



The
United
Reformed
Church

Tavistock U.R.C.

Russell Street, Tavistock PL19 8BD

Founded 1652

Loving God,

Encouraging Questions, Welcoming all.

CONTACT

Minister: Revd Robert Weston Tel: 01566 784990

Church Secretary: Mike Dennis Tel: 01822 618142

Administrator: Maureen Tulloch Tel: 01579 208519

Synod website: www.urcsouthwest.org.uk

Church Website: www.tavistockurc.org.uk

December 2024

Our Church is open for worship on Sundays at 10.30am.

The Service of Worship will be emailed or posted to those who want it.

1st December
8th December
15th December
22nd December
25th December
29th December

Led by Revd Elizabeth Kemp with Holy Communion
Led by Revd Rob Weston
Led by Mrs Suzy Weston
Carol Service led by Mrs Jenny Dennis and all
Christmas Day service led by Revd Elizabeth Kemp
No Service.

May your Christmas
be filled with hope,
peace, joy and love!



Dates for Your Diary:

Friday 29th November – Sunday 8th December St Eustachius' Christmas Tree Festival

Sunday 8th December Advent Lunch after the service

Friday 13th December 7pm Thames Valley Male Voice Choir Concert in our Church

Wednesday 25th December TaviHelp Christmas Lunch in our Church

Church meetings: 26th January 2025; 16th March 2025 AGM

Elders' meetings: 23rd February 2025; 13th April 2025

Letter from our Minister

Dear Friends

This Advent we are exploring the four themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. We will be looking at one of these topics each Sunday and adding appropriate decorations to our Christmas tree. Hope, peace, joy and love are essential elements to our faith and to our lives. There are many challenges that we face in our lives and we see others across the globe facing many more challenges; in the face of which we need hope, peace, joy and love.

When we recall the story of Jesus being born in Bethlehem, we often note that the nativity story has become sanitised and the darker elements of imperial occupation and the threat of the Roman Empire are brushed to one side. The reality is that life is so precious and precarious for all of us, it always has been and continues to be.

So as we celebrate the gifts of hope, peace, joy and love may we receive them as a gift from one another. In return may we bless one another with these very same gifts. Once again, the old adage about giving and receiving is very pertinent, 'it is in giving that we receive.'

At this time of year, we often look back at all that has occurred in the past twelve months. As a church fellowship we have been saddened by the loss of dear friends including Brian Mico, Len Woodland and Revd Phyllis Ball. We have rejoiced with the appointment of Bob Stride as an Elder. We have made progress with the full refurbishment of the pipe organ which is over 100 years old. We have a beautiful new kitchen area installed in the vestry. Not to mention the thousands of plates of delicious food served at Lower Deck Cafe throughout the year!

We have supported many different charities including Amigos (a charity working with farmers in Uganda), Medical Aid to Palestine, The Fisherman's Mission, Crisis (the homelessness charity), Red Cross Ukrainian Appeal, Tavistock's Catalyst Youth Project. We continue to provide regular community support, offering affordable meeting space for a wide range of community groups. It has been a busy year and we are grateful to all who give of their time and talents to ensure the hope, peace, joy and love of God are shared day-by-day and week-by-week.

God bless you and all those whom you love during the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

Rob Weston
Minister

Eco Church News

Here are some eco friendly ideas for the Christmas season:

1. Make your own Christmas presents:

How about getting crafty? Christmas is a time for giving and sharing, why not embrace the strong tradition of rural crafting and make your own gifts? A crafted gift is more personal, fun and kind on the environment. Nature will thank you!

2. Plant a tree: Trees add beauty and character to our countryside, help us fight climate change, and provide a home for wildlife. If you have no space in your garden, there are 'plant a tree' schemes (see Woodland Trust).

3. Use fabric, brown paper or recyclable paper for gift wrapping

Millions of rolls of wrapping paper will be binned over Christmas and much of it cannot be recycled. Look on the label and check if the paper you buy is 'recyclable'. Or use plain brown paper, fabric, or even a scarf, to wrap your gifts.

