre, barn dancing and metal worship in the arena, singing along with the Moses Brothers in the inflatable chapel and of course plenty of food and coffee around the dinner table!

Hatherleigh hosted a lovely light:party on 30th October which was a free evening of crafts, games, activities and food. We had a great time making starry sky cupcakes, thinking about our favourite things in God's creation with playdough, clay and rock painting. Then delicious cheese toasties for tea!



Light:quest this year on 31st October was a bit damp outside, but our spirits were not dampened. It's a free treasure hunt for all the family based in the local community. Thank you to the thirty volunteers who helped make this event in Okehampton, Halwill and Petrockstowe a fun and successful evening.

On the 16th October at Hatherleigh we had an Out and About session for babies and toddlers. The theme was from the book "The squirrels who squabbled". Autumnal crafts included making bird feeders and playing with autumnal scented playdough.

The next Out and About is on 18th December 10.00 at Bridestowe ARK



Stay and Play Café has been a success in half term with 26 people of all ages enjoying crafts, cupcakes, playing Mario Kart and having beans on toast with various toppings for lunch. The next one is on 30th December from 11.00-2.00 at Fairplace.



We're looking forward to our first Busy Bees session on November 7th at Hatherleigh.



Busy Bees

A space for babies, toddlers, parents and carers. Sessions will include snacks for the children and refreshments for the adults before ending with tidy up time and a story. Special/themed sessions will be advertised online. £2 for the first child, £1 per additional sibling.

Autumn 2024

Thurs 7th Nov
Thurs 21st Nov
Thurs 5th Dec
Thurs 19th Dec

Spring 2025

Thurs 16th Jan
Thurs 30th Jan
Thurs 6th Feb
Thurs 27th Feb
Thurs 6th Mar
Thurs 20th Mar
Thurs 3rd Apr

Summer 2025

Thurs 24th Apr
Thurs 1st May
Thurs 15th May
Thurs 5th June
Thurs 19th June
Thurs 3rd July
Thurs 17th July

Facilitated and supported by

INFUSION



West Devon
Methodist Circuit



Hurry up, there are still some places available...

Ice skating and shopping trip Saturday 30th November for young people aged year 7+

The cost is £25 which includes Ice Skating and transport to and from Plymouth. £15 if you do not wish Details and itinerary are on the West Devon Circuit Children and youth activities, or contact Sarah direct for more information

sarahann.balsdon@gmail.com 07794754124

book online <https://westdevonmethodists.churchsuite.com/events/icqrehij>



to skate.
website

Thank you to Sarah and everyone who supports the ministry to children and young people. Ed.

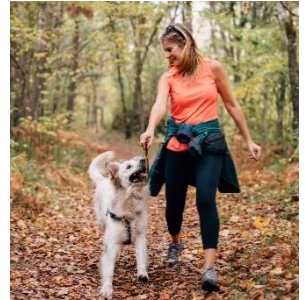
Forest Church



It seems like a new idea, but it really isn't. When Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, he was illustrating the love of God by observing what was around him. Matthew 6 v 25 – 30 consider the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. Whenever congregations are asked where they feel closest to God, invariably the majority say when they are out amongst nature.

On the new Plan you will see that from December, on the 2nd Sunday of the month at 2.00pm, there will be Forest Church.

Meeting at Evergreen Farm EX21 5HE where there is ample parking and toilets, the forest tracks are mostly level, but sensible footwear is advised. There are areas which are wheelchair accessible if it isn't too muddy. All ages welcome and dogs on leads.



We will share some scripture and say a short prayer before going out to walk, look and listen. Regroup to share with each other in an informal way over hot chocolate. Contact Angela with any questions. 07703 326573



"A walk in nature walks the soul back home."

Mary Davis



Madworthy

It was at a church council meeting when ideas were bouncing around as to how to use the revamped building at Madworthy that Barbara Dalton and Kath Brimacombe felt that offering a community lunch would be worth a try.

