DAWLISH COAST TEAM MINISTRY

A newsletter brought to you every fortnight throughout the year with information from the churches of St Gregory's (Dawlish); St George's (Holcombe); St Mary's (Cofton) and St Paul's (Starcross).

Issue date: Sunday 24th May 2026

www.cofe-in-dawlish.org.uk

This year the Mothers' Union (MU) celebrates 150 years. In this first article (in what will be a series of three) Ann Leigh shares with our church family some of the MU story.

We start in the year 1876. Queen Victoria had been on the throne for 39 years, reigning over a people who were the richest and most powerful on earth. Britain had the greatest empire, the strongest navy and, above all, the most advanced industries. But there was an enormous divide between the well-off minority and the great majority of families who lived on or below the poverty line. The churches led the way in education, health care and helping the poor. This was the great age of parish meetings. Sunday Schools were flourishing and many other Christian organisations were starting up.

George Sumner had been rector of Old Alresford near Winchester for 34 years. He met his wife Mary *(pictured aside)* in Rome in 1846. She was a great support to him in all his work, but for some time she had wanted to do more for all the women of the parish who were bringing up families. She decided to invite about 30 of them to the rectory to share her ideas on motherhood. Some of the mothers were from her own social class, but many were from the cottages where the poor working classes lived. She told them that when she had her first baby, and held her in her arms, she realised that God had given an immortal soul into her keeping. "*As I gazed with rapture at my little baby, it struck me how much I needed special teaching for so great a work as the character training of a child, and how little I knew about it. I felt that mothers have one of the greatest and most important professions in the world, and yet there is no profession which has so poor a training for its supreme duties*."

She suggested that the ladies should come to her for weekly classes, and she gave each one a card with advice that they should follow:-

- Remember that your children are given up, body and soul, to Jesus Christ in Holy Baptism, and that your duty is to train them for his service.
- Try by God's help to make them truthful, obedient and pure.
- Never allow coarse jests, bad angry words or low talk in your house.
- Kneel down and pray morning and evening, and teach your children to pray.
- Try to read a few verses of the Bible daily, and come to church as regularly as possible.

At first these meetings were just for their parish, but in 1885 George was made an Archdeacon and they moved into Winchester. Later that year he persuaded Mary to address a public meeting for the first time, and she spoke about the great influence mothers have on their children. The audience responded enthusiastically. Soon the Mothers' Union was a feature of every parish in the Diocese of Winchester, and branches were appearing in many other parts of the country, including Devon. The first members were enrolled in the Dawlish Branch in 1898.

THE PCC AND THE BISCUITS OF DIVISION

A tale from St Faithful's, Havnot reproduced here by kind permission of the author, Canon Tom Kennar.

It began at 7.42pm — just after the Treasurer's report and just before "Any Other Business." Judith placed a plate of biscuits in the centre of the table. There was a pause. Not the gentle, reflective pause of Taizé. A different sort of pause. On the plate were bourbons. Only bourbons.

Sally leaned forward. "Judith… is there a reason there are no custard creams?"
"They were unavailable," Judith replied.
"Unavailable," murmured Perry, already reaching for a spreadsheet. Dobbs folded his arms.
"Bourbons have gravitas. Dependable. You know where you are with a bourbon."
"Exactly," said Sandy. "You always know where you are."

Horse, technically not on the PCC but who had popped in hoping for a biscuit, lifted one thoughtfully. "Two biscuits with a bit of cream in the middle. Sounds like most church disputes."
Perry cleared his throat.
He had data. Colour-coded.
"In the last twelve months, bourbons have appeared at 68% of meetings. Custard creams at 27%. A rogue ginger nut at Harvest."
"We do not speak of the ginger nut incident," said Judith.

It was Lionel who broke the silence.
"I wonder," he said mildly, stirring his tea with liturgical precision, "whether we are in danger of a false binary." There it was. The phrase that has launched a thousand synod debates.
"False binary?" asked Sally.
"Yes," Lionel continued. "Christianity is not merely chocolate or custard. We have… gradients."
Perry's eyes lit up. He reached for his spreadsheet again.
Judith closed her eyes briefly.
Dobbs leaned forward. "What gradients?"
Lionel gestured towards the plate. "For instance — Marks & Spencer's chocolate-dipped bourbons."
There was a murmur.
"Bourbons," he continued, "but… elevated. Decorated. Slightly ceremonial. Bourbons with bells and incense."
Sandy laughed. "High church bourbons."
"Exactly." Horse nodded solemnly. "They smell faintly of Latin."

