



# TOLPUDDLE MARTYRS

Pilgrimage guide







The Tolpuddle pilgrimage began as a way of engaging young adults in a justice-seeking church. A small group first walked from Stroud in 2015, staying with Methodist Churches en route, and arriving in Tolpuddle for the annual TUC sponsored festival. Starting from the New Room in Bristol enables the pilgrimage to embark from another key place in relation to Methodism and social justice, and a group of twelve pilgrims walked from there to Tolpuddle in 2019.



“From the Wesleys’ work on prison reform and the abolition of the slave trade to a Methodist presence in campaigns such as Make Poverty History, the Fairtrade movement and Jubilee 2000, taking a stand is part of our Methodist heritage. Today, Methodist churches around the connexion reflect this in Our Calling to be ‘a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice’. As churches host debt centres, food banks, supper clubs and mutual aid groups, they continue to question why such help is needed. Not only do we want to see poverty and inequality alleviated, but we also want to change the structures and systems which bring it about in the first place.” (Methodist Church website).

We hope this booklet will do several things:

- Remind Methodists of our roots in and commitment to social justice
- Help share the good news that the Methodist movement is a justice-seeking Church
- Encourage and help pilgrims to walk the route





Day  
One

# THE NEW ROOM TO CHEW STOKE

Spend some time at the New Room; with its lovely café, historic chapel and interactive museum.

Reflect upon the fact that it was not just a place for fellowship and preaching, but for work towards better health care, prison reform and the campaign against the slave trade.

Walk to Faithspace (Prewitt St, BS1 6PB) in the shadow of the towering spire of St Mary Redcliffe. Book ahead if you wish to hear a little more about the work there: 'to share God's love - in hospitality, commitment and prayer - by creating a Christian presence with local people'.

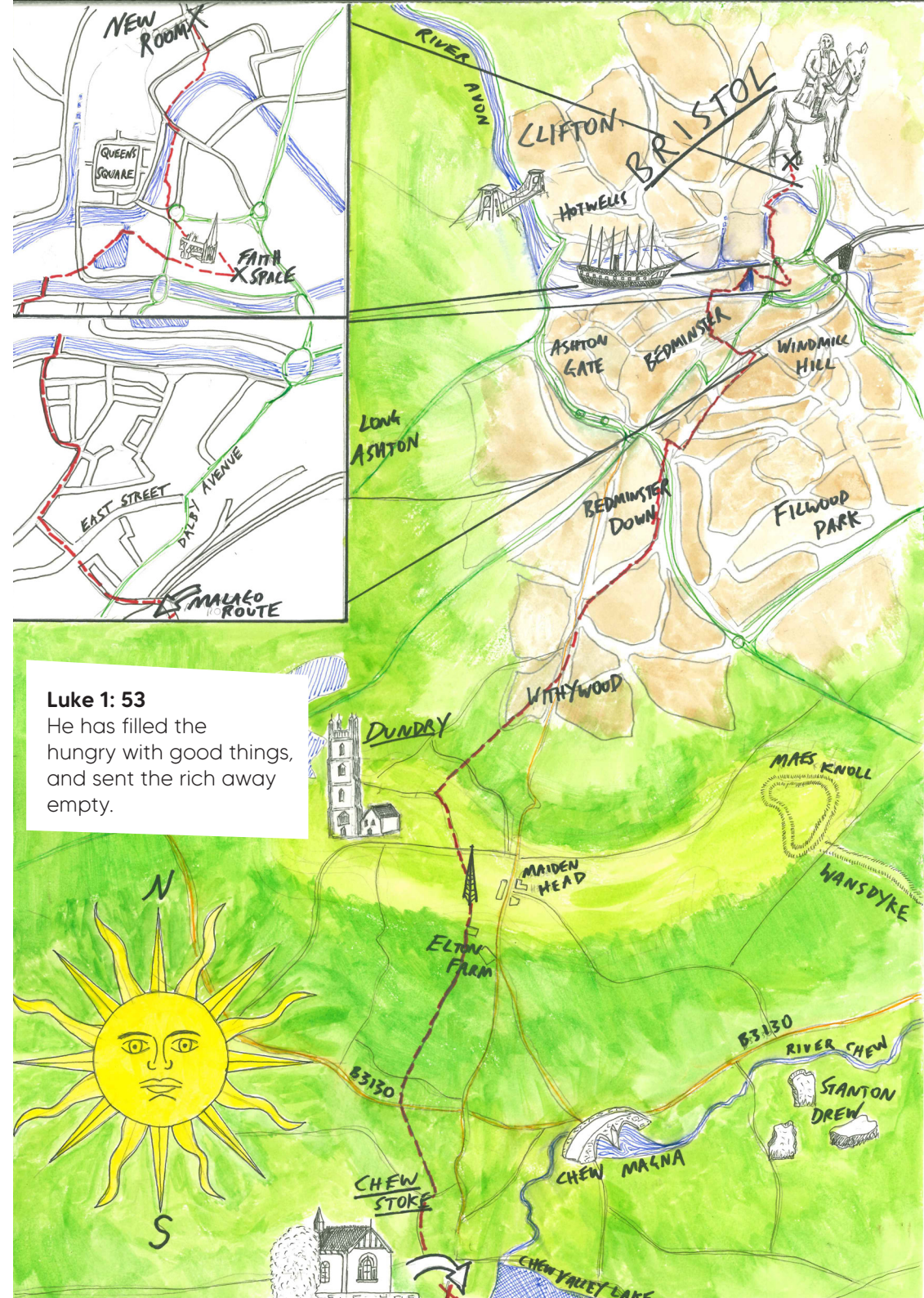
From there, the route picks up the Malago Green Way through South Bristol and up to the Withywood Centre; an amazing expression of Church and Community together with a mission to express hope, hospitality and healing. As you climb to Dundry Church, pause in the graveyard for your last view of Bristol and notice how it has been planted with pollinator-friendly flowers. With potential for refreshments at the Dundry Inn, continue on to Chew Stoke Methodist Church.

