

**Methodist Church Circuit** 

# IN TOUCH

August 2012

## **Some Thoughts from the Manse**



August is here again, and despite a year of rather mixed weather, we still continue to welcome visitors to our Methodist worship on Scilly. As Mary and I come towards the end of our third year here it is good to reflect on how different our life has been over the last three years. At the time it was quite a shock to be invited to

serve in an island community, and I expect we, like most people, were quickly won over by the beautiful location. Neither of us had ever been to Scilly before, we didn't really know what to expect, and looking back it was an exciting time for us both. Mary and I have always said 'We will go where we are sent', but never thought that we would be sent to a community such as this. The only experience I had ever had of island life was in my younger days when for a number of years I would visit a relative on the Shetlands, but I now realize that Scilly is a very different place to Shetland.

These islands are tiny compared to those in the north, our population is much smaller and is much more dependent on our summer visitors, and our transport links to the mainland are certainly not on the same scale. The size of our population is very similar to that of a small village on the mainland and yet we need to provide the infrastructure to service those who live here, which means a health service, schools, and care for the elderly, all things we would expect only to find in a town on the mainland.

It is a great joy to me to be so involved in this island community and to represent our church in every area of island life. I am the appointed NHS chaplain at our hospital, which brings me into contact with many families, and it is good to be part of the team who make our hospital such a special place. I take assemblies in the school and have close contact with the staff, and I am called upon from time to time to lead prayers when the Council of the Isles of Scilly meets to debate the business of our Islands. This is certainly a fine place to serve as Methodist minister, and I thank God for sending us here and for His provision in meeting our needs.

It is against this background that the Methodist Church seeks to be a witness and sign of the saving grace of God among the Island people. This is by far the smallest Methodist Circuit in Great Britain, with a total membership of just seventy friends. (Most Circuits in Britain today have a membership of about 500.)

We are proud to have two fine chapels on the Isles of Scilly; one on St Martin's with a membership of twelve who are very committed to serving their tiny island community, and another on St Mary's. Our church on St Mary's holds three services most Sundays throughout the year despite having a membership of less than sixty souls. We give

thanks for the warm relationship with those who worship in our parish churches and also with the Roman Catholic community.

Throughout the year we continue in mission, maintaining regular worship, visiting those at home, caring for the elderly and, especially on St Mary's, providing a year-round work with children through our children's church, Seekers meetings and our annual holiday club.

During the summer months much of our mission is to the many holiday makers who visit these beautiful islands. Our worship is planned with visitors in mind, they are invited to our mid-week activities, and we rejoice that there are many who come here every year and feel very much a part of our church. At one of our recent fellowship evenings on St Mary's I asked some friends to think of a verse from the Bible that helps to sustain them on their journey through life. It soon became clear that it really depended on what was going on in their lives at the time. One said that in times of despair we may well relate to the words of the psalmist 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me'. These, of course, were the very words spoken by Jesus upon the Cross of Calvary. Another said that in times of joy and of celebration, we might think of those words of Paul to Timothy 'The Lord provides all for us to enjoy'.

I wonder if there is a verse of scripture that you think sums up our walk with God – please do let me know. I expect a popular verse would be those profound words from the first epistle of John 'God is love'.

I remember as a child living in South London and every day walking to school past a rather severe looking chapel with what was known in those days as a 'wayside pulpit'. It really was just a noticeboard where a verse of scripture was displayed for all to see. The text that I always remember were the words, which I now know are from Paul's Epistle to the Romans, that red 'The wages of sin is death!. . . but the free gift of God is Eternal Life in Christ Jesus our Lord!'

As a child I had little understanding of how important these words really were, but now can see that maybe these are some of the most important words to be found in the pages of the New Testament; indeed some scholars have described these words as 'the Gospel in a nutshell'. To me what Paul says rings true! When we look at our world we see people all around who have turned away from the ways of God. Instead of following His ways and His values, so often we deny them in our daily lives, and time and time again throughout the ages, instead of choosing that which is good we have chosen that which is bad, and instead of choosing that which leads to life we have chosen that which leads to death.

History records how nations war with nations instead of working for peace and reconciliation. The selfishness of many has to millions being denied the very basics of life, while others look the other way.

