

# Wonford Methodist Church

## Contact Newsletter

February 2024  
(No: 526)



Minister: Rev Ben Haslam (01392 256716)



Wonford is a  
Fairtrade church

The **Methodist** Church 

[www.wonfordmethodistchurch.org.uk](http://www.wonfordmethodistchurch.org.uk)



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# A Message From The Minister

**Dear Friends,**

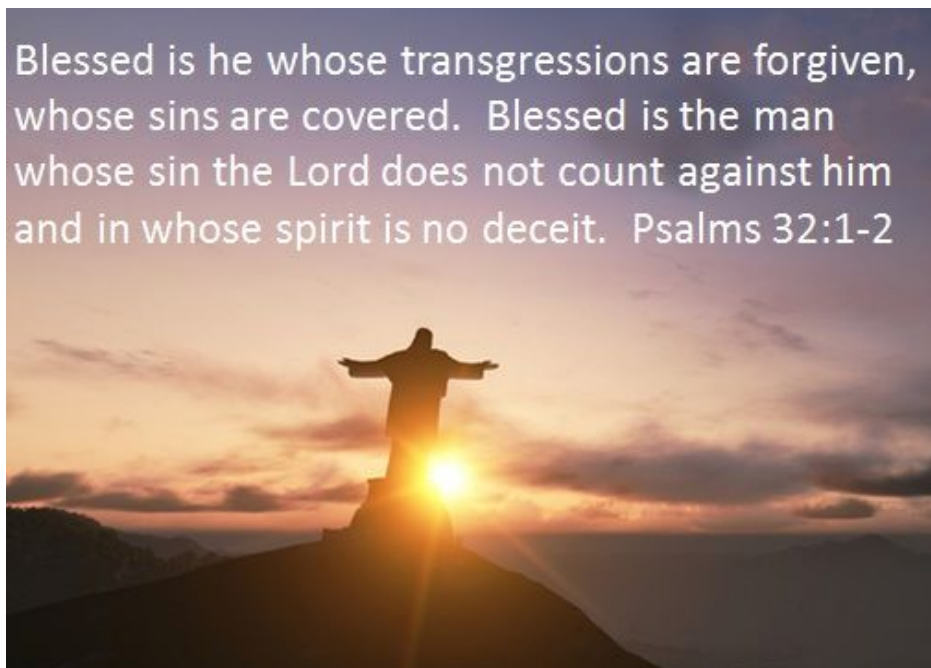
## **Psalm 32**

‘Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect’ said Jesus. Gulp! Trying to be a better person is one thing, but being so perfect that you’re just like God is impossible is it not? Well yes, it is. That’s the point. We can’t raise ourselves up to that level purely by our own efforts but when the Lord looks at all those who have accepted Him and His saving work, He sees us, not as we are in our natural selves, but as the redeemed and holy people He is helping us to become. So there’s no need to be anxious! If you still need convincing though, look at Psalm 32. It’s a great hymn of praise from someone who has been the recipient of so much grace and mercy from the Lord that he can’t help but sing about it.

Not that God is just standing by, waiting for us to fall so he can pick us back up again. No, He is constantly acting in our lives to guide, protect and strengthen us. The Psalms are not just a collection of pious statements with no basis in reality - the raw honesty in many of the Psalms attests to that. They are expressions of lives experience, of the writers very real relationship with God and they also help us today as we seek walk with God in our day to day lives. Above all, they encourage us to cultivate genuine thankfulness, even in difficult times, for God’s constant presence and never-failing mercy. Hence the closing words of this Psalm: “Be glad in the Lord, celebrate you faithful!”.

**With every blessing**  
**Ben Haslam**

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,  
whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man  
whose sin the Lord does not count against him  
and in whose spirit is no deceit. Psalms 32:1-2



# Dates For February 2024

## Coffee

4th	Janette & Melanie
11th	Pauline & Liz
18th	Rose & Paul
25th	Jenny & Alison

## Bible Study Group

Our fortnightly Friday Bible Study Group meets in our Lounge at 3pm to 4.30pm. In February they are meeting on the 2nd and 16th and are continuing studying the Ten Commandments with a study guide by J John based on the Just 10 series of talks. All are welcome to attend. Please speak to Monika Noronha or Terry Spencer if you want further details.