"The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness." **John Wesley**

### Psalm for the Day:

Taken from Psalm 10v15-18

Break the strength of the evildoer;  
search out wickedness till you find none.  
Give strength, instead, to the hearts of  
the poor  
as you listen to their laments.  
Give a hearing to the orphaned and the  
oppressed;  
restore their rights, O God,  
so that those who live upon the earth  
may strike terror in them no more. Amen.



### Luke 1: 53

He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.



**CHEW STOKE TO WELLS**

The first part of the day's walk lies alongside and within sight of Chew Valley Lake, which supplies a good proportion of Bristol's water, and is also a significant site for migrating birds. Passing through the village of West Harptree we pick up the Monarch's Way, taking us up and over the Mendips where there are signs of lead mining in the past. The Monarch in question was Charles II, and this long-distance footpath traces the route of his escape to France following his defeat by Oliver Cromwell in Worcester in 1651.

Reflect upon the need to find ways of justly sharing natural resources and material wealth.

On reaching the southern edge of Mendips, there are views out of the Somerset Levels; supporting a whole cluster of nature reserves and wide range of wildlife.

The final couple of miles leads down and into the Cathedral City of Wells, past an array of tempting coffee shops and to the Methodist Church, tucked away in Southover.

"Wealth is not necessary to the glory of any nation. But wisdom, virtue, justice, mercy, generosity, public spirit, love of our country. These are necessary to the real glory of a nation. But abundance of wealth is not." **John Wesley**

**Psalm for the day**

Taken from Psalm 37v27-40

Depart from evil and do what is good:  
 live for ever in peace;  
 for God is the lover of justice  
 and will never abandon the faithful.  
 I have seen the oppressors triumph,  
 towering like cedars of Lebanon.  
 When I passed by again, they were gone;  
 I searched, but they could not be found.  
 So, look for the honest, and look to the  
 righteous;  
 the future belongs to the peacemakers.  
 God is their help, their deliverer,  
 their refuge in times of distress. Amen.



**Luke 4: 18**  
 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
 because he has anointed me to  
 bring good news to the poor.





