

Newsletter of the Smaller Churches in the Thames Valley Circuit

July - August 2013

Minister's Letter

Many years ago, in a previous appointment, I offered to raise money for one of the churches by doing a sponsored silence. Anybody who knows me will also realise what a challenge that was going to be! I like to talk – I like to talk a lot – I am rarely silent! The day began well enough in the local church. People came to support me by sitting in the church sharing my silent retreat. At first, it was pleasant to enjoy the relative tranquillity of the church. I had brought along lots of study work and reading. There was no way that I should need to converse with any other human being. (THAT was the theory!)



It did not take long for my eyes to wander from the pages of my book. It was interesting material and I wanted to tell someone, I NEEDED to tell someone. If I had been at home, I would have left the study and bombard Conrad with all my new discoveries. But that option was not available to me. I was condemned to twenty-four long hours without using my voice. I did manage it and raised a good sum for the church funds but never again.

That experience gave me a valuable lesson. Our brains are constantly at work and it is a great blessing to have the gift of speech: To open one's mouth and put all our thoughts and feelings into words. After that day, I became more aware of stroke victims and other people who cannot talk at all and I gave God thanks for sign language and other forms of sharing information.

If we have the gift of verbal speech, it is a wonderful blessing from God. We can talk to one another. We can express how we feel, what we have done, how other people are. Yet often we misuse this gift. It is so much easier to complain than to be thankful. My son once gave me a valuable piece of advice on one of his trips home from University. After an hour in my presence, he said, "Mum, for every piece of criticism, please give me two pieces of praise. That way, I can handle it." It was one of those profound thoughts that made me stop and pay attention.

St. Paul told the Ephesians to **"...speak the truth in a spirit of love..."** [Ephesians 4: 15] Is that what we do? Is that really what we do? When I read those words, I am challenged that if I cannot say something in a spirit of love, then perhaps it is best to keep silent. I can still remember a person, many years ago, challenging something I had said in the church. The person concerned wrote me a letter and hand-delivered it so they could explain why I was receiving it. Rarely, have I been 'taken to task' in such a gentle and loving way, the person felt very strongly about what I had said but there was no animosity or bitterness in that letter. Truly, this person had 'spoken the truth in love' to me.

St. Paul concludes the chapter by writing; **“Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you in Christ.”** No church family is devoid of disagreements or quarrels and this is as true in the Thames Valley Circuit as in every other part of the Christian church. But, we can strive to be people who are kind and tender-hearted towards one another. We can be those in whom the spirit of forgiveness dwells.

In the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Sonia

News from the Churches

BURNHAM

Under the auspices of CTIB we hosted a Christian Aid Quiz in May. We had rather a low attendance (too many Quizzes recently?) but there was a great spirit of enjoyment and friendly rivalry. No team was disgraced in the usual type of quiz rounds (except your correspondent who does not know one film theme from another unless it is “Grease” or “The Dam Busters”) However, all heads hung low after the last round – where our knowledge of the work of Christian Aid was tested. Wild guesses (just occasionally informed guesses) were made. Contestants had to resist the temptation to nip out to the toilets, as the journey would take them past a very informative Christian Aid poster!

Modesty forbids me to say which team won - and it certainly was not because of their Christian Aid knowledge!

It’s been a joy to visit the Tuesday Parents & Toddlers group and to hear how they are to be part of the Church again – as they were many years ago when they first began.

The Sunday School is now an integral part of Sunday Worship. Numbers fluctuate, but it is still early days.

We are so grateful for the kindness and warm support of our preachers.

The Well at Lent Rise seems to keep branching out. I suppose a well can’t have branches, but never mind. Not only do they have a Quilt making group, and the art corner, but last Wednesday Bill (Brown) brought his guitar, which kept 3 people absorbed until home - time. We do have our serious side, and it is good to have the Prayer Room for quiet one to one conversations, and, of course, the Church itself is also open.



The photograph shows Bill and Claire demonstrating contact printing.

Hilary Evans

OLD WINDSOR

In the middle of May we had a most interesting and entertaining *Traveller's Tales* from Jancis Sherriff, one of our Anglican friends who does *Open the Book* with us.

Her daughter had decided to get married in Thailand, and so Jancis regaled us with some of the stories surrounding the wedding, but also told us a lot about Thailand itself, following her and her husband as they travelled round. We saw pictures of temples, palaces, busy streets, people, and truly stunning scenery. The hour passed so quickly. Thank you, Jancis!

We are delighted to welcome friends from Colnbrook & Poyle to our Traveller's Tales, Bible Studies and other events!

We have just finished a most interesting Bible Study series looking at *Aspects of Prayer* as illustrated by contrasting prayers in the Bible. We start a new Bible Study series shortly, when we shall be looking at the "minor" letters towards the end of the New Testament, beginning with James. We look forward to this, studying the teachings of some of the less well-known books of the Bible. Margaret will lead us through what promised to be another most interesting series!

Our second year of *Open the Book* is almost over! It seems only recently that we first got together to *plan whether* we could do this, or whether it might be just too much for us! How things have moved on!

Anne Haggarty



COLNBROOK & POYLE UNITED CHURCH

At our Tuesday Fellowship in June we had speakers from Women's Aid. We heard how women, children and sometimes men, arrive at the refuge needing protection, often with just the clothes they are wearing. They are given shelter and counselling. However, with Government and local authority cuts, finances are stretched, and help from groups such as churches is very welcome.

