



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Tavistock U.R.C.

Russell Street, Tavistock PL19 8BD

Founded 1652

Loving God,

Encouraging Questions, Welcoming all.

CONTACT

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Synod website: www.urcsouthwest.org.uk

Church Website: www.tavistockurc.org.uk

March 2025

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.

2 nd March	Service led by Revd David Downing with Holy Communion
9 th March	Service led by Mike Dennis
16 th March	Service led by Revd Rob Weston
23 rd March	Service led by Revd Elizabeth Kemp
30 th March	Service led by Noel Morgan

Yes, Shrove Tuesday is nearly upon us, marking the last day before the fasting period of Lent begins.

Shrove Tuesday is traditionally a day of feasting before the 40-day period of fasting leading up to Easter, and it's always observed the day before Ash Wednesday.



Dates for your Diary:

Tuesday 4th March 12noon Shrove Tuesday Pancakes at our church

Tuesday 4th March 7pm Talk on "Palestine: past, present and future" by Mike Gurney in our church

Wednesday 7th March 2pm World Day of Prayer service at the Catholic Church in Tavistock

Sunday 16th March Church AGM after the Service

Monday 31st March 7.30pm Midweek Topic - study of Mark's Gospel at Mike and Jenny's

Elders' meeting: 13th April 2025

Letter from our Minister

Dear Friends

This year Lent begins on 5th March and as I was looking for Lent resources I came across a Christian Aid six session course that may be of interest. It is something that you could complete on your own at home or with a small group of friends. The course is called 'Act on Poverty' and if you look on Session 1 you can find an inspiring video story from a URC member in Braunton, called Margaret Robinson. I've known Margaret for many years and I know that she has been instrumental in many events and actions by her church in North Devon. Margaret contacted her local MP and the Christian Aid team in London were able to follow up the local action.

Shrove Tuesday is the traditional feast day before the start of Lent. In the past, it was seen as the last opportunity to use up eggs and fats before the Lenten fast, which gave rise to the tradition of pancakes. In Tavistock we have developed a tradition of serving up pancakes with Fairtrade ingredients, giving the opportunity to raise the profile and importance of Fairtrade in our community whilst enjoying freshly cooked pancakes. Please join us on 4th March at midday if you are able.

In a world in which many people are rushing from one thing to the next, we need to be reminded 'Slow down, take your time and pause!' The contemplative dimension of life that Lent helps us to rediscover can release new energy. In the presence of God, we become brothers and sisters, more sensitive to one another: in place of threats and strangers, we can discover companions and fellow travellers.

At the end of February we marked the third anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine with a special ecumenical service at St Eustachius Church. As part of the service I led the 'Commitment for Peace' during which we prayed for peace and freedom for the people of Ukraine. At this time of global uncertainty, we pray for our sisters and brothers wherever there is conflict and division. As we journey through Lent, may we continue to work and pray for peace for all nations.

Every blessing,
Rob Weston

Premises News

The repairs to the roof slates on the church roof have now been completed and hopefully any future storms will not disturb the slates! Painting of the end wall of the church behind the organ is progressing well. We anticipate the installation of the refurbished organ will begin this month. Hugh has been busy identifying the items that are gathering dust and no longer required, especially in the gallery. These will be removed during the next few weeks. Our thanks to Hugh and all others who help care for our premises.

Nominations for Church Charities this year

At the January Church Meeting, everyone was asked to submit suggestions for this year's church charities. Please send your suggestions to our Church Secretary, Mike Dennis.

Stunning Snowdrops

On the first two Saturdays of February, Robert and Suzy were delighted to welcome friends from all over Devon for their two snowdrop planting days at their retreat centre, Tinhay Retreats in Lifton. This year a total of 38 people were involved, including a couple of car loads of people from Lavington. The snowdrops looked stunning along the lane and around the garden, with an extra 1500 planted. This year we raised £200 for Sands, a charity that works with people who have suffered the loss of a baby.

