

Methodist Church Thames Valley Circuit

Smaller Churches Newsletter

March – May 2017

Editorial – Weak tea makes everyone sad

As I'm sure you know, during February this year we have enjoyed four weeks of 'themed preaching' when the staff and local preachers in the Circuit have explored the theme of Hospitality week by week – God's hospitality to us, our hospitality to God, to one another and to the world. As a local preacher, I have found it a helpful exercise – to spend time considering what we mean by hospitality and how (and indeed whether!) we offer hospitality as individuals and church communities.

What do we mean by hospitality? The dictionary says it means entertaining and making comfortable not just invited guests but also strangers – and this command to welcome strangers is one that the people of Israel in Old Testament times knew very well. Welcoming the stranger certainly gives us food for thought on an international, national and local level in these days of mass migration. I like the definition of 'stranger' which says they are 'friends we don't know yet'. As God welcomes us with open arms so we should welcome others.

Smaller churches seem to be very good at hospitality. A large proportion of the things we do seem to revolve around food or refreshments in some way or other! I think, too, that every smaller church in the Circuit would like to think that it is a 'welcoming' and 'hospitable' church. But is that enough? Maybe not. Being a



'welcoming' church somehow puts the onus on the person who is arriving at church. If they don't arrive, you can't welcome them. And for many, stepping over the threshold of a church, even if it's simply for a cup of tea, can be quite daunting. I'd like to suggest to you instead that we should all be 'inviting churches'.

Being an 'inviting church' would involve going out into the community, getting to know the people who live around the church, finding out what they need, what their problems are, what they would really love to see in the place where they live, how you could help them in their daily lives. The next step would be to offer something at the church which would meet some of those needs. Oh, I know, the smaller churches don't have enough people to do what they're doing already. But what if, just

Stop Press

Are you joining the Smaller Churches Awayday to Guildford Cathedral on Saturday 18 March? We will meet at the Cathedral at 10.30 a.m.; there will be a guided tour and a time of meditation organised by the Cathedral. Bring a packed lunch or eat in the Cathedral Refectory.

Contact the Editor to arrange a lift (01628 662500)



maybe, some of those things you are doing are not what's needed in your area? If you live or worship in a village where the majority of people are over 50 you probably won't have much success if you decide to offer a weekly disco! Doing something which is really needed and would be appreciated in your area is not necessarily a huge undertaking – it might be something as simple as offering a space for an hour a week where people can chat, with good tea and coffee, and biscuits which don't look as though they might be appreciated more by our canine friends. Please make sure it's 'good' tea because weak tea makes everyone sad ...



So here we are at the beginning of Lent – a time when we probably think about giving something up. But this year I'd like to challenge you to take up something new rather than giving up something which you might not miss all that much and which you will in any case go back to when Lent is over. This Lent, go out into your community, talk to some people, ask them what the church could do for them, then talk about it to the rest of your church members and resolve to invite people to whatever it is you have decided to do.

Connie Jeffery – Editor

News from Burnham

To quote a former American Ambassador, Burnham's 'elements of refurbishment' as far as the main worship area is concerned are now nearly complete. The white and blue paintwork gives a very clear and bright look and the new heaters are now installed.



The 4 beautiful banners, each depicting a season of the year, are a gift from the craft group at The Well @ Lent Rise. The writer of these notes was privileged to watch them in the making, and they are truly works of art and a labour of love. They were dedicated in a short service of blessing, attended by members of the group, after the Covenant Service, early in the year.

Some of us, whose memories go back almost too far, will remember the days when we had a table tennis table. Well used by the Youth Club, and others when time and the occasion permitted. Now - thanks to the enthusiasm of church and congregation members, the unmistakable pings and pongs can be heard on the second and fourth Sunday afternoons in the month. A dozen or more attend regularly, and a second table is really needed. However, they are difficult to store when space is at a premium, and, at the time of writing, we are still working on that one. However, we are so grateful to those who are giving up their Sunday afternoons to welcome newcomers on to the Church premises in such a pleasant and friendly way. Other possible outreaches are also in mind, but your correspondent can't really share them with you, as the Church Council is imminent. So you'll just have to watch this space!

Open the Book is still greatly welcomed by our local Primary School. The group was invited, near Christmas, to visit the local care home, and were made very welcome. I'm told that they will probably return, on an occasional basis.