Mary raised a thoughtful finger. "And what of the giant custard creams? You know the ones. Twice the filling. No subtlety whatsoever."
"Charismatic custard creams," said Leslie quietly.
"Loud," Mary added. "Joyful. Possibly clapping."
Dobbs looked suspicious. "Do they require amplification?"
"Only metaphorically," Tim reassured him.

Perry was scribbling now.
"We may also need representation for the… how shall I put it… non-aligned."
"Pink wafers," said Horse, immediately.
Everyone turned.
"They're sort of neither one thing nor the other," he continued. "Soft. Slightly misunderstood. Occasionally crushed in transit. But undeniably part of the biscuit tin."

There was a pause.

Sandy smiled gently. "I think that's rather lovely, Horse." "Thank you," he said, taking a bourbon.

"And hobnobs," added Sally firmly. "We must not forget hobnobs."
"Hobnobs?" Perry looked up.
"Solid. Middle of the road. Reliable. Not flashy. Not covered in chocolate unless you choose to be. They just… get on with it."
Dobbs nodded. "Dependable."
"Broad church hobnobs," Tim murmured.
Judith, pen poised above the minutes, sighed. "So we are now proposing a five-biscuit model of ecclesial coexistence." "Six," corrected Perry. "If we allow seasonal shortbread." "No one," said Judith firmly, "is adding seasonal shortbread without notice." The discussion swelled.

Chocolate-dipped bourbons were tentatively categorised as Anglo-Catholic.
Standard bourbons as liberal catholic — structurally traditional, quietly reforming.
Custard creams were agreed to represent evangelicals. Giant custard creams as charismatic.

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'THE PCC AND THE BISCUITS OF DIVISION'
Continued from page 2

Pink wafers as those who refuse all labels but still turn up and stack chairs. Hobnobs as the quiet, faithful middle of the road majority who keep churches everywhere going.

And then — inevitably — someone asked about gluten-free options.

Tim raised his hands. "Friends," he said gently, "if our biscuit plate requires footnotes, appendices, and an ecumenical working party, we may have slightly missed the point."

Silence.

He leaned forward. "The Kingdom of God is not uniform. It is not monochrome. It is not one flavour, one texture, one tradition. It is — if we must persist with this analogy — a generous table."

He gestured towards the plate.

"Some like chocolate. Some like custard. Some like something pink and difficult to characterise. Some simply want a cup of tea and to be left alone. And yet — here we are. Around the same table."

Mary nodded slowly.

Unity, without uniformity.
Difference, without division.
A plate wide enough for everyone.

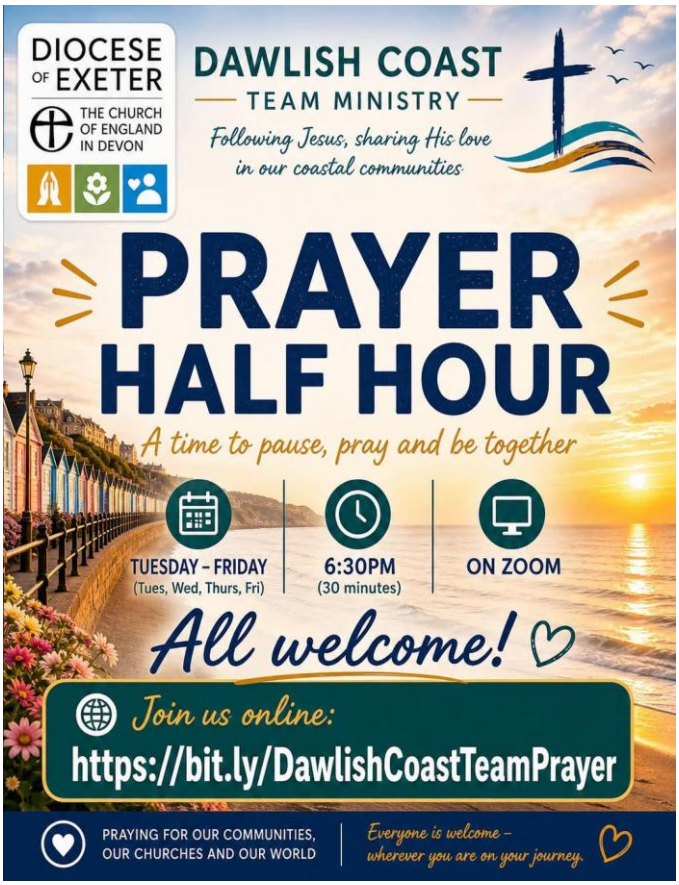
Judith cleared her throat.
"Revised motion," she read. "That the PCC shall henceforth provide a comprehensive biscuit selection, reflecting the theological, temperamental, and digestive diversity of the parish."
"All in favour?"
Every hand rose. Even Dobbs'.
"Carried," she said.
Horse reached for a pink wafer.
"See?" he said cheerfully. "No need to split the church."
And for one glorious moment, St Faithful's embodied the deepest Anglican truth of all:
You can disagree about almost everything…
…so long as there are enough biscuits.

