

Wonford Methodist Church

Contact Newsletter

May 2022

(No: 509)



Minister: Rev Ben Haslam (01392 256716)



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A Message From The Minister

Dear Friends,

When I was a lay worker, I remember helping to set up a Messy Church group. After a few sessions, it was beginning to be successful, when, one Saturday, during the concluding story, one irate father gave an indignant snort, grabbed his child's hand, and stormed out. Why? Because I had mentioned the name of Jesus. Despite being called 'Messy Church', this person was clearly surprised that there should be some religious element to the session.... This incident led to a panicked discussion as to whether we should leave out the Bible story, or call it something other than 'Messy Church'. We decided, in the end, against both of these things. One person's disgruntlement was a mere distraction, that was all. It was no reason to lose our focus and prevent those families from hearing the vital message of the gospel. How they chose to respond to that message was entirely up to them. Our only job was to be the messenger, and nothing, we realised, should prevent us from doing so.

Nehemiah, who as we have seen, was used to opposition, and to hostile elements trying every trick they could think of to prevent Nehemiah from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. None succeeded, owing to Nehemiah's firmness of purpose and clarity of vision. You could spend hours exploring all the biblical texts which encourage perseverance, steadfastness, and the vital necessity of holding on to the truths which God has revealed to us, knowing that the wider world will not always be receptive. Twas ever thus. The Cross, Paul tells us, 'is foolishness to those who are perishing' (1 Corinthians 1:18). There will always be the temptation to water down the gospel, to repackage it so that it is essentially a message about justice, equality, fairness etc. It isn't. It is a clarion call to a lost world, and the only hope for humanity. If the gospel we talk about is anything less than this, we are short-changing the world.

Sanballat tries threats, and then deception to deflect Nehemiah and his workers from their task. Given the scale of Nehemiah's task, such pressures must have felt almost overwhelming at times. The fact that Nehemiah does not succumb, must, I'm certain, come from the strength which only God can provide when His people keep their eyes on him. Churches have an absolute imperative to make the gospel known. They must never never never allow any distraction, any pressure from outside, any ridicule or derision, to water down that gospel, or settle for being a pleasant social

club. Never. We must never allow ourselves to be blown off course from what God has called us to do. Not under any circumstances. At all.

With every blessing
Ben Haslam

Dates For May 2022

Coffee

1st	Melanie
8th	Terry L & Margaret D
15th	Elaine & Graham
22nd	Rose & Paul
29th	Linda & Mervyn



Bible Study Group

This group *usually* meets once a fortnight in the Church of an afternoon from 3pm to 4.30pm. Newcomers will be very welcome to join us. The fortnightly dates for May are Friday 13th and 27th. Sunday Church Notices will remind you and everyone will be welcome!

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. They will be listening to recordings of the Rev Paul Smith's talks on 1 John from the MET Conference.

Saturday Morning Fellowship (10.30 am – 12.00 pm)

Over the past few weeks we have enjoyed spending time together over a cuppa and having some fun joining in various activities. We have been heartened to see 'old' friends back in church again as well as welcoming some new people and getting to know more about each other.

We have had a few more photo entries for our Wonford Methodist Church calendar competition but welcome more so please do keep snapping photos and send us any good ones that show God's Love.

Each week we continue to provide a quiet corner for reflection and prayer, as well as something to colour or create and a 'conversation starter' or table game on the tables. In April we had a go at table football and pool, enjoyed

an Easter numbers quiz, a quiet time of reflection on Holy Saturday and a bit of a plant/seed swap along with a bird quiz.

Coming up in May we have a celebration of Africa Day when we share some authentic food and lively music. We will have another gentle 'Mind, Spirit & Flow' session (back by popular demand) and our monthly games competition, although we notice that there tends to be more fun and laughter than serious competition!

We will also start to prepare for our Queen's Jubilee cream tea celebration (4th June) by making colourful bunting to hopefully hang outside the church (or inside if raining) so please let us know if you have any suitable pieces of colourful material in pastel shades that you can donate to be made in to bunting.

