

Newsletter of the Smaller Churches in the Thames Valley Circuit

March - April 2013

Minister's Letter

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I was sitting in the chapel at Eton Wick in the middle of a January afternoon. Sonia was speaking about the paralysed man and the friends lowering him through the roof, so that he could encounter Jesus. I was wondering about how I could invite people in the congregation to receive the ministry of the laying on of hands; then I knew that God was there. There were not many of us in the congregation – there rarely are at our services – but in the intimacy of the worship that afternoon the reality of God meant that we all left different people from how we had come.



Worship in our smaller churches can be encounters with God, which invite the possibility of transformation. When we come with that sort of expectation to worship, then all things are possible. The preacher makes his or her contribution, but it is when we are ready to allow God to meet us that something happens. As smaller churches we can take a lead on this in the circuit, for we are part of caring communities, where we appreciate each other's strengths and weaknesses, where we know how to upset each other and how to build each other up. Our gatherings carry all the potential for transformation and renewal, for release of energy and light.

As ministers we enjoy coming and sharing worship with you. I know you pray for us as we come and share. Sometimes we do not understand your situation and we make mistakes in how the worship is led. God takes all of that, the offering of a true worship in spirit and truth, and enables us to connect with the world when we leave in a new, vibrant way.

Thanks for teaching me about worship. I look forward to being with you, weeping, laughing, singing, praying with you this quarter as we travel the way of the cross to Calvary, and, through our tears, meet the Risen Christ.

Peace be the journey.

Andrew

News from the Churches

COOKHAM RISE

The early months of the year always seem rather quiet as people get back into gear after the Christmas break, so there has not been a great deal happening at Cookham Rise so far this year. The January coffee morning was cancelled because of the weather, but February's – in aid of our 2012-2013 fundraising project, Ludhiana Hospital in India – went ahead, as did January's and February's Sunday church lunch. We have changed the timing of both coffee mornings and lunches: coffee mornings will now be held on the third Saturday of each month and church lunches on the first Sunday of each month.

On Sunday, 10th February our Scout/Beaver/Cub parade service was led by Rev Gary Homewood (recovering from the 'flu) and several dozen Beavers, Scouts and Cubs enjoyed taking part in the story of 'Old Farmer Ted' and other activities. The adults enjoyed it too – the sight of some quite elderly church members mooing and baaing with gusto was quite something! On 24th March we have a parade service for Guides, Brownies and Rainbows, which will be led by Rev Sonia Hicks; you may wonder why we don't have all the uniformed organisations together, but we couldn't fit them all in if a lot came. On the same day, 24th March, at 3 pm, we have our next *Messy Church* session and on 12th April we will hold a children's workshop for primary-school-age children entitled 'Spring to Life': the thinking at present is that we will 'do' the paralysed man being let down through the roof and tie it in with new life/Easter.



During Lent we are meeting on a Monday afternoon and following a Lent Course entitled 'Life Source: a course on prayer for Lent' which we thought fitted in well with the Circuit's emphasis on prayer this Connexional year. Some of us are also taking part in the Lent course being put on by Holy Trinity in Cookham which is called 'The naturalist and the Christ' and which looks at the life and struggles of Charles Darwin as portrayed in the film 'Creation'. I am writing this before the Smaller Churches Awayday on 23rd February, but hopefully there will be a report on that next time.

Finally, there are dates for your diary. Firstly our Prayer Vigil will take place from 6 pm till 10 pm on Good Friday (29th March) and 8 am till 12 noon on Saturday 30th March: there will be prayer stations in the church following the last week of Jesus' life on earth, and refreshments (including cake!) in the Wesley Hall. We are also repeating our summer 'Afternoon Teas' this year – on 14th July and 11th August at 3 pm – and all the smaller churches are invited. You may like to take a leisurely walk along the river or elsewhere in Cookham and come to the church afterwards for refreshments.

We at Cookham Rise wish our friends in the other smaller churches a peaceful and joyous Easter.

