



NETWORK



Cullompton Baptist Church Magazine for June 2025

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WELCOME & NOTICES

Dear Everyone,

Welcome to the June issue of *'The Network'*.

I want to start by reminding everyone about this Sunday's (June 8th) annual anniversary service. This will be followed by a meal. More details can be found throughout this issue of the *Network*.

Also, I want to draw your attention to the **'Dates for your Diary'** section, where you will find a change to the date of the next Church Fellowship Meeting.

Amongst other topics in this Network is the continued serialization of Gareth's *'History of Cullompton Baptist Church'*. This month's chapter deals with the partnership of Cullompton Baptist Church & Bradninch Baptist Church. It also discusses when this church became an 'Open Membership' church and the start of *Noah's Ark*. As this all happened in recent history, this may be of particular interest to some. As always, as we look backwards on CBC's 325 years, we can be grateful for our church's past & thankful for its present & pray for its future.

I also wish to take this opportunity to apologise for this month's *Network* being sent out late; and why you have seen little of myself & Rev. Glen in May. The two things are linked. On the 1st May Rev Glen & myself took our first holiday since 2019. We normally don't like going away for more than 3-5 nights tops. However, this was to be the holiday of a lifetime & we went away for 12 days! Shortly after returning home we discovered that we had Covid. I feel so blessed because I should have been seriously ill, but I only felt yuk for a couple

of days. Then my regular cocktail of medication kicked in and stopped the cough in its tracks.

Despite not feeling unwell for very long, both Rev. Glen & myself were very drained. That first week is a blur. We slept for 20 hours a day. Even now we are spending most hours of the day sleeping. However I consider myself very fortunate. I had a total loss of smell for 2 weeks & still have distorted taste & smell, but things could have been a lot worse.

God Bless

Rowan

IMPORTANT: There has been, for some time, a problem with the Manse's land line. Therefore, if you need to contact Glen, then please ring his mobile telephone number: **07780 700247**. If you can't get hold of him on his mobile & it is urgent, then please ring Rowan's: **07766 313 400**.

<u>Dates For Your Diaries:</u>		
Sunday, 8 th June 2025	Cullompton Baptist Church from 10:30am	Our annual anniversary service & meal
Monday, 23 rd June 2025	@ 2:15pm (location to be confirmed)	The next ‘The Way Ahead’ group meeting.
Thursday, 26 th June 2025	The Manse @ 10:30am	Deacons’ Meeting
Thursday, 17 th July 2025	The School Room @ 7pm	Church Fellowship PLEASE NOTE change of time.
Saturday, 19 th July 2025	Cullompton Baptist Church @ 12pm	‘Braai In July’ This is a type of barbecue. Please see the ‘Church News’ section for more details.

July’s Network

The deadline for contributions for the July 2025 *Network* will be **Monday, 30th June** & the magazine will be released around the 3rd July.

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PASTOR'S PONDERING'S

Greetings to you all in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.”

Acts 2-17

As I write, we are only a few days away from our 325th birthday which we celebrate on the same day as the birthday of the universal Church. I love the fact we do this as it reminds us that we play our part in something bigger than we are.

It is a time of looking back with thanksgiving for the faithfulness of God and the faithfulness of people.

We are also invited to look forward with expectation.

Peter, in our verse gives us grounds for our expectancy.

The Spirit is poured out on all who call upon the name of the Lord.

This verse is not just about power, but about revelation. God wants to communicate with us and reveal himself to us on an individual and Church level.

I may not have had visions, but I am a dreamer so I have had plenty of dreams. I still do, for the Church.

In **Ephesians 3:14-21**, Paul prays for the Ephesian Church. Among His request's, he wants them to experience the depth, breadth, length and height of his love. I want that for all of you. I want to use those 4 dimensions to share my dreams for our life together.

Deeper

This is about our relationships with God and each other. Prayer, bible studies and sermons, communion and fellowship are the normal means of grace that God has given us to deepen and develop our relationship with God and one another. My prayer is that as we engage with these means of grace, we will grow in to these relationships growing up and growing out in love.

Wider

Our role as Church is to be a Kingdom of priests in our community. This work has become more fruitful over the last couple of years. I long to see more of it in the years to come.