# Day Three WELLS TO CASTLE CARY

Today's route takes us via the Somerset Village of Pilton, home – since 1970 – to the Glastonbury Festival. For founder Michael Eavis, it was always a campaigning festival enshrining Methodist social justice values. Michael has overseen the establishment of two local social housing projects and is planning a third. The developments provide affordable housing and each house comes with an allotment. "This is Methodism in action," enthuses Michael.

"One of my forebears, George Eavis, was involved in the 'Swing Riots' which preceded the actions of the Tolpuddle Martyrs by just a few years," Michael told us.

Thanks to Michael's support, Pilton Methodist Church now has a lovely cafe, with a view of the festival site, open Mon-Fri 10am - 12.30pm. Leave the Methodist Church and follow quiet roads past the Church at Pylle, towards Ditcheat, from where, after crossing the A371, arriving in 'Cary' (as the locals call it) via the path up from the Station.

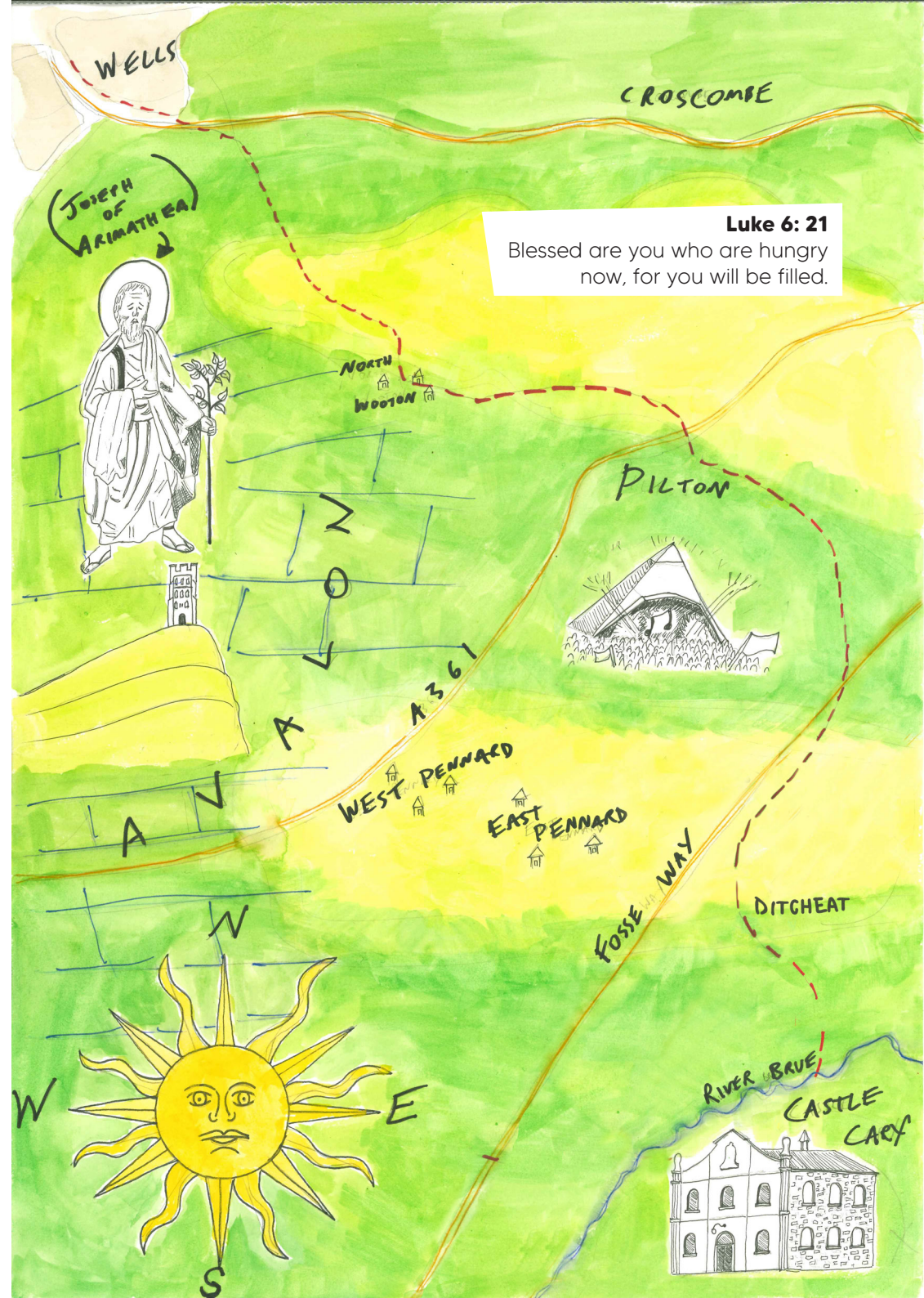
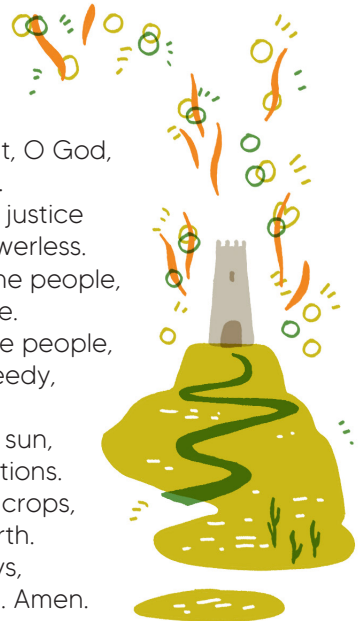
Reflect upon those figures who have led the way in working for justice.