Even here on the beautiful Isles of Scilly, at times relationships break down through lack of love and our lack of regard for others.

Paul's words remind us how we stand before our Almighty and Sovereign God, and Paul having done this goes on to remind us of the Good News of the Gospel. God treats us better than we deserve – For the wages of sin is death – BUT the free gift of God is Eternal Life in Christ Jesus our Lord!

The wages of sin is death, but despite our selfishness God still loves us. The wages of sin is death, but despite our shortcomings God still invites us to take our place in His Kingdom, and yes, the wages of sin is death but God, despite our attitude to others, still forgives us.

On our journey through life there is much we can achieve, but there is nothing any of us can do to achieve the gift of Life Eternal. We cannot gain the gift of Eternal Life by our good intentions or by our efforts, and we cannot even receive the promise of Life Eternal through our devotion to our church, or through regular worship. The only way for us to receive Eternal Life is for us to receive that free gift of God which is ours today in Christ Jesus.

What a joy it is to be living here on the beautiful Isles of Scilly, and what a joy it is to have so many opportunities to share the Good News of the Gospel in this island community. In good times and bad, in the summer with all our visitors, and in the winter with the faithful few, we meet for worship each and every Sunday and give thanks for the generosity of our gracious God in treating us far better than we deserve, and each Sunday we pray that through the witness of His church many more will learn of how God so loves the world.

St Paul also said, 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God to bring salvation to all who will believe'. May we never be ashamed of our precious Christian faith, may we at all times and in all circumstances be full of thanksgiving, and may our faith in a loving God continue to be seen in our love for one another.

So as Mary and I start out on another year on these remote islands, we do indeed give thanks, for our Sovereign God does treat us better than we deserve. We rejoice in the love we have received from the good folk who surround us, we give thanks for the human kindness that is very much part of this island community, and we pray that in the coming years we will be strengthened by our Lord to serve and to care for all who live around us and the visitors who love our islands so much.

And so it is that I remain, by the grace of God, the Methodist minister on these fine islands for a while.

Charlie Gibbs

### News from St. Martin's

It was good that some members of the St. Martin's congregation were able to cross to St. Mary's for the Circuit Service at Carreg Dhu Gardens, and later share lunch with others who had taken along a picnic. The gardens are such a tranquil place to worship and join in fellowship, surrounded by beautiful trees and plants and the cheeky tame birds. They are a real testament to those who initiated, brought to them fruition and have willingly maintained them over the years.

A mix of locals and visitors were led in worship by Charlie, his friend Barry, and Christopher, with Rose and Mervyn providing the music. It was a special time and an important one for the two congregations to be together.

Folk at St. Martin's were pleased to welcome Rev. Jane Willcock back to lead worship on July 15<sup>th</sup>. As a Local Preacher Jane had taken services on St. Martin's when holidaying several years ago, but had not been back to preach since her ordination in 2003. Our thanks to Jane for leading a service whilst on holiday.

Gladys and Daph have recently had cataracts removed and Steve Daly has returned home after a spell in the local hospital. They are in our thoughts and we trust they will recover well.

Heather Terry

# **Holiday Club**

This year's week-long Holiday Club 'On Your Marks' is being held from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> to Friday 17th August.

All Primary age children are welcome.

Anyone who is interested in helping in any way, please contact Sonia Crompton on 423816 out of school hours.



### **Action for Children**

Our collection of two pence pieces alongside the outer wall of St Mary's Chapel has proved a very worthwhile fundraiser. Many of our visitors are contributing to the line of coins and locals are now putting theirs in special boxes - to keep them much cleaner!

Sunday July 8th was celebrated as Action for Children's Sunday when envelopes for gifts and free bookmarks were available in the pews. Many envelopes were filled, and as they continue to be handed in, we shall not know how much they have raised for a while yet.

Very many thanks to all who have contributed – on behalf of the deprived and disabled children who will benefit.

Gwen Clarkson Action for Children Representative

# Reading of St Mark's Gospel

On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> August at 8pm we are planning a very special event to take place in our chapel – the reading of Mark's Gospel. This will take about 1½ hours, and will include the singing of hymns to go with the readings. We need your help.