For more than 40 years, Sands has been supporting people affected by pregnancy and baby loss to offer understanding and comfort through its Freephone helpline, online community and resources, and locally through a UK-wide network of around 100 regional support groups. Sands works in partnership with health care professionals, trusts and health boards and offers a range of training programmes and bereavement care resources to ensure that every bereaved parent and family receives the best possible care wherever they are in the UK.

Many families will know the heartbreak of losing a baby through miscarriage, sadly it is much more common than we realise as many of us still find it hard to discuss this kind of tragedy. Thank you for all who came and all who supported our charity this year.

Rob

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.

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

Date	Preacher	Organist	Elder	Welcoming Steward	Reader	Refreshments
2 nd Mar	Revd David Downing	Steve	Mike	Stella	Steve	Stella
9 th Mar	Mike Dennis	Jenny	Bob	Elizabeth	Bob	Sabrina
16 th Mar	Revd Rob Weston	Jenny	Suzy	Jo	Suzy	Jo
23 rd Mar	Revd Elizabeth Kemp	Steve	Sabrina	Malcolm	Steve	Anne
30 th Mar	Noel Morgan	Jenny	Stella	Anne	Anne	Stella

From **Mike Dennis:**

There will be a talk by Mike Gurney, the treasurer of Exeter Palestine Solidarity Campaign, at the United Reformed Church, Russell Street, Tavistock, on Tuesday 4th March at 7 pm ; the title of the talk will be "Palestine: past, present and future". This will be hosted by Tavistock Peace Action Group. All are welcome.

From **Jenny Dennis:**

On Wednesday 7th March at 2pm the World Day of Prayer service will be held at the Catholic Church in Tavistock. This year the service has been prepared for us by the women of the Cook Islands and entitled " I made you wonderful". It is an opportunity to learn about life in the Cook Islands and join with other churches in praying together. Everyone is welcome to come.

From **Maureen Tulloch:**

Link To Hope:

A Christian Charity Rebuilding Lives & Communities in Eastern Europe through Education and Social Care.

Do read their Diary on the following link:-

[Shoebox Appeal Delivery Diary 2024 - Link To Hope](#)

The diary details some of the work they do, visiting very poor communities with the Christmas shoe boxes, and how difficult some people's lives are.

Please keep knitting squares for blankets, hats, gloves and/or scarves for them too. Collection will be at the end of October as normal. There is lots of wool in the church vestry cupboard (by the door to downstairs). Help yourself. Maybe the 4ply wool could be knitted double.

From **Mike Dennis:**

Celebrating our multicultural.

Tavistock Stand Up To Racism held their initial meeting at the URC last year. Since then discussions have led to consideration of a multicultural festival. However, they are currently looking at smaller events which are intended to celebrate diversity and challenge anti-immigrant disinformation. Though the first event will take place during Refugee Week (16-22 June) it is to involve all cultures and not just those who may be refugees or recent immigrants but also those who have been in the country for decades or are of mixed heritage. If you or anyone you know has skills in fundraising or event organising or know of individuals or organisations which can assist with storytelling, world foods or workshops, please let Mike Dennis know

From **Maureen Tulloch:**

Just to say 'THANK YOU' for the lovely bowl of spring flowers you all gave me. It was an unexpected and pleasant surprise!

We think of, and pray for, our members who have not been able to get to church recently – Barry, Geoff, Pam and Peter, John, Garth, Jenny and Dorothy. May God bless them and keep them.

Good to hear that Pam is recovering well, and Peter is having suitable treatment too. It was lovely to see Pip in church recently – thanks to a kindly driver (Stella, Jo?). She really appreciated it.