**Monika**

## The Away Group

This group meets on a Monday evening every fortnight at 7.30 pm. Dates and venues will be given out each Sunday in the notices.

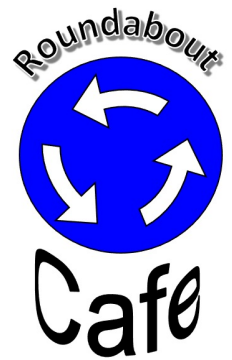
## Roundabout Café

The Roundabout Café will meet on Tuesday 20th February 2024 when there will be a talk on 'Farms for City Children' with Tracey Izod.

'Farms for City Children' is a charity enabling children from disadvantaged communities to experience the adventure of working together on our farms in the heart of the British countryside

They meet from 10.00am until noon with coffee and cake.

Everyone is welcome.



## Start of Alpha Course

We are planning to start the Alpha Course starting on Monday 5th February 2024 and it will be held in the lounge. It will thus take over from Away Group (but weekly). Further details will be given in notices.

**Tony Wragg**

## **Wonford Welcome Drop-In for Everyone - Saturdays 10.30am to 12.30pm** (optional warm light lunch at 12.00pm - cost 50p)

In February we will be having the following activities for you to join if you would like alongside the free cuppa & biscuits:

**3rd February** - you can share your favourite music and then test your music knowledge with our quiz!

**10th February** - we will have a 2 course community meal together (instead of the snack lunch)

**17th February** - we'll be sharing some ideas for Lent and Random Acts of Kindness activities

**24th February** - a chance to reconnect with you inner child for Tell a Fairy Tale day as we look back fondly at magical fairy tales

Wonford Welcome is open to all; everyone, whatever their age or beliefs, will receive a warm welcome! If you are able to spread the word, put up a poster or share it on social media please do. And if you haven't been along yet please do come and join us one Saturday!

**Alison, Helen, Lisa, Liz, Mandy, Monika, Paul & Rose and Sue K**

### **Monthly Prayer Meeting**

This will take place each month between 9 and 10am on the same morning as Roundabout Café. For February this will be the 20th.

**Lisa Thomas**

### **Notification of Church Council Meeting**

Our next Church Council is on Tuesday 27 February at 7.30pm. Any one is welcome to attend but only CC members are able to vote.

At this meeting we agree our Annual Appointments. Usually our CC Appointments are for 6 years, however, David has been our Treasurer since 2008 and would be happy if someone felt able to take this on, similarly Alison has been secretary since 2016 and would also be happy to pass this onto someone. Please speak to David or Alison or a steward if you would like to know more. If no-one comes forward CC will hold a separate vote to agree for them to continue.

**Please send apologies to Alison Howell.**

# **Spring Preaching Series 2024**

## **Adventures of the Early Church: A Journey through Acts**

### **Feb 4 Acts 3 vv1-29**

A blind beggar healed and the escape from prison. *Monika Noronha AA*

### **Feb 11 Acts 5 vv1-11**

Ananias and Sapphira *Rev Ben Haslam*

### **Feb 18 Acts 7 vv2-8, 54-8.1**

The Martyrdom of Stephen. *Rev Paul Smith*

### **Feb 25 Acts 8**

The Ethiopian Eunuch. *Rev Terry Spencer*

### **Mar 3 Acts 9 vv1-19**

Paul's Conversion; Road to Damascus. *Caroline Colin AA*

### **Mar 10 Acts 10**

Peter meets Cornelius; Changed perspective. *Rev Ben Haslam*

## **Easter**

### **Apr 7 Acts 11 vv13-19**

The Church in Antioch *Dr Jon Curtis*

### **Apr 14 Acts 16**

The man of Macedonia/into Europe; and Lydia. *Rev Ben Haslam*

### **Apr 21 Acts 17 vv16-33**

Paul in Athens. *Dr Joan Wragg*

### **Apr 28 Acts 28 vv11-28**

Onward to Rome *Prof Tony Wragg*

## **Trees of the Bible**

Biblical trees hold significant meaning, symbolism, and beauty. Trees in Christian spirituality represent more than growth and specific parables; they act as a reminder to Christians of God's creation, love, and kindness. God is the omnipotent creator of all things — trees included. He provided trees for humans to sustain themselves with the fruits, seeds, shelter, fire and beauty.