We need readers to help make this a very special time. If you can help, please do let our minister know. For this to be done well we will need about ten readers.

If you have never heard the whole of Mark's Gospel read in one act of worship, come along and witness how moving this can be. This will truly be a wonderful evening and one to remember!

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People are like tea bags - you have to put them in hot water before you know how strong they are.

# Some visitors to our church this year

The Rev Andrew Bell will be with us on Scilly from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> August. Andrew is a Superintendent Minister of a large circuit in Essex, and is also Chaplain to the University in Colchester. Andrew will be leading a fellowship evening on St Mary's on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> August, and sharing in the leading of worship on both St Mary's and St Martin's on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Andrew will be pleased to visit you at your home. This is his third visit to our islands and we look forward to his visit.

The Rev Vinaya Moses and his family are with us from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> August. Vinaya and his family are from India, where he has been a minister for many years. He is a fine Biblical scholar and evangelist, and is at present serving in the Cornwall Methodist District. Come and meet him and his family at our fellowship evening on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> on St Mary's; this will be a special time with friends who have much to share with us. On the Saturday evening Vinaya's son Jonny will be playing the piano for us in St Mary's chapel; this will be a blessing to us all, and on the Sunday they will be sharing in worship with us all both on St Martin's and on St Mary's.

Mrs Lucille Rowse is in Scilly from Friday  $28^{th}$  September until Wednesday  $3^{rd}$  October. Lucille is the secretary for Local Preachers in the Cornwall Methodist District. She will be leading a fellowship evening on Friday  $28^{th}$  on St Mary's and a study day on St Martin's on the Saturday. She will also be sharing in worship on St Mary's in both the morning and evening of Sunday  $30^{th}$  September.

Later in the year, in November, we welcome Chris Clark and John Hogarth who will be with us for a week leading fellowship and worship.

We are delighted that these Methodist friends are coming to visit our islands to lead us in fellowship and worship. Please put these dates in your diaries to be sure not to miss their visits. It is indeed a great joy to welcome visitors from our worldwide church family. We remember each of these friends in our prayers and pray that we will be greatly blessed by their ministry to us here.

### Street Pastors take to the beach in Whitstable

Volunteer 'Street Pastors' will take to Whitstable's beaches on Friday nights throughout the summer in what is believed to be the nation's first ever scheme of its kind to operate on the beach.

The Street Pastors are not there to evangelize or convert people to Christianity, but to offer support to Whitstable's night time beach goers. Throughout the summer, they will wander the beaches, offering assistance to anyone who needs it. That may involve giving away water or flip flops, helping people to get a taxi home, or simply proving a listening ear.

All of Whitstable's fourteen churches have joined forces to put the pastors on the beaches after the idea was hatched by the local police and Tankerton Evangelical Church. They identified a problem with young people drinking on the beaches at night and making themselves vulnerable.

The Co-ordinator, Lee Russell, says, "We are really grateful for the support of all the churches working together, in providing pastors, members of the prayer team, and financial backing."

"It's a fantastic thing having this common vision," added the Rev. Helen Letley, Minister of St John's Methodist Church. "This is about discipleship in action and demonstrating who we are as Christian people, so offering God's love in terms of active assistance."

Street Pastor schemes, set up and supported by the <u>Ascension Trust</u>, are widespread, with over 10,000 trained volunteers in around 250 teams throughout the UK. But this is believed to be the first project to put pastors on Britain's beaches. Pastors receive a full 12 days of training, which includes sea safety.

"My dream is that this is a good news story in our town," said the Rev Steve Coneys, Team Rector at Whitstable. "This is something which round the country seems to be received as unambiguously good news. Ordinary people get this."

### **Religious education**

On the Isles of Scilly, the RE taught in our classrooms is defined in a document called 'Awareness, Mystery and Value'. The document's title refers to three basic aspects of RE; to become aware of issues around us, to study the sense of mystery (or the supernatural) and to explore the moral/ethical dimensions of life.

But where does this document come from, and who decided that it should be the way things are done here on the Isles of Scilly? We asked the RE adviser for the Council of the Isles of Scilly, David Hampshire, some questions.

How did the RE syllabus come into being?

