



NETWORK



Cullompton Baptist Church Magazine for May 2025

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WELCOME & NOTICES

Dear Everyone,

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

Lots more news & events to share this month, so I will keep my bit brief, other than to say thank you to Bianca & Glen for their contributions. Also, a very big thank you to Marilyn for her very interesting article about her 'Cretan Easter'.



Finally, I would just like to give a gentle reminder to folk that smoking is prohibited on the church premises. This includes leaving cigarette butts in church bins. Thank you.

God Bless

Rowan

Dates For Your Diaries:

Monday, 19th May @ 2:15pm - TBC	Location TBC	'Way Ahead' group meeting - TBC
Wednesday, 21st May @ 7:30pm	Sainthill Baptist Church	Visit of our 'BMS Link Missionary', Laura-Lee Loving.
Friday, 23rd May @ 6:30pm	Cullompton Baptist Church	'Prayer Board & Games Evening' – please see in Church News page for more details

June's Network

The deadline for contributions for the June 2025 *Network* will be Monday, 26th May & the magazine will be released around the 1st June.

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PASTOR'S PONDERING'S

Welcome once again to *The Network*.

I hope you all had a good Easter, I know I did.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled".

Matthew 5:6.

To understand this verse, we need to understand what righteousness is. There two meanings.

First, God's uprightness in character. His holiness and faithfulness and more.

God's character is the opposite to our fallen one. This is why we need salvation.

This is the beauty of Good Friday. God carried our sinful nature and to those who confess Jesus as saviour and Lord, He gives us his righteous character with the new heart He gives us.

Secondly, righteousness means justice.

On the Spiritual level, we accept God's just verdict, we are sinners with no hope who are spiritually dead. When we repent and turn to Christ as our personal saviour and Lord, He did our time for us.

The net result of all this is when we stand before God on the day of judgement, Jesus declares we are His.

Hungering for righteousness also desiring, and praying for, a more just world.

Do we hunger and thirst for all of this in our lives and in the lives of others?

Heavenly Father.

I thank you for giving us a new heart and righteous character when you became our Lord and Saviour.

I hunger to know more of your presence in my life, I thirst for your holiness.

I also long for a more just world that looks more like your Kingdom.

In Jesus Name.

Amen.

Please take a look at the dates in your diary section to keep up to date with what is going on in the life of the Church.

May God bless you and fill you with his Holy Spirit.

Rev. Glen Graham.

A CRETAN EASTER

By Marilyn Bidmead

Bali is a small seaside port town/village in Crete. This was my third visit. Normally I have gone in September but as a Christian a Cretan Easter was recommended to me as something special by Kostas the owner of the hotel where I stay. I was not disappointed. Easter is the most important celebrated event in the Christian calendar in Crete. So I will share with you here my thoughts and experiences of a Cretan Easter.

The church/chapel in Bali is very small having a total of 15 seats inside but outside in the garden surrounding the church is a shelter that has many more seats. The services are in greek and are sung rather than spoken and there are no hymns sung in the services. The service is conducted by the priest and two others and there is little if any verbal communication from the congregation as part of the service. The participation of the congregation consists of making the sign of the cross on entering the church, lighting a candle and putting in a shallow trough and then going to various places within the church and kissing emblems. All ages are there and do this and even babies are lifted and held up to kiss the emblems. The numbers of people attending and going through the church doing this were really impressive. The church, the shelter and the garden were packed with people of all ages for all the services.

Maundy Thursday at 8pm we gathered in the church and outside to celebrate the crucifixion of Jesus. Despite not understanding what was said the intention of this service was very clear. A Cross was erected and a figure of Jesus was attached to it. A stone was banged to indicate the nails being driven into his hands and feet and a

knife was pushed across his body. Everyone, including me, went and kissed the feet of Jesus as he was on the cross. The symbolism was very moving in a similar way to our Walk of Witness. I was almost moved to tears by this service and it was unlike anything I had experienced before. An elderly lady had motioned me to go and sit next to her in the church and although her English was not very good she tried hard to speak with me and made me feel incredibly welcome there. Flowers were put on the top and arms of the cross and also laid at the bottom of it. There was a strong smell of Lillies in the church.

Good Friday at 9pm the service was to celebrate the movement of Jesus from the cross to the tomb and was in effect his funeral. A casket had been heavily decorated with flowers and after a short service a procession carrying the casket moved from the church around the village and down to the port where more prayers were said before the procession returned to the church leaving the decorated casket there. Some young girls were singing as they made their way down with the procession. His cross held high by various men from the community led the procession and his casket and all the people followed.