Over 36 types of trees are named in the bible. Many of them were quite significant.

- King Solomon imported Cedars from Lebanon to build a temple (1 Kings 5 v 6-10)

- Deborah sat under the Palm of Deborah to judge (Judges 4 v 4)
- Elijah sat down under a Broom Tree and was touched by an angel (1 Kings 19 v 4-5)
- Zacchaeus climbed a Sycamore Tree so he could see Jesus (Luke 19 v 4)
- King Saul had his headquarters under a Pomegranate Tree in Migron (1 Samuel 14 v 2)
- The Lord cursed a Fig Tree which made it shrivel (Matthew 21:19-22)
- Noah used Gopher wood to make the Ark (Genesis 6 v 14)
- Jacob peeled tree shoots from Poplar, Almond and Fig trees to place in front of Laban's sheep so they would be speckled, streaked or spotted and would therefore become Jacobs (Genesis 30 v37-43)

Throughout the Bible, trees symbolise different themes and meanings.

### **Olive Tree**

Olive trees carry favour throughout the Bible and remain a long-standing symbol of peace, harmony, prosperity, and covenants between two parties. In the Old Testament, a dove brings Noah an olive branch after the Great Flood to signify the earth was ready to grow new life again. As a plant, the olive tree takes patience to grow and thrive — an allegory for our relationship with God. Don't forget, even Jesus prayed under a garden of olive trees to talk to God the night before he was crucified.

### **Cedar Tree**

Cedarwood possesses a pleasant aroma and remains pretty resistant to bugs or decay. The Bible specifically calls out the "Cedars of Lebanon" as stately, slow-growing, and steadfast trees to which good Christians should compare themselves. The Cedars of Lebanon, however, are a sobering reminder to believers that every good and pure thing comes from God — and if taken for granted, judgment will come.

### **Oak Tree**

Have you ever been called an "oak of righteousness?" Throughout the Old and New Testaments, oak trees symbolise stability and strength, like when describing King Solomon's rule or the righteousness of Job.

### **Grapevine**

The grapevine, or just a vine, carried the significance of Israel's relationship with God. Not only Israel, but all believers in God. Jesus makes the metaphor in the New Testament that he himself is the vine, and the only way to Heaven is through belief in him, specifically saying, "I am the true

grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more."

### **Palm Tree**

Palms and palm trees are closely associated with Jesus' exuberant entrance into Jerusalem. They also carry another significance: the fronds used in Christian Palm Sunday celebrations are burned to create the ash for Ash Wednesday.

### **Sycamore Tree**

In the New Testament, Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus preach amid a large crowd of people. At the time, it was considered embarrassing for a grown man to climb a tree — but Zacchaeus abandoned his pride in the hopes of seeing Jesus..

### **Fig Tree**

Fig trees have deep meanings in the Bible and range from symbolizing Israel itself to security or inner peace. Again and again, figs find mention in the Old and New Testaments as symbols of safety, bountiful families, and decadence. Furthermore, a fig tree is one of the only types of trees explicitly mentioned in the Garden of Eden.

### **Acacia Tree**

Did you know that acacia wood is one of the only hardwood trees growing in the Middle East and Israel? As a strong wood built for construction, it's no wonder the Bible mentions acacia wood and trees in the same context as the Ark of the Covenant and Tabernacles. Acacia wood was used to build the holy Tabernacle of Moses and was so strong, it was allegedly in use for 400 years after its creation.

### **Dogwood Tree**

Scholars and Biblical students believe the cross on which Jesus was crucified was built from dogwood. As such, it is said that God both blessed and cursed the dogwood tree. The "Legend of the Dogwood Tree" persists both in and out of Christian theology, mystifying other religious followers, gardeners, and more.

### **Pomegranate Tree**

Rich in seeds, colour, and flavour, the pomegranate tree specifically illustrates themes of prosperity and wealth in the Old Testament books

Numbers and Deuteronomy. Tangentially related to Christian theology, some Jewish Traditions think that pomegranates were chosen to colour the robes of priests and as temple decorations because they have 613 seeds — just as the Torah has 613 laws to follow.