From **Revd Elizabeth Kemp:** My Life Story

The difference between being a Maid of Kent or a Kentish Maid, is the side of the river Medway where you are born... and actually the Men of Kent and Kentish Men supported different sides in the civil war. As I wasn't around at that time, and actually moved to Sussex at 4 years old, it all becomes purely academic. I was born in a Baptist Manse, attended two primary Schools and eventually five secondary schools, travelled with my family by sea to Hong Kong via the Suez Canal in a sand storm and four years later flew round the other side of the globe to Japan, Honolulu and San Francisco then greyhound buses across the 'States. As the miles passed, I chatted with unrelenting enthusiasm about the dog I/we might have when we were settled back in the UK.

If someone asked me what I wanted to be when I was 11, I would have said "a Spy" ("Carve Her Name with Pride" was my favourite film) but girls' grammar schools' careers libraries had nothing on that topic and I was not recruited by GCHQ!

I trained to teach, taught in an Oxfordshire comprehensive school for four years and then spent a year supply teaching on Canvey Island. My call to ministry took a long time to consolidate. I trained in Pittsburgh Presbyterian Seminary (Pennsylvania USA) where I gained an M.Div and then spent a year in Cambridge.

I was ordained into the Ministry of Word and Sacrament in January 1987 and during my working years served in East Midlands Synod, West Midlands Synod, South Western Synod, Thames North Synod, Wessex Synod, and finally East Midlands Synod for a second time, always moving after a piece of work was completed. I have had 26 different addresses in my life, been president of District Council, sat on Synod and national committees; I've led Fury groups, holidayed with various groups, been to the Netherlands and Southern Africa with CWM, enjoyed sabbaticals in India and Orkney and been privileged to meet some fantastic, loving and generous people along the way. I used to say that wherever I hang my hat (and my dogs' leads) is my home. When searching for a home for my retirement, I sacrificed the size of the house for somewhere with a proper garden. Tavistock passed my "dog friendly" test and I told the estate agent that I liked to dig and so did my dogs- grass and bushes -even a gnarly apple tree were the deciding factors in choosing this house to live in. Now I and my two dogs are settling into Tavistock, thanks for the welcome, and here we'll hang up hats and leads.

(Thank you, Elizabeth, what an interesting life. Now may I have other life stories, please?)

From **Rev Paul Snell:**

The Seven Churches of Revelation in Turkey

Rev Paul Snell (URC minister and former County Ecumenical Office for Devon) is leading an 8 day trip to visit the 7 churches addressed in the letters of Revelation chapters 2 & 3 from 18th – 25th October 2025. Visits include Smyrna, Pergamon, Sardis, Thyatira, Philadelphia, Hierapolis (including the magical Pamukkale), Laodicea, Colossae, and the magnificent Ephesus where St Paul spent 3 years in ministry. Finally Miletus where Paul bade an emotional farewell to the Ephesian elders. There is rich archaeology to discover alongside the biblical accounts, and our fellowship as we travel will offer us a shared experience which we will never forget.

The brochure, which is available at <https://thesnells.org.uk/> gives an outline of our trip and the booking form will explain the costs and other practical details. The price of £1799 pp (based on 2 sharing) is remarkable value for money for this kind of trip. If you want to know more or have any particular questions, please get in touch paul@maranatha.co.uk or call 07735 603553.

Aspects of the Passion

Hearing ♦ *Including*
Carrying ♦ *Handing over*

Two Saturdays: 15 & 29 March 2025,

10.30am–3.00pm Tavistock Parish Centre



Programme

Day One: Saturday 15 March

10.00 Arrival and tea/coffee

10.30 (prompt) Opening Prayer and Introduction

Hearing The disciples find it hard to 'hear' Jesus speaking about his impending Passion. Do we always 'hear' what Jesus is saying to us?

12.30–1.15 Lunch (hot drinks provided)

Including The Gospel story of the woman with the alabaster jar is a key event in the Passion narrative. What broader significance might it hold for us, as followers of Jesus?

2.45–3.00 Closing Worship (followed by tea/coffee and departure)

Day Two: Saturday 29 March

10.00 Arrival and tea/coffee

10.30 (prompt) Opening Prayer and Introduction

Carrying Jesus carries his crown of thorns along with his own cross to Golgotha. On the cross, what does he 'carry' for us, for God, for the world?

