

Newsletter of the Smaller Churches in the Thames Valley Circuit

July – August 2015

Minister's Letter: 'Having lots of weather!'

Dear Friends,

When I was a child in the 60s I remember seeing my first weather house (or whatever they were called) and being fascinated by them. Usually it was based on a Swiss style chalet where, if the sun came out, the lady would emerge from her side of the house with her parasol, or if it was raining the man would emerge from his side with his umbrella and the lady would retreat into her side.

It has always been a great English tradition to talk about the weather and May & June have been no exception, with phrases such as: 'Not much like June, is it?' or on a very sunny day, 'Looks like summer's finally here!', and then a few days later when the rain returns, 'So, is that summer over?'

We have come a long way in still times when we get it incredibly seaweed doesn't always get it guess at what the weather might be unexpected!



forecasting the weather but there are wrong. Even the most reliable piece of right! We can only take an educated for the following day and expect the

As Christians we are often told in it will have enough worries of its unknown, the new, the different All those things can cause us to get change!!!

the Bible not to worry about tomorrow, own. Yet, we all get nervous of the and anything outside our comfort zone: anxious before we even mention

As a circuit we are about to experience many changes as Andrew moves on, Sonia becomes Superintendent, Rev Mindy Bell comes to join us and the ministers have a quick shuffle around. Although change is not always welcome, it can be a time of refreshment, new ideas and new hope. It can encourage our tired bodies, refresh our weary minds and regenerate our vision as new ideas and thoughts renew our mission and ministry for the future.

Often smaller churches can find the challenge of change easier than larger ones. The very nature of being able to respond quickly and sensitively to new situations as they arise, is a bonus for a smaller congregation. (The reality is that there are few alternatives – if any!) Imaginary ways to respond of the needs of the community is often a skill which happens without a 'formal' church meeting and naturally 'just happens'! How we respond to the changing needs of the world around us, depends largely on how we, as Church, respond to our own changing needs and whether we embrace them or just hope they'll go away.

As we all know well, people and ideas and experiences and everything around us are constantly changing (yes, just like the weather!) and unless each church changes to keep up with the community around us, then how can we be effective in relating to its current needs?

So, as we move towards September I can guarantee three things: First, whatever else changes, our God's nature of Love will never change; Second, there will be plenty of changes whether it's a large church or a smaller church and thirdly, there will be plenty of weather!

May God bless you whatever the future holds.

Peace & Joy,

Andy

News from the Churches

BURNHAM

We are really getting in to the 'swing' of LA (Local Arrangements, otherwise known as DIY) Sunday mornings. The most recent one, by popular request, was largely made up of favourite hymns. This was a very happy and informal occasion with contributions from the congregation regarding choice of hymns. Perhaps not altogether surprisingly, the choices were almost entirely what we would call the 'traditional' hymns. These were sung with great enthusiasm, and it was good to hear about the memories some of them evoked – particularly about the Billy Graham Crusade in the 1950s, which your correspondent remembers, although of course she was very young! (Short socks, if you must know.)

Mid-week activities continue to go very well. The Mothers and Toddlers group continues to attract new members and is as much a pleasant meeting-place for mums and carers as it is for the little ones.

The *Open the Book* team continues its weekly visit to Lent Rise School, and if the students enjoy it as much as the team members do, then everyone is having a really great time. We hear that, in some cases, teachers have continued the theme in further classroom activities. We do praise God for this.

The work of *The Well @ Lent Rise* continues steadily. On Friday afternoon, 5th June, we had a celebration of the work of 'The Memory Box', where older people (mostly) share memories, etc, of earlier days. We had a magnificent display of diaries, letters, postcards, photographs, etc, and a short film made by students at Burnham Academy who had been working with the group, for some time. The main hall was full, and our MP (Dominic Grieve) came and stayed all afternoon. There was a rumour that the excellent cakes might have something to do with it. The young film-makers, and school staff were present, and the students had every reason to be pleased with their work.

Church numbers remain fairly steady with a 'kernel' of about 15, which is usually supplemented by a small number who attend on an irregular basis, but do feel that Burnham Methodist is 'their' church. As of course, it is!