People arrive from 10.30 for coffee and Barbara leads the activities which vary from crafts to quizzes and jigsaws, while Kath and her team provide a lovely lunch at 12.15. Last time on 16th October, folk were treated to chicken wrapped in

bacon, roast potatoes and veg followed by a choice of three puddings. A donation of £5.00 makes this amazing value.

Kath says, "It's gone like a rocket, I'm thrilled with it, we've had up to thirty-five people so far anybody and everybody is welcome. It's so good to see the church used to help the community, after all, church is not just for Sunday, is it?" The church is open from 10.30 – 2.30 and is a thriving place of friendship and fellowship.

The next community lunch is on Wednesday 20th November, then 11th December and 8th January. Book with Beryl 01409 221389 or Barbara 07974 109505

On the fourth Saturday of the month there is Creative Faith at Madworthy from 9.30 – 11.00. People of all ages and abilities can express their artistic side while contemplating a particular scripture. The focus in October was Ecclesiastes 3v1-11. Do go along for a new experience in encountering the scriptures.

Hatherleigh

We are celebrating our Chapel Anniversary weekend on the 14th /15th December. On Saturday 14th there is a buffet lunch from 12.00 to 1.30pm and a Songs of Praise Service on the 15th at 11.00am.

Soup and Sweet lunches are on Tuesday 17th December and Tuesday 18th February following the Coffee Morning which is from 10.00 – 12.00

Harvest around the Circuit



We had a fantastic time at *Boasley* Harvest Supper. 49 + people were served a delicious meal of Cottage Pie or Vegetable Lasagne with a host of vegetables along with a wonderful array of desserts. During the evening there was a quiz and later Rev Irving Penberthy played songs in his piano accordion with everyone singing heartily.





Fairplace

A lovely Harvest Festival followed by a lunch for 26 people.

Exbourne



Bridestowe



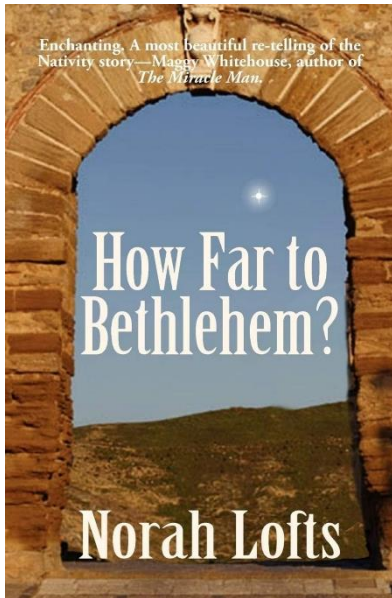
Iddesleigh The chapel was full to bursting and after a lovely service we had supper followed by a fun auction of produce.



"My best friend is a person who will give me a book I have not read."

Abraham Lincoln

BOOK REVIEW



I first read this novel as a teenager, it was originally published in 1965 and mine was an old copy. Norah Lofts' writing transported me back to Bible times with characters I thought I knew well, but I discovered new possibilities of who they were and how they might have thought. How far to Bethlehem had quite an impact on how I read scripture from then on. Who are the real people behind the words of the Bible? It gave me permission to wonder, to imagine and to get alongside the people in the stories.

It's good to see our own Maggy Whitehouse's review on the front cover of this latest edition. I agree, it is enchanting and beautiful. If you have never read a Christian novel before, this is the perfect one to begin with. A Christmassy classic.
Vicki Penfound

HERITAGE PROJECT

It is exciting news that in Spring/Summer 2025 there will be a series of heritage taster days at six chapels around the Circuit with the title **Dissenting Voices – celebrating the heritage of West Devon Chapels.**

West Devon has an interesting story to tell, with the visits of John Wesley to the area as well as the Bible Christian movement which began in Shebbear and the first Chapel built in Northlew in 1815.

There will be multi-sensory exhibitions, artwork and literature. Money granted by The Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled us to put on something of quality. The idea is to give the visitor of any age a wonderful interactive experience that will leave them with a sense of the Chapel's place in the community from its origins to the present day.