**Alison Howell**

## **How Will 2024 End?**

The acclaimed film ‘The Third Man’ ends with Anna walking along a cemetery path towards the exit gate, where an American writer, Martins, (played by Joseph Cotton) is waiting for her. He expects Anna to come to him, so they can develop their new-found relationship, but at the last minute, Carol Reed the brilliant Director changes the script, and directs Anna to keep walking past Cotton and out into the street alone. Even Cotton was surprised at the ending!

Virginia Laparra was an anti-corruption lawyer in Guatemala, who successfully broke up several criminal networks, arresting dozens of politicians who had previously been considered untouchable. Sadly over a year ago, Virginia herself was arrested and is in a tiny prison cell 23 hours a day. Amnesty International is striving with all its might for her release and bring an end to her nightmare, and a restoration of justice. Where will it end?

The Leprosy Mission too keeps on trying to end this cursed disease. Every two minutes someone is diagnosed with leprosy! When one sufferer uncovered her blistered hands she said, “Now I can’t feel anything on my hands. I burn myself whenever I cook.” It’s an uphill climb, but leprosy is a curable disease. What will the coming 12 months achieve?

Likewise, how much easier will it be in 2024 for many more people to pay their rent or mortgage, and not struggle to afford climbing food prices? Will fewer householders experience ‘no-fault’ evictions? And where will the Church be at the close of 2024? Will we have caught a fresh vision for sharing the love of Christ with more people, or will many more Churches have to close?

Can there possibly be a good ending to the wasteland hell in Gaza, where millions are cowering without food or shelter in a bombed graveyard? Will Israelis come to realise that the Palestinian people deserve to be an independent State, and abolish their evil apartheid? What will that ending be?

St Paul, banished to prison yet again, must have wondered what the future held for the young Christian Church, but then he fervently wrote, “I know in whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard what He



has entrusted to me.” Centuries before, when the Jews had seen their Temple systematically destroyed, Zechariah encouraged the downcast Jews with God’s words, “If you live the way I tell you, and remain obedient in my service, everyone will get along with one another, with friendly visits on one another’s porches.”

LOVE, not hate is still our supreme weapon for life’s journey. May God’s love flood the world in 2024! Blessed New Year!

**Rev Malcolm Carter**

## **Prayer Focus for February**

### **Week Commencing Sunday 4th February**

The Lord delights in those who fear him,  
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

*Psalms 147:11*

Energy prices continue to rise. Our Saturday Wonford Welcome sessions continue to provide a weekly warm space, along with a warm lunchtime snack and a monthly two course meal. Please pray for all the volunteers who make this happen and for all who come, that they may be blessed.

### **Week Commencing Sunday 11th February - Racial Justice Sunday**

The heavens proclaim his righteousness,  
for he is a God of justice.

*Psalms 50:6*

Merciful God,  
you are righteous and love justice:  
stir the hearts of your people that,  
rejoicing in our diversity,  
we may repent of the wrongs of the past,  
and, by your grace, seek the peaceable kingdom of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

<https://www.churchofengland.org>

## **Week Commencing Sunday 18th February - Student Sunday**

Show me your ways, Lord. Teach me your paths.  
*Psalm 25:4*

We pray for the thousands of students who call Exeter 'home' during the academic year. May they feel welcome here. Grant them health and strength as they live alongside us and continue their studies.

## **Week commencing Sunday 25th February**

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord,  
and all the families of the nations will bow down before him,  
for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations.  
*Psalm 22:27-28*

Pray for all the nations which are experiencing conflict. Be encouraged that God is in control.

