

Newsletter of the Smaller Churches in the Thames Valley Circuit

December 2011

Minister's Letter

A couple of years ago I was invited to preach at the Master's Thanksgiving Service of the Salters' Company (one of the Great Twelve City of London Livery Companies) in St Giles, Cripplegate. I happened to mention that I was Minister in Pastoral Charge of six churches – some rural, some urban – based upon Tenterden in Kent. A very well-dressed City gent, clearly both well-heeled and entirely lacking in good manners, proceeded to tell me that I must therefore be a country yokel, given a quiet backwater of Methodism to look after.

I bridled. Who wouldn't? I felt the collective pain of my six churches (the smallest of them with a membership of three), and my mind filled with a rogue's gallery of all the good and faithful people of those six churches, any one of whom, faith-fuelled, would have left him standing in a contest to see who understood best how to love and serve their community.



Each of my six churches was (and is) a pearl: small, yes, but very precious, and the result of a long and patient evolution. It's not about numbers, City Gent, it's about quality. It's about a group of people who wouldn't throw money at a problem even if they could; it's about a group of caring, loving people, who are always looking for a way to serve God by serving the people He has placed around them. Many of them in their seventies and eighties, they were disciples, deacons, apostles and angels, all rolled into one. Some of them were growing tired, and some of them were growing a little dispirited, but it never ever occurred to any of them to stop what they were doing, because what they were doing was putting their faith and God's love into action. The bigger churches (Methodist and other) were quietly in awe of them, and their communities were always genuinely grateful for them. And – here's a thought – I haven't once mentioned the buildings they worship in, because they would go on worshipping and ministering to their communities even if the buildings weren't there. After all, a pearl doesn't need a shell in order to be beautiful.

I'm a small church man, heart and soul. And so is Jesus.

Just so that you know.

God bless,

Gary.

Impressions of Singing the Faith

Saturday 29th October, 2011. Eton Wick Chapel. About 4.15 pm. Over 30 people present. Laughter. We are listening to the fire regulations! That set the tone for the whole afternoon.

We were starting an afternoon in true Methodist tradition - Singing our faith using *Singing the Faith*, the new Methodist collection of hymns and songs. We were members of the smaller churches, with welcome friends from the other churches.

This afternoon sprang from a suggestion made at one the Smaller Churches Support Group meetings, and was intended to encourage us to learn items from the new book. Connie Jeffery did all the hard work of selecting the hymns and organising sufficient copies of both words and music. David Black had agreed to play for us. We were very grateful to them both for the work they had done so willingly.

We progressed through the Church year from Advent to Remembrance Sunday. While we took the singing seriously, there was also much laughter in-between. Not all of us liked everything we sang, but there was something to please everyone.



As a welcome respite from singing, we all enjoyed a bring-and-share tea part-way through the afternoon.

Our grateful thanks go to the members of Eton Wick Chapel who gave us much needed cups of tea or coffee, and opened up their premises for us. Thanks also go to Connie and David for their major contributions to the success and enjoyment of the afternoon.

Anne Haggarty

Reports and News from the Churches

Burnham

Burnham Methodists have said "goodbye" to an old and faithful friend. The organ, which has been in place for over 30 years, has now been sold. It has rarely been used for a long time, as the keyboard has been found to be more practical. However - swings and roundabout! The extra space will be used for a children's area / crèche, which we are looking forward to creating in the New Year.



Colnbrook and Poyle

Colnbrook and Poyle United Church are looking forward to a meeting with St Thomas's C of E church members, with a view to starting up child friendly coffee mornings at our church in the New Year. We are praying that this will be a way to reach the people of Colnbrook, Poyle and surrounding areas, that will allow us the opportunity to lead and encourage them to find The Lord.

We are also in hopes of refitting our church kitchen, as well as carpeting the vestry during the Spring of next year.

Several of our members attended the *Come Taste and Sing* event at Eton Wick on 29th October, when we sang using the new, *Singing the Faith* hymn book. It was to say the least, enlightening as well as fun. Especially so when it was discovered that one of the hymns had got different words in the music book to that in the words book! One can imagine red faces all round at Methodist Publishing.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all our friends in the other churches a Blessed, Peaceful and Jesus-filled Christmas, both in your churches and your homes, or wherever you are celebrating this wonderful time of the year.

Bob Quarterman

Old Windsor

We invite you to our Christmas Brunch on Saturday, 3rd December between 9 am and 11 am.

There will be an ecumenical village Carol Service, *Carols for Everyone*, in the Memorial Hall on Tuesday, 20th December at 7.30 pm. This will include a presentation of the *Open the Book* Christmas Story to show the adults how we are presenting Bible stories to children in the village First School.

As usual, we are holding two carol services at our church this year:

- Christmas Eve Carols by Candlelight, at 7 pm (followed by mince pies!)
- An afternoon Carol Service (appreciated by those who prefer not to go out in the dark) on Thursday, 22nd December at 2 pm

Our next Traveller's Tales will be an illustrated talk by Rev Barbara McIntivey on Thursday, 12th January at 2.30 pm. Price, including afternoon tea, £4

Greetings ... and Congratulations!

Rev Phil Morse and his wife Irene send their “best wishes to all the saints in the Thames Valley Circuit who might care to receive them”!

Those of you who have been part of the Smaller Churches Group from its inception, will remember that Phil was instrumental in getting *Come, Taste and Sing* started ... in all its variations! He was delighted to receive a copy of the Smaller Churches newsletter.



We send our congratulations to Phil and Irene, the proud grandparents of Maisy Faith Adams, daughter of their second daughter and her husband Geraint. When Phil got in touch, their eldest daughter was awaiting the birth of her first child...

Contact

This newsletter is edited by Anne Haggarty, the Secretary of the Smaller Churches Group. Please contact her with ideas and suggestions.