John Wesley, in his last letter, to William Wilberforce, "O be not weary of well doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it."

## Psalm for the day

Psalm 72v1-7

Give to your leaders good judgement, O God,  
 And a sense of what is right.  
 May they govern your people with justice  
 and do right for those who are powerless.  
 May the mountains bring peace for the people,  
 and the hills bring forth justice.  
 May they defend the poor among the people,  
 the children of those who are needy,  
 and crush the oppressor.  
 May they endure as long as the sun,  
 like the moon through all generations.  
 like the rains that fall on the early crops,  
 like showers that water the earth.  
 May justice flower in their days,  
 and peace till the moon is no more. Amen.



**Luke 6: 21**  
 Blessed are you who are hungry  
 now, for you will be filled.



# CASTLE CARY TO SHERBORNE

Leave the town by the footpath down the side of the George Hotel, climbing up onto Lodge Hill. Follow the Monarch's Way along the top, across the A359, and then right down a dry valley. Leave the Monarch's Way in favour of the MacMillan Way, named after the founder of palliative cancer care who lived for some years in the house opposite the Methodist Church in Castle Cary.

Reflect upon the health inequalities shown up by the Corona Virus pandemic.

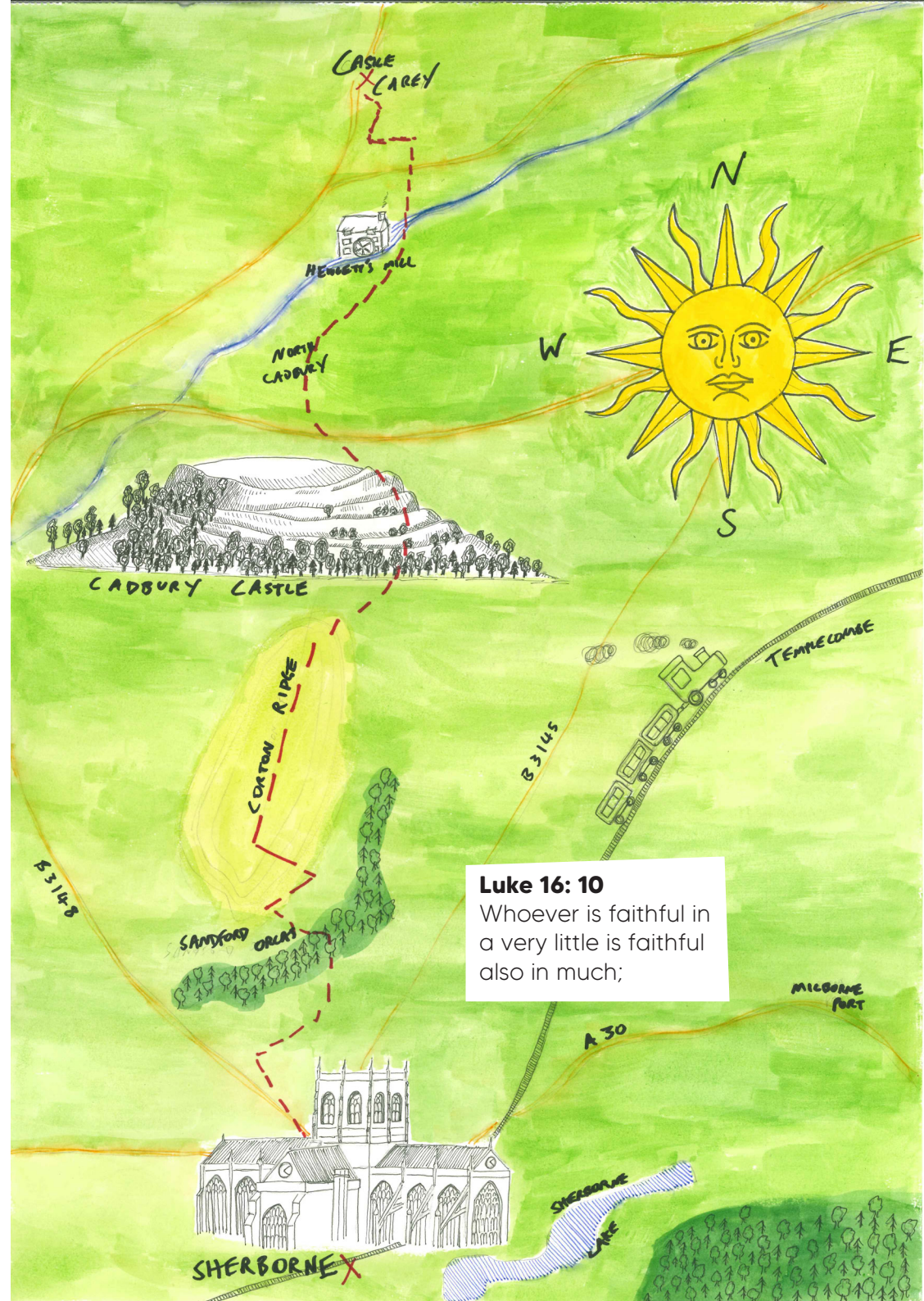
Pause a while underneath a 'Veteran' Oak Tree before continuing to a working water wheel at Hewlett's Mill. Follow minor roads and footpaths round North Cadbury, across the A303, through South Cadbury and past Cadbury Castle. Continue on the Monarch's/MacMillan Ways up onto and along Corton Ridge, with expansive views eastwards. At the end, turn left and head downhill, turning left at the bottom for a short walk up the lane, looking for