

Newsletter of the Smaller Churches in the Thames Valley Circuit

July – August 2014

Special Ordination Edition !

Minister's Letter

Slough, July 2014

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I love the warm weather – sitting and having breakfast in the garden and long, light evenings for conversation. I wonder if we are talking about the way ahead for the life of our churches. I believe that the Holy Spirit is prompting us to be creative about the resources we have so that God's mission can be carried forward. We are finding it challenging to fulfil the tasks required in our churches and sometimes are tempted to feel gloomy about the future. I believe that God has a future for the mission of the church – but it might look a bit different from how it looks now.

It was good to be part of the group which Sunday 29th June on the coach which left Methodist Conference is the focus of the not in a person or a hierarchy, but in a The music was inspiring, led by a gifted and old hymns. The ordination service in Margaret on the platform with hands laid afterwards. All of us who have had a



went to the Methodist Conference on Windsor early in the morning. The authority of the church. The authority is body of people representative of us all. group of people. There were new songs the afternoon was emotional – as we saw upon her and then the beaming smile small part in her formation were moved.

There was lots of conversation afterwards with friends – some of whom I have not seen for years. I heard stories of circuits where there is reason to rejoice and others where there is reason to weep. I laughed and cried with colleagues. Methodist people “connected” by travelling apart and coming together. It is that theme of “coming and going” again. This was a time to “come” – and be raised in hope for a church which has a future – and then to go back to the Thames Valley and be courageous in seizing the opportunities God gives to us to witness and to serve.

It was a long day, and some of us did manage a little doze on the way home on the coach. WE had been with the wider Methodist family for a while – and that had been good.

We have plans for a special “Come and See” event in September. I think it could be a special day in the story of the smaller churches in the Thames Valley. Make sure you have the date in your diary: Sunday 28th September 4 pm - 5:30 pm. We shall be singing again at Eton Wick on 23rd September. Looks like a full year ahead! Lots of coming and going – and I am confident that the God of Abraham will travel with us. There is a way ahead . . .

Peace be the journey.

Andrew

Margaret's ordination, 29th June, 2014.

The culmination of years of hard work, study, soul searching, prayer, of highs and lows, of not quite believing that everything would work out. Margaret was accepted into the presbyteral ministry of the Methodist Church, and ordained. What a joyful day!

The Circuit organised a coach to go up to the special services, and about 30 of us stood outside Windsor church at 7.30 am waiting to board ... and who was the last to arrive? The Superintendent, of course! A very smooth and easy journey to the NEC saw us there by 9.45 am, and as we got off the coach, there was Margaret to greet us! Handshakes, hugs, smiles and laughter all round.

While we waited for the morning celebration service, we were allowed into the waiting area at the Hilton Hotel there, and most of us had a cup of coffee (at a price!). (It's actually their café area.) The Monarch suite with its conference centre was the setting for the morning service – a very good conference centre, I expect, but lacking in atmosphere for a worship service, somehow. But its air conditioning worked! Every seat taken, all waiting expectantly.

Hymns and songs old and new. Prayers, readings. A thought ... when did you last laugh on hearing the words of Paul to the Galatians? We did! The new President, Rev Ken Howcroft, preached on the differences that Peter and Paul have brought to the Christian community, and that we should be prepared to stand up for our principles and beliefs. collection for *All We Can* through ordinands were brought up and accept them by standing vote. Their something of their personal struggles to end, I hoped we'd sing the last song taught to us by Jill – and not in English.



Then lunch – the idea was that we find somewhere to sit together outside idea! Unfortunately, we were centre in different directions, so lost contact. When some of us did meet again, we couldn't find anywhere outside to sit, so we eventually went back into the Hilton waiting area, asked permission, and ate there.

2.30 pm saw us on our way to the New Testament Church of God in Handsworth, where Margaret's Ordination Service was to be held. Rather a contrast in area from the NEC. Just a few yards away on the other side of the road is a huge Mosque. All the shops seemed to have names indicating different ethnic backgrounds – Afro-Caribbean, Pakistani, but not so many Polish names as we see in Slough.