We have recently welcomed the Welsh Church, who will be using our premises for worship on a number of Sunday afternoons during the year. We are very pleased to have them. For those of you

who are wondering about possible clashes with the table tennis, the Property Steward has it well in hand! However, should you be passing by, and happen to hear table tennis scores being given out in Welsh... It was a first, I must say, when the Property Stewards and your correspondent signed the lettings paperwork, to be offered a DBS in Welsh!

We are so pleased that one or two of our Toddler group families are occasionally attending morning worship. We do ask your prayers for Viv, Phil and Joy as they work with the carers and children on Tuesday mornings. As all of you know, who work with the little ones, it can be exhausting, but the rewards are beyond price.

Hilary Evans

News from Cookham Rise

I always find the first month of a new year a strange time – a sort of limbo, when the lazy days of Christmas still linger and nothing seems to have started up again. 2017 seemed more strange than usual, but now we are three-quarters of the way through February, I feel back in the swing. And so does Cookham Rise!

Come & Play for toddlers and their carers has resumed with gusto – on about the third Friday session of 2017 we counted 38 children. This is rather a lot, but we don't feel we can limit sessions number-wise because who knows whether the last Mum to arrive is the one who is only just about coping with the day and is desperate for company. One good thing to have happened so far this year is that two Mums, who are setting up a business cooking with children, have offered to cook with the toddlers on a Friday. This is great – as the more involved the Mums and carers are, the better.

Bump Camp for new and pregnant Mums has also resumed on a Wednesday, and on one occasion we had twelve under 3s to look after while their Mums did their exercises. Quite a few now stay for tea and biscuits afterwards too.

Church lunch, coffee mornings and *Open the Book* are all carrying on and during the summer holidays this year a door will be created between the kitchen and the church so that we can easily serve refreshments in the church as well as in the Wesley Hall. On 24th February Echoes of Swing, the band which practises on church premises will be in Concert in the church from 8 p.m. onwards (tickets £10, including refreshments, on the door). We are also beginning a Lent Course on 1st March – this year it is one put together by Embrace the Middle East called 'Moving to the Margins'. Oh, and this year we are offering Prayer Stations to the Circuit and

Arglwydd, arwain trwy'r anial-wch, Fi, bererin gwael ei wedd, Nad oes ynof nerth na bywyd Fel yn gorwedd yn y bedd: Hollalluog, Hollalluog, Ydyw'r Un a'm cwyd i'r lan. Ydyw'r Un a'm cwyd i'r lan

If you don't know what this means, perhaps you should ask someone from the Welsh church! - Editor

Pizza Muffins

A favourite with our toddlers at Cookham. Halve English muffins and crisp them in the oven for a few minutes. Put out bowls of passata, grated cheese, chopped ham or chicken, sweetcorn, peppers, mushrooms (or whatever takes your fancy).

Let the children create their own mini-pizzas on the muffins, put them on a baking tray lined with baking parchment (so you can write names by each pizza) and put in the oven on Gas 6, 180C for about ten minutes. Enjoy!

the Village on Good Friday evening and Holy Saturday morning. Do come along and spend a few moments in quiet thinking about Jesus's final journey.

Our long-term aim is still to have a community café on a day or two a week (the new door is a step in the right direction). And we also hope to begin some kind of midweek event, perhaps alternating between Table Talk (a chance to discuss topics of current concern), Grave Talk (an opportunity to talk about death) and TakeTime (Ignatian meditations using the stories of Jesus).

Watch this space!

Connie Jeffery



Here are a few books you might want to have a look at during Lent

Let me go there – the spirit of Lent by Paula Gooder

Canterbury Press, £8.99

Bestselling author Paula Gooder continues her popular series on the seasons of the Christian year with this daily companion for the six weeks of Lent, leading readers deeper into the spirit of the season and opening up the scriptures that are read in churches during this period. She begins with an introduction to the season of Lent and its characteristic themes, exploring how to use it as a time for spiritual growth. In forty short sections suitable for daily reading, Paula then reflects on a theme associated with the season, including: Wilderness, Journey, Fasting, Taking up your cross, Discipleship, Prayer, and Temptation.

Dethroning mammon: making money serve grace 2017 by Justin Welby

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book

Bloomsbury, £9.99

In his first full-length book Justin Welby looks at the subject of money and materialism. Designed for study in the weeks of Lent leading up to Easter, Dethroning Mammon reflects on the impact of our own attitudes, and of the pressures that surround us, on how we handle the power of money, called Mammon in this book. Who will be on the throne of our lives? Who will direct our actions and attitudes? Is it Jesus Christ, who brings truth, hope and freedom? Or is it Mammon, so attractive, so clear, but leading us into paths that tangle, trip and deceive?

