

# focus



**Furrough Cross  
United Reformed Church**

**February/March 2026**



"For behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come." (Song of Songs 2:11-12)

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## **REGULAR CHURCH ACTIVITIES**

**Sunday Services:** Sundays at 10.30 am. Communion on the first Sunday of each month.

**Midweek Worship:** Wednesdays at 2.30 pm.

**Messy Church:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month (not August) 4 to 6 pm.

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Opinions and views expressed in this magazine may be personal and not necessarily accord with those of the Minister and Elders of Furrough Cross United Reformed Church. Care is taken over the accuracy of the information presented but the Church and Elders cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions. The Editor reserves the right to edit or omit material submitted.

## SNOWDROPS

Mariana Wilson

Snowdrops arrive with a kind of quiet courage. They never wait for safe conditions or warm breezes; they push through frozen soil and winter's shadows, offering the first small hint that spring has not forgotten us. Their white petals seem delicate, but they're surprisingly resilient—tiny lanterns glowing against the bleakness of late winter.



It's tempting to dismiss them as simple flowers, yet their timing makes them something more: a reminder of grace that comes early, before anything else has changed. Snowdrops don't bloom because the world is ready; they bloom because new life begins even when we cannot yet see it.

For the church, they speak a familiar truth. Hope often appears in miniature, in moments that seem too small to matter: a kind word, a helping hand, a prayer whispered for someone who will never know. Like snowdrops, such gestures seem fragile, but they carry remarkable strength. They break through cold seasons of the heart and whisper the promise that renewal is already on its way.

As we step through these last weeks of winter, may the sight of snowdrops draw our thoughts to the God who brings light into our darkest places—quietly, gently, and right on time.

*Snowdrops contain natural antifreeze. On frosty nights, they collapse with freezing stress, but their antifreeze allows them to recover as soon as the temperatures rise.*



## SILENCE IS GOLDEN...

by Val Elms

Noise is hard to ignore indoors and outside. Many think it is the curse of modern life. Some of us have very little opportunity of solitude.

Kitchens have noisy gadgets.

Gardens have noisy gadgets.

If you live near a main road, the traffic is constantly roaring by to disturb us.

But under the fields and gardens the future flowers and vegetables will soon peep up from the soil.



I read Patience Strong say, *“How different for the work of God that goes on silently, in womb and cell, in seed and shell, in pod and plant and tree.”*

As Spring weather starts may we be fortunate to have time to sit in a garden or park in a peaceful spot to enjoy the God’s gift to us of the flowers and song of the birds.

*“The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quite alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature.”*

Anne Frank

## FIVE WAYS TO ATTRACT YOUNGER PEOPLE TO A SENIOR CHURCH

**1. Give them something real to do.** Young people are far more interested in purpose than polish. Involve them in meaningful roles—community outreach, social justice projects, creative initiatives. A church that trusts young people signals that it takes them seriously.



**2. Make space for honest questions.**

Many younger adults are drawn to faith, but allergic to pre-packaged answers. Create forums—discussion evenings, cafés, small groups—where doubt isn't treated as rebellion but as part of faith's nervous system. A church that can survive questions feels alive.

**3. Build genuine relationships.** What young people often lack isn't peers, but wise adults who notice them. Encourage mentoring, shared meals, storytelling nights, skill-sharing. Turn your church into a web of relationships to make it feel human rather than institutional.

**4. Show faith in action, not just in words.** Young people are deeply attuned to hypocrisy. If the church talks about love, justice, care, and compassion, let them see it embodied—supporting the lonely, helping refugees, caring for mental health, serving locally. Lived faith is more persuasive than eloquent sermons.

**5. Be rooted, not trendy.** Trying to imitate youth culture usually backfires. What attracts young people to older churches is often the opposite: depth, stillness, tradition, ritual, silence, continuity. Offer what the wider culture doesn't—meaning, reverence, and a sense of belonging to something larger than the moment.