We have a lot of toys which we intend to donate, as these are also in great demand.

If you have any clothing, toys or household items in fairly good condition, and would be prepared to donate them, we at Colnbrook and Poyle will collect them from you and deliver to the refuge.

Please also consider inviting Tony and Kelly along to your meetings to hear first-hand about their invaluable work. They can be contacted at 01753-549865

COOKHAM RISE

Coffee mornings and church lunches continue as usual at Cookham Rise and in the summer we are repeating last year's experiment – Sunday afternoon teas. The first will be on Sunday, 14th July from 3.30 onwards and the second on Sunday, 11th August at the same time. There will be sandwiches, savouries, cakes and, of course, scones with jam and cream. All we need now is some summer weather! Why not take a stroll along the river in Cookham and pop in afterwards?

On Saturday, 1st June, the two organists at Cookham Rise, Kathy Rickman and myself, played through every hymn in *Singing the Faith*: we did the same when *Hymns & Psalms* was published and thought this would be a good opportunity to get to know some new hymns and songs and to raise money for Water Aid by being sponsored. We started at 8 am and finished at 7.30 pm and it was a very enjoyable (if exhausting) day – we did say at the end of the day that we hoped there wouldn't be another new hymnbook in our lifetime though! David Black and Tony Nicholls from St Mark's and Neville Walton from Woodlands Park all took a turn at the organ/piano for a while, but the endurance medal must go to Shirley Booker from Colnbrook who came mid-morning and stayed to the bitter end – many thanks Shirley, we couldn't have done it without you. We had a small but steady stream of people throughout the day who sat and sang and enjoyed scones and tea or coffee, and we raised almost £ 700 for Water Aid – the final figure is not yet known. In addition we have a write-up on the Singing the Faith Plus website – if you have internet access go to this link: <http://www.singingthefaitplus.org.uk/?p=8716> If you missed 1st June and enjoy singing hymns, make a note of '*Singing the Faith – two years on!*' at Eton Wick on 7th September from 2.30 pm (followed by tea and biscuits) when we will learn some more new material.



On the afternoon of Sunday, 9th June we had another *Messy Church* session on the theme of new life. Eleven children plus parents/carers came and we made butterfly cakes, splodgy butterfly pictures, friendship bracelets and a big picture with flowers and insects made from potato prints, planted sunflower seeds and played with sand, water and playdough. The Bible story was the paralysed man who was let down through the roof of the house by his friends – hence the 'new life' theme – and we sang 'If I were a butterfly' and thanked God for making each of us who we are. Tea was sandwiches, sausages, hula hoops and the butterfly cakes we made earlier – plus a quick nod to healthy eating in the form of a few veggie sticks! There was a really good spirit all afternoon – it feels as though we are really getting to know the people who come now. For next time (on 22nd September) we are going to ask them to think about bringing another family with them.

On June 15th the church had a stall as usual at the Village Fair organised by the scouts – a multimedia stall with books, CDs, DVDs etc. I am writing this before the event so don't know how it went! Weather-wise it is always one of two things for the Scout Fair – a heatwave or a monsoon!

On the evening of Monday, 3rd June we began a five-session Bible study on The Beatitudes which meets each week: the first session was an overview and the remaining four sessions are looking at two of the Beatitudes each time. Ten people met the first week and seven the second and the discussions were lively and interesting, teasing out what the sayings mean for us today.

Coffee mornings and church lunches continue as usual and a church team (with a little help from the Roman Catholics) continues to take *Open the Book* into Cookham Rise School. Ladies Circle continues every fortnight too and in recent weeks the ladies have enjoyed hearing about Rev Andrew Baker's time in the Caribbean (and seeing some photos of an unbelievably young Andrew and Jill!) and hearing about Rev Malcolm White's fascinating family research with a Cookham connection.

Connie Jeffery

ETON WICK



Eton Wick has travelled through difficult times this year with major surgery on two of its most active members. Both Daphne and Peter have recovered well, and the church is blessed that they are both almost back to their former fitness. Through help from members at other churches and local volunteers, the church has been able to continue to operate almost as normal.

Recently a Healing Service was held mid-week and the church was almost bursting with people!

We were delighted that Eton Wick was selected for the first of this Summer's Open Air Circuit Services. The first Open Air Circuit Service took place at Eton Wick on 23rd June and the weather stayed fine, enabling us to praise the Lord in a service called "Peace on the Green".

On 7th July we are hosting a **Big Lunch** after the morning service and already tickets are selling fast.

Phil Clack

Joint Events ... dates for your diary

The next meeting of the Smaller Churches Group is on Wednesday, 28th August, 7.30 pm at Old Windsor

Sunday, 7 th July	Eton Wick after morning worship	Big Lunch
Sunday, 14 th July	3.30 pm at Cookham Rise	Sunday afternoon teas
Sunday, 11 th August	3.30 pm at Cookham Rise	Sunday afternoon teas
Wednesday, 21 st August	7.30 pm at Cookham Rise	Circuit Healing Service
Saturday, 7 th September	2.30 pm at Eton Wick	Singing the Faith – two years on!
Saturday, 28 th September	St Andrew's starting at 4 pm	24 hours of Prayer <i>followed by:</i>
Sunday, 29 th September	6.30 pm at St Andrew's	Circuit Missions Service led by Rev Conrad Hicks

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!

Please Support US!

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