Longer

It is wonderful to see how God has sent us mature believers from a number of nations to help us with the work. The harvest in a growing town is plentiful and the workers are still few. Continue to pray for more workers. The harvest I am speaking of is lost souls. My dream and prayer is simple, more Baptisms and conversions. Lets pray for this every week. Do we really believe that the Gospel changes lives by giving folks new hearts? I do, so let's pray for it.

Higher

When I look at the word higher one thing springs to mind. Everything we do is done in the power of the Holy spirit, in the name of Jesus for the glory of God. Unless we have this etched on our hearts, everything we do will be in vain.

What are your dreams? I would love to hear about them.

Heavenly Father. We ask that your Holy Spirit would fall afresh on us as individuals and as a Church. May we dream dreams for your Church and pray them in to reality. May your will be done among us. Amen.

I want to draw your attention to two dates:

The next deacon's meeting is on **26 June at 10.30am**.

We have needed to change the date of the next fellowship meeting. It is now on **17 July at 7pm** in the school room.

Finally, in the July magazine, I will write a reflection on our recent trip to New York.

God bless and fill you all.

Rev. Glen Graham.

CHURCH NEWS



325 Years of CBC Celebration

By Bianca

On **Sunday, the 8th of June 2025**, straight after the church anniversary service, we will be celebrating our church's 325-year anniversary with a meal together. During a sit down lunch, we will be enjoying a variety of savoury dishes, followed by puddings and cake. Please join us in celebrating the life of our church and let us enjoy a good time of fellowship together.

We have decided to push "Meet the Church" back for now to focus our attention on the great milestone of our church serving the Lord for 325 years!

We look forward to sharing this special date with you all!

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Braai in July & Promise Auction

By Bianca

On **Saturday, 19th of July 2025 at 12pm**, we will be hosting a “***braai***”. A braai is a South African term that is similar to our barbeques. A braai is not just authentic food that is very traditional to the country but also a way of life and a very important aspect of the culture in South Africa. In South Africa, burgers and sausages are not at all something that goes on a braai. Steak, chops, boerewors [a type of sausage meat] and all different kinds of meats are cooked on a braai. Hot and cold salads are served with a braai, mainly depending on the weather, as we braai all year round.

We decided to also host a Promise Auction as a part of this event due to a few requests. Most of us know what Promise Auctions are. We have had these in the past but here is a description for any of our new folk who many not know what it is . A Promise Action is where we auction off any skills or services we may have to our congregation. Ideas of such are: a few hours of gardening, DIY, sewing or anything like that. Other ideas are: to offer to cook for someone, take them shopping or take them out for a tea and cake. These “promises” will be auctioned off for small amounts of money that will go towards church finances.

We hope to see many of you there!

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Just a quick update this month. Throughout the coming weeks, the children will be studying:

- David Becomes King
- Mephibosheth
- The Lord's Prayer
- Forgiveness: The Unforgiving Servant
- Kindness: The Good Samaritan

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LET THERE BE HOPE

By Rev. Glen Graham

Someone once said something on the lines of the quality of our prayer lives is in proportion to our hope. I pray that the below offering will inspire your hope and prayers.

The narrative of the last 5 years encouraged by the media is that life is getting gloomier. Economic collapse, wars both cultural and physical, pandemics and more has played across the world stage and our TV screens.

Pastors and other religious commentators have spoken of a great unravelling of Church and western society. I have done so from our pulpit based on the evidence around me. Throughout my life, I have known nothing other than Church decline. There have been little pockets of renewal from time to time, but the trends seemed to be suggesting more of the same.

I say seemed because a recent report bucks that trend. One of my favourite parables is found in **Mark 4:26-29**. Seed is planted, the seed goes underground and thanks to the ground and the elements springs up to be a fruitful plant. If the Bible Society are to be believed, something has been going on quietly under ground since 2018 unreported. What is more, the Covid accelerated rather than halted this underground growth.

So let's see some of the findings.

Conducted by YouGov, the trend towards decline has stopped. 2 million more people attended Church in 2024 than in 2018.

