

Newsletter of the Smaller Churches in the Thames Valley Circuit

May – June 2014

Minister's Letter

I am writing this newsletter having just come back from a silent retreat that was truly wonderful. The course leader was Brian Draper and he was an inspiring speaker. During the silent time only he could speak; his task was to guide the retreat and he gave us all lots to think about. This few days is always a brilliant preparation for Passiontide and Easter with a combination of study, reflection, prayer and worship; just the right mix to get the creative juices flowing! This time I wrote a poem, a reflection, a prayer guide and painted a couple of pictures.

I have to say it is strange being in a silent mode because there are no 'good mornings' or 'good evenings'. When people pass things to you or hold the door open, you have to answer just with the smile on your face. And who knew that silent eating could be so noisy, boy does cutlery clatter! To drown the sound we had quiet music during meals. Then having become immersed in silence it is hard to come back to the noisy world. We talk and discuss for the last 3 hours or so, but then you enter the world of traffic and the M25 seems very noisy. I wanted to shout at the world to be quiet. Out of the three days we are only silent from 2 pm on day one until 9.30 am on day three, but even so it is hard to re-adjust to speaking.

I have no doubt that your Lent reflections progressed well. I have different aspects of life and biblical encouraged us to use something called powerful. We focused on keeping God and following the desert and temptation this, we are half way through this period walk once more. Preparing to Jesus paid for our salvation and his willing resurrection people that we are called to



preparations, meditations and been focused on glimpses of God in teaching. The retreat 'centring prayer' which was very in the heart of all we were doing path much as you did. As I write of preparation for the Passiontide remember, once again, the price gift of love making us the be.

*Will you walk the path that will cost you much and embrace the pain and sorrow?
Will you trust in One who entrusts to you're the disciples of tomorrow?*

Singing the Faith 662

With every blessing.

Margaret

We rejoice that Margaret will become a fully ordained presbyter at this year's Conference. Please remember her, particularly on 29th June!

News from the Churches

BURNHAM

Our Young Church has had a birthday! We began on Palm Sunday 2013 and decided that, even if it wasn't the exact date, Palm Sunday was a good day for a celebration. (Any excuse for a party!) So – we celebrated. We made Easter bonnets (which came in handy as party hats), we sang, we played games, we ate delicious food and we thanked God for all His wonderful goodness. We've mentioned before that we have extra helpers now, both in the mid-week Lent Risers Group and on Sunday mornings. We'd like to thank the Sunday congregation for their loving support – particularly when the Young Church Percussion Band gets a bit too enthusiastic. Which is most of the time.



At the Smaller Churches Away Day afternoon session, our group found itself discussing publicity – or the lack of it. We decided to look carefully at our notice boards and how we could make them more attractive – and challenging – to passers-by. We are aware that a number of local people don't know we exist and we've been *The Church at the Crossroads* since 1897. A sobering thought.



The Well at Lent Rise continues to attract new visitors to the Wednesday morning *Meeting Place* for coffee, conversation, Art and Craft activities, and sometimes for consultations, too. The Art Corner still attracts considerable interest, and there are plans afoot to visit the Matisse exhibition at Tate Modern.

Holy Week activities included a short service for 'The Well' led by Sonia on Wednesday morning. She led a Maundy Thursday evening service over a simple supper, and left us with a number of very interesting thoughts regarding our understanding of Holy Week. On Good Friday evening Burnham members joined, as has been the custom for a number of years, with other Christians at the United Reform Church for a service of prayer, readings and reflections.

We cannot finish our contribution to this Newsletter without mentioning the death of one of our most faithful and helpful members, Pam Webster. Although she had been in poor health, her death was quite unexpected, and left us all shocked and bereft. For many years she had been a cheerful and friendly door steward, and her loss has saddened not only Church members and friends but the wider community. Thank you Pam, for your quiet and steadfast Christian witness.

Hilary Evans

The Thames Valley Circuit is committed to supporting its "smaller churches"

Although with comparatively few members, each of these churches is very active, and all are strengthened by working together. These newsletters tell of some of their exciting, on-going work.

COOKHAM RISE

During Lent eight to ten people met each Monday evening at the home of Brenda and Denis Boothman in Cookham to study the Lent Course ***Another Story must Begin***, based on the film version of *Les Miserables*. I think everyone would agree that it was one of the best Lent courses we have done: there are so many Christian themes in *Les Mis* – redemption, salvation, transformation, love, social justice, etc – and each week we studied a particular character, watched clips from the film and related their story to the Bible and to life today. Some really deep discussions resulted – and, of course, we had the pleasure of Brenda's home-made cakes each week too! I am convinced that it is in small groups that we grow as Christians.