**A senior church doesn't need to become young. It needs to become alive.**



**February:** Ken Harris

**March:** Herbie Doney; Jim Neale; Adrian Robinson; Jenny Webber; Bill Becher; Pat Latham; Geraldine Morgan; Bill Bell



## UNUSUAL BIRTHDAY TRADITIONS

- **Germany** – Unmarried adults turning 30 may be forced to sweep public steps while friends deliberately make the mess worse. They are only released after receiving a kiss.
- **Jamaica** – Friends ambush the birthday person with flour, often followed by eggs or water. Avoiding the attack is part of the game.
- **Canada** – In Atlantic Canada, the birthday person's nose is covered in butter or margarine to prevent bad luck in the coming year.
- **Denmark** – A flag is placed outside the house to publicly announce that someone inside is having a birthday.
- **China** – Birthday noodles must be eaten without breaking them, leading to awkward, slurping attempts.
- **Hungary** – Guests sing an extremely long and dramatic birthday song that can go on uncomfortably long, purely for effect.
- **Switzerland** – On milestone birthdays, friends may dress the celebrant in embarrassing costumes and parade them through town.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **February Messy Church** - Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> February, 3:45 PM-6 PM
- **Early Morning Prayer Meeting** - hosted at Furrough Cross Church on Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> March, from 6:30 AM to 7:30 AM.
- **Word's Day of Prayer service** – held at Furrough Cross Church on Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> March, starting at 10 AM.
- **Church Meeting** - Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March following the service.
- **March Messy Church** - Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 3:45 PM-6 PM.

## SUNDAY SERVICES

<b>Date</b>	<b>Preacher</b>	<b>Reader</b>
01 February	<b>Rev Derek Hill</b>	Mariana Wilson
08 February	<b>Mrs Tayna Ansley</b>	Janet Dart
15 February	<b>Rev R Jennings</b>	Paul Madge
22 February	<b>Monty Wills</b>	Clare Smith
01 March	<b>Rev Valerie Price</b>	Jenny Webber
08 March	<b>Rev Jerry Cook</b>	Janet Dart
15 March	<b>Miss Catherine Harris</b>	Mariana Wilson
22 March	<b>Mr Jim Collins</b>	Bill Becher
29 March	<b>Rev Dick Gray</b>	Clare Smith

A heartfelt thank you to all who give their time and effort to help with the smooth running of our church. Everything you do is greatly appreciated. Your willingness and dedication are what keep our church going.



## 70'S RULE!

*by Paul Madge*

So now we are all 70!  
Rose Maddock  
(daughter of Joan  
Neville), Paul Madge  
& Janet Dart, nee  
Pearson.



The three of us first  
met up in 1969 at the  
Abbey Road  
Congregational  
Church 'Pilot' youth

club. I had been invited to come by Philip Dart, the son of two of the Church Elders, Wilf & Jean. The Pilot company was run by Mrs Eileen Morrall, her husband Jack was a great Lay Preacher. The Church building was situated at the bottom of Abbey Road and is now occupied by a block of flats. So our old church is still helping in the community by providing a safe place to live. We used to meet in the Church hall and back rooms that adjoined the main Church.

We played badminton, table tennis & many other games like Twister. The other young people in the group included Shirley Leaman, Philip West, Graham Dart, Loraine Bowden, Simon Meadon, Peter Lovering and many more I cannot remember by name. Later we were joined by Alan Neville (Rose's brother) and Chris Tucker.

After a little while it was suggested that we might like to come to the Church service on Sunday evening, which most of us did. Some of us did join the Church and become Church Members. Almost all of the others moved away to work in other parts of the country and the world.

The back of the church rooms was right against the cliff—it might have been an old limestone quarry. We had a rock fall at the back of the kitchen, which brought some of its roof down, we couldn't use it anymore. Was God telling us it was time to move?

At this time, 1981, we could have joined the new Central Church, but we as a Church elected to join with Babbacombe URC. It was time to have a fresh start, so instead of using our old names, we combined under the name of Furrough Cross. The Youth group flourished at Furrough Cross under the leadership of Shirley, assisted by Graham, Janet & myself.

The photo, taken this last December, is testament to over 50 years of friendship.



## CHRISTMAS PRESENTS!

*by Penny Batley*

Last year our friend from church got my Uncle Herbert a wooden spoon saying "the world's biggest stirrer" for Christmas. This year he's got another one from her saying "I'm still stirring". She knows him so well!