Connie Jeffery

OLD WINDSOR

Our *Open the Book* sessions at our local First School continue to go very well, and we are pleased to say that we have had two new team members join us since Christmas. It feels slightly unreal that we are half-way through the three-year cycle of stories to tell the children. While we like to have a few children take part most weeks, we do not have them every week.

Our *Travellers' Tales* series continues to have a wide variety of subjects and speakers. By the time you read this, you will have missed one on Kenya (about 25 people from various parts of the Circuit supported us – even though it was snowing!), and one on Jamaica. However, you have time to book the dates for the next two – one on 14th March called “A tale of two cities PLUS ...” and one on 16th May about Thailand.

Our Brunches will be held in March this year on 2nd and 9th, both with an English theme, on 16th there will be a Shaw Special, and finally on 23rd there will be a Continental theme. All profits from these Brunches will be going to Missions.

Our annual parade of witness through the village on Good Friday takes place as usual, starting at 10.30 am from outside the shops in Wheatsheaf Parade, and ending (this year) at St Luke's for a short ecumenical service. For those of you who know the village, this is not the short walk it might seem, as we go via the old Catholic church, and the Methodist church! It will be a joy to welcome to our Easter Morning service, Rev Heather Noel-Smith, for her first visit to us, and to share the Easter Communion with us. We are especially pleased to be having Holy Communion on Easter Sunday this year.

The regular winter coughs, colds and flu have hit us hard this year, and we have all been feeling the effects. We also hope that Margaret is feeling better, as she has been very unwell. We are hoping that now Spring is just round the corner, we shall all pick up in health, particularly Margaret and those of our members who have been really unwell.

Anne Haggarty



COLNBROOK & POYLE UNITED CHURCH

Our United Services, held alternately on our premises and at the Parish Church of St Thomas's, are well received by all who attend, and we look forward to continuing to join in worship.

Our Fellowship sessions, on the first Tuesday in the month are proving very popular, and, while we always look forward to having Margaret come, we also appreciate the contributions from other speakers.

We are very pleased to report that every month, we send about 32 Kg of food to the Slough Foodbank.

ETON WICK

We are most grateful to Laura Clack and Jo Webb who provided us with another excellent lunch after the morning service on 24th February. This was a good meeting point for supporters of the Ladies Club and Lunch Club as well as our own church members.

There will be a short Holy Week service at 1 pm following the weekly lunch on Wednesday, 27th March, led by Rev Sonia Hicks. This service has always been popular with our “diners”.

Will our occasional visitors, and others who might wish to join us, please remember that lunches will be available **fortnightly** from 3rd April. No booking required. Just turn up from 12 noon. We shall be delighted to see you.



On Good Friday, 29th March, there will be a short service at 9.30 am, conducted by Rev Sonia Hicks, followed by seasonal refreshments and fellowship. As we have no preacher planned for the evening of Easter Day, we shall probably be celebrating the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour with *Songs of Praise*, and invite others who have only one service to join us.

We are pleased to report an increase in attendance at morning services. Rushil Samuel Harry was baptised here in November 2011 and now comes with parents Bimal and Nitu as they have settled in the village. Carol Tombe is also hoping to do so, but is staying with her nephew at present. We welcome all these new friends and hope they feel similarly at home with us!

For the rest ... these are expressions of thanks to folk who have contributed hugely to the life of the Church by the exercise of their various talents.

Firstly, (but in no particular order! – for Strictly Come Dancing enthusiasts) our sincere thanks to our “flower ladies”, Valerie, Pat and Liz. For many years, Valerie has been on her own, and she does appreciate some help. Magically, in recent weeks, Pat and Liz have created four displays representing all the seasons of the year!

