

Newsletter of the Smaller Churches in the Thames Valley Circuit

September – October 2012

Welcome to this edition of the Smaller Churches Newsletter! We start the new Church Year with hopes and dreams, and look forward to working with the new Staff team to try and achieve them!

Minister's Letter

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings to you. I guess you will understand that I write this to you with tears close to the surface. These have been the most dark days of our lives, and we are travelling through a deep valley, which has steep sides. I know that our family can never be the same again – and that “normal” life will be different now.

I want to thank you for your love, prayers, practical support since Peter's death. We know that we have been carried by the people of God, and especially the Methodist family. God has held us, but you have carried us. Thanks. I have found it possible to lead worship – especially in the intimate setting of the smaller churches – and have valued that intimacy. The smaller churches can offer that special atmosphere in worship, which will mean much to people who know the reality of a journey through the valley.

In the darkness a light does shine. The light of the victorious love of God, proved in Jesus. We hold on to that – with a trembling hand and a flickering faith.

So at the beginning of this church year, with a new staff team, about which I am delighted, we hold out the candle of hope. I want us to take as our theme for the year the words of the disciples to Jesus, “Teach us to pray”. I know that I am scratching the surface of what this means; I look to some of you to help me on my prayer-journey this year, that each of us might be able to encourage others to pray, and that we as a church may be marked as a church of prayer. It may involve us in starting new things and letting other things die. It might involve us in changing our priorities.

I know that Margaret, Sonia and Andy will have much to teach us as they pray and minister among us. We mention their names in our prayers at this time. I have a sense that the smaller churches are being called to become “houses of prayer” for the circuit, the nation and the world. Let us seek God to discover what this might mean in practical ways.

Thanks again for your prayers – in which you have prayed when we could not. I look forward to walking with you on the prayer-journey this year.

Peace be the journey.

Andrew



News from the Churches

COOKHAM RISE

On 15th July our Church Anniversary service was led by Rev Barbara McIntivey and was followed by lunch: there were 38 people in church and 33 stayed to eat with us – a lovely time was had by all and we sent Barbara and Dave off with our very best wishes for a happy and fruitful retirement. The Circuit will certainly be very different without them!

Given the popularity of our church lunches we decided on a new venture this Summer – Afternoon Tea: we hosted two – on 1st July and 5th August and were happy to welcome over twenty people to each, including friends from around the Circuit. There was a sumptuous array of savouries and cakes, and of course scones with jam and cream and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. There are other 'pluses' to Afternoon Tea: whereas preparing a whole Sunday lunch can seem a bit daunting, providing a cake for tea is more manageable and so we have been able to involve more people in preparation.

We had hoped to run an Olympics Holiday Club this Summer, but other commitments meant very few people were available to help and so we reluctantly abandoned the idea. That's a down-side of smaller churches – it only needs a couple of people to be away to scupper any plans you may have made. In Summer 2013 we are hoping that *Lighthouse* will happen in Cookham, under the leadership of the Anglican church: at the moment, however there are problems with finding leaders, so please pray about that situation.

Monthly Saturday coffee mornings have continued throughout the summer months, raising funds for various charities and bringing together church members and friends and people from the village community.

Harvest Festival will be on Sunday, 30th September and will be led by Rev John Newton: we're not sure yet whether there will be church lunch or some other sort of get-together with food, but there will definitely be something. On 20th October our next *Messy Church* session will take place: we don't have a theme yet, but we'll let everyone know how it went afterwards – anyone from around the Circuit who would like to come along would be very welcome.

Of course in September our new pastoral arrangements come into play and we are eager to see how this will work out in practice – maybe an opportunity for new kinds of shared leadership will emerge.

Exciting times!

Connie Jeffery



BURNHAM

Diamond Jubilee Saturday – a celebration service in the parish church, St. Peter's – under the auspices of **Churches Together in Burnham**, the first such service for well over 20 years. Burnham Methodists were involved in the preparation and delivery. The Church was packed ... what a joy to see so many local residents celebrating this wonderful occasion! So much goodwill and friendship! The writer of these notes saw her two grandsons in the colour parties for the Cubs and for the Beavers, and remembers her daughter (their Mum) carrying the Brownie pennant and her son (their Uncle) escorting the Scout banner, on important occasions many years ago. Not to mention Grannie (guess who) as Guide Captain, who bore the District Banner, and nearly tripped on the steps. (Sharp intake of breath from packed congregation.)

We learn from the past, take lessons from the present, and use them to inform the future. Burnham Methodists are delighted that the local ecumenical group, now known as **Churches Together in Burnham**, has been re-formed. We can look back to the work we did in the 1980s under the banner of the **Association of Burnham Christians (ABC)**. Many good things were done! Friendships were made and misunderstandings about denominations resolved. Now we are up and running again. On Sunday evening, 23rd September, our Superintendant Minister, and Rev Sonia Hicks, will lead a *Churches Together in Burnham* service at 6.30 pm, to introduce Sonia to the people of Burnham. We are looking forward to her ministry, to continue the work of bringing the good news of the gospel to the people of Burnham and the surrounding area.

