

Newsletter of the Smaller Churches in the Thames Valley Circuit

January - February 2013

Minister's Letter

Another New Year and, by now, you have tried and utterly failed to keep any of your resolutions. I thought you might be interested to know that I have a secret list of resolutions that are specifically designed for members of the clergy.



Here are a few of the best:

1. NEVER get talked into buying an electronically-heated font!
(“Just calm down everyone! As soon as the steam clears we’ll be able to see who I baptized!”)
2. NEVER let a five-year-old take the collection!
(“Thank goodness you found him. He bought WHAT!!!”)
3. NEVER go bungee-jumping in a cassock!
(“At least he’s drifting north-west; there’s an airfield at Henley ...”)
4. NEVER use a crusty roll during a communion service!
(“Luckily only the choir was actually hit by shrapnel ...”)
5. NEVER laugh at a baptism!
(“I’m so sorry; it’s just that when you said Arbuthnot I felt an uncontrollable urge to scream ...”)
6. NEVER pretend to eat the Baby Jesus from the Crib Scene!
(“If I get the head, will someone take Mrs Smith’s feet?”)
7. NEVER suggest that the Organist plays too fast!
(“And so to our next hymn: on your marks, get set ...”)
8. NEVER criticise the flower arrangement!
(“No, don’t move, you’re pulling against the thorns ...”)
9. NEVER let the Boys’ Brigade use Super Glue!
(“... and then they said ‘Salute!’ Anyway, part of the eyebrow is left ...”)

10. NEVER share any part of the wedding service with the Father-in-Law!
 (“No, sir, you cannot say ‘and three-to-one on the divorce ... ’”)
11. NEVER accept innovations from the market place!
 (“It’s just a wedding licence; we don’t do a five-year extended warranty!”)
12. NEVER agree to a baptism by full immersion in a local swimming pool!
 (“Shouting ‘shark!’ was not helpful, Mr Jones ... ”)

I hope that cheered away some of the winter gloom for you.

Have a very happy New Year, everyone!

God bless,

Gary.

News from the Churches

COOKHAM RISE

I sometimes think the Smaller Churches’ Newsletter is a bit like Radio 4, which tells you what is going to happen in the news bulletin, then tells you about the news in detail – just as we look forward to events in the future and then tell the other churches about them when they’ve happened! But at least we don’t go on to sum up by telling you what we’ve already told you as Radio 4 does!

November 23rd saw a concert in the church from *Echoes of Swing* – the jazz band which practises in the Wesley Hall each week. The band played “big band” numbers to an appreciative audience and we raised some money for church funds and for our project this year – Ludhianna Hospital in India. Our Christmas Coffee Morning on 8th December was a busy morning and raised over £200.



We held our church Christmas lunch on Sunday 16th December, when 34 people sat down to turkey with all the trimmings followed by Christmas pudding and mince pies – I think everyone enjoyed the food and the company. The previous day was our children’s workshop (for primary school-age children), this year entitled *Christmas is Coming – let’s get Ready!* Because schools broke up so late this year, we had to hold this on a Saturday – we usually go for the Thursday before Christmas. Only eleven children attended (whereas we would normally expect over 20), but they enjoyed themselves making lanterns, doves, table decorations, gingerbread and a picture showing Mary & Joseph on the road to Bethlehem, and going into the church to think about what we do when we get ready for Christmas and what Mary would have had to do to get ready for the birth of a very special baby.

On the evening of Thursday, 20th December the Ladies Circle invited everyone to a carol service, led by Rev Andrew Baker, at which the ladies did the readings. This was followed by mince pies in the Wesley Hall. Our church carol service by candlelight was on Sunday 23rd December at 4 p.m, led by myself and Kathy Rickman; it was followed by refreshments and – surprise, surprise! – more mince pies.