**WEDNESDAY WORSHIP CHRISTMAS SPECIAL**

*by Beryl Navarro*

On Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2025, we celebrated Jesus, the reason for the season—God's unspeakable gift to us.

Lead by Raymond, Shirley and friends, we came through rain, mud and water to remember and worship!

Below are some photos of before, during and after!



The first arrival – determined to brave the elements!



Our fabulous five singers



Thanking Raymond for a year of faithful and wonderful playing



Part of our fabulous catering team



Happy to be together in God's house!



Christmas jumpers and Christmas food and fellowship.  
Thank you to our Lord Jesus for everything!

Where two or three in quiet meet,  
With open hearts and humble mind,  
Their shared prayers, like incense, rise,  
In love that leaves no one behind.

Where faith is lived and burdens shared,  
Christ walks among us, close and near;  
In simple love, with hearts laid bare,  
His living body gathers here.



## HERBIE'S POETRY CORNER



🎆 HAPPY NEW YEAR 🎆  
"A happy new year!"  
as we greet one and all  
Yet all the uncertainty  
as we face the unknown!  
The road may be rocky  
The road may be smooth  
But whatever the journey  
we'll see it through!

Written by Herbert J B Doney.



IN HIS HANDS  
Never worry about tomorrow for  
tomorrow is another day  
All the hopes and dreams we plan  
may never really come our way!  
Live today!  
Enjoy the living!  
Let us live life day by day  
For there's only one  
who knows the future  
Place your trust in him today!

Written by Herbert J B Doney.



MY PRAYER  
Thank you dear father for i knew it was  
you who shares all my problems and  
those wrongs that i do!  
Now all my uncertainty i bring to you  
For you're understanding  
Loving and true!  
The perfect example that i'd like to be  
Please help me dear Lord  
Work through me!

Written by Herbert J B Doney.



## DECEMBER MESSY CHURCH

*Shirley Leaman*

Our Christmas Messy Church was a joyful occasion full of laughter, noise and worship.

Board games were played and lovely crafts made. Fascinating Nativity Wheels and Mobiles, enchanting angels, edible mangers, with a jelly baby Jesus, and a Christmas decoration that lit up. The children helped with a giant picture illustrating what Christmas really means. And made a picture of the night sky with angels singing God's praises.



We watched a video of God telling the shepherds of a special Baby who had been born. The Rev Val had us singing carols and we heard about the grumpy innkeeper who kept having an assortment of people knocking on his door looking for a baby. Finally, the magic moment of lighting the Christingles with the children's faces aglow in the candlelight.

We finished the afternoon with a Christmas buffet. Sandwiches, pizzas, cakes, sausage rolls, biscuits, jellies, squirty cream. And, would you believe, 180 mini sausages were devoured!





A huge thank you to Agnes, our head chef, who cooked chickens, made all the sandwiches and, along with her team, provided a wonderful spread.

So at the end of 2025 a great big thank you to all the Messy Church team who have glued, and cut, and stuck and baked and laughed and chatted, and washed up and cleaned up all in the service of the One who was born at Christmas. Jesus is the reason for the Season

and He is the reason we do all of it.

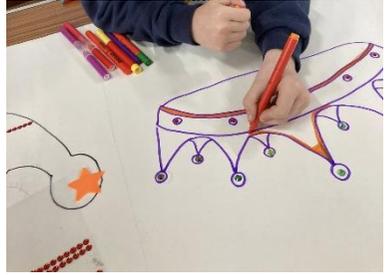




## JANUARY MESSY CHURCH

*Shirley Leaman*

Our first Messy Church of 2026 saw us thinking of Epiphany and the visit of the three kings to Jesus. We watched a video and saw the wise men on their camels travelling many, many miles following the star which led them to a poor stable in Bethlehem.



Our crafts reflected the story we had heard. The children decorated gift boxes and enclosed a gold coin, similar to one of the gifts the wise men gave to Jesus. Then there were yummy star and camel shaped biscuits to decorate, a constellation jar to make, crowns to becrust with “jewels” and a big picture to colour in.

