

In touch



information from Strand Church

the church at the centre of town

February 2013

FROM THE MINISTER

As I watched the unfolding drama of the helicopter crash in central London in the middle of January, two comments stuck in my mind. The first was a senior policeman who said, "It's a miracle not more people were killed", and the second was a workman on the site who said, "The two men who worked in the cab are always there at 7 am - never late. This morning the children of one of them overslept and did not wake their dad; the other had a rare hold up in his transport to work. Otherwise they would have been dead."

The pilot and a man walking to work were killed, and our hearts go out to their families, even as we give thanks that not more families were bereaved.

Jesus was questioned about his understanding of a disaster in Jerusalem, when a tower fell, killing nineteen people. He brushed aside the idea that the victims had been punished by God and told his hearers to remember that we are all mortal and that we will all one day be in the presence of God.

The issue arises time and again - why one and not another? - why me and not him or her? There are helpful answers to the issue, based on our living on a dynamic planet which inevitably has earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis and other natural disasters, but they are of little comfort to the victims. My way of coping is to praise God for all that is good, and not to blame God for what is bad, because I believe that God wants the best for each one of us. Logically,

this may seem inconsistent, but it helps me to believe God is working for good in the world and so I believe in the miracles and thanks to God for them; and I pray God into the lives of those who suffer. My faith is based on a belief that that God's love is ultimately demonstrated in a wrongly convicted man nailed to a cross, who was raised from death through the same love.



ROGER WHITEHEAD



Snippets

For some time the Elders Meeting has been concerned about the high target given to the congregation for its **contribution to the national Ministry & Mission Fund** out of which ministers' stipends are paid. The Elders Meeting has offered a lower figure, and we are awaiting the response from the Synod. It was agreed to change the **church bank account name** to "Strand Church United Reformed". A meeting about the **Safeguarding** will be held when the Strand Centre trustees and volunteers are also invited to discuss protection for children and vulnerable adults.

Local Mission and Ministry Review

The national Church wants to develop the existing system of Accompanied Self-Appraisal for Ministers to include seeking the views of the Elders Meeting on what its minister should concentrate on, and feed this into the Appraisal via a Synod appointed Accompanier. The aim is for church and minister to see if the church needs to reassess its mission and if so, how best the minister can help in this. The minister's job description and the church's profile would be amended in the light of this process. The Elders Meeting welcomed the proposals believing that they followed good practice in other organisations. It is likely that the process will take place in Dawlish some time this year.

Theme for bicentenary celebrations

The Meeting has been considering how best to mark the congregation's bicentenary next year. A paper was discussed suggesting that the focus might be on how to develop the caring work of the congregation. Within our small fellowship there is a huge diversity of spiritual gifts, intellectual ability and life experience and the focus might be on how to develop this and share it. It was agreed that this would be discussed in the morning at the elders' Quiet Day in March and in the afternoon there might be a time of led spiritual reflection.

It is likely that the lower end of The Strand will be closed from 28th January for two weeks for South West Water to divert a water main. The work is expected to take fifteen weeks.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

A card was received too late for inclusion in last month's *In Touch* from Eva Turi from Rákóczi, Hungary, "Dear Friends I wish you a Merry Christmas and all the best for the coming year. Love from Eva."

STRAND CENTRE REPORT

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People

Sadly **Alethe Virgin** has resigned as **Chair** of the Strand Community trust for personal reasons. No replacement has been appointed.

Tracey Phillips has been appointed Centre Manager. She and her husband Dave were thanked for the work which they had both done in planning the kitchenette and helping with the administration. A meeting will be held this month for key people in the Centre and the Church to meet Tracey. One of the first projects is turning the vestry into a Centre Office which would also be a place for small meetings and confidential conversations.

As his final act as **Treasurer Martin Charlesworth** presented the Centre's accounts for 2012. He was thanked for all he had done, in particular reducing the fuel bills by 25%. Tracey Phillips will be the Administrative Treasurer with responsibility for book keeping until a new Treasurer is appointed. It was agreed to approach the Strand Church's examiner, D A McAdam to be the examiner for the Centre.

Report on the Centre's finances

Martin Charlesworth reported that there were several bills to be paid which exceeded the money available, and the Centre Executive is seeking to rectify the situation in several ways. These include stepping up **grant applications**, most of which will be done locally; reducing expenditure, in particular the high cost of heating the Centre; revising the letting charges in the light of the cost of running the building; and ensuring that the Inspire Café should become a separate unit within the Centre, with an expectation that it would contribute significantly to the Centre's income. Tenants are being sought for the top floor of the hall which is now vacant after the closure of the Third Age Group.

Photocopier

The leasing company is no longer covering the cost of materials to keep the old photocopier going, and so a refurbished machine is to be leased by the Strand Centre, and other users (including the church) will be charged for use.

