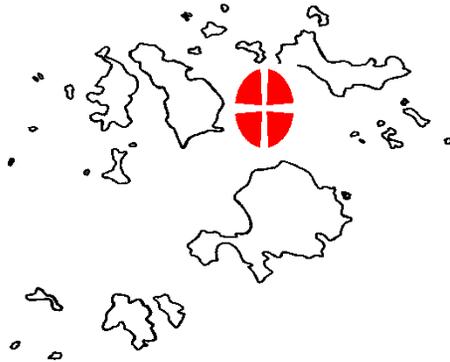


Isles of Scilly



In Touch



Methodist Church Circuit

December / January 2015

Chairman of the District

Revd. Stephen Wild M.A.

Minister

Revd. Charles R. Gibbs 422406

Local Preachers

Barbara Hasler Len Michell

Gordon Bird

Christopher Savill

Circuit Stewards

Mrs Christine Savill 423563

Mr Mervyn Bird 423117

Mrs Beryl Read 422977

Mr Len Michell 422409

Circuit Treasurer Mr Christopher Savill 423563

Circuit Meeting Secretary

Church Stewards St. Mary's

Mrs Claire Jenkins Mrs June Lethbridge

Mr Philip Lethbridge Mrs Beryl Read

Mrs Sue Williams Mrs Leigh Kendrick

St. Martin's Mrs Barbara Jones

St. Mary's

Treasurer Mrs Sue Williams 422605

Church Council Secretary Mrs Beryl Read 422977

Property Secretary Mrs Anne Gurr 422224

Gift Aid Secretary Mrs Stephanie Bird 423117

Organist Mr Len Michell 422409

St. Martin's

Church Council Secretary Mrs Jackie Perkins

Church Treasurer Mr Alan Terry

Organist Mr Rodney Ashford 423109

Connexional Link Person Beryl Read 422977

Some thoughts from the St. Mary's Manse

It is good to be back on the islands having just returned from my three month study leave. Firstly let me start this letter by thanking all those who made it possible for me to take this time away from my circuit responsibilities and reflect on my ministry at this point in my journey. Thanks especially to our circuit stewards who helped in making the arrangements, and also to the ministers who were able to come over and stand in during my absence. From what I have heard this has been a time of great blessing for us all, and a reminder to always be thankful for the many gifted people who are part of our Methodist Church. We give thanks that by God's grace we are indeed equipped by His Holy Spirit as we seek to proclaim to all the Good News of The Gospel.

Every seven years Methodist ministers are required to take what is called a sabbatical in order to reflect on their calling and to find time for rest and study. In my case this has come at an important time as I and Mary begin to think about what we will be doing at the end of our seven years on Scilly in the next stage of our ministry. To help us in this Mary and I were able to attend an excellent conference put on by the Methodist Church at Leamington Spa. Here we met with other ministers and their spouses who like us were reflecting on what comes next on our journey of service in the wider church. All who attended this meeting came away confident in the churches provision for its ministers, and with a vision of how we may play our part in the days to come.

This break from island ministry also gave me the opportunity to visit friends in various parts of the country and to see how new ventures and initiatives are helping to

equip the church as we serve this present age.

It was good to go back to some of the places that I have served over the years and to find that in many places good things are happening and that the Methodist Church is certainly still a vibrant part of many communities up and down the country. This experience certainly fills me with hope for our mission here on Scilly and my hope is to make the most of my remaining time here in encouraging us all to use our gifts in furthering the work of our church in this island community.

Also during my time away I was able to put together some of the thoughts that I have developed over the years on the Gospel of John. I have made a start on writing what I call 'A Commentary Of Sorts On John's Gospel'. This work is certainly going to take a very long time but I have now made a start. It would seem to me that in many ways our lives are fleeting and insignificant in the great order of things yet somehow in the pages of John we are reminded that each and all are important to our Sovereign God who despite the ways of this world has a purpose and a great love which can be known to all who will humble themselves and receive from Him.

This letter will be read by most of you in the December edition of our 'In Touch' island magazine. By this time I expect our thoughts will be on the celebrations of Christmas and it would seem to me that some of my thoughts on the writing of John are very apt for this season of the year, so let me now share some of these thoughts with you.