We have also had the first of our “4th at Cookham” services, – worship in the evening which is a bit 'different' to the norm. This one, on 23rd March, was led by Rev Gary Homewood, with lots of visual aids to worship and an opportunity for people to share their experiences in an intimate circle setting. There were fifteen people there and everyone said afterwards what a good service it had been. We are looking forward to the next one with interest.

On the evening of Good Friday and the morning of Holy Saturday there was the usual prayer vigil at Cookham Rise, with seven prayer stations, all based on words spoken in the last week of Jesus's life on earth, taking us on a journey to the Cross. Each station had something to read, something to do and suggestions for prayer. Not many people undertook it helpful and as the vigil, I find it an enormously to have been living Holy as I thought about the chairs this year added a new more people came from way we remember Holy move on to something new.



the journey, but those who did found organiser and putter-together of the helpful exercise – although I do seem Week for about a couple of months stations! Having the flexibility of dimension. It would be great if around the Circuit, but maybe the Week is changing and it is time to

We set up our *Messy Church* session on the afternoon of Sunday, 22nd March, but unfortunately nobody came, so we decided to offer the same session on Wednesday, 9th April after the children had broken up from school. Fifteen children and assorted mothers, grandmothers and helpers took part in this session on the parable of the Prodigal Son, making 'piggy biscuits', pigs in blankets, piggy masks (there's a theme here!), a big picture of us sitting round a table with the caption 'all are welcome at God's party', binoculars (for the father to watch out for the son of course!) and farm animals for the younger ones to play with. I told the story Godly-play-style, which was successful: I can't recommend *Godly Play* too highly as it really does engage the children (even though I had one prosaic child who, when I asked the question “I wonder what this can be?” as I unfolded a square of green, said “It looks like a flannel to me”. Which it was!) Anyway, a great time was had by all and we enjoyed tea, including party rings and jelly and ice-cream. We also had party rings after the service when I led worship at High Street on Easter Day – has someone bought a job lot?!

We are still carrying on with all our usual things – coffee mornings, church lunches, prayer meeting, *Open the Book*, etc – and an occasional knitting group has also started in the church itself. Led by Gill Curry from St Luke's in Maidenhead, the idea is to knit hats and blankets for the Kori Women's Development Project in Sierra Leone. The charity is already making a difference in lowering the FGM rates in the area, and has also been successful in getting children into schools in the area. Anyone is welcome – just bring a pair of medium knitting needles and some oddments of wool – tea, coffee, cake and chat provided.

Connie Jeffery

COLNBROOK & POYLE

It was no April fool's joke, when on 1st April at our monthly fellowship meeting, we were entertained by singer Franz Hepburn. Jennie and Bob Quarterman first met Franz at a birthday party for a ninety year old lady, a resident at the nursing home where Jennie's uncle resides. All the folk there were amazed when this man, who was born in the Bahamas, stood up and started singing. He had the most wonderful deep crystal clear Bass-Baritone voice, and proceeded to sing many songs from various shows and films. He tells us, not surprisingly that his voice has been compared to that of Paul Robeson.



While Franz got his wind back, we were treated to some music trivia, such as who was the composer of this piece of music? Which show or film was this one from, etc? We had an hour of sheer musical pleasure from this man, who sings at many venues, in many countries across the world. Much of his time spent singing is to raise money for his favourite charities. Although he has sung in several London shows, as well as in a couple of films. After the music we all enjoyed a cup of tea and some nibbles.

We were also very pleased to have some of friends from Old Windsor Methodist Church join us for the occasion. If you were unable to be with us on April 1st, don't worry; Franz has agreed to come back soon. Watch this space...

OLD WINDSOR

Our last Travellers' Tales, with Malcolm and Veronica White talking about Jordan, was a fascinating insight into that country, told by two people who clearly love the area, with a wealth of information and pictures. We had over 40 people present.

Our next Tale is on 12th June, when Dr Ed Filmore is coming to tell us about Albania.

We love the variety of places that members of the Circuit have been to, and thank them for being willing to come and talk.