An interesting Church building. Formerly a Methodist Church, it was completely rebuilt with a big worship area. Personally, I wished the air conditioning had worked better – the sun streamed in through windows at the front, making looking at the preacher difficult, and raising the temperature to soporific levels!

The Ordination service in the afternoon is always something of a contrast to the vibrancy of the morning worship, and this was no exception. But it was a joyful occasion in a different way. The faces of the ordinands told (as in the morning) of their journey to this point; faces joyful, almost scared, sombre, lit up from within – ten ordinands, ten expressions. The laying on of hands, done by Rev Leo Osborn, Rev Dr Sung-che Lam from Hong Kong, and the presbyter chosen by the ordinand, was a most moving, gracious and dignified part of the service. This time, because there is no communion rail in this church, each ordinand came up separately. Normally all progress together and the laying on of hands follows quickly; on this occasion, more time was taken. It added to the occasion.



After the solemnity of the service, everyone wanted two things – fast! A drink (hot or cold) and a word with “their” new presbyter – in either order! Result – a scrum! Very happy, very friendly, but nonetheless a scrum! We were trying to present a stole to Margaret – who was now wearing one of the biggest smiles I’ve ever seen on her face – but some of us couldn’t get near. In the end, about four of us got near enough to make the presentation, Andrew said a few words, and photographs were taken. It was a great delight to see Margaret’s sister, Jennifer, at the celebrations, looking almost as pleased as Margaret.

After that, the anti-climax of getting on the coach and coming back to Windsor, but not before Rev Jim Booth came on board to wish us all well, as we do to him, as he retires from the active ministry. A smooth journey back, with some tired people on board, arriving in Windsor just after 9.30 pm.

Pat – our grateful thanks to you for dealing with all the organisation and ensuring we all had a wonderful day!

A long day – but what a day! A memory to treasure.

Anne Haggarty

News from the Churches

ETON WICK

Daphne Hogg writes:

Two of our members had eagerly awaited a trip to Birmingham when, for one day, we would officially be members of the Methodist Conference for the purpose of receiving “into Full Connexion” 33 Probationer Ministers, among whom was the circuit’s own Rev Margaret Dudley, and also the son of members at our St Mark’s Crescent church, Rev Geoffrey Farrar.

By 7.30 am we were on our way, and arrived well ahead of time at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel, part of the hugely impressive National Exhibition Centre complex on the outskirts of the city. We were directed to the coffee lounge – where the thirst of many quickly evaporated when we saw the price list! Some were bold enough to produce their precious bottled water!

This was an opportunity to meet past Ministers, acquaintances and families of Ordinands. At 10.15 we proceeded to the Monarch Suite where Conference Sunday Worship would be held. What a contrast to the few that Rev Sonia would lead at Eton Wick! Before 11 am the music group “entertained” us with loud, lively music and songs from *Singing the Faith*. I did wonder if we had diverted to the Glastonbury Festival (without the mud)! The service was dignified and joyful, the newly appointed President of Conference preaching and the Vice-President reading the Scriptures with great passion.

The Ordinands were presented to Conference (us) and we stood briefly to confirm our willingness to receive them as competent to “lead God’s people in worship, prayer and service”.

We were permitted to enjoy our picnic lunch in the luxury of the coffee lounge, where the tea trays barely matched the humble water bottles!



At 2.30 pm the coach took us to the New Testament Church of God in Handsworth, one of 5 venues chosen for the Ordination Services. Here we met Rev James Booth and Carole, Jim scarcely recognisable with his snow-white hair and beard, retiring at this Conference, and looking forward to a “very long rest” after many years as Chair of the Liverpool District. Jim was so very encouraging and helpful, generous with his time and advice, during our refurbishment in the mid-nineties.

Ten Ordinands, accompanied by their Assisting Ministers, were to complete a further stage in their Christian journey, no longer to be Probationers. Margaret was accompanied by Rev Stephen Skinner, Superintendent of the Thanet Circuit, from where she candidated for the ministry.

It was very moving to see each Ordinand kneeling to receive the Laying on of Hands, symbolising the Gift of your Holy Spirit, by your people, including the World Church Representative, Rev Dr Sung-che Lam, Methodist Church, Hong Kong, who also read the Epistle from Romans 12 in his native Language.