Hilary Evans



The Charter

COOKHAM RISE

At Cookham Rise at the moment we are seeing how a venture which you begin can metamorphose into something different or extra without you really trying! For the last few months a young lady has been using the Wesley Hall for “Bump Camp” – exercises for pregnant and new mums. All the mums at present seem to be ones who have actually had their babies, and whereas, when the venture started, the babies were content to lie in their prams, they are now growing (as babies do) and are all between 8 and 10 months old – and not so keen on being confined to their prams/buggies for an hour! So we have started a crèche in the church, using our baby equipment from “Come & Play”, and can have as many as eight babies to look after. Actually they don't take much looking after as they are all content to play with what we provide and interact with each other – although some are now becoming mobile on hands and knees or stomachs and seem keen to explore the further reaches of the church! That's the next challenge I suppose! Some of the mums stay afterwards and have a cup of tea and a chat and we are hoping that will metamorphose into what we envisaged as “Bumps & Babies” – a support group for pregnant and new mums. Watch this space!

“Come & Play” on Tuesdays and Friday for under-4s and their carers continues to thrive – a record high was reached a while ago when 22 adults and 28 children appeared on a Friday morning. Wonderful chaos ensued! We made a Friday sessions through school host some older children as well. revert to toddler-type play term week my 11-year-old had a great time playing “cafés”

Nothing else new to report really. *Porridge* every week, Bible Study looking at “life balance” – some of produce a pie-chart of how we lunches and coffee mornings, 4th the opportunity for some evenings including an agape, painting), Ladies Circle, *Open the* our long-term vision of a space. But who knows how any in the months to come? We just the leading of the Holy Spirit.



Gloriana at Boveney

decision early on to continue the holidays and so we occasionally Everyone seems quite happy to materials for a morning! In half-granddaughter came to 'help' and with a group of little girls!

We continue with *Prayer &* occasionally (at present we're us found it quite difficult to spend a week!); monthly Sunday *at Cookham* (which has given us wonderfully creative Sunday Taizé-style worship and prayerful *Book*, etc, etc. And we still have community café with a play-of these will change and develop pray that we may remain open to

Connie Jeffery

OLD WINDSOR

The Old Windsor Carnival took place over the first weekend of June, with events on the Recreation Ground on the Friday evening, Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. Saturday morning is a busy time for a number of people preparing floats portraying their view of the ‘theme’ set by the Committee, this year *Magna Carta*, ready for judging at lunchtime and a procession around the village in the afternoon. For those who do not know Old Windsor, the village is split by the A308 Straight Road from Windsor to Egham via Runnymede, where the Magna Carta was sealed.

The procession has to cross the A308 to reach the roads on the route on the north part of the village, and later to rejoin Straight Road for a ¼ mile before turning and following the route to the Recreation Ground on the south side of the village. As you would expect, this causes queues of traffic on the main road, but 'hats off' to the drivers of the long vehicles as they negotiate the various turns and corners. Crowds of villagers congregate along the route, especially at the junctions where the lorries have to slow down.

Sylvia and I were standing outside our house, where the route rejoins the A 308, watching the floats and talking to neighbours, and watching out for those with buckets collecting for the charities supported by the Carnival this year, when a shout went up "Hello Open the Book team"! We turned and spotted a row of children from King's Court First School sitting on the *Fire of London* float waving and shouting to us. The children know us as part of the ecumenical team that has the great privilege of presenting the Bible stories at their assembly on a Wednesday morning. One of the parents carrying a bucket passed us and enquired, "Don't the children know your names?" We do not mind and are pleased that the children feel happy to acknowledge us in that way. We had a smile on our faces for some time after!

David Alexander

One of the many celebrations this year was Magna Carta! The Magna Carta River Relay / Pageant from Bisham to Runnymede on 13th/14th June passed right through our circuit from Cookham in the north-west to Old Windsor in the south-east. Some of the photographs in this edition illustrate the sights we saw. (See a larger selection in the Picture Gallery on the Circuit website.)

On Monday, 15th June, there was the official international ceremony, attended by the Queen, marking the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the charter. Margaret attended as an invited guest, and led the Circuit Service at Old Windsor on 21st June when she talked about the history of the charter and its relevance today.



