

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those he favours!" Luke 2 v 14

In Good Voice



It's always fun to sneak into a choir rehearsal and just listen. The Choir at Fairplace, Okehampton were busy preparing for the Carols by Candlelight Service on December 21st at 4.00pm.

Under the able direction of Kath Brimacombe, the choir got to grips with new arrangements of old favourites and also some which were unfamiliar from a cantata by John W Peterson called "Love Transcending".

Where did Kath find this treasure trove? "I'm a bit of a squirrel", she chuckled, "I've been involved with choirs over many years and have built up quite a collection." Kath is clearly proud of Fairplace choir and rightly so.

The joy of singing and sharing the love of music draws in members from a wide area. One travels forty miles to attend. Bill from Belstone laughs in a typical Devon farmer's way, "It's better than cleaning out the cows!" At full strength the choir numbers thirty-six, which is impressive.

The altos blend to some lovely harmonies, and the overall effect is rich and warm.

Rachel, a soprano who is singing a solo "Mary's Child", grinned, saying "My cat knows this by heart." Clearly a lot of practice goes on outside the official rehearsal times too. All the soloists added feeling and character to the music. Jenny, who sings "Sleep Holy Child" with a beautiful tenderness was immersed in the moment.

The men get to shine too. "O Holy Night" which has been recorded by so many singers over the years has a different feel to it with this choir. An older male voice brings a gentle gravitas and builds to the familiar line "Fall on your knees, hear the angel voices"

It's less of a performance and more of a direct invitation to the hearer. The oldest member is Irving, who also has a solo part to sing. Amazing that in his 90s, his voice is strong and clear. He is also, like everyone else, having a grand old time.

Kath combines the strong direction that a choir needs to get to their best with a great sense of humour. Terms like "Boldly slushy" are easily understood and applied and smiling, they go over the piece again to give it more nuance.

"Joy to the world" is an absolute belter, using the arrangement written by the late and much loved Fairplace organist, John Holland. Kath, who knew him well called it a joint effort with her directing his music and for Ann who is singing with the altos it will be a fitting tribute to a very talented man.

So, if you are able, come along to the Candlelight Service 4pm on Sunday 21st and help raise the roof.



INFUSION

children | youth | families



Light:quest 2025 saw 30 volunteers going out into the streets of Halwill and Petrockstowe to run a treasure hunt for families in both communities. Bridestowe also set up the activity up inside the church.

Families collected 3 phrases through BSL fingerspelling to form the words from Micah 6:8 whilst collecting bags, glow sticks, chocolate, sweets and a waterproof vinyl sticker with the verse! After, they had the chance to pop into the brightly lit up churches to warm up and grab a hot chocolate too.

Thank you to everyone who came along and a big thank you to all the volunteers!

The Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8).



Busy Bees celebrated its first birthday on 6th November. What a year! We celebrated with party games as well as our usual playtime with lots of toys and painting firework pictures. Of course, snack time included birthday cake, and we reflected on the year. How the children have grown and how friendships have grown too. New faces (and babies and toddlers of all ages) are always welcome.

Busy Bees joined forces with Mum Crew for the Children's Procession at Hatherleigh Carnival. The hard work preparing signs, wings, headbands and more were rewarded with First Prize! Thank you to all the parents for their support. It was a great event. Next Busy Bees sessions are: 4th & 18th December, 8th & 22nd January and 5th, 12th & 26th February.



Join us for a free session of Christmas fun with story, crafts, sensory fun and a chance to visit and feed the animals at Woolley

Animals Farm Park! We have 3 sessions to choose from: 10:00-11:30, 11:30-13:00, 14:00-15:30. **Book tickets via the West Devon Methodist Circuit Website.**



Stay and Play Café is next at Fairplace on **Tuesday 30th December 11.00am – 2.00pm** Ideal for keeping the festive spirit going. On the menu are Festive Toasties and Gingerbread Biscuits.