Everyone is welcome to join us and if you would like to help in any way, or have suggestions of things we can do, then please speak with one of us.

PLEASE NOTE - there will be no Saturday Morning Fellowship on the 14th May 2022 due to an existing booking for the hall for an all day event - see diary at end.

Mandy, Liz, Rose, Rev Ben and Sue K

Roundabout Café

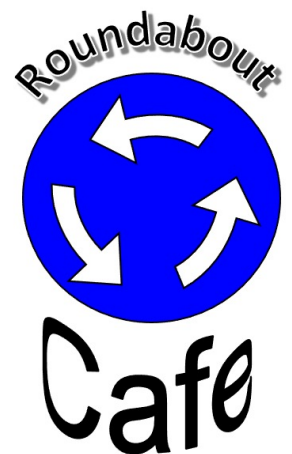
The Roundabout Café will meet on Tuesday 17th May when we will have a talk by Hillary Bush on

The YMCA in Exeter

We meet from 10.00am until noon with coffee and nice things to eat. Everyone is welcome.

Green Team Article

The Green Team is very pleased to welcome Liz Simonetti joining us. She has already been helping water our "garden" areas alongside Sue K and Alison Howell, who have been planting and transplanting all of it so well. I'm sure you have noticed the changes. My thanks to them all; and we all look forward to new tarmac throughout the car-park soon.



Most of you will be well aware of our links to the Eco-Church, and how we completed their very long set of questions with answers which meant we were awarded a Bronze award by them in 2019. Recently we tried again to "up" that to a Silver award but, despite "green" improvements in all we do at Wonford MC, we are sadly not there yet. To change our supplier of gas and electricity to one of the more ethical companies like Ecotricity would help. Do you agree with me that these monthly items encourage us all - as individuals - to take more small steps towards caring for God's wonderful world?

But, I am very aware that I am still falling short time and again. When I re-read Sue Keatt's on "Sustainability" in our April newsletter, or listen to Lucy Mottram, the speaker on Tuesday 19th April's Roundabout Cafe on how Devon County works hard at all the better ways of Recycling - even things that are considered 'waste' - I begin to see much more I should be doing to help save God's wonderful world.

From the 4th - 12th June this year the Eco Church is encouraging churches to do a "Count on Nature", looking at all aspects of the land surrounding the church buildings. Now, you may feel we have nothing but tarmac!! But you'd be wrong. Over this last year we have tried hard to improve every bit of cultivatable soil; and, I think our gardeners have improved it greatly. There is even the hope of a "Bug Hotel" coming soon. So, do keep looking!

Margretta Bowstead

Green Team (Alison Hobbs, Alison Howell, Helen Moore, Margretta Bowstead, Martin Lloyd, Sue Keatt)

Prayer Focus for May

Prayer – Our Strongest Weapon – Pray Without Ceasing

Week Commencing Sunday 1st May

In you O Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame.

Deliver me in your righteousness.

Psalm 31:1

Please pray about the war in Ukraine, the war in Yemen and all the other conflicts in our world which are ongoing.

Pray for PROTECTION for all who are in dangerous situations.

Week Commencing Sunday 8th May

Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue;
be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.

Psalm 31:2

Pray for the PEOPLE who have been displaced in these conflicts. May they find safe places to rebuild their lives. Pray for the Ukrainian refugees already arriving in our city. May they find a loving welcome among us.

Week Commencing Sunday 15th May

But I trust in you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my God."
My times are in your hands;
Deliver me from my enemies
And from those who pursue me.

Psalm 31:14-15

Pray for the POWERS that be. We pray for the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky. Give him wisdom and courage to persevere on behalf of his people. We pray for the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. Turn his heart to do right, to talking instead of fighting.

Week Commencing Sunday 22nd May

In the shelter of your presence you hide them from human plots;
you hold them safe under your shelter from contentious tongues.