Looking back over the years I am in some ways quite puzzled that Christmas is still marked in the way that it is in Britain today. Despite the slow but steady decline in the numbers of those who worship week by week in our churches and chapels Christmas in some form or another is still by far the longest and most significant religious festival

to be acknowledged by those who rarely choose to be involved with the day to day life and mission of the church in our nation today.

For most the build up to Christmas starts in Autumn when our shops begin to tempt us with all the trappings of the perfect secular Christmas which so many even today see as in some way being an essential for themselves and for their families. Yet the statistics and the evidence surrounding our secular celebrations remind us of just how 'The World' has distorted the Biblical message of 'The Word Made Flesh'. It is a sad fact that in Britain today after our Christmas celebrations millions of pounds worth of food finds its way onto our rubbish tips. The pressures of providing the perfect secular Christmas is also seen in many facing huge debts when the bills come in. Credit card debts are said to be of staggering proportions in the month of January and there can be no doubt that celebrating Christmas as we do in our nation today puts much un-needed pressure on many aspects of family life. Solicitors and lawyers report that January is the busiest month for those negotiating their way through family breakdown, and maybe it is these sad statistics and facts that remind us all that somehow in Britain today we have lost sight of how we should be celebrating the Gospel message of 'The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us!'

Some within the church have said that the season of Christmas brings many opportunities for offering the Good News of the Gospel, yet somehow in the midst of our Christmas celebrations so often the real life changing message can so easily become lost. My hope is that the church in our nation will again discover how the message found in the Gospel of John can be our crucial tool in facing the challenges of this present age. Look as you may, but

you will find no grounds for this distortion of the Christmas message in the writing of John. John's story of the nativity makes no mention of Mary or Joseph, no mention of angels and shepherds, and has no record of those wise men travelling from the east bringing gifts to a new born King. Instead we are each challenged to receive 'The Word made flesh' and in so doing receive New life in His name.

In the build up to Christmas many will be attending the traditional nativity performances which still seem to be the crucial element in bringing to a close the Christmas term in most primary schools wherever we may live. Anxious parents look on as the story of the baby Jesus is performed by their offspring and for many this is all part of the build up to their annual Christmas celebrations.

It is a fact that these annual nativity gatherings do bring people in to explore the wonder and the mystery of the birth of Christ as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and we rejoice in this. Yet it would seem to me that although it is good that this miraculous story is relived year by year it also brings with it some problems. The story of the nativity that is found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke is indeed a wonderful and very powerful story but told alone without any explanation of its purpose is maybe doing very little in helping us to fully grasp our need of truly receiving the Good News of The Gospel.

Year after year the story is told. We look on in amazement as Mary is told by an Angel that she has been chosen to give birth to one who will be called 'The Son of The Most High' and we are deeply moved as we hear of how Mary and Joseph travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem only to find no room at the inn and that Mary's Son is to be born in a stable. Yes we love the story of the baby Jesus and all that goes with it! The shepherds and the Angels and the bright

shining star all come together to make the perfect Christmas story to pass down to future generations. Added to this Matthew tells us the story of how those wise men from the east bring gifts to the baby King, and although strictly speaking this story belongs to the church season of the Epiphany it certainly is seen as an essential in the nativity story that for so many is the essence of a proper build up to their Christmas celebrations.

Yet John who is often referred to as 'The Evangelist' makes no mention of this story which is treasured by so many. Instead John strives to tell us the true significance of this much repeated story of the nativity and his words not only complement the record of The birth of Christ as recorded by Matthew and Luke but are I believe the vital link in challenging us to trust that this baby born in the stable is indeed The Saviour of this World.

The wonderful words from the opening chapter of John's Gospel are still thankfully an essential part of our traditional carol services, and each year in our chapels on St Martin's and St Mary's they are faithfully read by members of our very precious island community.

In John's Gospel 'Light' is a word that is used to describe the nature and purpose of God. This pure light is also shown to be the nature and purpose of Jesus in a unique and very powerful way and made no clearer than in the words of Jesus quoted by John "**I am The Light of The World, and whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will instead have The Light of Life!**" Over the centuries countless thousands have believed these words and found them to be true bringing hope in times of despair.