Every five years a local authority has to review the agreed syllabus to be followed in its community and controlled schools under legislation passed in 1993. In 2010, the Standing Advisory Council for RE (SACRE) on the Isles asked the Council to form an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to look at different syllabuses it might adopt and explored whether a bespoke syllabus could be designed for the Isles. In the end it chose to adopt the syllabus for North Somerset, Somerset, BANES and Bristol authorities, with some modifications to content which related to the particular situation of the Isles.

So what is local about the syllabus here on the Isles of Scilly?

The local aspect of the syllabus is the content that pupils learn which relates to the rich religious traditions of these Isles. That would include Neolithic and iron age settlements, the role of the monastic communities here on the Isles, the importance of great people like John Wesley and Methodism as well as Christianity here today. It also has a focus on how religious life on the Isles has changed and how exposure to new religious traditions impacts on individuals and families as a reflection of changes that have occurred across Britain.

Many churchgoers lament the decline in knowledge of the Christian faith among young people today, is RE in any way to blame for this?

It has to be said that this is an issue across Britain. From 1944 RE was predominantly teaching the Bible to children but by 1988 this had changed significantly. In the 1988 Education Reform Act, schools were no longer seen to be places of religious induction - perhaps with the exception of some Roman Catholic, Anglican and Jewish schools - and the focus is much less on 'learning our religion'. The challenge to the churches is one of evangelisation and catechesis. Communities have to explore how they can do this and how they can engage with young people. This has to be seen in the context of wider social change where the institution of the churches became less important to people as the welfare state took over many of its roles. In truth RE is not to blame for

the decline of knowledge of the Christian faith - which is still the major subject to be studied as part of RE - but wider social forces and, at times, the inertia of the churches themselves. To lay blame at the feet of RE is to place it where it is easy and makes no demands upon ourselves.

Can you explain how RE balances the teaching of Christianity with other world faiths?

About thirty percent of RE will be focussed around the other principal religions represented in Great Britain; these are: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. In many ways when we are looking at non-Christian traditions we are giving pupils windows into other people's experiences. They will not, in the time available, be able to experience the fullness of these traditions and it is not the intention that they do so, as they can with Christianity to which they are bound - culturally at least. There is an issue, though, nationally about the teaching of Christianity as it is often much less well taught than the other religions and that is an issue all schools need to take seriously.

### What is the role of a SACRE?

SACREs advise the Local Authority on RE. (NOTE, it is peculiar to the Isles of Scilly that the SACRE does not advise on collective worship; because the school is C of E voluntary controlled, the Foundation Governors are responsible for collective worship) SACRE has a role in supporting RE and also giving advice to teachers on how best to teach and resource RE. It is potentially one of the most influential bodies in terms of education in England today especially where it works with schools, the authority and national bodies.

The SACRE is a Council appointed body and relies on the goodwill and commitment of people who care about RE in the community's schools. If you would like to help in this important task, please contact the Clerk to the SACRE, Peter Laverock at the Town Hall. Tel 424018

There is a website with lots more detail on the RE syllabus; <a href="http://amv.somerset.gov.uk/">http://amv.somerset.gov.uk/</a>

SACREs have a national association which campaigns for improvement in RE teaching <a href="http://www.nasacre.org.uk">http://www.nasacre.org.uk</a>

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### Some howlers from children

The people who followed the Lord were called the 12 decibels.

The epistles were the wives of the apostles.

### Ambassadors for Christ - serving the local church

A survey of homes in the parish of All Saints, just outside Truro, resulted in an obvious desire or an acknowlegement in those questioned to find out about God. Those involved in the survey visited 2000 homes - 357 people completed the survey. Each person was invited to choose one option from 5 multiple choice questions.

Question one: 'What do you believe about God?'

36% believe that God is close, not far away or a Force or Non existent or anything else either.

Question two: 'What do you believe happens at the end of our lives?'

36% answered that they were not sure, 20% that we die and that's it, 12% believe we return to earth as another person whilst 12% believe we all go to heaven. 16% believe that some go to heaven and some go to hell.

Question three: 'What do you believe about Jesus Christ?'