4. Look after wildlife this Christmas

Resist the urge to sweep away all the leaves and other debris from your garden as many small mammals use them to keep warm. Set up a bird table: sunflower seeds, peanuts, bird feed are all good for our garden birds to keep them warm during the long nights (see Devon Wildlife Trust).

5. Buy local this Christmas

Buying the ingredients for your Christmas lunch from a local farmers' market is a great way to reduce our carbon footprint. You'll be supporting local farmers, cutting the distance your food has travelled, and supporting your local countryside.

Robert Weston, Green Apostle South Western Synod

Warm Welcome

With the changes to winter fuel allowance there will be people worried about heating costs this winter. So we will continue to advertise our Lower Deck Cafe as a 'Warm Welcome' space. This is part of a nationwide movement of churches and community buildings that are opening up to welcome people.

The Libraries across Devon are also advertising their usual opening hours as ideal times to pop in and keep warm. Our Tavistock Library is indeed a wonderful resource for the town and I know many of you are familiar with all that is on offer.

Rob Weston

Premises news

Storm Bert caused widespread damage and flooding across the United Kingdom at the end of November. Thankfully we did not suffer flooding, but sadly we did have a small number of tiles dislodged and broken by the winds. We thank Hugh for making the arrangements with the contractors to have the roof repaired, on both sides of the building.

Back in September the guttering along the edge of the boiler house was damaged by a Tesco delivery van, this work will be covered by the Tesco insurance. We have already had a letter from Tesco accepting responsibility for this repair.

The work on the organ continues to progress, Michael Farley and his team are now preparing the organ for its return. Currently, the organ is expected to be back in place before Easter.

Following the audit by Tavistock Dementia Alliance, we will be installing some more dementia friendly signs around the building, both in church and in the Lower Deck Hall.

The four floodlights in the church gallery require some attention by a qualified electrician, it is possible that they need to be updated with an LED equivalent. The Elders have agreed that this

work should be scheduled for 2025.

Rob

Lower Deck Cafe

Well done to all the volunteers who serve in the cafe each Friday, we continue to serve 80-100 plates of food each week. There is a need to recruit new volunteers in 2025, when some of our long-term volunteers retire from their roles. If you know anyone who might be interested and suitable for the cafe team, please let Jo know. We are grateful for all the new volunteers who have joined this year, each of whom has been a real blessing. Let us pray that this important part of our mission continues to flourish.

Rob

Christmas Tree Festival

Don't forget to visit this year's St Eustachius' Christmas Tree Festival which runs from 29th November until 8th December. We are grateful to all those who have made **Jesse Tree** decorations which you can see on our tree. (See also the article from Rev Elizabeth Kemp on the last page). We thank Anne Snook and Elizabeth Kemp for decorating the tree this year. We will be saving the hand-made decorations for future use, as they are all so colourful.

Rob

Eco News: Emissions-saving heat network for Plymouth

Plymouth has been selected as one of a handful of cities for the government's Heat Network Zoning Pilot. With the council already planning the project's first phase, local homes and businesses could be among the first in the country to benefit from this innovative new system, which could reduce Plymouth's carbon emissions by up to 5%.

Heat networks function by using a central source of heat that is then distributed to consumers via a network of underground pipes that carry hot water. As a result, buildings are warmed using a city-wide, central heating system as opposed to costly and fuel-heavy individual boilers and heaters.

Plymouth Churches Green Action

From **Jacki Palmer**, TACT

Alone at Christmas?

"TaviHelps" Christmas lunch at the URC: Local Charity "TaviHelps" has asked Tavistock Area Christians Together to help publicise the Christmas lunch that they are hosting at the URC once again this year. Do you know someone who could be alone this Christmas and may like to share Christmas Day with others? TaviHelps warmly invites them to a Traditional Christmas turkey dinner with fun, friendship and music! Volunteers will happily pick up before 11.30 and take people home at around 2.30 There is no charge, but places are limited, so it is really important to book in advance. Please contact Judy Hirst of TaviHelps either by email: info@tavihelps.co.uk or by phone 07894 538131.