This life changing message of '**The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us**' I hope will be celebrated in our

services on the lead up to Christmas and in our all age worship on Christmas morning on St Mary's. We look forward to our annual Carol service at the chapel on the 20th with our friends from the Parish Church and those who worship at the Catholic Church which will be led by myself together with our dear friend Bishop Christopher Budd and our new Chaplain to The Isles, Canon Perran Gay.

So I end by wishing you all a very happy Christmas and every blessing in the year to come. Don't forget the date for our annual Covenant Service this year on St Martin's and St Mary's is Sunday 17th January which also marks the start of the national week of prayer for Christian Unity. On St Mary's this service will be followed by a luncheon.

The annual St Martin's Carol service with readings read by island children will be on the afternoon of the 20th and we give thanks to Heather Terry who each year makes the arrangements for this annual island service.

Hopefully at some point in our Christmas services we will sing those wonderful words of Charles Wesley..... **'He deigns in flesh to appear, widest extremes to join. To bring our vileness near and make us all divine. And we the life of God shall know, for God is manifest below!'**

I remain by the grace of our Sovereign God the Methodist minister on these islands for a while, every blessing to you all.

Charlie Gibbs.

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Any contributions will be gratefully received. The magazine uses material from the Parish Pump, a resource for editors to which we subscribe

News from St. Martin's

Firstly, we want to say "welcome back" to Rev C. Gibbs and his wife Mary. We trust your experiences away from the Islands have been rewarding and encouraging, and you have returned feeling refreshed and restored. May the memories of your last months of service here be happy and fulfilling.

Secondly, St. Martin's folk would like to thank all those who have served us well during Charlie's sabbatical. Whether Scilly based and familiar, visiting the Islands on holiday or supernumerary ministers who we have met before, they have each inspired our worship in their own singular ways.

Rev S. Wild spent a short time on St. Mary's on October 17th, when he came for Rev. Canon P. Gay's induction as Chaplain of the Isles. He was unable to lead a service, but briefly spoke to the Methodist congregation about evangelical opportunities he has seized when travelling the country as President of Conference. Unfortunately, St. Martin's members could not be present because of boating restraints early on a Saturday morning, but they were represented by Alan and Heather for this and the preceding photo shoot! Pictures can be seen on the Isles of Scilly Circuit web page.

On October 28th Rodney Ashford (our Chapel organist for fifty four years!) celebrated his 90th birthday. Fortunately, his daughters were able to come from the mainland for a few days and help welcome those Islanders who called to offer their congratulations. The special day culminated with a good traditional high tea for family and close friends. Uncle Rodney has lived on St. Martins for all of his ninety years, receiving his formal education there, and as a farmer was precluded from war service. We give thanks for his long life, and that he is still able to live at home and

independently care for himself

Our well attended Act of Remembrance was held at Chapel this year, with Rev C. Gibbs, Rev Canon P. Gay and Rev P. Prince sharing leadership of the service. After the benediction, everyone walked the short distance to the War Memorial outside the Anglican Church, where we again reflected and listened to the reading of the Roll of Honour. A wreath was laid by a member of the St. Martins Coastguard team. The Fire Service was also represented.

It was good to welcome Rev Canon P. Gay with his wife Raine to our Chapel, and we trust we will have future opportunities to get to know them better. The building was not unknown to Perran, as he had visited years ago when Truro School choir came to give concerts. He recalls playing the old pedal driven harmonium!

Finally, members at St. Martins wish all who read In Touch a Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Peaceful 2016. Let us remember in the midst of the bustle, how much this troubled world needs the Child of Bethlehem and pray accordingly.

Heather Terry. (Covering for Val Thomas who with Graham are visiting their son and his family in Australia.)



Birthday Greetings for December go to Louis Asten, Keith Grossett, Pauline Jackson Cocking, Gladys Perkins, Merryn Smith and Josh Smith. We also wish a Happy Birthday to those with **January Birthdays** – Gordon Bird, Stephanie Bird, John Goody, Martin Parker, Anthea Roberts, Margaret Smith, Tony Thomas, William Thomas, Nathan Thomas and Liz Turner

All We Can – response to the refugee Crisis

As the headlines continue to be dominated by news about refugees and migrants, All We Can – the Methodist relief and development partner - has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting those who have fled the conflict in Syria, and to contributing to addressing some of the root causes of the crisis.