the stile on your right. Follow that West side of the valley along through Holway, bearing right along a track that leads across fields, up through some woods and emerges onto a minor road by Sherborne Golf Club. The waymarked route turns right and then left descending towards Sherborne on a minor road. After a kilometre bear left, down and then up along a track through woodland which brings you into the town by the Quarr nature reserve.

"I visited as many of the poor as I could. I found some in their cells underground, others in their garrets, half-starved both with cold and hunger, added to weakness and pain. But I found not one of them unemployed. So wickedly, devilishly false is that common objection, "they are poor only because they are idle." **John Wesley**

### Psalm for the day

Psalm 82v1-4

God stands up in the divine assembly  
and gives judgement in the midst of the gods:  
'How long will you defend the unjust,  
and favour the cause of the wicked?  
Defend the poor and the orphaned!  
Render justice to the afflicted and oppressed!  
Rescue the weak and the poor!  
Set them free from the clutches of  
the wicked!' Amen.



**Luke 16: 10**  
Whoever is faithful in  
a very little is faithful  
also in much;



# SHERBORNE TO HILFIELD FRIARY

Leave Sherborne via the A352, and take the first minor road right, having crossed the bridge. Follow the Macmillen Way (marked on your OS maps) along paths and minor roads to the hamlet of Knighton. Just at the end of the first house beyond the farm, look for the stile to the left down over the fields. Crossing a small bridge, proceed across fields and into Yetminster. After crossing the railway line, look for the sign to the Methodist Chapel, which you may find open and welcoming of pilgrims ([yeovilblackmorevalemc.org.uk](http://yeovilblackmorevalemc.org.uk)).