The Well at Lent Rise continues in its work of spiritual and practical ministry. It is a joy to meet on Wednesday mornings with friends and neighbours from the local community, who have enjoyed friendship, the opportunity to talk to professionals in many different areas, local councillors, or just the opportunity to CHILLAX! We give thanks for the way the Spirit of the Lord is working in our land.

Hilary Evans



WOODLANDS PARK

The joint initiative by the Methodists and Anglicans on the green area in the centre of the housing estate for the residents of Woodlands Park on Bank Holiday Monday, 4th June, was a great success! The Anglicans were so enthused that they wanted to do another in September. We are currently planning a joint **Christmas Festival** on the Village Green in Christmas Week.

We are looking forward to welcoming you to the Circuit Healing Service which is taking place in our church on Tuesday, 30th October, at 2.30 pm

OLD WINDSOR

We held our last service with Barbara on 8th July. We welcomed a number of friends who came specifically to say “Goodbye” to Barbara. The service included the Commissioning of Anne Haggarty and David Alexander as Worship Leaders, who were supported by family members. Afterwards, 40 of us sat down together for a lunch with good food, good conversation ... a good time.

We are looking forward to welcoming our new minister, Margaret, and to working with her!

During the past year we have enjoyed our experiences with *Open the Book*, and we are looking forward to starting again in the new school term. So, we gather, are the children who were last year’s nursery class - they want to know what the other classes so enjoyed on Wednesday mornings! We shall miss Barbara for her enthusiasm, which enabled us to get started, but know that *Open the Book* travels well - even if only to Isleworth!

We have tried *Messy Church* during the year, with rather mixed results. However, this coming year we are planning to work jointly with the Parish Church ... the Methodists will provide the venue, the Anglicans provide most of the children, and we hope that helpers will come from both churches. The first of these ecumenical sessions will be on 24th November.

We shall continue with our occasional series of “Traveller’s Tales” - has anyone a good travel experience they would be willing to share with us (preferably illustrated)? Contact David or Sylvia Alexander for more information.

“Come and join the celebration!” This Autumn we celebrate our 60th Anniversary of becoming a Methodist Church. On Saturday 27th October, the church will be open from 3 - 5 pm. Do come and celebrate informally with us; share your memories, and afternoon tea, which will be available throughout the session.

Rev Dr Malcolm White will be leading both our services on Sunday, 28th October. Our morning service will be our Celebration Service. In the evening, it will be the Circuit’s Missions Service, when Malcolm will be talking about his healing ministry at Westminster Central Hall.

Anne Haggarty



ETON WICK

We have had a very successful Summer of Events. We held a *Diamond Jubilee Quiz*, a *Big Lunch*, and a *Table Top Olympics*. Hard work, but great fun! All three events were well supported, not only by our own members, but also by members of the Circuit. We still have the flags up! Pictures from two of these events are now on the Circuit Website [Photo Gallery](#).

We are looking forward to welcoming our new minister, Sonia, getting to know her, and working with her.

We have the following events planned:

- Sunday, 9th September Harvest Festival celebrations
- Sunday, 7th October Our Ladies Club Anniversary
- Sunday, 14th October Our Chapel Anniversary.

All are welcome.



COLNBROOK & POYLE UNITED CHURCH

We are looking forward to having Margaret as our minister.

We have started to hold lunches before our regular monthly Fellowship meetings. These have been very well received, but we are having to review how frequently we hold them. We have found that monthly is putting too much strain on the few people who do the catering. We shall experiment with possibly one per quarter, and see how this is received.

Over the summer the review of the LEP has taken place, something which happens every seven years. This was our first one! A number of conclusions and recommendations have been put forward, and we shall be seeing how we can take these on board in order to achieve one of our aims – of bringing people to God, and spreading the Good News of Jesus.

A number of our members and friends have been, or are, unwell. Please join us in remembering them in prayer.

Joint Events ... dates for your diary

- Sunday, 2nd September.
Circuit Service at Windsor at 6.30 pm. Circuit Welcome for our new members of staff and their families.
- Tuesday, 18th September,
7.30 pm at Cookham Rise. Next meeting of the Smaller Churches Group.
- Tuesday, 30th October
A Healing Service at 2.30 pm at Woodlands Park Methodist Church.
- Saturday, 10th November.
2.30 pm at Eton Wick *Singing the Faith* - again!

EDITORIAL

Please Support US!

If you can support the above circuit events or our activities and events listed under our individual churches, in any way, please do! Thank you!

Editor's note / Contact

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

Thank you to all contributors, and – *please* – keep the contributions coming! You don't **have** to wait for my reminder!

Anne Haggarty