

# Newsletter of the Smaller Churches in the Thames Valley Circuit

## June 2016 – August 2016

### Minister's Letter:

Today, I'm standing up for the smaller churches. No, really, I am. I'm standing up. I've got a nerve that's trapped in a locked rib just below my left shoulder blade: if I stand up, I'm largely without pain; if I sit down, I need morphine. So I am – quite literally – standing to write to you. I've got a pedestal thingy set up in front of my desk which allows me to type facing the computer screen at a height of about five feet. I type, I walk around, I come back and type some more. Churchill did it all the time, and he didn't even have a computer. Or a trapped nerve, that I'm aware of.

So, now that we've got that bit out of the way, I want to tell you why I've got a police box and a sonic screwdriver in my study. Well, yes, I'm a fan of *Doctor Who*, that much is obvious. My daughter Sarah loves the programme, too, and we watch it together, me sitting in an armchair (oh, happier days) and Sarah lying across the back of the armchair – and me – so that she can hide her eyes during the scary bits. But the police box and the sonic screwdriver are in the study for another reason.

During one of the episodes, the Doctor is about to land the Tardis (the police box; at least *try* to keep up with me), and his assistant, Clara (be still, my beating heart), asks him to make sure it's a soft landing. The Doctor stops for a moment and thinks, and then tells Clara that the Tardis always makes a soft landing, because if it didn't, if it landed with its full gross weight, it would crush the Earth. And the reason why that would happen is very intriguing indeed.



You all know by now – you do; don't pretend – that the Tardis is bigger on the inside than it is on the outside. That's what its name means: T.A.R.D.I.S., Time And Relative Dimensions In Space. In other words, the inside is never in the same dimension of time as the outside. It's in a different dimension, a momentarily different second to the one the outside is occupying. So they can both occupy the same space because they are never both in that same space at the same moment.



Once you get that principal into your head, what follows is perfectly logical (!) If two objects can occupy the same space because they are in different dimensions of time, then one of them – the Tardis – can occupy as much space as it wants. Not only is it smaller on the inside than the outside, that inside is infinite.

Now, there's a thought. You walk into the Doctor's tiny little box – you can walk all the way around it in about five seconds – and you leave all the world outside, and you find infinity inside, the boundless, measureless realms of all time, all creation.

Ah, I hear you say. At *last*, I do believe he's getting somewhere. This is all about Pentecost!

When we celebrate Pentecost we remember that golden moment when God the Father fulfilled the promise of God the Son and delivered to God's People the Gift of God the Holy Spirit. (There's Trinity Sunday sorted for you, as well.) We remember the moment when the living spirit of God entered this world so that it could enter his people – and you and me – and remain there for ever.

At our baptism, and over and over again, whenever we receive communion, the Holy Spirit – the living reality of God – pours into us.

And God is infinite.

And God is within us. Within you!

Alright, so that's a fairly flimsy excuse for paying over £20 on E-Bay for an all-singing, all-dancing version of the sonic screwdriver, but, as a metaphor, it works extremely well. You and I, we are both just human beings; we have our form; we have our space and our time. And we have our limits. But, within us, we have God, the God of all Creation, the God who existed before Time began, the God who will still be there at the ending of the world, at the ending of all the ages. Within us is the God of infinity.

And for us, now read smaller churches. Limited in size and space? So what? Those churches contain within them the infinite, the boundless, measureless presence of God. Those churches contain a power which has no end.

You want proof? Hold a Circuit event. Who comes? The smaller churches come. Always. Unfailingly. (The bigger ones never come; they need a kick up the ...) They lead by example. Yes, I did say that. Let's say it again. They LEAD by example. They have within them the Spirit of an infinite God. They personify Him; they reflect His divine endless love. And they put that love into action. Always.

Perhaps we need more smaller churches, not big ones. Small is beautiful. Small very often puts Big to shame.

So, there you have it. The reason why I have my Tardis and my sonic screwdriver. They remind me of God, in a funny sort of way. They remind me that only human beings are silly enough to apply limits to anything in a world that can never contain the full measure of God and His love for his children.

The God - the self-same God - that is within you.

And may that God richly bless you.

But still watch out for Daleks!

Gary

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## **Editor's note / Contact**

Thank you – all who have contributed to this edition!

Copy for the next edition is required by Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2016. Please don't forget pictures!