*“What if Christmas, he thought, doesn’t come from a store.
What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.”*
Dr Seuss. ‘How the Grinch stole Christmas’



Bridestowe Open The Bible team getting ready to tell the story of David being anointed king by Samuel. It helped set the scene for December’s telling of the Christmas story, when I’m sure the children will be very excited. Please let me know if you would like to join our group, or can offer sewing for costumes or help build props. We don’t have a lot of storage, so clever solutions are very appreciated. A prayer support group would also be great. *Angela Banfield*

Madworthy

Festive Fun Day December 7th 11.00am – 3.00pm Activities for all ages and of course, plenty of food!

Creative Faith

Joel 2:23-32 (NIV)

Be glad, people of Zion,
rejoice in the Lord your God,
for he has given you the autumn rains
because he is faithful.
He sends you abundant showers,
both autumn and spring rains, as before.
The threshing floors will be filled with grain;
the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

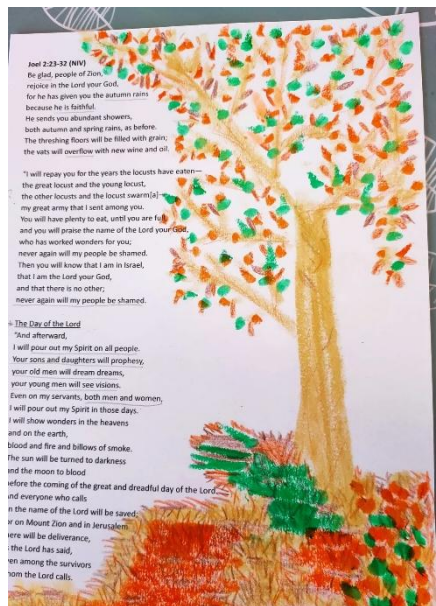
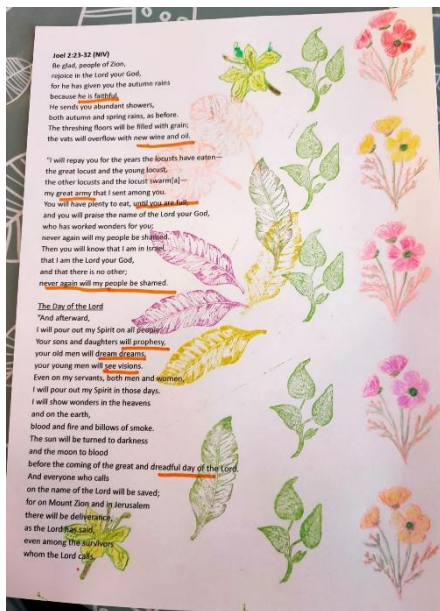
"I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—
the great locust and the young locust,
the other locusts and the locust swarm[a]—
my great army that I sent among you.
You will have plenty to eat, until you are full,
and you will praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has worked wonders for you;
never again will my people be shamed.
Then you will know that I am in Israel,
that I am the Lord your God,
and that there is no other;
never again will my people be shamed.

The Day of the Lord

"And afterward,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.
I will show wonders in the heavens
and on the earth,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.
And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved;
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
there will be deliverance,
as the Lord has said,
even among the survivors
whom the Lord calls.

The group continues to be a great source of blessing to those who attend. The quiet spirituality of exploring and contemplating a particular scripture has produced some beautiful artwork. Here are just some examples. Next session is on 27th December 9.30 – 11.00am. Perfect for unwinding with friends.





Forest Church

- exploring God's creation -

Join us every 2nd Sunday, to meet, explore
and worship in God's Creation.
2-3pm

Meet at Evergreen Farm,
Beckett, Ashwater, Devon, EX21 5HE

Come prepared for whatever the weather.
Hot chocolate at the end.
Dogs on leads welcome.
Suitable for all ages.
Toilets available at the meeting point.