There will also be concerts given by Jim Causley in each of the villages focussed upon. The Chapels are: Northlew, Winkleigh, Exbourne, Chilla, Boasley and Bridestowe.

Now we are in the planning stage and appealing for any photos, stories, information, items of interest that relate to the history of these chapels. Please contact Vicki if you

think you can help. Rachel Short, a local historian, has already visited some people and places collecting oral histories. The more, the merrier – and your memories may be far more interesting than you think!

Exbourne History Group has a meeting on 21st January 2025 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall with Dr Janet Few giving a talk, “Uproar and Disorder! – the impact of Bible Christians on parishes in North Devon.” It promises to be a real treat for local history buffs or anyone who looks at the inscription “Bible Christian” on their chapel and wonders, “So who were they, then?” Non group members are welcome, the cost to attend is just £3.00 and there are refreshments afterwards.

Advent

There are Advent courses to suit everyone this year.

Angela is leading one called “Meekness and Majesty” at Boasley, Madworthy and Bridestowe. Boasley begins on 27th November at 7.00pm, Madworthy begins on 29th November at 11.00am and Bridestowe date and time TBA.

Vicki is leading one at Hatherleigh Thursday afternoons from 28th November 2.30pm and online called “Welcome the King” It will explore themes along with characters of the Nativity. Welcome the King (1) into our hearts, (2) into our homes, (3) into our relationships and (4) into our world.

Make Advent be a Holy Season of deepening your spiritual life and so look forward to a Christmas with extra special meaning.

EXBOURNE METHODIST CHURCH

COMMUNITY CONCERT

FRIDAY 13TH DECEMBER 7.00PM

Free Admission - Refreshments

Donations to Chapel Funds

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Belstone - Carol service 8th Dec 6.00pm

Boasley - Carol service 24th Dec 6.30pm

Northlew - Carol Service 15th Dec 6.30pm

Bridestowe - Carol Service 22nd Dec 6.30pm

Chilla - Carol Service 22nd December 3.00pm

Madworthy - Pop up Nativity 22nd December 7.00pm

Exbourne - United Carol Service 22nd December 6.30pm

Hatherleigh - Toy Service December 1st 11.00am

Christingle 8th December 4.00pm

Carol Service 22nd December 6.30pm

Christmas Eve Communion Service 11.30pm

Iddesleigh - Christingle 15th November 7.00pm

Carol Service 22nd December 2.30pm

Fairplace - Wives and Friends Carol Service 19th December

Carol Service 22nd December 4.00pm

Petrockstowe - Christingle 1st December 11.00am

Carol Service 15th December 6.00pm

Providence - Carol Service 15th December 11.00am

Winkleigh - Big Sing 22nd December 6.30pm



“He who sings prays twice!”
St. Augustine

History of the Christmas Carol

Like many traditions, carols weren't originally just for Christmas. The word “carol” originally meant to dance or indicated the song danced to. The first Christmas carol came around AD 129, just 30 years after the death of the apostle John (also known as John the Evangelist). The bishop of Rome at the time, Telesphorus, decreed that “In the Holy Night of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour, all shall solemnly sing the ‘Angel’s Hymn.’” The lyrics, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests,” come from Luke 2:14.

The earliest carols were written and sung in Latin, making it difficult for many to understand them and, therefore, less popular. However, in 1223, when St. Francis of Assisi began his Nativity plays in Italy, songs and canticles sung in the language of the people watching told the story of Jesus’s birth. This helped the new carols spread throughout Europe.

Not everybody thought well of carols. Oliver Cromwell outlawed the public singing of carols in 1644. He banned Christmas celebrations, too. Most continued singing carols in secret, so these songs survived. In fact, there are huge numbers of carols from the fifteenth century that have survived, making it the best-preserved aspect of English medieval music. In 1660, the restoration of the British monarchy abolished all legislation enacted from 1642 to 1660, so Christmas was once again celebrated with feasts, festivities, and carols.