Anne Haggarty

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## News from the Churches

### COOKHAM RISE

Before I started to write this I looked back at what I had written for the September – November 2015 issue of the Smaller Churches Newsletter to remind myself of what I had written about Cookham Rise's hopes and dreams for 2015-2016.

Firstly I talked about 'growing' our relationship with Sonia, as the 'new' minister with pastoral charge of Cookham Rise. We are enjoying the 'growing'! In some ways Cookham Rise is 'easy' in that we don't make many demands on a minister – we tend to just get on and do things; on the other hand we do have a unique way of doing things in Cookham which is not always easy to get your head round – we think Sonia's doing quite well! Seriously though, we feel there is a worthwhile partnership developing which will enable growth and mission.

Secondly, the *Looking to the Future Group* continues to meet and cast a leisurely and prophetic (?) eye over the work of the church and how it might expand or change. One decision has been to try replacing 'Messy Church', which has never really taken off, with 'Gardening Church', which fits in well with the Cookham Community Allotment. We hope to make use of the garden around the church for this venture and expect much fun and maybe significant conversations over the beds!



**Swift Work**

**Nestboxes installed  
At Cookham Rise**



Thirdly, we are considering a third Come & Play session each week on a Wednesday afternoon. There are so many families with under-4s in the Cookhams, and there is a real need for more facilities for toddlers. We are still considering a lunch one day a week too, and with this in mind have decided to knock through the wall between the kitchen and the church and put in a door, so that refreshments can easily be served to the Wesley Hall and/or the church. Another step towards our ultimate goal of a community café.

The prayer meeting has not really expanded – although those who do come do so regularly and faithfully. We remind ourselves that we are called to be faithful not successful. In the same way ecumenical work in Cookham remains in a state of flux, but we continue to pray that a new shape will emerge in the end. We are likewise still praying about a midweek time of worship – we are confident that it will happen if God wants it to.

So we come to the end of this connexional year looking forward to continuing our work in 2016-2017. We continue to pray for all the smaller churches in the Circuit as they take stock at this time and for the Thames Valley Circuit as a whole as it goes through the stationing process.

Connie Jeffery

## BURNHAM

When we were little, it's very likely that occasionally our grannies and grandpas were asked to keep us entertained – even if only briefly. This, of course, for those of us who were little long before the joys of CBBC. By the way, isn't CBBC wonderful? Answers on a postcard, please. To return – do you remember your grandparents (or whoever), linking their fingers together and teaching you - 'Here's the church and here's the steeple – look inside and see the people!' Didn't our fingers get into a muddle, trying to follow?

So here we are, we've built the church (1897) with or without steeple and we look inside at Burnham Methodist Church, still better known locally as 'Lent Rise Meth'. Inside the comparatively recently built porch we have a coffee/tea preparation area. Open the glass doors and come in. Blue and gold chairs, a prayer corner, two stained glass windows in commemoration of 2 families who proclaimed the love of God from this chapel for so many years. On the right hand wall, you will see the 4 picture frames containing the names of Cradle Roll members for many years back. A very important part of our Church history. Fresh flowers in the Church often reflect a particular theme, or are given in remembrance of a special occasion.

Very nice, you say – but where are the people? Sadly, our numbers are low. We have a strong and dedicated 'core' of about 10 to 12 people, about half of these are Church officers, or people who have tasks within the Church.



We warmly welcome those who worship with us very occasionally, but probably regard us as 'their Church.'

On Communion Sundays – All-Age worship, we would look to see 20 or more. We have 2 families with small children, and when they are with us, we are able to make provision for them.



During the week, we have a very strong Toddler group, and we also, on an ecumenical basis, present 'Open the Book' to the local primary school. The Cameo lunch club is always full.

Our ecumenical group, 'The Well@Lent Rise', based here, attracts between 20 to 30 for the Wednesday morning 'drop-in' coffee, arts, etc, (the Meeting Place) and is now offering a lunch once a month. 'Wake-up Wednesday' – the early-morning refreshments available to those students waiting across the road for the school transport – is always well received.

Therefore, we do have outreach to the local community. However, despite fine preaching and a warm and friendly atmosphere, we are not seeing, except occasionally, more than say 15 or 16 on a Sunday morning. The civil parish of Burnham is a little over 13,000 people. Last Sunday, the writer stood in the car-park, saying farewell to a church member. The writer stood, facing the crossroads. Cars were everywhere. Not going to the Horse Show – they should have been there hours before.