As the organisation has done for the last two and a half years, All We Can will continue to provide humanitarian support to those fleeing the conflict in Syria through work with partner organisations in neighbouring countries. Donations to the Syria appeal (<http://www.allwecan.org.uk/where-we-work-parent-emergencies/syria>) will particularly help All We Can's partners to improve conditions and prospects for people living in temporary accommodation in Jordan.

A fund is now open to receive donations to support Methodist Churches that work with refugees in Macedonia, Serbia, Germany and Italy. Please visit <http://www.allwecan.org.uk/what-we-do/emergencies> for details.

Footnote

The onset of winter is adding to the hardships of tens of thousands of migrants who are fleeing to Europe. A number of relief organisations are working to help them. The following are a list of the organisations who are working to support them. Elsewhere in the In Touch there is already an article on Samaritans Purse which is well supported on the Islands.

ALL WE CAN at www.allwecan.org.uk

Christian Aid at www.christianaid.org.uk

Embrace the Middle East at www.embraceme.org

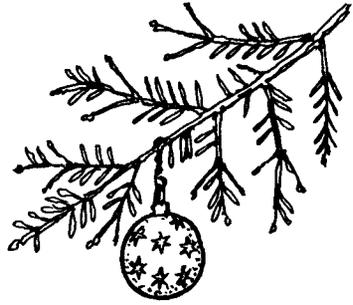
Samaritan's Purse at www.samaritans-purse.org.uk

Save the Children at www.savethechildren.org.uk

Tear Fund at www.tearfund.org

Christmas box appeal

The Operation Christmas Child appeal by Samaritans Purse has been very successful on the Islands again this year. In total there were 84 boxes in school on 16th November with more promised. Mary Leathers has already received 30 so that makes a running total of 114. The shoe boxes are filled with appropriate gifts for children and given as an unconditional gift of love. They go to children around the world based on need and regardless of their background or religious belief. Mary Leathers and Sam Grossett organise this event every year and we give thanks for their commitment to this valuable cause.



NCH Action for Children

The following letter was given to all who support this valuable outreach

Dear generous friends,

We give thanks that because of your generous donations in purchasing blackberries and rose hips, this year we have been able to raise the grand sum of £136 from the fruit picking harvest.

We give thanks that together we can continue to support this important Methodist Charity. Our next fundraising event will be our usual Book Sale, with refreshments in the Methodist Hall from 10-4 on Saturday 5th December. Offers of help for food supplies, the sales thereof and selling the books will be much appreciated.

Gwen Clarkson

Action for Children Payments.

Since reporting the Action for Children (AfC) Income last Autumn, I have been able to send a total of £693-32 to our special Methodist charity. This sum is over £200 more than last year, and does not include the St. Mary's Chapel Christmas collections, which Sue Williams sends separately. A breakdown of the total income is listed below.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed in any way. Again we must commend Gwen for her enthusiasm and determination in organising, with the help of Mary and Charlie Gibbs, two Grand Book Sales, selling rosehips and blackberries and dealing with the AfC Sunday gift envelopes.

On a personal note, please can I ask Chapel folk to save any unwanted paperbacks until next Spring, when I will gladly receive them for my roadside book box.

Finally I pass on the gratitude of AfC, who always send a letter of appreciation and thanks after I have banked cash.

Two Grand Book Sales	£264 -75
Sale of blackberries and rosehips	£60 - 00
AfC Sunday gift envelopes	£97 - 75
Manse Book Stall	£31 - 94
AfC collection boxes	£86 - 42
Copper Collection (Chapel/at home)	£30 - 99
Roadside Book Box sales	£121 - 47
TOTAL	£693 - 32

I understand Gwen has more money from the sale of fruit, but as I haven't yet received it I will include it next year.

Heather Terry



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To make you smile (with a Christmas theme)

Dear Father Christmas,

This Christmas could you please send me a yellow door. Yours,
Sherlock Holmes

Watson: So why do you want a yellow door Holmes?

Holmes: Lemon-entry, my dear Watson.

Higgs Boson and the Pope

A Higgs Boson particle barged into the Vatican at Midnight on Christmas Eve. The Pope was in the middle of his sermon, and annoyed. He looked up from his notes and said: 'You can't burst in here like that.' Higgs Boson retorted: "Oh yes I can, you know you can't have mass without me!"