Gen Z males are the fastest growth area. Gen Z are those aged 15-26. In 2018, 4 per cent of this age group attended Church monthly. Now 16 per cent of women and 21 percent of men in this age group go to Church monthly.

In other age groups the numbers are rising slowly

Stories are coming out about teenagers dragging parents to Church. Small revivals happening on University campuses. Online Christian events for Gen Z folks numbering thousands, these are Christian events.

Bible sales have risen!

In our own Baptist Union 63 per cent of Churches are either growing or holding their own, a sharp increase over a decade ago.

Christians on their own, in small groups and Churches are praying like never before.

This may not be like historic revivals have been, but something slow is happening and the spiritual atmosphere might just be shifting.

Now I find history to be a great teacher, perspective bringer and hope giver. The history of the 18th century, the very century we were planted in has much encouragement to give us.

British society in the early 18th century was as bad as it is today if not worse. The Church was spiritually compromised, corrupt and persecuting each other. The golden age of the puritans came to an end thanks to persecution from within the Church.

A faithful few remained but they were few. They dug in and prayed hard. Then along came the Wesleys and Whitfield and the great awakenings on both sides of the Atlantic. The effects of all this were felt for 150 years in Church and society.

The Baptists were late getting to the party. We got there eventually through the prayerful, courageous faith of one man, Andrew Fuller.

Fuller was a Pastor based in Kettering Northamptonshire.

Seeing we had missed the first great awakening, he was burdened we should not miss the next.

In 1784, he issued a challenge to all the Baptist Churches in the land. Every first Tuesday in the month, every Baptist Church had to meet for at least an hour to pray for revival and Church and transformation of society. I wonder if Cullompton Baptist Church got involved in answering the prayer call of 1784?

The fruit of all this is that Churches grew. Inspired by that prayer call, William Carey answered another call. He went to India with the Gospel and in 1792 the Baptist Missionary Society started and the World Missionary movement as we know it was born.

But what for now? Merely writing what I have written so far has upped my faith and courage levels and given me hope.

I have been praying on and off for revival for 31 years. Could we be on the cusp of something? Like fuller, I don't want to miss out on anything. I am already part of 3 online prayer groups for revival.

I tentatively want to put out an idea called 'First Tuesday'. Every first Tuesday from 7.30pm till 8.30pm either in your homes or in the Sanctuary, let us meet to pray for revival of the Church and transformation of society. I will record a small devotional to go with it which will be sent via email each month.

This morning, I was reading the Parable of the mustard seed. A little seed becomes a bush for birds to take sanctuary.

'The Quiet Revival' which is the name of the Bible Society report is a mustard seed thing. So I hope also is this article. May the seeds in this article germinate in to prayer, faith and hope.

Rev. Glen Graham.

KEEPING UP WITH THE BENTLINS

It is hard to believe that it is 11 months since Gabriel, Karen & Milli joined our church family, albeit for a short while. They came to England from Brazil to learn English. They had taken up work on a farm near to our church. Finally in December 2024 they left Devon to continue their adventures. Over the coming months Bianca has kept us up to date with their activities. The following update should have gone in last month's newsletter, however we had so much to report on other things that it was decided to keep the below back until this month.



Brazilian Update – The Bentlin Family

By Bianca

Hi all

As promised, here is another update on the Bentlin Family, especially focused on the reason they feel God called them to Portugal and a very exciting announcement at the end!

One of the international volunteers, staying at the big house in the little village called Avo, near Coimbra, had grown up in the Baptist faith as a child.