An average of 8-10 of us took some time out each week from our preparations for Christmas during Advent to look at “Four Advent Songs” – the Song of Zechariah, the Song of Mary, the Song of the Angels and the Song of Simeon. And yes, before there are “letters to the editor”, I know Simeon came after Christmas, but the story's themes of waiting and hoping fitted in well with Advent, and Simeon's speaking of Jesus's future and the sword that would pierce Mary's heart reminded us that Jesus didn't stay a tiny baby in a manger but grew into a man who taught and healed and died. I like the carol *The Infant King* which urges us not to wake the baby because “the cross, the nails, the piercing” will come soon enough. And I like the last verse which says:

Hush, do not stir the infant King.
Dreaming of Easter, gladsome morning.
conquering death, its bondage breaking:
sing lullaby!

We were delighted that Rev Andrew Baker and Rev Malcolm White (the Burnham one!) were able to join us for these Advent studies – it brought a different dynamic to what would otherwise have been a meeting of the 'usual' people.

There was a note of sadness to our Advent preparations too as one of our members, Norma Fiske, passed away on 7th December. Norma was an inspiration to many of us and about 90 of her family and friends from church and elsewhere celebrated her life on 19th December in Cookham Rise church, when Rev Barbara McIntivey (who had been a tower of strength to Norma in years gone by) gave the message.

We at Cookham Rise wish all our friends in the smaller churches a peaceful and joyful 2013.

Connie Jeffery

OLD WINDSOR

Our Christmas celebrations began with the village Carol event held in the Memorial Hall. A very lively evening, enjoyed by all who attended, but we were all disappointed by the turnout – though the Methodists were (as usual) well represented. The Thursday Fellowship Carol Service followed later in the week, and our celebrations culminated with our traditional *Carols by Candlelight* service on Christmas Eve.



We have finished another term of *Open the Book*, which we gather from both parents and staff, is much appreciated by the children (and the staff). We hear that children go home and re-tell the story they have seen, including sound effects. Some of the Biblical names (Tabitha and Hezekiah, for example) get a little mangled in the retelling! At the “thank you” gathering for all helpers we were told that the children are disappointed when we are not there on Wednesday mornings.

In November, we were thrilled to have our postponed *Travellers’ Tales* on Croatia, when Mike and Betty Willcocks entertained us in words and pictures about that fascinating part of the world. We have three more *Travellers’ Tales* planned for the next few months:

24 th January	Kenya, with Evelyn Thomson
21 st February	Jamaica, Ireland and back, with Rev Sonia Hicks
14 th March	Another whatever next!, with Ian Haggarty

All are illustrated talks starting at 2.30 pm, followed by tea, inclusive cost £4, and ALL are welcome.

As usual we shall be holding brunches in March: 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd. There will be a different theme each week, with food available from 9 to 11 am. Everyone is invited.

Anne Haggarty

ETON WICK

Christmas Celebrations

The traditional “Carol and Mince Pie” evening on Tuesday, 18th December, led by Rev Sonia Hicks was a great success with over 50 people enjoying traditional carols sung by individuals as well as all present, mainly accompanied by Connie Jeffery on the piano and also Rita Wymark on the piano accordion. Mixed with this musical feast were festive readings and a Christmas comedy written by Rev Gary Homewood and performed by Gary, Sonia and Andy Packer. Refreshments including mince pies and cakes were served during the interval. This very enjoyable evening raised £220 for *Action for Children*. We thank Daphne Hogg for organising it so well ... and hope she isn’t whisked off to a new career in talent shows!



Pie & Praise

Our new year Pie & Praise meetings start with talks by two ladies. First, on Tuesday, 8th January with a talk by Rev Sonia Hicks. Then on 19th February, Mrs Nitu Harry, one of our newer church regulars, will be talking about her background and life.

Both meetings will start at 7 pm with a meal, and are evenings not to be missed.

Circuit Healing Service

The next Circuit Healing Service will be held at Eton Wick at 2.30 pm on Thursday, 10th January, led by the Circuit Staff. All will be most welcome at this service.