Saturday at 11pm everyone gathered in the church and outside again for a service until midnight. Everyone had special candles and was dressed in their best party clothes. At midnight the candles were lit, fireworks were set off and a large bonfire had also been lit. The bonfire had an effigy on it and this was apparently representative of Judas. This was a great celebration indicating the resurrection of Jesus. I found it quite strange as it reminded me of our November 5th Guy Fawkes night and it was only when I was talking to one of the reception staff at the hotel afterwards that she explained the significance of the bonfire and effigy to me.

Easter Sunday is a big family get together. Eggs that have been coloured red on Good Friday are smashed against one another to see which one is the strongest

and lasts the longest - a bit like our game of conkers! A lamb is roasted in the garden on a spit and large gatherings of family members enjoy time and a meal together. The egg symbolises new life and the red symbolises the bloodshed. The lamb is reminiscent of sacrificial offerings.

I am really glad I was able to go and experience my Cretan Easter and learn more about their culture and religion and I was deeply touched by all the symbolism as well as the large numbers of people who attended the services and took part in the processions. Despite the language barrier I was able to feel the meanings of their services and processions and despite the differences from our Easter I thoroughly enjoyed celebrating Easter the Cretan way.

Marilyn

Easter 2025

CHURCH NEWS

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.



MAY - Upcoming Prayer Board & Games Evening

On **Friday evening, the 23rd of May 2025 at 6:30pm**, we are hosting another prayer board evening due to the last one being such a success. This is a creative arty evening where we can work our prayer boards/prayer journals. You are welcome to work on other things such as book marks for your bible or anything else you want to. This is mainly a thing ladies enjoy however; husbands are welcome to join us too. We will have games out for men play together, should they wish to make use of these. This will be a great time to enjoy fellowship together as a church family. Snacks and drinks will be provided as well.

All are welcome!

JUNE - Celebrating 325 Years – service & social event

On **Sunday, the 8th of June 2025, straight after church**, we will be celebrating our church's 325-year anniversary. We will also be playing a game during this time called "Meet the Church", where we will all have two minutes to tell the church

more about ourselves. With many new church family joining our church, this will be a great opportunity to get to know each other better.

What will be served at this event is still TBC and more details on this event, will be in our next Network Magazine.

We hope to see many of you there!

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We have decided to start a new monthly article in the Network all about Sunday School. Our hope in doing this, is that our children can feel like they have a section dedicated to them in our Church Magazine – after all they are a very important piece of our church family! We also hope that these articles can be helpful and informative to parents/guardians to show them what their children have been learning and doing in Sunday School.

We had so much fun with our children going over the Easter story again. It certainly is a great blessing to see Easter and it's deep meaning through the eyes of children. We as a team, are incredibly proud of our children's love of the Lord that shines through them all. We have witnessed two wonderful steps in faith by two children on Easter Sunday, which made it even more special! We are incredibly blessed to be walking the road of their faith with them. Please keep all our children in your prayers, we believe we are yet to see all the miracles the Lord has in store for them!

EASTER LESSONS

Lesson 1 – Jesus washes the disciples’ feet

Lesson 2 – Judas’s betrayal & the meaning of Palm Sunday

Lesson 3 – Easter Sunday, the cross, empty tomb and resurrection and what it means for us

Lesson 4 – Jesus appears on the road to Emmaus

Our Easter egg hunt on Easter Sunday was a great hit with all our children and we were blown away by what good hunters they all were! They worked so well as a team and would help each other or share the eggs they were finding if one had less. Even with all the excitement of the Easter egg hunt, they managed to focus on our lesson and the true meaning of Easter before all fun things started. They also made lovely Easter cards for their parents/guardians which all came out so lovely!

UPCOMING LESSONS

Lesson 1 – David: Anointed

Lesson 2 – David & Goliath

Lesson 3 – David & Jonathan

Lesson 4 – David & Saul

Once we have completed the full Easter series, we will be moving on to our next series which focuses on the life of King David and all the lessons from it that we can apply to our lives.

Each of our Sunday School teachers prepare their lessons themselves under the guidance of Rev Glen and Rowan. So each of the lessons have different styles with different activities.