Only 45 thought that he didn't exist at all, 17% that he was a man but that's it, 26% believe that He was a prophet or messenger from God.

Question four: 'If you could ask God one question would it be one of the following?'

Why am I on earth? Why is there so much suffering? Why don't you show yourself? Why did you make the earth? Not surprisingly the largest %(55) was to the question Why is there so much suffering?

Question five: 'If you could know God personally would you be interested?'

55% answered positively to this one.

I know that we can use numbers to our advantage but the questions asked to those in that area probably reflect the hidden interest in every community and ours. Jesus said 'Go then to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples; baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you, and I will be with you always, to the end of the age.'

Let us take every opportunity that God provides to let others know about God, His Son and the Holy Spirit and life in all its fullness.

Mary Ratcliffe

## **Spring Harvest**

Merryn and Vicki Smith would like to hear from you if you are interested in joining them in a visit to Spring Harvest at Minehead during the first week of this event, March 30<sup>th</sup>- April 4<sup>th</sup> 2013.

Spring Harvest is a Teaching and Worship event for everyone. Held at Butlin's Holiday Camp it offers accommodation and all the facilities of Butlin's. There is an incredible kid's programme run by passionate specialists. With other children of their age this is greatly enjoyed. Vibrant worship and brilliant Bible teaching means that you come back refreshed indeed. The theme next year is The Source, Encountering Jesus today.

Please look at the programme which is on the sideboard and contact Merryn and Vicki for further details.

I have been encouraged by the response to attend the Methodist Women in Britain Conference at Treloyan in November. I pray Merryn and Vicky too may be encouraged by our response to this opportunity to go away together.

Mary Ratcliffe

# **August Birthdays**



This month we send our love and best wishes to Jenny Burrows, Neil Didlick, Sybil Gandy, Rev. Charlie Gibbs, Anne Gurr, Peter Laverock, Daphne Perkins, Jeremiah Roberts, Paula Rose, Katie Smith, Rebecca Smith, Alan Terry and Julia Walder.

Happy Birthday to you
To God's name be true
Happy Birthday to all of you
Happy Birthday to you!

# **Church Gift Day – Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September**

We will be celebrating the abundance of God's provision in our lives at our Harvest Thanksgiving on the morning of Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September, and again that evening at our special Harvest Songs of Praise.

We give thanks to all who give week by week to provide for the ministry and the mission of our church, and we now look forward to the opportunity to make a special gift at our annual church gift day, which this year is on our harvest weekend on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September.

On this day our minister will be in the Manse from 10am until 7.30pm to receive your gifts, to greet you and to offer refreshments. Please put this date in your diary and help to make this a very special day for our church.

The Methodist church is pleased to be an important part of this island community. The people of these islands look to us in times of need and in times of celebration. Local people over many generations have been married in our chapel, have had their children baptized, and have looked to us for the funerals of their loved ones. Our minister and members of our church visit the homes of the sick and the elderly; we work closely with our island school and young people, and seek to offer care to all in need. We offer a warm welcome to those who visit our islands, and love to have them with us at Sunday worship.

This year our weekly offerings have not met the costs of maintaining our ministry, mission and buildings. Because of this we ask you to give generously so that we may further the good work of our church among the people of these islands.

If you cannot come to the Manse on September  $15^{th}$ , please send your gift by post to: The Minister, The Manse, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0JT.

We give thanks for all that is past, and we continue to trust in God for all that is to come.

Charles R. Gibbs Methodist minister

## Don't blame the poor, say churches

The Methodist Church, Baptist Union of Great Britain and United Reformed Church are accusing the Government of continuing a trend of blaming the poor as new proposals to redefine poverty have been announced.

'These proposals risk further stigmatising the poor in the eyes of voters and the media', said Paul Morrison, Public Issues Adviser for the Methodist Church. 'It is universally acknowledged that poverty is a relative concept. These proposals seek to undermine the idea that relative poverty matters, by focusing on other issues. At its worst it will seek to measure the 'faults' of the poor, further blaming them for poverty.'

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# Methodist Church launches interactive web map on new website

The Methodist Church has launched an interactive web map of its churches in Britain, combining Methodist data with information from the Office of National Statistics, the Church of England, and Action for Children. The launch of the web map coincides with the launch of the new and improved Methodist Church website where the map can be viewed.