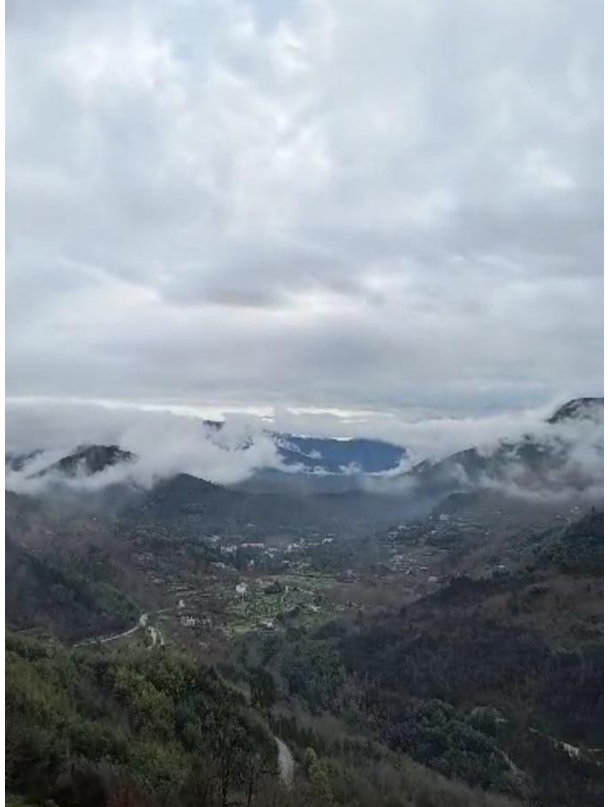
However, he had moved away from his faith as he grew older. The Bentlin family shared their deep love of the Lord with their house mates and the gentlemen who grew up as a Baptist seemed quiet interested in their testimonies. Karen shared with me that she believes one of the main reasons the Lord called them to Portugal was to meet this gentleman and witness to him and encourage him to find his faith in the Lord again. As we all know, the Bentlin family are extremely dedicated to our Lord and their great love for the Him is infectious to all those around them! They certainly are the right people to help this gentleman find his way back to the Lord. We thank the Lord for their lives and their unwavering dedication to the Lord! We pray for their new friend and ask the Lord to work in his heart and brings him back to Him!

On a very exciting note, I am incredibly proud to announce that the whole Bentlin family no longer need to use their translating app to communicate in English! What an amazing achievement! They have all worked very hard to learn the English language (as well as the other languages they have already learnt). We know they are very committed to learning new languages, especially English (a universal language) so as to share their love of the Lord to all who they meet on their travels.

We have faith that with another language under their belt, their work for the Lord will reach even further and they will touch many lives of God's children. We all continue to be very proud of the Bentlins and their achievements thus far and cannot wait to see all the new goals and adventures the Lord has in store for them in the foreseeable future.

We continue to enjoy the updates we are receiving from the Bentlins and are grateful to still be a part of their adventure since they left Cullompton. We also continue to keep the Bentlin Family in our prayers throughout all their travels, that our Lord may protect them, bless them and use them to win more souls for God's Kingdom!

God bless
Bianca



HOME GROUPS

These will normally be held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month.
Next dates as follows:

10th June 2025
(10:30am & 7pm)

24th June 2025
(10:30am & 7pm)

8th July 2025
(7pm only)

**N.B. You are very welcome to attend either/or both
AM or PM groups**

For location information please email: cullomptonbaptists@gmail.com

UPCOMING SERVICES

Sunday, 8th June @ 10:30am	Anniversary Service	Led by: Rev. Glen Graham Preacher: Rev. Alan Bailyes
Sunday, 15th June @ 10:30am	Communion Service	Led by: Rev Glen Graham
Sunday, 22nd June @ 10:30am	Normal Sunday Worship	Led by: Rev Glen Graham
Sunday, 29th June @ 10:30am	Normal Sunday Worship	Led by: Rev Glen Graham
Sunday, 6th July @ 10:30am	Normal Sunday Worship	Led by: Rev Glen Graham
Sunday, 13th July @ 10:30am	Normal Sunday Worship	Led by: Rev. John Sanderson

Cullompton Baptist Church History

© Gareth Shaw

Chapter 4 – When Two Become One

The 1960s saw the church facing great financial difficulties partly because of rising costs and in part because of the major work undertaken in the 1950s. Such problems preoccupied the church meetings during the early years of the 1960s as the church found itself overdrawn at the bank. As usual the membership responded with many money raising schemes, particularly popular being barbecues, many of which were held at Rydon House, Willand the home of Eric and Beata Batten. More significantly the church also spent considerable effort in drafting a new constitution under the leadership of the Rev Boocock . This was adopted in 1962 and formalised many of the existing workings of the membership and the church officers. Shortly after this the minister resigned and the Rev Thompson was invited to the pastorate in 1963. The church was still having financial problems although it was still receiving new members as for example in 1964 when Miriam Gloyn applied for membership, and the year before Ken and Lynn Edwards were received into the church.