Here are a few of the things the children have been doing in Sunday School:

- **Check in's about how their last week or two has been and what they enjoyed about it.**
- **Prayers with our Prayer Lamb**
- **Worship / dance parties**
- **Lessons**
- **Videos**
- **Questions and activities**
- **Arts and crafts**
- **Games**

Our Star Chart has been a great hit in Sunday School and with such good behaviour and concertation that our children have been showing during our lessons, they have already reached their first prize milestone!! We encourage parents/guardians and anyone else who may like to see their Star Charts, in the vestry, to visually see how well our children have been doing.

Unfortunately, due to all the fun we are having and our focus being solely on our children during Sunday School, taking pictures of arts and crafts have been slipping our minds! We will try our best to remember to take more pictures as their crafts are so lovely and creative.

We hope you have all enjoyed this update on Sunday School!

Best wishes and God bless

The Sunday School Team

Easter At Cullompton Baptist Church/Springfest Review

It is with real gratitude to God and a number of people that I write this report on our Easter happenings.

SpringFest

It was a real joy to host a variety of Spring fest events. Our vestry was transformed in to a milking parlour for the milk the cow event. 30 Children got to have an experience what it feels like to milk a cow guided by our two Milk Maids Maggie and Rowan.

Meanwhile outside in our Yard, the folks at Fordmoore farm were cooking up some delightful tempting dishes which 60 folk enjoyed. Thanks to our Marilyn for organising this and to chef Adam for giving up his time.

In the school room, creative crafts involving sheep were taking place washed down with some much needed hot and cold drinks. Thanks to Paul, Bianca, Zara and Margaret for doing the kind of things we are being known for, kids crafts and refreshments.

Finally, Mary and I were in the Sanctuary showing the Easter story film. People stopped to look as they were going to and from activities. As well as showing the film, I was able to direct folk to where they needed to be and offering a dog to stroke which many really appreciated.

All in all, it was a successful day. We had a steady but manageable group of people who left satisfied with all they had experienced. We all went home tired yet content with a job well done. I am proud of you Cullompton Baptist Church.

Holy week and Easter

The joy and solemnity of this season was captured well. Our services on Palm and Easter Sunday were well attended. It was good to sing familiar hymns and be reminded of truths we hold dear. Although good Friday was wet, spirits were not dampened. The walk of witness was well attended and it was a privilege to read some of the Good Friday story and pray for our town outside our building.

Retreating inside the warmth and dry of the Church, it was a delight to join 9 other souls to reflect with the aid of music why Good Friday means so much to us. 6 of us enjoyed a bite of lunch together.

Only one thing stopped it being the best Easter ever. Suddenly on Holy Saturday afternoon, my darling and faithful guide dog Rab died. Rab surely was the most joyful dogs I have ever known. He brought happiness to a lot of people and touched their lives.

Despite that, I am eagerly anticipating what next Easter will bring.

Rev. Glen





Sermons On YouTube:

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

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

BIBLE STUDY – HOME GROUPS INFO

These will normally be held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month.

Next dates as follows:

13th May 2025

(Cancelled – due to Rev. Glen being on annual leave)

20th May 2025

(10:30am – TBC)

(An extra 7pm session to replace the 13th)

27th May 2025

(10:30 & 7pm)

***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, 4th May @ 10:30am	Baptist Home Mission Sunday	led by Rev. Simon Taylor
Sunday, 11th May @ 10:30am	Normal Sunday Worship	led by Peter Woolway
Sunday, 18th May @ 10:30am	Communion	led by Rev. Glen Graham
Sunday, 25th May @ 10:30am	Normal Sunday Worship	led by Rev. Glen Graham

ANSWERS TO THE EASTER ANAGRAMS

- 1.Fox Rici unci - crucifixion**
- 2.Sorcerer unit - resurrection**
- 3.Dody Figaro – Good Friday**
- 4.Apple rusts – last supper**
- 5.Andra duty mushy – Maundy Thursday**