Reflect upon the importance of hospitality, especially in relation to refugees. Leaving Yetminster, continue on the MacMillen Way for the first couple of miles, but proceed directly along the track to the hamlet of Stockwood, and to 'St Edwold's Church'. This tiny little gem of a chapel is kept open for passing walkers/pilgrims, and feels like an oratory.

Pause for a while in this tiny gem of a chapel, kept open for passing walkers/pilgrims.

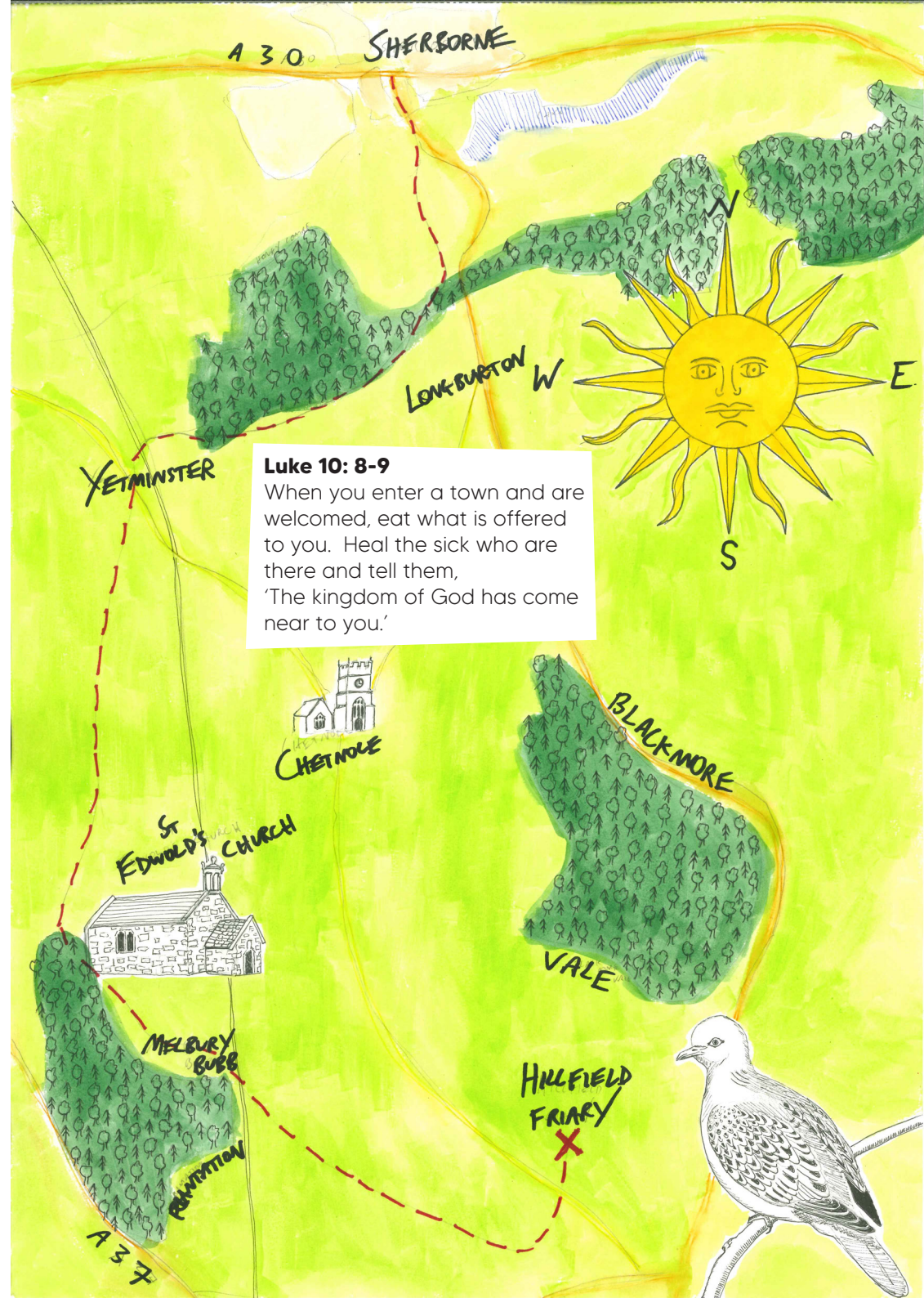
The path then leads up over the top of the hill (with trig point) and down to Melbury Bubb. For this short section you are on the Hardy Way. Take the road along past the church, and pick up a waymarked path over fields, through a very boggy gateway and across the railway down to Redford. From there it's minor roads up to Hillfield Friary, nestled in a fold of the hills.