After a drink and a cake (and locating the lost!) we left at 7 pm, tired perhaps, but with many memories of a fantastic experience that most probably will never be ours again.

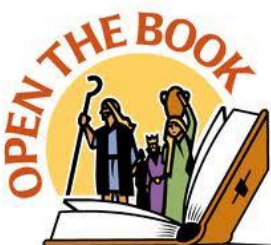
We thank Pat Smith of Windsor who master-minded the trip, and also Peter Webb who enabled Pam to have a day she will never forget.

BURNHAM

Your correspondent is sitting in front of a blank computer screen with an equally blank mind! The ironing basket looms behind her and an imminent holiday beckons (i.e. in a few hours and no packing done yet). Talking of ironing, have you ever heard of Olympic Ironing? In our house the ironing board lives upstairs and so, strangely enough does the upstairs television. When the Olympic rowing was on, usually in the mornings, your correspondent would hurry upstairs to ‘get on with the ironing’ which actually meant sitting in front of the aforementioned upstairs TV and screaming encouragement loud enough to be heard at Dorney Lake. Enough of this. Another time I’ll tell you about the Australian approach to ironing as demonstrated by my daughter-in-law.

In common with the other smaller churches, we in Burnham thoroughly enjoyed *Messy Church*. The activities were varied and some were quite Challenging. Fishing, anyone? All of them gave us the opportunity to think about the theme of ‘Feeding the 5,000’ and talking it over with others at the same table. Thank you to the organisers and a special thank you to Rev Margaret for her very thoughtful epilogue. We at Burnham are hoping to organise our own *Messy Church* later in the summer, once ‘Lighthouse’ has finished.

We have heard that it is very likely that our local primary school, Lent Rise, is going to begin *Open the Book*, thanks to the good offices of Wayne Dixon. Much prayer has been offered regarding this opportunity. We are delighted with this news and to know that at least one member of our Church Family hopes to join the team. The Christian witness and Outreach offered by *The Well @ Lent Rise* is flourishing and several new friends have become regular attenders at the Wednesday morning ‘Meeting Place.’ We have recently been knitting squares and making them into blankets for Syria. Your correspondent has all the blankets at home at the moment and is



thinking of having to take up residence in the shed. We understand that 'our' blankets, together with many others made by local residents, will go on display in August before being sent overseas.

We were saddened to hear of the death of Bob Saunders, from St Peter's Church, who featured on the Circuit plan for a number of years. His ministry here at Burnham was much appreciated and we know that he always felt welcome amongst his Methodist friends.

Our Sunday School fluctuates in numbers, but never in enthusiasm and we are always grateful for the interest of the congregation in what the young ones have been learning. Activities will lessen during the holidays, some taking a well-deserved break, but the witness of 'the Church at the Crossroads' will always be there.

Hilary Evans

COOKHAM RISE

Summer is here and the garden at Cookham Rise has burst into life – life in all its fullness as the shrubs and the grass and flowers in the 'wild garden' have all put on lots of new growth. We are fortunate at Cookham to have the garden, and the children at Rainbow Preschool enjoy planting and growing in their garden on the other side of the church.

Just as in the garden some things flourish and others die, so in church life, and at Cookham Rise we are experiencing sadness and gladness at the same time. We are sad that Rainbow Preschool will close at the end of this term, after twenty-seven years of service to the community of the Cookhams and further afield. Changes in Government policy and funding are making things difficult for many preschools, and we can only thank God that Rainbow has given so many children a wonderful start in life. But we are delighted that the church is sponsoring Cookham Community Allotment Project: we have taken over an allotment on the Alfred Major site, and thanks to Kathy Rickman and some friends, vegetables are already growing. We are hoping that anyone in the village who is interested in growing vegetables or who would like some companionship and fresh air or a place to spend some time will come along and join in. Vegetables freely available to anyone who goes along to help!