From **Maureen Tulloch**

News of Pip:

Pip is doing really well but her daughter thinks she won't be going back home. She is settled and happy at Camplehaye so they will have to look at selling her flat in the New Year.

From **Ray Hinton**, Tamar Valley Male Voice Choir,

Tamar Valley Male Voice Choir are holding a concert in Tavistock URC on the 13th December from 7pm. Please contact me on rayhintonsaddles@hotmail.com if you would like tickets.

From Jenny Dennis:

My Life Story.

I was born in Hereford, the eldest of 5 children. During my childhood we moved several times as my father progressed from a Child Health Clinic Doctor in Sheffield and Southport to Deputy Medical Officer of Health in Oxfordshire and finally East Sussex Medical Officer of Health where we lived in Lewes.

I was brought up in the Brethren Church. Sunday was spent at church in the morning followed by Girl Crusaders in the afternoon and when we were in our teens we were expected to attend evening worship as well. No playing cards or watching tv on a Sunday. Only essential housework and cooking was done. Very different from today!

One memory I have of my time living in Long Hanborough, Oxfordshire was the very snowy morning of 30th January 1965 . We wrapped up warm and donned our wellington boots to walk up to the railway station with my Dad. In chugged the steam train bearing the coffin of Winston Churchill. There was quite a crowd there but it seemed such a solemn occasion. He was later buried in the churchyard of our neighbouring village, Bladon.

It was in that village that I continued my piano lessons which I had just started in Southport but had not progressed very far. My new teacher, Mrs Mansell, started me from scratch. I remember she told me that the house we were living in was previously owned by CS Lewis and that her daughter went to the nursery there that CS Lewis's wife ran. There is nothing documented about this but it was a good story!

I left school when I was 17 with enough O'levels to gain a place at Brighton School of Nursing and completed the course to be a State Registered Nurse. I had plans to move away to Sheffield and do midwifery training but that was scuppered when Mike Dennis appeared on the scene! We met at the youth club run at the Christian Alliance Club in Lewes where I had been helping on my free Friday evenings and Mike had been introduced to it by a work colleague of his who also helped. He was able to give me a lift back to Brighton as he was living in digs there. We were engaged in Nov 1974 and married in the local Baptist Church in September 1975.

Our first home was a Victorian terraced house in Brighton and I continued to work part time as a staff nurse at Brighton General Hospital until our first son arrived in December 1977. Childcare was very limited then so I opted to be a stay at home mum and brought up our three children, registering as a childminder following the birth of our daughter in 1985. It was during this time that I was headhunted by the head mistress of the Infant school to work with an autistic child. I stayed with him moving up into the Junior School. After he had moved on I was given a permanent contract working with the "difficult children" which I did for eighteen years retiring in April 2008. During that time I qualified as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant.

We were members of the Methodist Church in Brighton and I held roles as Cradle Roll Secretary and Junior Mission for All (JMA) both local church and circuit. In our final Methodist Church in Brighton I sang in the singing group which latterly I ended up running! One of the members there ran an art group which I joined and with encouragement my art work gradually improved. I also became part of the leadership team in the church as a vestry steward.

We moved down to Tavistock after Mike retired fully at Easter 2009. We chose Tavistock because we needed to be nearer Mike's parents in Penzance and because his younger brother was diagnosed with frontal lobe dementia and needed some support. Moving to Tavistock opened up opportunities for voluntary work. I was part of the pilot scheme for Befrienders with TASS. Befriending took up an afternoon a week for over ten years. More recently I have been a regular helper at the Food Hub and Ukrainian Language Café both of which have come to a natural end. Art4Fun continues !

We continue to enjoy life in Tavistock and now two of our children have relocated to the west country so we have family around us as we embrace the future.