"We took twelve of the poorest, and a teacher, into the society-room, where they were employed ... in carding and spinning of cotton, and maintained with very little more than the produce of their own labour." **John Wesley**

### Psalm for the day

Psalm 98v1-4

Sing a new song to God, who had done wonderful things,  
Whose right hand and holy arm have brought salvation.  
God has made salvation known,  
shown justice to the nations,  
and remembered the house of the faithful in truth and love.  
All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of our God.  
Sing praise to God, all the earth;  
ring out your joy! Amen.



**Luke 10: 8-9**  
When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'



# HILLFIELD FRIARY TO TOLPUDDLE

The last day is a long walk, reminding us of the long journey to freedom and justice for all. The route goes cross country, via Cerne Abbas, Piddletrentide and Dewlish, and finally down into Tolpuddle, descending into the village via a small road from the north. The old Chapel is a few hundred metres to your left, the Martyrs' Tree immediately in front of you on the small green, and the museum/café a few hundred metres to your right.

The 'martyrs' were 6 agricultural workers who, in the early 18th Century, dared to challenge their employers in relation to a living wage. They organised what is looked upon as one of the first trades unions. They met either under the sycamore tree in the village or in the upper room of a cottage (look out for the plaque). Members swore of an oath of secrecy - and it was this act that led to the men's arrest and subsequent sentence of seven years' transportation.

Such was the outcry over this sentence that they became celebrated as the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs.' Several of them were Methodists, empowered by the Spirit to make the connections between their faith and social justice.

Each July, the TUC sponsor a festival which celebrates the roots of the trades union movement, and each year the Methodist Church is represented by the President or Vice-President. The closing act of the festival is a march - with banners and bands - down to the Methodist Chapel.

"Surely you cannot be ignorant that the sinfulness of fine clothing lies chiefly in the expensiveness: in that it is robbing God and the poor, it is defrauding the fatherless and widow; it is wasting the food of the hungry, and withholding his raiment from the naked." **John Wesley**