12.30–1.15 Lunch (hot drinks provided)

Handing over What difference does it make in responding to the Passion narratives whether we view Jesus as 'betrayed', or as 'handed over'? What might 'handing over' mean to each of us?

2.45–3.00 Closing Worship (followed by tea/coffee and departure)

Practical information

These Lent Days are free of charge and open to everyone. We meet in Tavistock Parish Church Centre, next to the Bedford Hotel on Plymouth Road. There is no parking at the Centre, but the Bedford Car Park (Canal Road, PL19 8AU) is only two minutes' walk away.

We begin promptly at 10.30am and end by 3.00pm. Tea/coffee will be available from 10.00am and after 3.00pm. We will also provide hot and cold drinks at lunch time, but **you need to bring your own packed lunch**. We'll supply all Bible readings and other discussion materials, but you may want to bring your own notebook.

Purpose and Content of each Day

The purpose of the days is to renew, deepen, and strengthen our faith during the period of Lent. They will be quite informal in approach and tone and will be social as well as spiritual occasions. They offer a chance to be with fellow-Christians for spiritual development, where you can expect to hear and share a range of perspectives.

Each Day will include Bible reading, small group discussion, shared reflection, and a short closing act of worship. Together, we will explore four aspects of the Passion narrative, bringing out what each aspect might mean for us—individually and as church communities—this Lent.

Attending the Lent Days

If you would like to attend one or both Days, it is helpful for us to know in advance so that we can make necessary arrangements.

Please get in touch, leaving us your name and a contact number or email address:

House phone: 01822 762078

Text (Patti): 07507 805 074

Email (Bob): bobowensreader@outlook.com

Please also let us know if you have any queries, or any special requirements.

Patti and Bob Owens will be leading the two Lent Days. They are Readers (Licensed Lay Ministers) in the Church of England Benefice of Tavistock, Gulworthy, and Brentor, and live in Tavistock. Patti is a retired psychotherapist, teacher, and lecturer. She has facilitated Christian retreats, quiet days, and exploratory faith groups. Bob is a retired Professor of English Literature. He has published editions of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the King James version of *The Gospels*, both for Oxford University Press.

From **Jenny Dennis:**

WasteAid

I would like to suggest that one of our charities for 2025 should be WasteAid.

It fits very well with our Eco Gold Award in supporting poorer countries to look at how they deal with waste both to care for our environment and provide an income for the very poor.

WasteAid is a Non Governmental Organisation which works with communities and policy makers in low and middle-income countries to implement waste management and recycling programmes. Its work improves the livelihoods of some of the poorest and most marginalised, supports grassroots entrepreneurs and contributes to a cleaner and healthier future for all. They are currently working in The Gambia, India, South Africa and Uganda.

Amie is one of hundreds of waste collectors who have benefited from WasteAid's programmes. She tells a familiar story of working hard every day collecting plastic waste from the beach and river in her fishing village, a short drive from Gambia's capital city, Banjul.

Before becoming part of a WasteAid collective, Amie, who cares for her family of 15 children, struggled to make ends meet. She also worried about the health risks of burning and dumping plastic near the village's waterways.

Now, through her work with WasteAid, Amie not only earns enough money to care for her family, but she's also making a difference in her community as part of a co-operative of waste collectors and inspiring people to responsibly dispose of their waste.

She explains how she and members of her WasteAid Collectors Group collect, sort, cut, package and sell plastic to be recycled and reused. Each transaction is proudly recorded in her treasurer's book.

As a graduate of WasteAid's 'Wastepreneur' training programme, the waste collectors' cooperative that Amie is part of gained the know-how, insights, and investment they needed to increase their income from waste. They were able to take part in community clean-ups that have helped her and her fellow collectors to transform their futures and educate their community on finding value in plastics.

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

CONTACT items for April– please email them to me (maureen.tulloch@homecall.co.uk) by the 25th March. Many thanks.