Sunday Morning Rota for December: (Please ensure that you swap with someone if you are unable to fulfil your duty)

Date	Preacher	Organist	Elder	Welcoming Steward	Reader	Refreshments
1 st December	Revd Elizabeth Kemp	Steve	Stella	Anne	Steve	Stella
8 th	Revd Rob Weston	Jenny	Bob	Jenny S	Mike	Maureen
15 th	Mrs Suzy Weston	Jenny	Sabrina	Stella	Stella	Anne
22 nd	Jenny Dennis/Carol Service	Steve	Anne	Pam D	Various	Peter & Pam
25 th Xmas Day	Revd Elizabeth Kemp	tba	Jo	Malcolm	Jo	None
29 th	NO SERVICE					

From **Bob Stride and Jenny Dennis:**

Mike was presented with a certificate on 24th November in recognition of 50 years since he was accredited as a Local Preacher. He has been preaching in both Methodist and URC churches.



There was a special cake after the service.....

*(Congratulations, Mike.
Well done!)*



From **Mike Dennis:**

Maybe you have got all your presents ready for Christmas. However if like me, you tend to wait until December before you think about such things and then wonder what to give, there are suggestions on the table at the back of the church. Various charities produce lists of alternative Christmas gifts by which you can remember a friend or relative and also support those overseas who are not so fortunate as we are. There are suggestions from Christian Aid, All We Can and Ripple Effect. Make someone's Christmas special.

From **Rev Elizabeth Kemp:**

A Jesse Tree for 2024

This Advent we are decorating our church Christmas tree (and our tree for the festival at St Eustatius) differently. Isaiah Ch11 v 1 : "A shoot shall come out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots". Jesse was King David's father.

Long before Britain became Christian (and that's way before Prince Albert encouraged greeting cards and Christmas decorations!) people were decorating trees in the winter, with pagan symbols. The Jesse Tree connects the pagan tree festival to Christ. The Jesse Tree illustrates Jesus' genealogy- tracing his lineage back to King David. Jesus' credentials were important to explain who his people were and where his authority came from. The symbols hanging on the Jesse Tree were traditionally added daily during Advent, telling the story from Creation through to Christ's birth.

During the Medieval era, religious art (and mystery plays) were popular ways for ordinary illiterate people to learn and share Bible Stories. Illustrations showing Jesus' lineage back to King David were popular subjects for murals and stained-glass windows. In one of the stained-glass windows of Chartres Cathedral there is a Jesse Tree featured- it dates from 1145. Jesse was portrayed reclining across the bottom of the picture and his ancestors such as Solomon and Mary grow out of him like branches.

As people became more familiar with the bible stories and characters, they began to craft their own symbols to decorate their homes each year so that at home as well as in church, they could share the story of God's faithfulness through the ages; people would hang fresh symbols in their homes each day during Advent rather as we might open the windows on an Advent Calendar. The tradition of making Jesse Trees to reflect on during Advent is popular in many Roman Catholic churches. Although we do not rely upon pictures to share Bible stories, looking at things in a different light can enrich our celebrations. We look to sharing our own Jesse Tree this Advent.

From **Suzy Weston:**

Advent Lunch, 8th December. Please will you either sign up on the sheet in the vestry or contact me, if you plan to come. We will be having Christmas themed casseroles and puddings.

From **Jenny Dennis:**

Do come to the Prayer and Stillness Group held at the St Eustachius Parish Centre on the second Monday each month at 2.30 pm. It is a time of music, short readings and shared silence followed by refreshments and fellowship and is affiliated to the Julian meetings network.

From **Maureen Tulloch:**

Please remember in your prayers the folk who are unable to attend worship anymore – Pip, Dorothy, John, Barry, Geoff and Garth. May God bless them all.

As a Gold Award Eco Church, we email out copies of our magazine and use recycled paper for our printed copies.

CONTACT items for January– please email them to me (maureen.tulloch@homecall.co.uk) by the 27th December. Many thanks.