Psalm 31:20

Pray for all the PLACES where there is war, conflict and disruption. We pray for countries, homes, families and relationships. May people find resolution and solutions to difficult situations. May the love of Jesus come to all these places. Help me to take the love of Jesus everywhere I go.

Week Commencing Sunday 29th May

Praise be to the Lord, for he showed his wonderful love to me when I was in a besieged city.

In my alarm I said, "I am cut off from your sight!"
Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help.

Psalm 31:22

We pray for PEACE. May the peace of God reign in our world and in each of our hearts to the glory of our Lord and Saviour. Amen

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) or Margretta Bowstead (01392 437329).

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

Zimbabwe: A Story of Defiant Hope

This is part of an article given to me by Margretta Bowstead and written by Rev Graham Shaw (who some of you may know) who is Chair of Trustees of the 'Zimbabwe Victims Support Fund'.

I was privileged to visit Zimbabwe in March and to spend the best part of two weeks engaging with our ZVSF team in Bulawayo in conversation, some limited travel and prayer. I also had the opportunity for some helpful conversations with a few experienced professionals in the field of sustainable self-help projects. The seasonal rainfall proved erratic this year with the result that the key crops, including maize, are stunted. The maize harvest will be small and some farmers may have nothing to show for all their hard work. I noticed that some hungry people were eating the small, green cobs.

Poverty, hunger and desperation

The situation on the ground can only be described as one of widespread and increasing poverty, hunger and desperation. Though this should not have come as any surprise to me, I have to say I was shocked by the squalor and desperate need I observed. Symptomatic of this malaise the roads are full of potholes, flagstones are missing from the pavement and the shops stand empty while traders have taken to selling their wares out on the streets. Rotting rubbish is piled high in the alleys. Power cuts are endemic and residents now store water in every available container because the taps are so often dry. A corrupt and dysfunctional government is failing to meet the basic needs of the people, and the deeper tragedy is that this should

think there is little to celebrate in Zimbabwe today. I suspect that not all the members of our team – and certainly not many of those whom they serve – enjoy the blessing of a regular breakfast, or any other regular meal. Nevertheless it was a celebration – registering a defiant hope against all that diminishes and destroys human flourishing within a beautiful land and among a beautiful people. Despite every obstacle, and against all the forces ranged against it, the Kingdom of God advances steadily.



A Model Garden

If I had deliberately set out to find one sign of real hope amid all the immense challenges of daily living I could hardly have done better than to visit, as I did with Di Charsley our team leader, the horticultural garden alongside the Ekuphumuleni Care Home in one of Bulawayo's high density townships. We were met by Yvonne Berkhout who was responsible for setting up the garden and who now monitors and supervises the project. She kindly showed us around and explained how it had all come about. It was beautifully laid out and obviously tended with great care by those of the unemployed from the community who had been selected for the three month training course in horticulture. We saw row upon row of different vegetables and learnt that 28 different varieties had been introduced to the garden. Drip irrigation was available, fed by a borehole which was powered by solar power. The produce not only supplies the adjoining Care Home with vegetables the year round but provides the trainees with the means to support their families. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has approved the project and issues certificates of competence to trainees who complete the course. The project is lauded by the local community leaders and proudly "owned" by the whole community. In short it is a life-changer for all involved and a huge benefit to the community. Moved by what we had seen, an interview was set up for me with the National Development Officer of the Zimbabwe Development Democracy Trust (ZDDT) responsible for the funding and oversight of the project at

Ekuphumuleni and others like it. Our Bulawayo team and the Trustees have long sought a viable self-help, training project which we feel able to commend to you, our faithful supporters. Yet we have learnt that, as a relatively small Charity and without the relevant professional expertise, our options are limited. However what we could not hope to achieve by ourselves might well become possible working in partnership with an experienced player who shares our long-term objectives. And this possibility, I believe, has arisen in the form of an invitation to explore the prospects of working in partnership with ZDDT and with their funding partners in Australia.