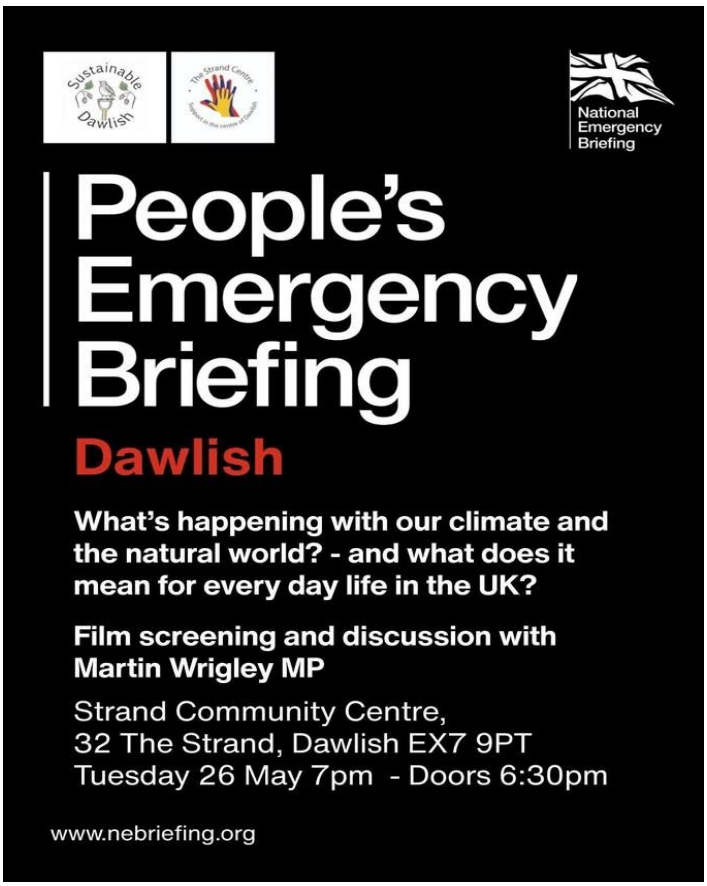
Editor's Note:

St Faithful's is a fictional parish, imagined by a real-life parish priest. It reflects familiar church cultures, observed with affection and humour, in the belief that theology still has something to say.

Images are created with the assistance of Artie Fishal, who is very intelligent.

I'd recommend books by Canon Tom Kennar, which can be purchased (by 'print and deliver' service) at www.books.by/tom-kennar. Or search for 'Tom Kennar' on Amazon (especially for Kindle editions)





RETIRING CHURCH WARDENS AND TREASURER SAY 'THANKS!'

Richard and Leena (Retiring Church Wardens) and Paul Jones (Retiring Treasurer) send their thanks to the church family at St. Greg's for the gifts and cards given to them on Sunday 17th at the APCM.

Richard and Leena say how much they appreciated *'the lovely gifts with very appropriate cards, a train for Richard and a lighthouse for Leena! THANK YOU!'*

Paul says *'thank you for the kind words I received in person and in my card, and for the gift vouchers. I was very touched, thank you very much.'*

Nick (see below) is a church family member at St Mary's, Cofton – please support him if you can!