The famous carol that we love to sing, “Hark the herald angels sing”, written by Charles Wesley didn't start out as we know it now. The original first two lines were “Hark, how all the welkin rings, glorious the King of kings.” Even in the early 18th century, ‘welkin’ was an old-fashioned word for heaven or sky. The preacher George Whitefield altered the opening lines in 1754 that have remained ever since. The tune we sing today was not the original either, the composer Felix Mendelssohn wrote it in 1840.

Hopefully you will get to sing your favourites this year, but as Christmas carols are still being written, it's good to learn some new ones too.

Jesus is the heart of Christmas

*Jesus is the heart of Christmas,
Give the Lord his rightful place!
Garlands gleam with his charisma,
Tinsel, glisten with his grace!
Jesus is the heart of Christmas
Welcome him with love and praise!*

*Jesus is the heart of Christmas,
Share him in each card you send.
Give each gift in love and friendship,
Share his gifts which have no end.
Jesus is the heart of Christmas,
Lord and Saviour, Guide and Friend.*

*Jesus is the heart of Christmas,
Light your candles from his flame!
Hang your holly in his honour,
Trim each fir tree in his name!
Jesus is the heart of Christmas
Celebrate the day he came!*

*Jesus is the heart of Christmas,
Find his peace on busy days.
May the messages of Advent
Guide us through the Christmas maze.
Jesus is the heart of Christmas,
Sing each carol in his praise!*

Marguerite Kendrick (b.1927) Singing the Faith 207

Editor's Note

We are drawing near to the close of one year and the arrival of the new. The Christmas season has contrasting elements of rushing and reflection. Rushing around getting ready for family gatherings, preparing food, buying gifts, writing cards etc. and the quiet times of reflection remembering lost loved ones, or contemplating the year that has past and what is to come.

To the Christian, Christmas is that and much more. We celebrate the arrival of Christ into the world, Emmanuel, God with us. God with us in the humility of the manger, vulnerable and dependant on Mary and Joseph. God with us in the exhaustion of the refugee fleeing from violence. God with us in the bringing together of nations and cultures who seek goodness and truth as the Magi did. The story of Christmas is not one of glittery sentimentality, but a gritty affirmation that "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." This is the power of Christmas, light and hope in the darkest of places. The New Year will bring touchstones of familiarity but also a lot of uncertainty. The Methodist Covenant Service is a solid touchstone of expressing faith. The famous Covenant Prayer is both daunting and safe. An affirmation of complete commitment to God, safe in the knowledge that we are loved completely and unconditionally. There is no better choice of how to live life, no greater reassurance in an uncertain world. We walk in the light of Christ and are bearers of that light wherever we go.

May you be blessed in your preparations and celebrations and may the Christ child be born anew in all our hearts this Christmas.

Vicki foreva26@hotmail.co.uk

Covenant Services

Boasley - 19th January 11.00am United service with Northlew

Bridestowe - 19th January United service at Parish Church
9.30am

Chilla - 2nd February 2.30pm

Madworthy - 26th January 11.00am

Exbourne - 2nd February 11.00am

Hatherleigh - 2nd February 11.00am

Iddesleigh - 26th January 11.00am

Fairplace - 26th January 11.00am

Petrockstowe - 12th January 11.00am

Providence - 16th February 3.00pm

Winkleigh - 12th January 11.00am

Where Now Your God by Gerard Kelly

*Where now is your God
Of wrath and rage
Your retributive idol?
The sweet breath of this baby
Bears no fire
His skin has the scent
Of milk not malice
He does not growl
He gurgles
His eyes are fixed
On his mother's face
He is not searching out
Your faults and failings*

*This star that lights the stable
Is sent to shine in your shadows
Not to show the world your shame
There is no anger in the angle
Of these angels arriving
No fight in their flight
As they alight
They sing of peace
Not punishment
Be astounded they say
But don't be afraid
For this is love
This is mercy
This is God made flesh*

*This child
Whose swaddling cloths
Are wet and soiled
Who reeks to high heaven
Of the functions of earth
This burping baby
Blowing bubbles*

*This is how your Father
Shows his face*

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