What a joy (and a relief!) it is to find the piano stool occupied when we come into the Chapel! Our digital “music box” sometimes plays tricks on us, and we are very grateful to Peter who has controlled it, virtually single-handed, for many years. However, we are greatly indebted to those who occasionally provide “live music” and especially to Connie who come whenever her other commitments allow. We are grateful to Anne who has offered her services in the evening while Ledgers Road is undergoing refurbishment.

And lastly, where would we be without our friends from Burnham? Jo and Peter, we can never thank you enough for all that you contribute to the life and witness of the Methodist Church in Eton Wick. We are so very grateful, (and may God give you the strength and the willingness to continue!!!).

BURNHAM

Burnham Methodists have extended a very warm welcome to a new member. He has, in fact, been provided with accommodation on the Church premises. It can best be described as a one-room flatlet, very well provided with all necessary equipment to enable essential duties to be carried out. Although the accommodation is on the small side it is snug and appropriate for purpose.

It is not clear whether the Rev Sonia has yet made a pastoral visit, but those who have been closely involved with his installation are confident of her approval. His name is Worcester Bosch and he has already warmed our hearts. Our bodies have been occasionally chilly and Keith Evans can sometimes be seen in close conversation with him, peering at dials, and sometimes pressing a lever.



Members were present at all four Week of Prayer lunch-time services, held in very challenging weather. The services were a great blessing to all, but the Churches Together Committee has recently decided that next year one joint Sunday Service will be held. More details later.

The Well@Lent Rise 'Wake-up Wednesday' team were delighted to receive an early morning visit from Christian youth worker Wayne Dixon. He was able to spend some time with the students waiting for the school buses and assisted with handing out the eagerly-received, (as always) bacon butties, warm croissants and hot chocolate. It was a joy to receive an e-mail from him later in the day, expressing his enthusiasm for this work, based at Burnham Methodist.Church.

Sunday morning congregations are showing some growth, although the bad weather has kept some indoors. We are particularly delighted to see several under 5s – their enthusiasm (particularly when handed a musical instrument) is a delight to behold! Many thanks to our preachers, who make a special point of making these young ones feel so included.

Hilary Evans

Stop press

Two members have asked if they may look into the possibilities of starting a Young Church group. We are delighted about this - a wonderful answer to prayer.

Churches Together in Burnham will be holding a Christian Aid Quiz on Saturday, 11th May at 7.30 pm on our premises, to kick off Christian Aid Week.

WOODLANDS PARK

On Saturday 15th December a joint event was held on The Green at Woodlands Park. The event, Woodlands Park Winter Wonderland, was a result of collaboration with White Waltham Church of England, Housing Solutions and a few of us from Woodlands Park Methodist Church. The idea was to put on an event to reach out to the local community with no strings attached. The first event of this kind was held back during the Jubilee.



This event involved Father Christmas, naturally, reindeer, delightful, activities, music and food. All at no cost. Tents erected, luckily in the dry at this stage. We reckoned we had about 250 people come and join us. Some made crackers, some joined in the centre games, eg in the pond out the pond and after two hours we came together with a group of musicians to sing carols. It was enjoyable for all those involved and a big thank you to Margaret Cooke, Neville Walton and Jean Broome for their help. We are already planning our next event.

Linda Harrison

PS Had to smile when a gentlemen called out to me just before the event started. "Linda can you move your car – the reindeer have arrived!" I thought it was Father Christmas!

Joint Events ... dates for your diary

Saturdays in March: 2 nd , 9 th , 16 th and 23 rd	9 – 11 am at Old Windsor	Brunch – proceeds for missions
Thursday, 14 th March	2.30 pm at Old Windsor	<i>Traveller's Tales</i> – A Tale of Two Cities ... PLUS. Ian Haggarty
Thursday, 21 st March	7.30 pm at Burnham	Circuit Healing Service.
Friday, 29 th March	6 – 10 pm at Cookham Rise	Prayer Vigil
Saturday, 30 th March	8 am – noon at Cookham Rise	Prayer Vigil

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!

Wishing everyone a Happy and Holy Easter!

Anne Haggarty