'PUDDING CLUB'

– AN OPEN INVITATION –

PUDDING CLUB, is a group for ladies, held once a month in the Upper Narthex at St Greg's.

At the next meeting on

Thursday 4th June at 2.30pm

there will be a visit from a Fire Safety Officer who will be giving useful information on how to keep our homes safe.

All women are most welcome to attend this meeting as a one-off without feeling any pressure or commitment to joining Pudding Club on a regular basis.

Dawlish Coast Team Ministry

Finding Our Way in a Confusing World: drawing on the wisdom of Ignatius

an afternoon of quiet prayer

at St George's Church, Holcombe

on Saturday 13th June 2-4pm

2pm Opening worship and reflection

followed by an hour or so on our own in the stillness

3.30pm Closing worship

followed by tea and cake

No need to sign up! All are welcome!

For information, phone Helen Bays 01626-863098

Text 07391-594867 spiritualdirections264@gmail.com

SERVICES – 24th May to 6th June 2026

Sunday 24th May — Pentecost Sunday
9.30am St George's – Morning Worship
9.30am St Paul's – Holy Communion
10am St Gregory's – Holy Communion
11.15am St Mary's – Holy Communion
6pm Telephone Service – *to join dial 0330 088 1927 followed by access code 2132492*

Wednesday 27th May
10.30am St Gregory's - Funeral Service: Margaret Murch
***NOTE**: There is no 10am Midweek Holy Communion this week*

Sunday 31st May – Trinity Sunday
10.30am St George's – Benefice Service
***NOTE**: There are no morning services elsewhere in the Benefice*

Wednesday 3rd June
10am St Gregory's – Midweek Holy Communion

TUESDAY PRAYER MEETING ON ZOOM

All welcome to a half hour of prayer online on Tuesdays at 9am. Just click on this link or go to https://zoom.us/join and enter: Meeting ID: 575 020 5964 and Passcode: 850653

Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri.
PRAYER HALF HOUR
From 6.30pm on Zoom
Please follow this link HERE to join

DIARY DATES

MAY

Saturday 23rd '**Turn the Tide' Festival** – 10am to 4pm, Dawlish College – Fun and FREE family-friendly environmental festival for all ages.

Sunday 24th **"It's Pentecost!" (CTDD celebration) -** 3pm on the Lawn, Dawlish

Tuesday 26th **Julian Prayer group -** 2pm in Upper Narthex, St. Gregory's
People's Emergency Briefing *(see page 3)* – 7pm in the Strand Centre. See a powerful new film featuring Chris Packham, leading climate and nature scientists, a former general, and Jennifer Saunders — all speaking candidly about where things are heading, and what can still be done. 16+ only. Free.

Friday 29th **Charity Day**, 11am-3pm at Luscombe Castle (£6 incl. a drink and biscuits)

JUNE

Monday 1st **Mens' Breakfast -** 9am in Upper Narthex, St. Gregory's
Craft and Chatting - 1.30-3.30pm in the Church Room, St Pauls, Starcross

Tuesday 2nd (to July 3rd) **'Mothers' Union 150 years'** – a display in St Gregory's Lady Chapel

Tuesday 2nd **Kids' Swap Shop –** 9-11am in St. Gregory's
Praying for Dawlish - 12 noon in the Strand Chapel

Wednesday 3rd **Drop In -** 2-4pm in St. George's, Holcombe

Thursday 4th **Pudding Club –** 2.30pm in Upper Narthex, St. Gregory's (*see page 4*)

Saturday 13th **Monthly Sale -** 11am-1.30pm in St. Paul's, Starcross
Afternoon of Quiet Prayer – 2-4pm in St George's, Holcombe (*see page 4*)

If you would like any support, or someone to talk to, or you know of someone else who does, please contact one of the following from the Ministry Team:
Revd Linda Cronin (Rector): 01626 927281 or email: revdlinda@icloud.com
LLMS: Steve Cronin: 07817 678774; **Will Halse**: 01626 866054; **Ceri Lee:** 07739 936286.

Benefice Administrator: (Tues-Fri 10am-2pm): **Rachel Hammond** 01626 864322
Safeguarding Officer at St Greg's: Tess Hickson 07376 658440
Information and contact details for Safeguarding Officers in the other churches can be found on our website here