Our *Looking to the Future* Group has also met recently and come up with one new venture and one possibility. On Wednesday mornings we will meet for 'Prayer and Porridge' – thirty minutes of prayer in the church at 8 am followed by breakfast at Costa. It's always difficult to find a time when people can get together to pray and the Monday afternoon slot was no longer working, so we hope that more people will feel they can spare a while every Wednesday. We are also mulling over a new venture which doesn't have a name yet: a sort of café with good coffee and cakes, etc, with play facilities for children and the possibility of inviting groups such as the police or the Citizens' Advice Bureau to be there occasionally. The hope is that it would grow organically and become whatever the people using it needed it to be. All very much in the planning stages, but some of us are off to Englefield Green this month to see how their Village Centre operates.

We are also continuing with our Bible Study sessions, and on Monday 7th July we begin a five-week course entitled 'A Way through the Wilderness', looking at the comfort God longs to offer us in times of stress and anxiety. '4th at Cookham' services have continued on the fourth Sunday evening of each month – we have had Taizé-style and quite experimental worship, and it has been good to be open to different ways of worshipping God. We would be delighted to see anyone from around the Circuit – the next one will be led by Rev Andrew Baker on the evening of 27th July.

Sunday 6th July is our Church Anniversary when Rev Barbara McIntivey is leading our worship and joining us for lunch: I am writing this before the event, but we will be glad to see Barbara and look forward to hearing tales of retirement from her and Dave over lunch.

Our next *Messy Church* session will take place on the morning of Friday, 25th July, just after the children have broken up from school. We intend to repeat the Smaller Churches session on the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand'. Only this time I will make sure I have metal rather than plastic paper clips so that the magnetic fishing game will actually work! Well ... I don't do 'science' any more than I do 'numbers'...!

Connie Jeffery

OLD WINDSOR

Just approaching the end of the school year, and the completion of the three-year programme of *Open the Book* at our local first school. Another successful year, with a team which works ecumenically and co-operatively, everyone contributing ideas, props, costumes – using their knowledge and skills for the benefit of the children. The children clearly love what we do, the school appreciates our presence, and we enjoy exploring some of the stories we present – some this year have been less familiar than those at the start of the series. Our rehearsals are marked by serious preparation, prayer and laughter – a winning combination!

Our oldest team member is over 90, and keen to be involved; this is a testament to the joy that doing this for the children has brought us all. Over this last year several of us have had to take time off for personal reasons, but we have all been keen to get back into the swing of things as soon as we can. Next term – yes, we have been invited back – we start again ... with the appropriate story of creation!

Our last *Traveller's Tales* was a most fascinating insight into Albania. Dr Ed Filmore from St Mark's came, describing and illustrating what he and his wife had seen there, when celebrating their daughter's wedding. So many interesting and unusual facts, interspersed with stories of life in Albania, a country of which we all knew very little. Thank you, Ed.



Our next *Traveller's Tales* will be on 14th August at 2.30 pm when Shiona McMillan will be telling us about her Baltic Cruise to St Petersburg.

At the end of our General Church Meeting we agreed that we needed to think about our way forward, and will be praying about this. At the last Smaller Churches meeting, Andrew urged all the smaller churches to review their work and the use they make of their premises. This is a big challenge to and for us.

Anne Haggarty

COLNBROOK & POYLE

From Colnbrook & Poyle to Margaret ... Our good wishes to you now you have been ordained!

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.

Editor's note / Contact

My thanks to all contributors for this edition!

The next edition will be coming out for the start of the new Church year in September. Please share with us what you have been doing during the Summer!

Anne Haggarty

Joint Events ... dates for your diary

The next meeting of the Smaller Churches Group is on Thursday, 16th October, 7.30 pm at Burnham Methodist Church

July

Saturday, 5 th	2.30 pm at St Mark's Crescent	Circuit Strawberry Tea
Sunday, 27 th	6.30 pm at Cookham Rise	4 th at Cookham, led by Rev Andrew Baker

August

Sunday, 3 rd	4 pm at Windsor	Circuit Service – World War 1 Lament
Thursday, 14 th	2.30 pm at Old Windsor	Travellers' Tales – Baltic Cruise to St Petersburg by Shiona McMillan
Sunday, 31 st	5 pm at St Andrew's Slough	Circuit Open Air Service

September

Saturday, 13 th	2.30-4 pm at Eton Wick	<i>Singing the Faith</i>
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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!

Acknowledgement

Our grateful thanks to Mrs Pat Smith for supplying the Ordination pictures.