

Shoots of new growth at Wonford, Exeter

B E N H A S L E M



*Ben Haslam
shares what God is
doing in and through
a local church.*

We have a lovely lady called Edith in our congregation at Wonford Methodist Church who works at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital. Part of her role involves supporting and welcoming those coming to work at the hospital from overseas. Many of those she has supported have come to worship with us at Wonford and brought new life and energy into our midst whilst we were still reeling from the impact of Covid restrictions. Others joined us when walking past the church one Sunday to find us belting out a hymn in the car park (this was when we were banned from singing indoors). We have become much more diverse as a result.

Preaching there only once a month as I do, every time I go to Wonford, I meet at least one person for the first time and the past year has seen a spate of baptisms and welcoming new people into membership.

This, of course, goes very much against the prevailing narrative of decline. Why should Wonford be different? Being near a major hospital is part of it, of course, but I'm sure there's more to it than that.

God brings growth when his people pray for it, of that I'm certain. That's not all though. I'm also becoming increasingly certain that God brings

growth to churches which teach and honour the holy scriptures without distortion, and have a genuine openness to being led by God's Spirit.

Let me, however, add a brief caveat. There are faithful, Bible believing churches which are struggling, owing to many other factors thrown against them. To such churches I can only say that faithfulness is always worthwhile and important, even if the fruits seem to be elusive.

If a small number of Christians are growing in their faith together, they can still, even without realising it, be a formidable spiritual force and should never lose heart. At Wonford, we have been richly blessed in welcoming new members to our fellowship, but we are not complacent. We are thinking and praying about how to best integrate new people, from different cultures, into our fellowship and to ensure that their gifts and graces are enabled to enrich our life together. Above all, we are thankful to God for giving us renewed hope for the future and we wait in eager expectation to see what he will do next!



REV BEN HASLEM

Rev Ben Haslem is minister of Wonford Methodist Church in the Exeter Coast & Country Circuit: wonfordmethodistchurch.org.uk.