During our worship time we heard the story of Clem the Clumsy Camel who, even though he was clumsy, carried one of the three kings to Bethlehem and even managed a shaky bow when he saw Baby Jesus in the manger. We also heard that even if we're clumsy and do wrong things, God is always ready to forgive us if we're sorry.



We finished the afternoon with lasagne, crusty bread, salad, and marble cake and custard. A happy end to a chilly January afternoon.

Our next Messy Church is Friday 13th February - 3.45 pm to 6 pm. Come and check us out.

## NATIVITY SERVICE



Our Messy Church families took part in our nativity play on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December. They were amazing. Their singing was fantastic, the poems were great and with Mary riding into Bethlehem on a donkey, and the regal wise men entering riding on our lovely camels following the star, it was a wonderful start to Christmas—celebrating its true meaning. The children received so many lovely comments

on how well they had done, it was fab.

We also had the pleasure of some furry friends among the congregation.



## MESSY CHURCH MEAL

The Messy Church team had a lovely meal and get-together at the Zoo Café in Babbacombe. Many thanks to Beryl and Shirley for organising it.





## EARLY MORNING PRAYER

*shared by Bill Becher*

Bill Becher is hosting an Early Morning Prayer at Furrough Cross Church on Monday, 2nd March 2026. All are welcome to join.

### A Short History of the Group



Every Monday morning from 06.30am to 07.30am a group of Christians from churches across Torbay and the surrounding area meet at one of around fifty different churches / Christian ministries to pray for God’s kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Host organisations currently include a variety of Anglican, Baptist, Salvation Army, Brethren, United Reformed, Pentecostal, Methodist and independent Churches; with Ministries such as Linx, Youth Genesis, Torbay Hospital Chaplaincy, Torquay Christian Community, Street Pastors, The Haven. Those praying come from both small and large churches across a similarly wide variety of denominations and networks.

### 23 Years of Weekly Prayer

The Monday 06.30 prayer meeting is the continuation of a prayer movement started over 23 years ago which was originally for the witness of the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship. Then around 20 years ago, it became one of two prayer meetings established at the request of Operation Mobilisation to prepare for the “Tell Torbay the Good News of Jesus Christ” Logos Ship Mission. At that time, representatives of some 64 churches were involved. Through the 2020–21 national lockdown we continued to meet every week on Zoom, visiting most of our hosts.

## Prayer Focus

As the meeting begins, a leader or representative of the host church or ministry brings a word from scripture and a prayer. The focus of prayer remains that of witnessing to the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel right across Torbay and the surrounding area including Totnes and Teignmouth. During the time that we have been praying we have seen the creation of many new parachurch ministries and interdenominational activities. Each week we celebrate and bless those, alongside prayer for the nation, and for the persecuted church across the world. In the final section, our host's prayer needs are shared and the meeting prays accordingly.

### Jesus Said, "I will build my church"

We would love to welcome you to share in this time of prayer. We gather from 06.15am for tea / coffee and there is the opportunity to share breakfast / fellowship after we finish at a local café.

For more information including a current schedule of venues, please contact our coordinator Andrew Stilliard: [jesusishw@gmail.com](mailto:jesusishw@gmail.com)

*"In all states of dilemma or of difficulty, prayer is an available source. The ship of prayer may sail through all temptations, doubts and fears, straight up to the throne of God; and though she may be outward bound with only griefs, and groans, and sighs, she shall return freighted with a wealth of blessings!"*

**Charles Spurgeon**



## FIVE MINUTES MORE

*By Unknown Author  
(Shared by Margaret Burton)*

If you only had Five Minutes More to live,  
Tell me honestly what would you do?  
Are you ready to open that unknown door,  
Does eternity mean life for you?  
Ev'ry word, Ev'ry deed you have said and you've done,  
You sure can't relive them 'nor change anyone.  
In this Five Minutes More, have you peace deep within?  
If not, look to Jesus, Let Him come in.



If you only had Five Minutes More to live,  
Tell me honestly what are your plans?  
Are you ready to face what the judgement brings,  
Is your future in God's holy hands?  
Makes no difference how wretched your past may have been,  
The Saviour is waiting to cleanse ev'ry sin.  
In this Five Minutes More, just repent and receive,  
God's Son holds your future, Only believe.