Open the Book is still going very well. One more term – and we shall then have completed the three year cycle! It seems only a few weeks ago that we gathered to present the first story and when we wondered how the school and the children would receive us. It has been a great source of fun, of working ecumenically, of learning, of worship. For us in Old Windsor, it is a splendid piece of outreach – far better than we could have imagined – parents tell us that they hear the whole story once their children have gone home, and it is not just the title, it is the whole “performance”!

Anne Haggarty



ETON WICK

Daphne Hogg writes:

In the absence of anything that is newsworthy during the coming months, my thoughts turned to the valuable resource we have in individual acts of service, given with love and self-forgetfulness. These are often not recognised as gratefully as they should be.

This is an opportunity to say “Thank you” to all those who quietly contribute to the ongoing witness of the People of God – the Church – in this village.

It goes without saying that our first and greatest thanks are due to God, both Creator and Saviour, whose Love, living, dying and risen again has brought us thus far. In our prayers, do we always remember to thank Him?

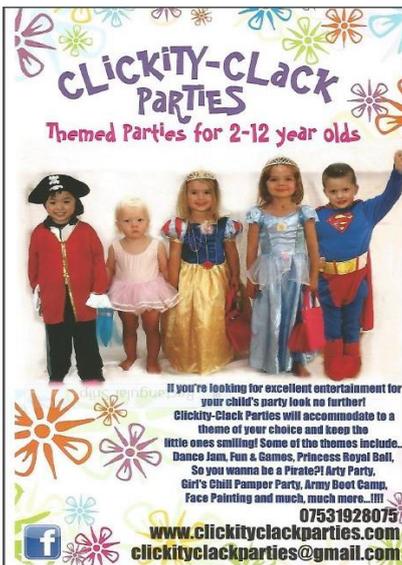
Over the centuries it has become traditional to have music and flowers to add to the beauty of worship. We have Peter who spends more time than most of us realise ensuring that our digital hymnal performs reasonably well! We have been greatly blessed by Connie who often comes to play for us, and occasionally preachers bring their wives, or even multi-task themselves in order to give us “live” music. To you all, an inadequate but sincere “THANK YOU”.

In Pat, with occasional help from Liz, we have two members who are talented and imaginative in the arrangement of flowers. I hope we take the time to appreciate their contribution to worship. “THANK YOU” both.

Recently I was very moved to receive a generous donation from a housebound member “towards flowers for Easter”. Sometimes we need to be reminded that we have a duty of care to those who are no longer able to meet with us. So to those who also serve, “THANK YOU”.

Gifts come in kind, too, such as the member who supplies all our coffee (Fairtrade, of course, and we get through quite a lot!). “THANK YOU” to you.

Finally, mention of a very special group of people without whom there would not be a Lunch Club, which is our main outreach activity. Incredibly, Margaret, Jennifer, Jo and Peter Webb, Valeria and Peter Morris, and Eileen, have each given about 20 years of loyal service, which merits a huge “THANK YOU” for such commitment.



Additional thanks are also due to those who clean and heat our premises, and use their transport on many occasions to enable the less mobile to participate in the various meetings and activities.

With all these folk, and others too, we are indeed truly blessed.

Thanks be to God!

We are very happy to support Debbie, daughter of one of our members, who is bravely setting out to form her own children’s entertainment business. For more information, contact [Debbie](#).

Editor's note / Contact

My thanks to all contributors for this edition!

The next edition will be coming out **during** July. It will be a Conference Special, with reports and comments – **and photos** – please, from anyone who is going to Margaret's Ordination service, and any other session of Conference. I should like to include as many different reports as possible, and one-line reports are as valuable as full-page ones!

Anne Haggarty

Joint Events ... dates for your diary

The next meeting of the Smaller Churches Group is on Thursday, 26th June, 7.30 pm at Cookham Rise Methodist Church

May

Sunday 4 th	5 pm at St Mark's Crescent Preceded by tea at 4 pm	Circuit Easter Offering Service.
Monday 12 th	7.30 pm at Windsor	Testimony Service for Rev Margaret Dudley
Friday, 23 rd	8 pm at St Mark's Crescent	Born in Song

June

Thursday, 12 th	2.30 pm at Old Windsor	Travellers' Tales – Albania Dr Ed Filmore
Saturday, 14 th	3 – 5 pm at Burnham	Smaller Churches' Extra – <i>book the date and watch this space!</i>
Sunday, 29 th	4.30 pm at Handsworth New Testament Church of God	Ordination Service (including Margaret!)

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!