Carols misheard by children

Deck the Halls with Buddy Holly

We three kings of porridge and tar

On the first day of Christmas my tulip gave to me

Rudolph the Red

There was once a great Czar in Russia named Rudolph the Red. He stood looking out the windows of his palace one day while his wife, the Czarina Katerina, sat nearby knitting. He turned to her and said, "Look my dear, it has begun to rain!" Without even looking up from her knitting she replied, "It's too cold to rain. It must be sleeting." The Czar shook his head and said, "I am the Czar of all the Russias, and Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear!"



Friday Fellowship

**7 Friday evenings looking together at Luke's story of
The Prodigal Son**

The Story of Amazing Grace

**A Bible Study for all to join
Produced by Robin Frost
At The Manse**

7:30- 9:00 pm followed by refreshments

- 27th November: The Hard Goodbye Luke 15:11-20**
- 4th December : The Pigsty Luke15: 13-17**
- 11th December: The Long Road Home Luke15: 17-20**
- 8th January : A Robe and a Ring Luke15: 22-24**
- 15th January : Dead and Alive Luke15: 19-24**
- 22nd January : Party Time Luke15: 23-27**
- 29th January : Sour Grapes Luke15: 25-32**

Feel free to just come along for a few evenings or for all seven. Bible Study notes are available at the Manse.

A warm welcome awaits you



"I'm sorry Michael – even if you HAVE changed your ring-tone to 'Away In-A-Manger', it's still ALL mobiles OFF!"

January

His name is Jesus

JANUARY SERVICES

St. Mary's

3 rd	09:15	All Age worship
	11:00	Parish Church
10 th	9:15	Rev. Charlie Gibbs/ Beryl Read Communion
	11:00	Mary Ratcliffe
	18:00	Rev. Charlie Gibbs
17 th	10:30	Covenant Service
		Rev. Charlie Gibbs
	18:00	Barbara Hasler
24 th	9:15	Leader: Mervyn Bird
		Preacher: Barbara Hasler
	11:00	Len Michell
	18:00	Rev. Charlie Gibbs Communion
31 st	9:15	Leader: Sonia Crompton
		Preacher: Mary Ratcliffe
	11:00	Rev. Charlie Gibbs
	18:00	Gordon Bird

St. Martin's

3 rd	14:00	Rev. Charlie Gibbs
10 th	11:00	Gordon Bird
17 th	14:00	United Covenant Service
24 th	11:00	Rev. Charlie Gibbs
31 st	14:00	Rev. Charlie Gibbs

Park House

3 rd	4pm	Len Michell
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PRAYER CHAIN

In the first instance please contact me, Mary Ratcliffe 423030 or Revd. Charles Gibbs 422406. I will then pass on the prayer request to the first name in each of the groups.

Mervyn & Stephanie Bird **423117**
Sue Williams 422605
Merryn & Vicki Smith 423360

Claire Jenkins **423546**
Margaret Snowball 422896
Gordon Bird 422550
Sonia Crompton 422854

Barbara Hasler **422208**
Margaret Crane 422596
Len & Sylvia Michell 422409
Pamela Thomas 423115
June Lethbridge 422404

Beryl Read **422977**
Gwen Clarkson 423106

For the Prayer Chain to be effective it is essential that requests are forwarded to the person in the column beneath your name, if that person is not available please ring the next person on the list.

If anyone else would like to join in this special ministry please contact Mary Ratcliffe on 423030. We thank God that we can be channels of His grace.

December Notices

St. Mary's

- 6th 09:15 All Age Worship
 11:00 Revd Charles Gibbs
- 13th 09:15 Gordon Bird Kim Watson
 11.00 Revd Charles Gibbs
 18:00 Revd Charlie Gibbs
- 20th 09:15 Beryl Read Mary Ratcliffe
 11:00 Barbara Hasler
 18.00 Carol Service
- 27th 09.15 Mervyn Bird Len Michell
 11:00 Revd. Charles Gibbs Communion
 18:00 Mary Ratcliffe

St. Martin's

- 6th 11:00 Gordon Bird
- 13th 11:00 Revd. Charles
- 20th 14:00 Christmas Carol Service
- 27th 11:00 Chris Savill

Park House

- 6th 16:00 Beryl Read