The map has been designed to enable people to view and explore churches, fellowship groups, projects, schools, and much more within their local contexts. Visit: <a href="https://www.methodist.org.uk">www.methodist.org.uk</a>

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# **Colourful writing**

The foreign student, writing a letter to the superintendent of the mission society, desired to end with the words: 'May Heaven preserve you.'

Not being quite confident of the meaning of 'preserve', he looked it up in a dictionary. When the letter reached the director, it ended with the words: 'And may Heaven pickle you.'

## Think on These Things

Sometimes when you're feeling important, Sometimes when your ego's in bloom, Sometimes when you take it for granted You're the best qualified in the room.

Sometimes when you feel that your going Would leave an unfillable hole,
Just follow this simple instruction
And see how it humbles your soul.

Take a bucket and fill it with water, Put your hands in it up to your wrists, Pull them out and the hole that remains Is the measure of how you'd be missed.

You may splash as you please when you enter,
You may stir up the water galore,
But stop, and you'll find in a minute
That it looks just the same as before.

The moral of this is quite simple, Just do the best that you can. Be proud of yourself, but remember, There is no indispensable man.

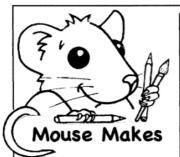
With thanks to Trinity Methodist Church, Royton

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One day we stand to lose everything - except those qualities that have eternal value. *David Watson* 

The weaker we feel, the harder we lean on God. And the harder we lean, the stronger we grow. *Joni Eareckson Tada* 

Never make the blunder of trying to forecast the way God is going to answer your prayer. *Oswald Chambers* 



Do you remember to PRAISE and THANK God for all He is and all He does?

Psalm 89 verse 52 says: "**The Lord** 

deserves praise for ever more

Cut out and keep these cards to remind you to praise God at all times!



"You are my source of strength -I will sing praises to you'

Psalm 69:34









71 Sr

## Fellowship and Study Evenings - September and October 2012

Seeking together to be disciples of Jesus today

Meeting on Friday evenings at 7.30 pm in the Manse. Refreshments served at  $8.45\ pm$ .

29<sup>th</sup> September An evening with Lucille Rowse who is the

preacher's secretary of the Cornwall Methodist

District

Revelation 3: 14-22. Led by Charlie Gibbs

12<sup>th</sup> October An evening with Barbara Hasler who always

brings a fresh challenge to our discipleship.

19<sup>th</sup> October An evening with Len Michell who shares with us

his Biblical knowledge and scholarship.

26<sup>th</sup> October An evening with Keith Dickson, the

Superintendent of the Newlyn Fisherman's

Mission.

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This is the Circuit magazine but it needs your contributions to make sure everyone knows what is happening.

In Touch can be read on line. Just go to our Circuit website <a href="https://www.scillymethodists.co.uk">www.scillymethodists.co.uk</a> and click on the link to the newsletter. Back numbers of In Touch can also be accessed. If you would prefer to read In Touch in this way please let us know and we can save the cost of a paper copy.

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Some material in this magazine was obtained from <a href="https://www.parishpump.co.uk">www.parishpump.co.uk</a>. We thank them for providing material for magazine editors to use.

# **AUGUST SERVICES**

# St Mary's

5th	10.00 am 11.00 am 8.00 pm	Children's Church Rev Charlie Gibbs Rev Charlie Gibbs <i>Holy Communion</i>
12th	9.15 am 11.00 am	Gordon Bird and Beryl Read Rev Charlie Gibbs <i>Holy Communion</i>
	8.00 pm	Rev Charlie Gibbs
19th	10.30 am 8.00 pm	Mary Ratcliffe and David Pender Rev Charlie Gibbs Songs of Praise
26th	9.15 am 11.00 am 8.00 pm	Len Michell and Beryl Read Rev Charlie Gibbs Rev Charlie Gibbs

# St Martin's

5th	11.00 am	Len Michell
12th	6.00 pm	Rev Charlie Gibbs Holy Communion
19th	11.00 am	Rev Charlie Gibbs and Rev V. Moses
26th	11.00 am	David Pender