BURNHAM

During recent months we have seen a slow but steady increase in attendance at Sunday morning worship. It has been a joy to welcome back one previous regular worshipper, whose contribution to our Church activities has always been most helpful. We are also seeing friends who have come along regularly to *The Well at Lent Rise*' Wednesday morning Meeting Place, and are joining us on Sunday mornings.

Wednesday 19th December saw the last of *Wake-Up Wednesdays* (where we provide bacon butties, croissants and hot drinks to the students waiting for the school buses which stop across the road) until the new term starts. It will be very good not to have to be on the premises cooking by 7 am, but the pleasure and thanks expressed by the youngsters, not to mention the fellowship among the group of workers more than makes up for wrenching open the eyelids and de-frosting the car at a most unreasonable hour of the morning!

We have been delighted that Rev Sonia has been able to share *Wake-Up Wednesdays* with us on more than one occasion and her dedication and infectious enthusiasm, in all areas of the work at Lent Rise, are such an encouragement to us all.

All of us at Burnham Methodist – the Church at the Crossroads – send love and peace for the New Year.

Hilary Evans



COLNBROOK & POYLE UNITED CHURCH

A cautionary tale from Bob Quarterman:

Gift Aid, or Robbery? Beware...

I feel I just have to make all of you who Gift Aid, either to your church or favourite charity, aware of my experience. I have Gifted Aided now for many years. After all, if we can claim back some of the tax we pay, to aid good causes, why not?

Imagine then my horror, with the added expense of Christmas looming, at receiving a letter from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs demanding the sum of £130 without any explanation whatsoever. After making a telephone call to them to ask the reason, I was soon enlightened by a very pleasant young lady. Apparently I no longer pay tax. Therefore I should not Gift Aid.

I therefore had to pay back the monies paid to our church for the previous year. Despite the fact that my pension provider deducts tax from my January payment every year, it is not enough. It is apparently not in their remit, to write to the treasurers of churches to say that individuals don't qualify to Gift Aid; they even go ahead and pay it. They don't feel the need to inform the donor.

Check it out all you pensioners who Gift Aid. You may be receiving a letter from HMRC. They want their money back!!!

A Very Happy New Year to all our friends in the Thames Valley Circuit.

WOODLANDS PARK



Woodlands Park Methodist Church

Invites you to join us for a Quiz

Date: Saturday 9th February 2013
Time: 7 pm – 10 pm
Cost: £7 (to include supper)
Location: Soltau Centre, Stubbings Church, Henley Road.
Just off the A4.
Car parking available.

Purpose: To raise funds in aid of 'Omwabini' Project to support orphans of Aids victims in Africa.

So if you feel your little grey cells need a little bit of exercise after the excess of the Christmas holidays, a good supper and a bit of a giggle – then please come and join us.

Tickets are available from: Linda Harrison at carllindaharrison@hotmail.com or leave a message on 01628 824067 or call on my mobile on 07922 065293.

PS: Don't have a team? Don't worry! We can match you up with one of our resident experts ... Come and enjoy the fun.

Methodist Church – Thames Valley Circuit

Smaller Churches Group

AWAYDAY

led by Rev Dr Malcolm White

SATURDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2013

10 am – 3 pm

at the Soltau Centre, Stubbings

The Circuit focus for 2012-2013 is 'prayer': this will be a very special day on this topic for everyone from the smaller churches

Bring a packed lunch – names to Connie Jeffery please (01628 662500; connie.jeffery@talk21.com)

Joint Events ... dates for your diary

Thursday, 10 th January	2.30 pm at Eton Wick	Circuit Healing Service.
Thursday, 24 th January	2.30 pm at Old Windsor	<i>Traveller's Tales</i> – Kenya Evelyn Thomson
Saturday, 9 th February	7 pm at Soltau Centre	Woodlands Park's Quiz Evening
Thursday, 21 st February	2.30 pm at Old Windsor	<i>Traveller's Tales</i> – Jamaica, Ireland and back. Rev Sonia Hicks
Saturday, 23 rd February	10 am at Soltau Centre	Smaller Churches' Away Day

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