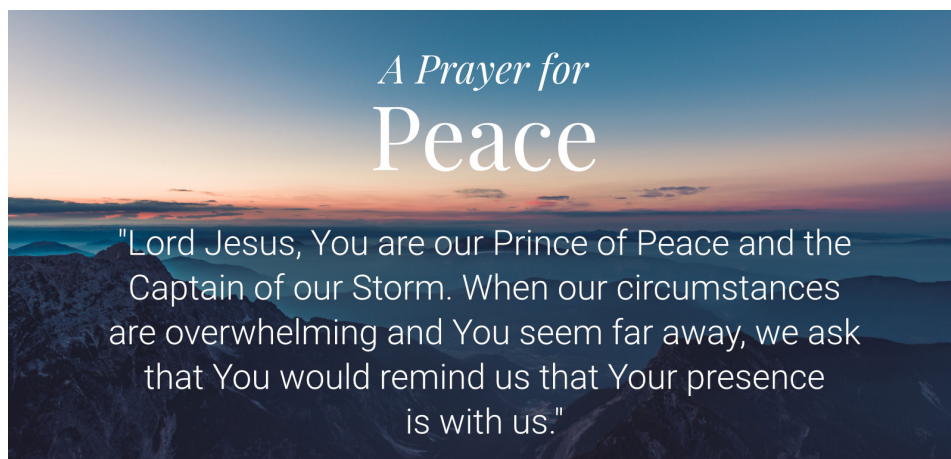
## **Our Prayer Phone Link**

Should you, or those you know, wish to be supported in prayer, the first contact is now Lisa Thomas (01392 273220). Your request will then be passed to members of the Prayer Link who will pray for your need. If the first contact is unavailable, please contact Rose Smith (01404 510853).

## **After Service Prayer Support**

This is available in the Quiet Room on Sunday mornings. Two members of the Prayer Team will be available to pray with you.

## **The Prayer Team**



# Dates For Your Diary

## February 2024

Fri 2nd	3.00 p.m.	Bible Study Group meet in the lounge **
Sat 3rd	10.30 a.m.	Wonford Welcome Drop-In (until 12.00 pm) **
Sun 4th	10.00 a.m.	All Age Worship with Monika Noronha Themed Preaching **
Mon 5th	7.30 p.m.	Start of Alpha Course in the lounge **
Tue 6th	7.30 p.m.	Leadership Team meeting in the hall
Sat 10th	10.30 a.m.	Wonford Welcome Drop-In (until 12.00 pm) *
Sun 11th	10.00 a.m.	Rev Ben Haslam Themed Preaching and Sacrament **
Mon 12th	7.30 p.m.	Alpha Course in the lounge
Fri 16th	3.00 p.m.	Bible Study Group meet in the lounge **
Sat 17th	10.30 a.m.	Wonford Welcome Drop-In (until 12.00 pm) **
Sun 18th	10.00 a.m.	Rev Paul Smith - Themed Preaching **
Mon 19th	7.30 p.m.	Alpha Course in the lounge
Tue 20th	9.00 a.m.	Monthly Prayer Meeting (until 10am) **
	10.00 a.m.	Roundabout Café (until 12pm) **
Sat 24th	10.30 a.m.	Wonford Welcome Drop-In (until 12.00 pm) **
Sun 25th	10.00 a.m.	Rev Terry Spencer - Themed Preaching **
Mon 26th	7.30 p.m.	Alpha Course in the lounge
Tue 27th	7.30 p.m.	Church Council meeting in the hall **

**\*\* Details in this newsletter or on the notice board in the hall.**



The deadline for items for the March 2024 Newsletter will be Sunday 11th February 2024. There is no guarantee of inclusion, but they may be given to:

Andrew Jackson - 19 Hills Orchard, Martock, Somerset. TA12 6DF.

**Tel: 01935 826072 or e-mailed to [andrew.m.jackson@me.com](mailto:andrew.m.jackson@me.com)**

# **Weekly Activities**

## **Sunday**

10.00 a.m. Morning Service and Young Church  
*(1st Sunday in each month is All-Age Worship)*

6.30 p.m. Evening Service *(not every week)*

## **Monday**

7.30 p.m. The Away Group meets *(Fortnightly)*

## **Tuesday**

9.00 a.m. Monthly Prayer Meeting *(3rd Tuesday)*

10.00 a.m. The Roundabout Café *(3rd Tuesday)*

## **Wednesday**

## **Thursday**

## **Friday**

9.30 a.m. Friday Toddlers Group **\*A\***

3.00 p.m. Fortnightly Bible Group in the Church Lounge

## **Saturday**

10.30 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.

Wonford Welcome Drop-In

Tea, coffee and biscuits are free.

( **\*A\*** = No meeting during school holiday)