Where are people going? And why?

Hilary Evans

## **ETON WICK**

In common with the majority of the UK, the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday gave us an ideal opportunity for celebration, which took many different forms throughout the country.

Being Methodists, food soon became our all-consuming passion! Our gallant duo, Laura Clack and Jo Webb, offered to lay on a 4-course celebratory lunch on Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> April.

There was a choice of menu, the main course being either roast beef, or roast chicken, each with all the trimmings, and a selection of five veggies. We served tea / coffee in the Chapel as guests assembled, and thirty four people sat down shortly after 12.30.

As well as the excellent meal, the participants seemed quite "bowled over" by the decoration of the hall and tables. Union flags replaced vases of flowers and each place setting included a cardboard crown to wear, as well as a red, white or blue serviette "sprouting" from a wine glass (only the wine was missing!).

At the suggestion of our minister, Margaret, we dutifully sang the National Anthem before "service" began.

The party ended about 3 pm with generous and well deserved thanks to Jo, Laura and Peter Webb (the "runner").



One of our guests, retired after many years' service with the Royal Household, wrote to the Palace informing them of our celebratory lunch. She was surprised to receive a reply from the Queen's Lady in Waiting.

Pauline has very kindly offered the original to the chapel and, subject to the agreement of our Church Council, the letter will be framed and "hung" as a permanent reminder of a very special occasion!

**GOD SAVE OUR QUEEN!**

Daphne Hogg



## OLD WINDSOR

Looking back over the last year it is difficult to detect any great changes. We are all older, possibly a little less fit than this time last year, a little more tired. But, we carry on.

Our Traveller's Tales have been well received, not just by Old Windsor members, but by the village community, and by members of other churches from throughout the circuit. A special mention of our friends from Colnbrook & Poyle who support us at many of our events.

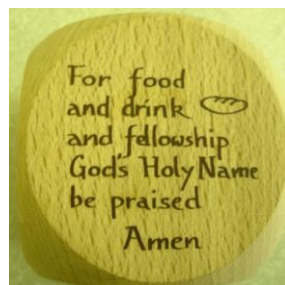
*Open the Book* continues to be enthusiastically received, by both staff and children. The team works well together, and we have a great deal of fun sorting out who should take which part – and is it type-casting? Our props and costumes are carefully sorted out each time – it's amazing what tea towels and old curtains can be used for! And if one of your team is willing to be really creative ...

In addition to our regular outreach, our church has held a couple of special events since our last newsletter.

On Maundy Thursday this year, by popular request, we held a Passover meal, when Margaret gave us further insight into the meaning of this special occasion.



In June we hosted the next in the Smaller Churches' series "Come and See". This was led by Margaret on the theme "Sensory Worship". A most enjoyable afternoon was spent with representatives of 5 of our churches experiencing our difference senses such as sight, smell, touch, taste – an afternoon summed up by this prayer on a "praying die": food, drink and fellowship.



Our sincere thanks to Margaret for her great efforts on behalf of our church.

Anne Haggarty

## WOODLANDS PARK

We at Woodlands Park are members of a group of eight who regularly do "Open the Book" at Woodlands Park School ... and are now into our 8th year! We are also involved with Housing Solutions and White Waltham church in creating a sense of community in the area, hence *Mayday Mayhem* last Monday. We made cakes and manned stalls, and the local people were able to enjoy everything provided for 3 hours free of charge. Games, craft, special activities and food and drink. We try!



Jean Broome

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### *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.

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### **Joint Events ... dates for your diary**

The next meeting of the Smaller Churches Group is on Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> July, 7.30 pm at Cookham Rise.

#### June

Thursday, 16 <sup>th</sup> 2.30 pm	Old Windsor	Traveller's Tales: Vancouver Island and Vancouver. An illustrated talk by Ed and Chris Filmore
Saturday, 25 <sup>th</sup> 2.30 – 4 pm	St Mark's Crescent	Strawberry Tea – Circuit fundraising event for Missions.

#### July

Sunday, 31 <sup>st</sup> 4 pm	Cookham Rise	Come and See: Allotment service
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#### August

Thursday, 25 <sup>th</sup> 2.30 pm	Old Windsor	Traveller's Tales: A Guernseyman's view of Guernsey. An illustrated talk by Keith Le Page
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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!*

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