 West Devon
Methodist Circuit

 westdevon.methodist
westdevonmethodists.org.uk

Christmas in West Devon

Saturday 6th December

Petrockstowe Candlelit Service 6.30

Sunday 7th December

Hatherleigh Toy Service 11.00

Madworthy Festive Fun 11.00 – 3.00

Sunday 14th December

Exbourne Carol Service 3.00

Belstone Carol Service 6.00

Iddesleigh United Carol Service at Parish Church 6.00

Thursday 18th December

Fairplace Okehampton Wives & Friends Carol Service 3.00

Sunday 21st December

Providence Carol Service 11.00

Iddesleigh Carol Service 2.00

Chilla Carol Service 2.30

Fairplace Okehampton Carols by Candlelight 4.00

Petrockstowe Carol Service 6.00

Bridestowe United Carol Service 6.30

Northlew Carol Service 6.30

Exbourne United Carol Service at Parish Church 6.30

Hatherleigh Carol Service 6.30

Winkleigh Christmas Big Sing 6.30

Madworthy Pop Up Nativity 7.00

Christmas Eve

Petrockstowe Crib Service at Baxter Hall 3.00

Boasley Carol Service 6.30

Hatherleigh Communion 11.30

Christmas Day

Bridestowe 10.00

Fairplace Okehampton 10.30

Hatherleigh 10.30

Petrockstowe 10.30

Winkleigh 10.30



Hatherleigh

The Chapel Anniversary Weekend is 13th/14th December. On the Saturday there is a buffet lunch from 12 – 1.30pm and on Sunday a Songs of Praise Service at 11.00am. Do come along and join in the celebrations.

The Chapel was open again on Carnival night and has become a welcome venue in the community, providing facilities for folk to get out of the packed crowd. People find a welcome space to sit and chat or just join the queue for the loo. Outside free hot drinks were served. Thanks to all who enabled this mission to help people enjoy a family friendly cultural fixture in the town.

“The Bible contains much that is relevant today, like Noah taking forty days to find somewhere to park” Curtis McDougal

Providence

THE DARTMOOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHRIS CHAPMAN. November 15th Book Launch

2025 has been quite a year - the end of our 4th year of open days has seen the continuing trend of visitors from across Devon and even further afield. Some today from London and Penzance especially to join us.

There are a few thanks to be handed out so here goes.

Obviously to Chris for his photography and hard work over the past 50 plus years which has led to some beautiful images of Dartmoor and its local people.

I would also like to thank our hardworking ladies, Margaret Allin, Diana Brown, Debbie Scott, Jackie Crawford, Christine Duffy, Gay Hill and Rachel Short who over the year have earned their crust but for those there today - they earned it several times over. Absolutely magnificent.

A big thanks goes to Michael Wadman our car park general who makes sure everyone parks properly and always greets them with a friendly face and conversation.

A huge thank you to Joan White, Paul and Catherine Purser for use of their yard and field to park in. Without it would be so difficult to operate safely.

Tich Scott, who mentions us to everyone he meets - and he meets a lot of people and is a great supporter of our chapel and project.

Also to other supporters such as Jim Causley, Bill Murray and especially to Steve Alford and Hayley Janze, and not forgetting to mention Tommy Jack who made his first visit to us today with his mum and dad.

I want to personally thank our Minister, the larger than life, Rev. Chris Jackson, who without his constant guidance and very clear support of what we are doing to keep Providence open; we would definitely not be in such a promising position.

A special thanks goes to Simon Timms, who had the vision to say no to a one-year exhibition and encouraged me to think bigger and longer term which means that our 5th consecutive year is a certainty and not a pipe dream.

Simon's involvement leads me to thank the Heritage Lottery fund and National Churches trust who have shown faith in our project from very different aspects, but have made all the difference when it mattered.

However, there is one last thank you to make, and this as far as I am concerned is the biggest one.

All the work, the teas, the cakes, the pictures, the books and the chapel would mean nothing without you the visitors.

I want to say exactly what I feel here.

Without you, the visitor, we would not exist and would have a very nice collection of photographs gathering dust.

Whether you have visited, once or twice, or in some cases multiple times over the 4 years or indeed this year alone as some have done, I am humbled by the comments made about our venue and the exhibition and these remarks always make me feel it is worth it.

Many of these remarks come from genuinely local people from long standing Dartmoor families whose family members and friends feature in the photographs of Chris Chapman.