That is all I can say at this stage pending further conversations with our Bulawayo partners and all those involved. But this I will say following the initial contacts, that I am very hopeful that we are close to starting, with some justifiable confidence, on a long-term self-help project to put alongside the relief feeding programme we have funded over many years.

If proof was required that there is still a need for the relief feeding it was provided, brutally, by a visit to Killarney. This is a community of some 120 families to the East of Bulawayo which has been within our feeding programme for many years. And it is a truly marginalised community of victims. Some of the residents have lived there a life-time yet, because they lack any proof of their legal title, they have frequently been raided and their homes destroyed by State security forces acting, it appears, on behalf of powerful interests seeking to clear the land for residential development. Moreover there are now ominous signs of another imminent land grab.



No Place to Call Home

Methodist Response to the Government's Plans to Offshore Asylum Seekers in Rwanda

The Government's plans to offshore asylum seekers in Rwanda gives yet another insight into its hostile, uncompassionate and ineffective response to asylum seekers and refugees.

People are not a problem to be dealt with, but are individuals with inherent value and dignity made in the image of God. Sending some of the most vulnerable people in the world thousands of miles away to be imprisoned does not respect this dignity.

The factors which push people out of their homes and into displacement will always be much stronger than those which motivate them to claim asylum in a certain place. As we have seen in Ukraine, conflict and persecution can become a daily reality at a distressingly rapid pace.

Whilst it is important to address the dangerous trade of people smuggling across the channel, the lack of safe and accessible routes by which people can claim asylum in the UK will ultimately contribute significantly to increased small boat crossings. The government have shied away from committing to a resettlement target, and the Nationality and Borders Bill lacks detail of new or expanded resettlement routes. Now, the government is passing the issue onto another country, which the UK has previously criticised for holding a poor record on human rights.

Offshore processing is a distraction from the real work which needs to be done to establish workable, safe and welcoming routes through which the UK can play its part in responding to need.

We urge the government to reconsider their approach, and accept proposed amendments to the Nationality and Borders Bill to uphold a practice of welcome.

The President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, The Revd Sonia Hicks and Barbara Easton

Dates For Your Diary

May 2022

Sun 1st	10.00 a.m.	All Age Worship with Caroline Colin
Sat 7th	10.30 a.m.	Saturday Morning Fellowship (until 12.00 pm) ** Plymouth & Exeter District / PED Synod meets at Tavistock
Sun 8th	10.00 a.m.	Rev Ben Haslam - Sacrament. Followed by the Annual Church Meeting
Fri 13th	3.00 p.m.	Bible Group meets in the lounge **
Sat 14th	10.30 a.m.	Saturday Morning Fellowship Cancelled **
	10.30 a.m.	Plymouth & Exeter District 'The Environment' Day at Wonford MC (bring your own lunch)
15th - 22nd May 2022 - Christian Aid Week		
Sun 15th	10.00 a.m.	Dr Jon Curtis
Tue 17th	10.00 a.m.	Roundabout Café (until 12pm)
Sat 21st	10.30 a.m.	Saturday Morning Fellowship (until 12.00 pm) **
Aldersgate Sunday		
Sun 22nd	10.00 a.m.	Dr Joan Wragg
Fri 27th	3.00 p.m.	Bible Group meets in the lounge **
Sat 28th	10.30 a.m.	Saturday Morning Fellowship (until 12.00 pm) **
Sun 29th	10.00 a.m.	Rev Andrew Sails

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



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

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

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

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

- 3.00 p.m. Bible Group at the Church *(Twice a Month)*

Saturday

- 10.30 a.m. Saturday Fellowship Meeting

To be sure these take place see Dates to Note or the Notice Board
(***A*** = No meeting during school holiday)

The deadline for items for the June 2022 Newsletter will be Sunday 15th May 2022. There is no guarantee of inclusion, but they may be given to:

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Tel: 01935 826072 or e-mailed to andrew.m.jackson@me.com