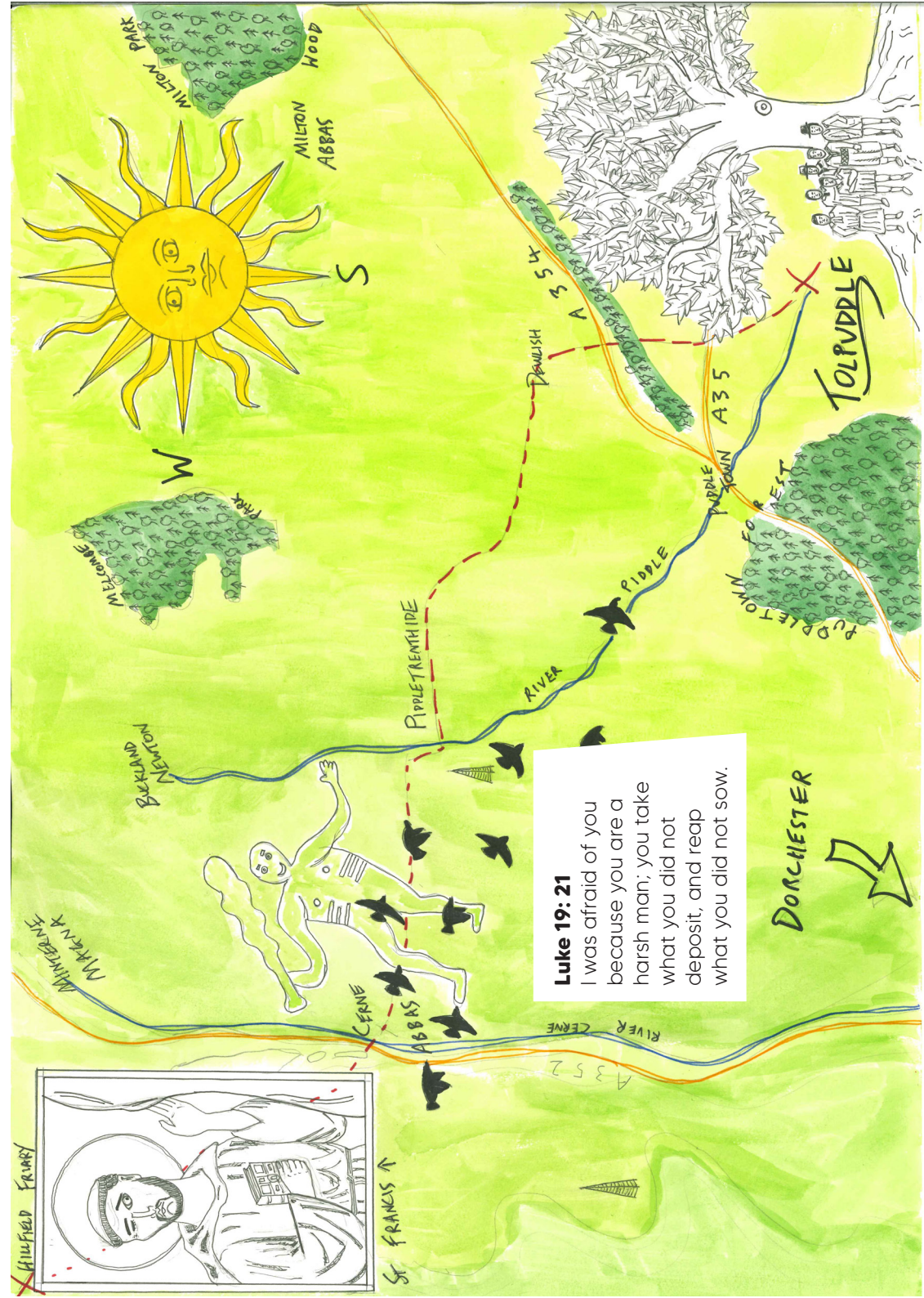
### Psalm for the Day

Psalm 146 v 7-10

It is God who sets the captives free,  
who restores the sight of the blind,  
who raises up those that were bowed down,  
and loves the just.

It is God who protects the stranger,  
who sustains the widow and orphan,  
and thwarts the wicked.

The Maker will reign forever,  
Our God through all generations.  
Give praise to the Holy One,  
Alleluia!



**Luke 19: 21**  
I was afraid of you  
because you are a  
harsh man; you take  
what you did not  
deposit, and reap  
what you did not sow.







### **Pilgrimage Prayer**

O God, who raised up the people called Methodists to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land, renew us with your Spirit of grace and justice that hearts may be warmed and the world changed to reflect that new Jerusalem towards which we look in hope and longing.

Through Jesus our brother, our companion and our Lord. Amen.



### **Useful Links**

[www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk)

– where you can find more on Methodism, Social Justice and Pilgrimage.

[www.newroombristol.org.uk](http://www.newroombristol.org.uk)

[www.faithspacebristol.weebly.com](http://www.faithspacebristol.weebly.com)

[www.withywoodcentre.co.uk](http://www.withywoodcentre.co.uk)

[www.chewstoke-methodistchurch.co.uk](http://www.chewstoke-methodistchurch.co.uk)

[www.wellsmethodistchurch.org.uk](http://www.wellsmethodistchurch.org.uk)

[www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk](http://www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk)

[www.hilfieldfriary.org.uk](http://www.hilfieldfriary.org.uk)

### **OS Map Numbers**

Landrangers 172, 183 and 194

### **Acknowledgements**

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The choice and text of the Psalms for each day are from the Iona Abbey Worship Book, 2001 and have been used with the permission of the Iona Community ([www.ionabooks.com](http://www.ionabooks.com)).