These pictures show "The Jurors", a specially commissioned artwork by Hew Locke, which is now on permanent display at Runnymede. It consists of 12 bronze chairs, each decorated with images and symbols relating to past and ongoing struggles for freedom, rule of law and equal rights, as illustrated by this picture of the chair representing Freedom of Speech, with symbols such as accessing the internet and public speaking.

Anne Haggarty

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

On behalf of the members of all the Smaller Churches in the Circuit, I take this opportunity to wish Andrew all the very best for his future ministry in Glasgow, and thank him for all the time, encouragement and inspiration he has given us over the last five years. He has transformed the group from one which struggled to find a purpose into one which is developing new ways of sharing ideas and worship.

Thank you, Andrew!

Copy for the next edition of this newsletter (September – October) should reach me not later than 20th August, preferably with pictures! Thank you.

Anne Haggarty

Joint Events ... dates for your diary

The next meeting of the Smaller Churches Group is on Thursday, 16th July, 7.30 pm at Old Windsor

July

Thursday 9 th	2.30 pm	Old Windsor	Traveller's Tales: <i>Malta</i> with Rev Margaret Dudley
Sunday 12 th	6.30 pm	St Andrew's Slough	Circuit Service: Local Preachers Accreditation Service
Sunday 26 th	6.30 pm	St Andrew's Slough	Farewell Service for Rev Andrew and Mrs Jill Baker

August

Sunday 16 th	6.30 pm	St Mark's Crescent Maidenhead	Circuit Service Open Air Service (weather permitting!)
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September

Saturday 5 th	4 pm	St Andrew's Slough	Welcome Service for Rev Sonia Hicks as our Superintendent, and for Rev Mindy Bell and family
Thursday 17 th	2.30 pm	Old Windsor	Traveller's Tales: <i>Western Canada</i> with Chris and Ed Filmore

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!

**To see an earlier edition of the *Smaller Churches Newsletter*,
select the relevant link from the following list:**

May – June 2015	Including Easter information
March – April 2015	Including Easter information
January – February 2015	Including a visit to a brothel
November – December 2014	Including the Smaller Churches' contributions to the Circuit Prayer Safari
September – October 2014	Including Thames Path sponsored walk and meeting old friends
July – August 2014	Including Rev Margaret Dudley's Ordination
May – June 2014	Including singer Franz Hepburn at Colnbrook and Poyle
March – April 2014	Including new chairs!
January – February 2014	Including <i>Hanging the Greens</i> and <i>Throw Santa down the Chimney!</i>
November – December 2013	Including Gary's Gift, Burnham's visit from the Chair of the District, and pictures from the <i>24 Hours of Prayer</i> exhibition.
September – October 2013	Including <i>Glue, Pews, and Singing the Faith</i> .
July – August 2013	Including Burnham's <i>The Well @ Lent Rise</i> and Cookham Rise's (literally) <i>Singing the Faith</i> .
May – June 2013	Including Cookham Rise's <i>Treasure Seekers</i> and reference to Mrs Meg Few's 100 th birthday.
March – April 2013	Including Burnham's new member (!) and Woodland Park's Christmas Community event.
January – February 2013	Including Gary's New Year resolutions, and a cautionary tale about Gift Aid from Colnbrook & Poyle.
November – December 2012	Including Sonia's experience in a small church which grew.
September – October 2012	Including Cookham Rise's new venture – Summer afternoon teas.
June – August 2012	Including Barbara's farewell letter, and Woodland Park's <i>Fun Day</i> .
April – May 2012	Including Burnham's <i>The Well @ Lent Rise</i> , and Eton Wick's celebrations for the Diamond Jubilee.
February – March 2012	Including <i>Bright Lights of Bethlehem</i> .
January 2012	Including Old Windsor's <i>Open the Book</i>
December 2011	Including <i>Singing the Faith</i> , and the birth of Maisy [these are not linked!]
November 2011	Including Cookham Rise's <i>Messy Church</i> .
October 2011	Including Old Windsor's first <i>Open the Book</i> .
September 2011	The inaugural edition