**For more up-to-date information
about the church visit www.StrandChurch.org.uk
About the centre visit www.StrandCentre.org.uk**



NEWS FROM THE COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

A world-wide partnership of churches in mission

A MAJOR CYCLONE IN SAMOA

As you may be aware a major Cyclone hit Samoa wreaking havoc greater than the 2009 tsunami. CWM has made an initial response to the sister Church. Dr. Salevao, General Secretary of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa writes, "Once again we are having to go through the painful process of grieving for our lost loved ones, houses, possession and even hope. Houses have been totally destroyed; lives literally torn to pieces. We are awaiting a report on the extent of the damage to our members' homes and properties as well as the damage to our churches, halls and ministers' residences. The first phase of our assistance has to be in terms of basic needs - food, water, clothing; shelter, etc. Then there is a lot of rebuilding and recovery to do here."

THE MAMRE COMMUNITY IN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IN MADAGASCAR

Mamre was the place where Abraham welcomed the three angels. This Reformed community of twenty Mamre Sisters sends us Christmas greetings each year. Here are some extracts from the accompanying letter. The three pillars of their vocation are prayer, celibacy consecrated to God and community calling.

We are thinking seriously about earning our livelihood in order to pay for all we need: our food, home, clothes, training, medical care. There are already a few small projects on the go: growing green vegetables with the 'weekly' method, cabbage farming, raising hens and ducks. As human and religious beings, we hold together these two pillars of our life, spiritual nourishment and bodily nourishment just as Jesus did in the gospels.

Everything is problematical in Madagascar because of the continuing political crisis and there is corruption everywhere. One consequence is that the Roman Catholic sisters cannot help us any more and we are training the young sisters.

The National Synod of our Church took place this year. Five sisters went, and four of them kept up a prayer vigil the whole time whilst Sr Angeline attended all the meetings. There was a special service to thank God for the new officers of the Church led by Sr Josephine whilst Sr Angeline did the sermon and the prayer of blessing for them - requested to do so by the Moderator.

The children at Horeb and Ambavahadimitafo had the privilege of each receiving a beautiful parcel of presents thanks to the 'Samaritan's Purse'. Every child was happy to go home with a parcel. We carry on with our work of teaching the Bible to Prisoners in Antanimora. We invite you all to come to see us!



BUILDING WORK

Contract

The Strand Trustees agreed to a contract for Phase 1 of the work at a cost of around £51,000. Two final grants of £2,000 and £500 through the good offices of John Clatworthy and the offer of a loan of £5,000 meant that £51,000 was available. The Trustees had decided that, because work had to be started before the end of January or they would lose two of the grants worth £35,000 it was necessary to sign the contract even if there were no money to pay the professional fees. The Trustees have insisted that no additional work is agreed without approval in order to keep costs within the budget.

Building work

We have discovered that the lights in the auditorium are fed by rubber covered wires which is illegal. They will need to be rewired. Hopefully the additional costs can be covered from the contingency fund. Ideally it is hoped to take advantage of that work to replace the existing light fittings which are expensive to run and change bulbs with new ones, each separately dimmable.

Appeals

Jean Potter has launched her Vice-Chair Epiphany Appeal on the theme of 'Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh' seeking donations of £500, £250 and £100 to equip the kitchenette. The initial response seems encouraging. There was a good article in the *Dawlish Gazette* launching the public appeal. We are asking local firms for their support and hanging a banner outside to draw attention to the Appeal.

The refurbishment of The Strand

It is likely that the lower end of The Strand will be closed from 28th January for two weeks for South West Water to divert a water main.

During refurbishment parking in The Strand is free.

OFFERINGS AND OTHER SPECIAL INCOME

	Sunday Offerings*		Special Collections and Events	
	2012	2011		
December	£1,278	£1349	Coffee Mornings in Dec (2011 = £173)	£108
Year total	£19,107	£15,447	Coffee Mornings (for the year)	£1,736
			Coffee Mornings (in year 2011)	£1,245

* includes standing orders etc but not Gift Aid rebates

Christmas Offerings		Christmas Eve (St Petrock's)	£84
Carol Service (Water Aid)	£33	Christmas Day service (Xian Aid)	£150
Crib Service (Children's Hospice)	£57	Christmas Day lunch (Xian Aid)	£316



Thinking Ahead: Pentecost and Church Anniversaries

The fourth of our Synod's excellent meetings to share ideas about special Sundays in the church's year is **at Collumpton URC on 16th February at 10.00**. All welcome: help our worship leaders be inspired and imaginative.

St David's Weekend

Saturday 2nd March at 7 pm Welsh Evening

Traditional dinner including leek soup, Welsh lamb and Welsh cakes followed by Welsh entertainment. Booking is essential for catering purposes.