Cullompton Baptist Church History

© Gareth Shaw

Chapter 3. A New Century: the process of modernisation

At the start of a the new century the church had a new minister the Rev Joseph Butler who took over the pastorate of the church in 1901, after what appear to have been rather unhappy times in the last years of John Horne's ministry. All we know of Joseph was that he was a happy and friendly man who brought a good deal of optimism to the church. This was a time when the church was starting to develop a new found confidence to organise more social events and treats for the Sunday school (see chapter 6). The ministry of Joseph Butler was relatively short, as was that of his successor the Rev Joseph Beaupre, both only stayed in Cullompton for three years. Joseph Beaupre arrived in 1904 and we learn that he had a genial character and was a good visitor to the sick and infirm. His time was marked by the significant event of the building of the first Manse next to the church, on part of the land given by Burrows in 1887. Prior to this ministers had lived in rented property in different parts of the town. This was not unusual at a time when most people rented from private landlords and the church had little money to buy a manse. The church agreed to build the manse in 1905 under the direction of Mr E Labdon (local builder and church member), they were also hopeful of gaining money from the Baptist Union Twentieth Century Fund . Unfortunately, this was not forthcoming and as no grant was made the church once again had to rely on its own resources. This was not the only difficulty for in addition to having to raise a considerable sum of money there was also some internal dissent within the church. The minute books are largely silent on the details of the problem. But it seems some members objected to the Manse being built so close to the chapel and initiated a court case ,claiming the loss of light. This was unsuccessful but obviously opened up divisions within the membership and created unnecessary difficulties. When building began the foundation stone was laid by Mr Smith of Reed and Smith the papermaking company and John Pidgeon from the church. The building made good progress and was completed in 1906 at a cost of £453. The

minister and his family moved into their new home in March 1906., after the Manse was officially opened by Mrs Reed of Thornlee near Exeter. The occasion was marked by a public meeting in the evening addressed by the Mayor of Tiverton to which people were asked to pay 6 pence for admission. Just at the same time that he was preparing to move into the manse the pastor asked the church whether they would like him to continue his ministry as his time of office was at an end in October of that year. The church agreed that he should be invited to stay for a further two years, although they warned of the difficulties in guaranteeing his salary unless weekly offerings improved.

At this time the church also took stock of its lay preachers and these included Mr E Labdon (listed in the town directory as a builder and undertaker in Fore St.), Mr C. Raven (bootmaker), Mr M. Labdon, Mr J. Samson (bootmaker and cycle agent in Fore St), Mr W. Gunn, and Mr W.G. Paul (baker and confectioner in Fore St.). Clearly our church was well served spiritually and that many of these people were important traders within the town.

The financial difficulties continued into 1908 when the pastor was again warned of the problem in meeting his stipend and that funds were only sufficient to meet his pay for the next three months. Not surprisingly it was shortly after this that he had decided to leave. At this time there were some 59 church members and a strong confidence in the need to carry on undertaking further improvements to the building. Over the next few years renovations were carried out on the organ and improvements made to the choir stalls.

In 1909 the church was also confident enough to call a new minister and the Rev Bonsor was offered a stipend of £84 and the use of the manse at a rent of £2 per year. By 1912 the membership was still growing as a further 7 people were baptised. Interestingly, attendance at church meetings was fairly low, usually averaging about 15 members. Improvements continued as the members voted to install a new organ in 1912 at a cost of £200., and by May 1913 some £150 had been collected.. Much of these monies were raised by sales of work which became a common feature of the church at this period.

1914 saw the resignation of the Rev Bonsor on health grounds, a resignation that was accepted with deep regret by the church . At the start of the war the church became involved in the conflict, first directly through a number of its members joining the armed forces, and second through collecting for relief efforts. During the period 1915-16 the church collected for the British Red Cross, the Soldiers Institute at Aldershot, the French and Belgium Relief Funds, and Christmas parcels for soldiers at the Front. In 1916 the minute books also record that the church secretary was empowered to secure the chapel against aircraft, we are not told how he should achieve this! By the end of the war in 1919 the church had lost a number of young men in the fighting and these were remembered in a commemorative window at a cost of £85, this was officially unveiled in May 1920 by Mayor Selwood.

It is also interesting at this time to pause and reflect on the number of different offices in the Church, some of which carried with them a salary. For in addition to the secretary and treasurer, there were sidesmen, a caretaker , organist and organ blower. The organist commanded a salary of £10 per annum, whilst the blower was paid £3 . The organ and its use also became the centre of some disagreements between the organist and the church. The organist claimed the right to use the organ for teaching his pupils whenever he wanted to. One of the pupils in question was Eric Batten who was being trained but was soon appointed deputy organist in 1924. He was appointed organist in 1927.