At this time the church had been asked by the Devon and Cornwall Association to consider relinquishing its control of Ashill, as it could be now linked with Uffculme and Sainthill. This was readily accepted.

The 1960s was also a time when there were a good number of young people in the church and youth activities were developing in a strong way (see Chapter 6). In 1965 seven people, including Ruth Edwards and Stuart Lindsell, had asked to attend baptismal classes. It was also a time of recognition for the long service by some members with Reg Whitton being made a life deacon after serving in various church offices for 29 years and Gladys Drewe was given a gift as she retired after long service as a deacon.

In response to the changing social times, this was the so called ' swinging sixties' as the Beatles and pop music exploded on the scene, the church provided a youth

club under the control of Ken Edwards (see chapter 6). In 1967 he asked if the school room could be used as a ' club room and coffee bar', this was agreed . Indeed the young people became far more active within the church and started to take special services that were much appreciated.

In 1967 at the height of the Biafran Civil War , Bill Roberts, a Cullompton man working in Nigeria with the Scripture Union came to give a talk to the church about the plight of the Biafran people. How could the church help? This was at the time before the building of the M5 when every Friday night during the holiday season the traffic would crawl down the A38 often blocking the centre of Cullompton. How could these people be helped? Ken Edwards solved both problems by opening an all night café in the schoolroom . Posters were placed at each end of the town and motorists had plenty of time to read them. Volunteers from other churches joined our members to cook and serve light meals from 8pm to 8am. Coffee and bacon butties was a favourite. It was a service much appreciated and all the money went to Biafra.

One of the biggest changes during this time was the joining with the Baptist Church at Bradninch, mainly due to the increasing problems of meeting the cost of the ministers stipend. The church had been obtaining help from the Home Work Fund for some years and it was suggested in 1972 that we join with Bradninch. This had been precipitated by the end of the Rev Thompsons ministry. At a special church meeting under the chairmanship of the area superintendent, it was recommended that ' under the present circumstances, we should have one minister for the two churches. Each church to pay half of the minister's stipend and expenses and that a new manse be built on the outskirts of Cullompton nearest to Bradninch . Each church to decide what to do with their manse'. There were no objections to this although some were unhappy with the idea of selling the manse. By contrast Bradninch wanted to defer any decision on a joint ministry for a further year. To overcome the problems of having no minister the Rev George Sterry kindly agreed to take services on three Sundays per month. In the same year Reg Whitton resigned as church secretary after 33 years. He was replaced by Beta Batten , with Norman Lindsell as treasurer.

The mid 1970s was also a time when Cullompton was growing as the first of what became many new housing schemes was started. The church gave recognition of this and was making efforts to interest more local people in its activities, with a 'bring a friend' service being organised.. By 1973 Bradninch had agreed to the merger and plans were laid for calling a joint minister. The details occupied the two churches for some considerable time and many joint meetings were held. Problems arose over who should be called to the ministry as the two churches failed to agree. Cullompton had further problems with the death of its part time minister George Sterry in 1973 after his second term as pastor at our church.

Agreement was eventually reached with the acceptance of the Rev Edmund Palmer as minister to both churches. Eventually in 1977 a new manse was built on the new housing area around Manitoba Gardens in Cullompton and the old manse sold much to the regret of some members. Despite all of the early problems this was to mark the start of a successful partnership between Cullompton and Bradninch. A joint newsletter was established, along with a joint 'young wives' group. House groups were also established and proved popular as did fellowship evenings between the two churches.

Despite the fact new houses were being built in Cullompton the church was unfortunately not attracting many young families as was pointed out in 1979. This was to mark the start of a long term trend characterised by an increasing population in the town but fewer younger people attending our church. It was decided to visit the new local estates and literature was prepared for this along with copies of St John's Gospel. In addition the minister started an after church meeting for young people.

In 1980, the fifth anniversary of the joining with Bradninch , special services were held at the two churches and the partnership was duly celebrated.