Sunday 3rd March at 10.30 Annual Welsh Service

Guest Preacher: Revd Vincent Canning who is planning a service around Welsh hymnody. Not to be missed.

Safeguarding

Special meeting on 11th March at 2.30 pm

Safeguarding is about more than children! Jan Murphy, the Synod Safeguarding Officer is holding a seminar for the Church and Centre and all who are even remotely involve with vulnerable adults or children in the church or the centre are urged to attend.

PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING CONVERSATIONS

As the debates on same-sex marriage and related topics continue, the URC has suggested seven principles for conducting the discussion reflecting Christian understanding of respecting one another.

I will listen carefully before responding, checking out what I am hearing

I will express myself with courtesy and respect to every sister/brother who participates in these conversations, especially toward those with whom I disagree

I will express my disagreements and critical engagements with others without insulting, making fun of or slandering anyone personally

I will not exaggerate others' convictions or perspectives nor make unfounded prejudicial assumptions based on labels, categories or stereotypes

I will always work towards extending the benefit of the doubt in the spirit of generosity

I will honour my own discomfort of things said or done in our conversations

I will allow myself and others to change as a result of our conversations



FOR YOUR PRAYERS



Lent begins on 13th February

This year's Christian Aid theme is *Count Your Blessings 2013*, and there is a calendar suggesting a bite-sized reflection to inspire thanksgiving for the blessings in your life. Copies available from Roger Whitehead.

Ash Wednesday Services 13th

10.00 United Service with the Methodists in the hall

7.30 Torbay URC Churches Service at Furrough Cross (lifts available)

Both are Communion Services which will include voluntary ashing.

Lent theme

We are planning a special theme in our services throughout Lent this year.

commitment for life

This year we have one prayer that is split into 10 separate sections. Each prayer is followed by suggested action that is designed to help you focus your prayers and time of reflection.

We pray for the hungry of this world, those who are caught up in the cycle of poverty that denies some people food. Grant that we will take a lead in giving generously. We are committed to life.

Action: *As you write your shopping list, thank God for the sheer choice and availability of food we have. Thank God for all the abundant riches he has provided us with and ask him to give us the strength, will and wisdom to share that wealth with all of our brothers and sisters across the world.*

Thank you

Marie Coulthard writes: "I would simply like to say thank you to everyone for their prayers and good wishes, which have upheld me through what has been a difficult time. I have felt the calm of God's presence guiding me through the days of uncertainty and give thanks that the future looks good."

The Prayer Meeting every Friday at 11.30 Carey Room

Our prayer meeting is a quiet time for reflection and prayer for the church and specific individuals, including those on the weekly prayer sheet. We welcome those who can come only for part of the time.

The Bible Study Group every Friday at 1.00 Carey Room

We look at a variety of subjects and always find there is more to a passage than we originally thought. We bring our lunch at 12.30 and chat beforehand.

SERVICES IN FEBRUARY



Morning Services at 10.30 unless otherwise stated

3	Baptism & Holy Com.	Revd Roger Whitehead †
10	Pulpit Exchange	Margaret Noel (St Gregory's) † *
17	Prayer for Healing	Revd Roger Whitehead †
24	Café Worship	Revd Roger Whitehead †

* All the churches in Churches Together have invited a preacher from a different tradition. Roger Whitehead is at Cofton and Jean Potter is at Starcross.

Other services

13	10.00	Ash Wednesday United Service with Methodists †
24	6.30	Iona Service with the Methodists in our building §

REGULAR CHURCH EVENTS

Thursdays 10.00 - 12.00 **Coffee Morning** (with play area for children not 21st) †
2.30 - 3.30 **Keep Fit** †

Fridays 11.30 - 12.30 **Prayer Meeting** (from 11th) Carey Room
12.30 - 2.00 **Bible Study Group** (from 11th) Carey Room

§ in the auditorium † in the Strand Hall ɹ Strand Hall lounge # in the foyer

Not meeting: Mon & Tues Coffee Mornings; Table Top; Knit & Chat;

ADDITIONAL MEETINGS IN FEBRUARY

(on our premises unless otherwise indicated)

Wed	13	10.00	Ash Wednesday Service †
		7.30	Torbay URC Churches Ash Wed Service , Furrough Cross
Fri	15	10.00	Dawlish Home Aid (for St Gregory's) † ¥
Sat	16	8.30	Men's Breakfast St Mary's Hall, Dawlish Warren
		10.00	Thinking Ahead: Pentecost & Anniversaries (see weekly sheet)
Mon	25	6.00	Elders Meeting ɹ

¥ **Note: Home Aid** will be in the hall this month.

THE STRAND CHURCH

Minister	Revd Roger Whitehead	28 High Street	889 098
Acting Sec	Mrs Jean Potter	1, Ivy Lane, Teignmouth	773856
Bookings	Mrs Janet Garland	10, Luscombe Terrace	888312
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