### ANSWERS TO LAST EDITION'S QUIZ

1. B. A Christmas Carol
2. A. God is with us
3. B. Germany
4. B. Joseph
5. A. Reindeer
6. C. Silver
7. A. Bohemia
8. A. Father Christmas
9. C. Luke
10. B. Poinsettia





A family of tortoises goes on a picnic. They arrive at the park a week later, but realise they've forgotten the salad dressing. They plead with Uncle Tortoise to go back for it.

"No way, you'll eat all the food without me!" Uncle replies.

After assuring him they won't touch the food, he goes off on his way. Two weeks later, the Tortoise family are getting hungry, but no sign of Uncle.

"I'm sure he'll be here soon," says Mumma Tortoise.

Another week goes by. By now the Tortoise family is starving.

"We're all hungry but we promised to wait," says Mumma Tortoise.

Another week goes by and still no sign of Uncle Tortoise.

"I can't take this anymore, we can't starve ourselves" says Daddy Tortoise grabbing the sandwiches and passing them around.

As he takes his first bite, Uncle Tortoise pops up from behind a bush and says "I knew you were going to start without me, I'm not going!"

### What Did He Drink

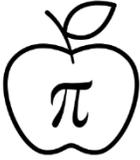


(Answers in the next edition)

1. What process do plants use to convert sunlight into energy?  
A. Respiration B. Photosynthesis C. Fermentation D. Transpiration
2. Which gas do plants absorb from the atmosphere during this process?  
A. Oxygen B. Nitrogen C. Carbon dioxide D. Hydrogen
3. What is the largest mammal currently living on Earth?  
A. African elephant B. Sperm whale C. Blue whale D. Humpback whale
4. Which part of a plant is primarily responsible for absorbing water and minerals from the soil?  
A. Stem B. Leaves C. Flowers D. Roots
5. What type of natural habitat is formed by coral reefs?  
A. Freshwater wetlands B. Desert C. Marine ecosystem D. Tundra
6. Which animal is known for having the longest migration route?  
A. Arctic tern B. Monarch butterfly C. Wildebeest D. Humpback whale
7. Which layer of the Earth's atmosphere contains the ozone layer?  
A. Troposphere B. Stratosphere C. Mesosphere D. Thermosphere
8. What term is used for animals that eat both plants and other animals?  
A. Herbivores B. Carnivores C. Omnivores D. Scavengers
9. Which tree species produces acorns?  
A. Maple B. Birch C. Pine D. Oak
10. What do we call a group of wolves?  
A. Flock B. Herd C. Pack D. Pride

# DINGBATS

Can you guess the popular phrases and sayings?  
(Answers in the next edition)

<p>FINGERS FINGERS FINGERS</p> <p>1</p>	 <p>2</p>	<p>→ Five</p> <p>Five</p> <p>3</p>	 <p>4</p>
<p>TROUBLE TROUBLE</p> <p>5</p>	 <p>6</p>	<p>RECORD</p> <p>7</p>	<p>JACK</p> <p>8</p>
<p>MAN</p> <p>9</p>	<p>→ AID AID AID AID</p> <p>10</p>	<p>LI NK</p> <p>11</p>	 <p>12</p>
<p>SOMEWHERE</p>  <p>13</p>	<p>DR. DO</p> <p>14</p>	<p>LEM ADE</p> <p>15</p>	 <p>16</p>
 <p>17</p>	<p>O N A E C</p>  <p>18</p>	<p>BAD</p> <p>19</p>	 <p>20</p>

## YOUR MAGAZINE NEEDS YOU



*Got a story to share? A poem? A testimony? A word of encouragement? A funny moment that made you laugh?*

***We'd love to hear from you!***

*Our church magazine is a reflection of **you**—your faith, your journey, your voice.*

*Your contribution can bless and inspire others in ways you may never imagine.*

*No professional writing skills needed—just a willing heart and a few words (or pictures!) from the soul.*

**Please share your contribution for the next magazine  
by Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March**

 *In person to Mariana Wilson*

 *By email to [furroughx@gmail.com](mailto:furroughx@gmail.com)*

 *By Facebook Messenger to  
<https://www.facebook.com/furroughcross>*