The 1980s also saw two other significant developments - one was the encouragement for more people to join in the church services, and more significantly the proposal to move away from a closed membership . The latter was only agreed after much thought and prayer. The church was also well served at this time by a wide range of members who often took the strain of church office

in their stride despite problems of illness. This was especially so in the case of the then church secretary Beryl Lambert. Also at this time the church embarked on a programme of evangelism under the title of 'talk about' . Edmund Palmer was able to report in 1983 that such meetings had been well attended and he proposed to carry on these meetings later in the year. There was also a large scale crusade held in a tent on the Community Fields and Ken Edwards reported that some 300 people had attended. He also stated that the Crusade choir formed for the occasion would continue, and they are still singing today. The late 1980s saw further efforts by the church to reach out to the new housing estates as visits were made to the new houses at Oak Park in 1986 and 1987.

1987 also saw the resignation of Edmund Palmer who moved to Burnley and this was to mark the beginning of the end of the joint ministry between Cullompton and Bradninch. The old problems arose as the two churches could not agree on which minister to call, this led to Cullompton exploring the possibilities of calling their own pastor in 1988. During these difficult times we were fortunate in being sustained by the work of the Rev Matthew Francis who had retired to Cullompton. A letter was sent to the congregation explaining financial support needed to call a new minister, this brought 19 replies representing an increase of £61 in weekly offerings. All agreed that we should go ahead thus cutting the links with Bradninch.. There were many practical problems to overcome especially the dividing up of the money from the jointly held manse.

In 1989 the Rev John Alvis was invited to take up the ministry at Cullompton, he came with a young family and did much to add to the Sunday school. Under his ministry the church opened a play group that was led by the minister's wife, this is now the ' Noah's Ark' playgroup which has proved extremely popular and still meets on our church premises. It was also at this time that the idea was put forward to have coffee after our morning service, which has now become a regular event. Unfortunately, troubles arose in the church , largely over a new style of ministry, and by 1993 his work was terminated in much sadness. The church at this time was in a somewhat confused state but was fortunate in 1994 to have the services of an experienced and caring pastor in the shape of the Rev David Luce. He agreed to act as our minister and was ' on loan' from Upton Vale

church at Torquay. Under his leadership the church came together again and experienced a happy time that saw membership increase. It was also a time of great loss as a number of key members were called to the Lord. The church lost the following servants; Ivor Rees, Beata Batten, Gladys Drewe, Matthew Francis , and Joy Lindsell. Quite naturally this left the membership short of their considerable skills and they have been very difficult to replace.

The second part of the twentieth century had seen considerable changes in the church , financial problems had led to a joint ministry, but then Cullompton had the confidence and support to go it alone again. The town itself was changing during this period. It was growing rapidly but many of the new, younger families had jobs in Exeter or outside the area and as such had few ties with the town. The church found it increasingly difficult to reach these new families a problem that continues to-day.

“Serving God and the Community; a history of Cullompton Baptist Church

1700-2000”

© Gareth Shaw

Come back next month for Chapter 5 – Into the Twenty First Century: Building in Faith

Proceeds from the sale of this book (published circa 2000) were given to the Church Building Fund.

AND FINALLY

Please email all enquiries to:
cullomptonbaptists@gmail.com

A gentle reminder that smoking is prohibited on the church premises. This includes leaving cigarette butts in church bins.

Thank you.




Sermons On YouTube:

A 2025 Sermon archive is gradually growing & can be found at:

https://www.youtube.com/@cullompton_baptistchurch3193

Each video will contain that week's reading, the sermon & previews of the hymns/worship songs sung during the service (YouTube will generate direct links to where you can hear versions of the whole musical pieces).

The church has a 'WhatsApp' group.  Please speak to **Bianca** if you would like to be added to it or email the church

We are now on Social Media!



Facebook



Instagram



X

To follow us on any of the platforms
above search our name

Cullompton Baptist Church

Our Mission is to:

- Bring others to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour
- Deepen our knowledge of God through worship and Bible teaching
- Lovingly support each other through fellowship
- Encourage each other in practical Christianity

So that we may reach our full spiritual potential through His spirit living in us.