As a blow in myself I think their dedication to their surroundings and trades was best summed up today when local farmer Steve Alford who had visited during the afternoon in daylight to support us, said, as he prepared to leave in near darkness - "OK, time to go and get some more work done"

He could have stayed at home and worked during the daylight hours and put his feet up when it was dark, but no, he chose to show his support for us.

So here is to 2026 and our 5th year bringing people together at Providence for photographs, teas and conversation and a sense of community.

Thank you to all of you, your support is not taken for granted.

Ian Crawford.

Footnote: There were people who had never been to Providence before. Ian's estimate for the day was between 270 – 300 attended. Over 12 pints milk for tea and coffee! 124 books sold on the day with a portion of the sale price donated to Chapel funds. Together with donations for refreshments and other donations £2000 was raised.

There is a Soup & Sweet on 2nd December with music by Jim Causley.



A film showing Chris Chapman's work played in the Chapel throughout the event



Belstone

Belstone Chapel is having its closing service on January 11th, 2026, at 3.00pm. The building is being sold, and we pray that it will continue to provide some sort of benefit to the community in the future. It will be a bittersweet occasion, remembering with thanks the witness of the Methodist people over the years and looking forward to the different ways God leads his people to live out the Gospel in the community.

The last day of the Tea Rooms trading will be 29th December.

Marion Walpole is retiring after ten years of what has been a full-time job. All the cakes and scones are home made and have been enjoyed by locals and tourists alike. "It will take quite a bit of adjusting to after all that time," she said. "It has been a lovely, welcoming and safe space."

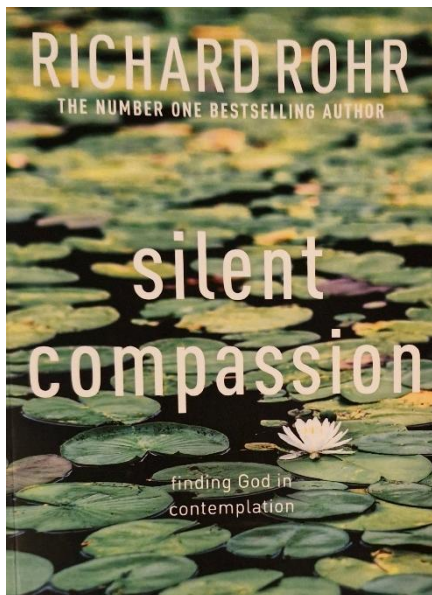
The environment was deliberately designed to facilitate conversation. "It adds to life", one particular memory stands out when couples were encouraged to sit at a large table. It turned out that one couple was from Germany and another were soon to go on holiday there. Over their conversation they decided to meet up in Germany. One remarked upon leaving, "I think I've found my new best friend!"

Many people over the years have found connections with others and been blessed through going for a Belstone cuppa.

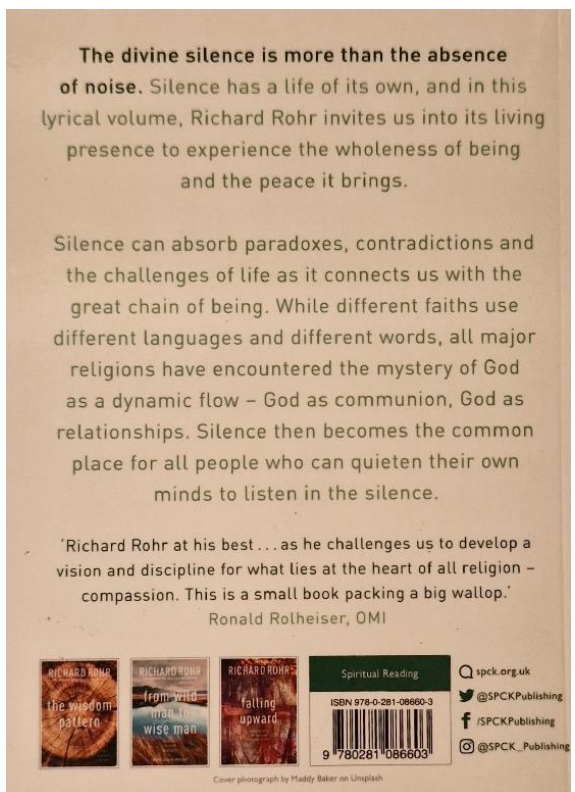
Thank you, Marion, for your years of cheerful compassionate service and thanks in advance too for delicious refreshments after the closing service.

"Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom." Marcel Proust

Book Review



This is a gem of a little book. Small enough to be a stocking filler and a fitting read for long winter evenings. Richard Rohr, a Franciscan monk and prolific spiritual writer can get across deep truths in a simple, engaging way. His writing style is that of a friendly chatty teacher whose approachability belies the depth of wisdom and theology. He expounds on the teachings of Francis of Assisi as well as quoting contemporary theologians. "Silent Compassion" is an antidote to the busy modern life we become exhausted by. Get a copy, sit in a comfy chair with a cuppa and enjoy. Vicki



Letter from the Superintendent

“Happy Christmas, war is over”...so sang John Lennon in 1971...if only it was true.

The world is in a difficult place and for many war is a reality of the here and now. Many people over the past few months have asked me and others, so what can we do about things?

Well, I am still a bit of an idealist, I believe in the hope that God brings into people's lives, even in the darkest of times.

Perhaps the biggest message of Christmas is that “God showed Up” in the person of the baby Jesus. Bringing an eternal hope for all to hang on to.

At Christmas we think of the child as the bringing of hope, of peace of love and of salvation to all, the baby that grew up to be the Saviour of all, just as the angels proclaimed.

It is a message, a gift, that we still proclaim to the world today. We celebrate the birth of Jesus through the re-telling of the Christmas narrative in word, song, art, drama, nativity plays and countless other expressions in our worship.

We need to be strong amongst all the darkness of the world we live in. Remember that Jesus came to be light to the world, and the darkness will not overcome it (John 1). Hope, peace and love is at the heart of our message, and it is these things that people need to be reassured with, and those things are all embodied in the Christmas story...

John Lennon also said that “While there's hope, there's life...Give Peace a Chance...”

So let us all proclaim the message of Jesus, the Good News, and bring life to people this Christmas.

Many blessings,

Rev Chris

“God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving”

Pope Francis

Editor's Note

The season of Winter, December – February, is one third the end of the year and two thirds the beginning of a New Year. It's a time when we often think of endings. The first Christmas without a loved one is always a poignant time, and we hold in prayer all those who are in that situation this year.

Christmas is for everyone. Whatever your situation, the light of the Christ Child reaches everywhere. The Nativity story tells us Jesus was not born into privilege but into poverty. His presence is with us wherever – and however we are.

I like the fact that Christmas is after the Winter Solstice, the shortest day. Christmas comes as the days are beginning to lengthen again. The themes of light and hope are embedded in Creation as daylight increases.

The end of a year is a time for reflection, the long winter evenings are a good time to take stock, learn, give thanks and look forward. 2025 has seen fellowship deepen, faith grow and the love of God has been evident through the actions of his people.

It is becoming more common for folk to put up their decorations earlier and earlier and then take them down well before twelfth night. That's a shame, as the Season of Christmas takes us well into the New Year. The excitement and anticipation of Advent give way to the greatest Birthday Party, but the joy of Jesus does not leave us on Boxing Day. We should enter the New Year with excitement and anticipation too.

2026 will see an ending with the closure of Belstone, and I hope that the closing service will be well attended to raise the rafters with praise to God, giving thanks for all His goodness.

There are also new beginnings throughout the Circuit. I commend to you the discipleship course "Practicing the Way", currently on Wednesdays 10.30am at Fairplace. This course will be repeated through the Circuit and promises to be both a tonic and a challenge as we seek to live out our faith practically.

We may be surprised by what we will be reflecting on this time next year. Whatever happens, we can echo the last words of John Wesley, "Best of all, God is with us." Let us step into the New Year with confidence as we follow Jesus.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.

Vicki foreva26@hotmail.co.uk

Superintendent Minister

Rev Chris Jackson (01837 52302)

chris.jackson7@gmail.com

www.westdevonmethodists.org.uk