The 1920s were a period of church growth as membership grew and giving increased. There was no doubt a level of optimism after the war years. In part this was reflected in the continual modernisation of the building, as for example in 1923 when electric lighting was installed at a cost of £32. In the same year a baptismal service had been held for 8 people. We also learn that in 1925 it was suggested ' that in view of the increased large attendance on Sundays it would be wise for all seatholders , especially those requiring their own seats, to occupy their seats early'. The organist was asked to give a little extra music before the service. There were also increased weekly offerings and a

further six baptisms in 1926. These were exciting times for our church as in 1926 we hosted the Devon and Cornwall Baptist Association meeting, although heavy rain kept many people away and only about 88 people sat down to tea. The minister at this time was the Rev Noel Ives who after 5 years of successful work at Cullompton told the church that he planned to move to Exmouth at the end of 1931.

The process of modernisation and change continued into the 1930s, under the ministry of the Rev Wilden who was invited to the church in 1932, but only came the following year. For reasons unknown to us his ministry was extremely short and he left after just 12 months. A new pastor, the Rev Hugh Ferguson from Lowestoft was appointed almost immediately through the suggestion of the Rev Butt who was much active in our church during this period. In that same year Mr F.L. Labdon offered to give £50 toward the building of a new primary room and kitchen as a memorial to his late father. This was agreed and the project went ahead at a cost of £183.

The period of the late 1930s was a somewhat troubled time in the church, the minute books record serious dissension between one member and the church leaders that led to his membership being suspended after one fiery meeting in 1937, thankfully reason prevailed and the exclusion was rescinded in 1938. To make matters worse the church was once again without a minister, although this was rectified in 1939 when the Rev Burton accepted the pastorate. In that same year the minute book records that Eric Batten resigned as organist, 'having been called to serve his country'.

During World War Two the schoolroom was used in the war effort and functioned as a YMCA canteen and centre for the armed services based around Cullompton. Members of the church were as ever active in the centre and worked tirelessly to look after the various troops who used the facilities. This was much appreciated by the men and many of their letters of thanks survive, typical of these is that by a Mr B. Hollow of the RAOC stationed in Malta in 1943 who wrote:

' I have travelled half way around the world, and I can honestly

say, I have not met anyone, as hospitable as the people of Cullompton. I also wish to thank the personnel of the YMCA for their kindness to myself and brother soldiers'.

Many people were involved in this work but from the church Mr and Mrs Whitton seemed to have taken a major role, Mr Whitton was also our long serving church secretary. Towards the end of the war the Rev George Sterry was invited to be the pastor for a period of 5 years. He came to Cullompton from Bridlington where he had served for six years before going on to minister to the East St Church in Bristol. Many years later he was to come out of retirement to serve our church again.

As usual in the church, plans were already being made to bring back the schoolroom into church use and with the compensation from the military authorities for their use, the church was able to proceed with a renovation of the schoolroom. Not being ones to waste anything, they found that the blackout fittings left by the military could be sold for 30 shillings.

The church in 1946 also had to deal with an outbreak of bad behaviour, as the minute book states that they would have to seek ' police help in stopping rowdyism of youths outside the church during the services'. By 1948 the church started a mission around the town especially on the St. Andrews estate but this was short lived as the following year the minister stated his intention to resign and move to Bristol. Once again the Rev Griffen stepped in as a stand in pastor, before the Rev Clifford Henson came in 1950. This year also saw large development plans being made for the inside of the church , these involved changing the seating and moving the baptistry to the front of the chapel in its present location. These changes to the building were part of the 250th Anniversary celebrations.

The 1950s were a somewhat mixed time for the church. There was great optimism after the war as represented by the church redevelopment and a spate of baptisms , with 7 young people coming forward in 1951 alone. Sadly, there was also a time of much internal strife. It centred around the sudden resignation of

the Rev Henson who moved to Southmead Baptist Church in Bristol. His sudden departure 'caused deep concern amongst some church members' as the minister had felt he had lost the confidence of the deacons. In turn many members stated that they had lost confidence in the officers of the church. This unpleasant period fortunately was soon put in the past as the church welcomed a new minister in 1956, the Rev Boocock.

During the years from 1909 the church had also taken on the responsibility of the chapel at Ashill as a branch of their work. This involved controlling the premises and covering various costs of repair. It is to Cullompton's great credit that in 1954 the Rev Clifford Henson could report that Ashill had been well maintained and that it had 12 members, a Sunday school and a women's meeting.

Come back next month for "Chapter 4. When Two Became One"

"Serving God and the Community; a history of Cullompton Baptist Church 1700-2000"

© Gareth Shaw

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

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AND FINALLY

COMING UP NEXT MONTH News of the Bentlins' plus all the regular features & more.

Please email all enquiries to:
cullomptonbaptists@gmail.com

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.