Glimpses of glory 2017 by David Bryant

The Mowbray Lent Book

Bloomsbury, £8.99

Facing a terminal cancer diagnosis, David Bryant looks back on his life and writes powerfully about the moments when he unexpectedly encountered God in the most unlikely places: a high security prison; at the bedside of a dying child; in the gift of imagination; or in Bible passages that have been

startlingly brought to life in his own experience. Forty reflections offer a reading a day for Lent, with an explanatory introduction and a concluding Easter meditation.

Hanging by a thread: the questions of the cross by Sam Wells

Canterbury Press, £8.99

A reflection on today's challenges to our understanding of the crucifixion, exploring contemporary ideas in history, biblical studies and philosophy asking if inconsistencies, persecution and improbability leaves our faith, heritage and morality hanging by a thread. Explore 6 biblical stories and discover how the cross has an enduring power today.

The things he did: the story of Holy Week by Stephen Cottrell

SPCK, £7.99

In one extraordinary week Jesus rides into Jerusalem; shows righteous rage in the temple; eats with the wrong sort of people; lets a woman anoint him; washes his disciples' feet; breaks bread and shares wine; prays passionately; and lets himself be arrested ... Jesus stands in the prophetic tradition of those who embody what they teach. The things he did were carefully planned, each with political and religious significance as Jesus moved towards his greatest and final act.

News from Eton Wick

At the first meeting of the New Year on 3rd January, the Bible Study Group continued their study of the Letters of John. The next study will focus on prayer and possibly the popular York Course during Lent.

The Ladies' Group recently said "goodbye" to their President who has moved to Nottinghamshire to be nearer her family, and we are pleased to hear that Jane has settled very happily and on Advent Sunday was received into membership of the very active Hucknall Methodist Church.

We are very sorry to have lost the oldest member of the Lunch "diners" who would have been 100 years old in July. Her life was remembered at a Thanksgiving Service on 17th February at St John's church in the village.

Congratulations to Mary Baker, one of our Lunch helpers, who gained 100% in the Food Safety Certificate which she took online.

Two of Phil and Laura Clack's daughters, one who came to the village as a small child and the other who was born at Heatherwood hospital after they moved here, returned on 5th February bringing their baby daughters for Baptism, Sophia Sylvia Rose and Ariella Ophelia. About 50 family and friends joined them and the congregation and all were served lunch after the service! Those who are familiar with our premises will understand how this stretched our resources! However, with careful planning, forethought and the eager assistance of young male guests, together with the clever strategy of Rev. Margaret, all the problems were resolved. The children were set to modelling loaves and fishes with clay or play dough according to their age, during the sermon, and





were as quiet as mice! Photos were taken including one outside the chapel with the six members of the Clack family who have been Baptised at the chapel, starting with Debbie and her cousin Alison who shared a double Baptism in 1988.

In the evening Margaret introduced the Circuit theme for the year, "Hospitality – God's hospitality to us", and the congregation of seven



gathered around the Lord's table which was a fitting close to a truly memorable day.

Daphne Hogg

News from Old Windsor

In the last edition I talked about our plans for Christmas services. We held them all – some were a great success, others less so. Our Carols by Candlelight is always eagerly anticipated, and this year numbers were up! There was a wonderful atmosphere. However, our Christmas Day service had only a few people attending, and so the presence of visitors was appreciated ... and we *did* have more there than would have joined Windsor for their service, so it was well worth holding! Our service of carols for the Day Centre folk went down very well, with about 15 – 20 people joining us. There was a lovely atmosphere in spite of our keyboard! We had not used this keyboard since it was given to us, and Evelyn our organist struggled to find the right pitch for us to sing to – it came out much too high (even for Anne!), or the correct volume to give us a lead. But ... we shall go again.

On the other hand, our ecumenical Carol event had only two people in addition to our usual supporters, probably due to insufficient publicity. Similarly, one church “forgot” to publicise our service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ... Catholics and Methodists were well represented, but there was only ONE Anglican!

It is necessary to draw near to God, but it is not required of you to prolong your speech till everyone is longing to hear the word 'Amen'.

C H Spurgeon on Prayer

We had hoped to start regular monthly visits to the Day Centre, but it hasn't worked out yet. In January too many of us had been unwell so we did not go, and in February we discovered their programme had been changed, and everyone was playing Bingo! So, for March, we are trying a different time – one suggested by the manager.

As you should all know, we are holding a Maundy Thursday lunch on 13th April, to which all members of the Smaller Churches are invited. Come and hear about the Passover traditions, as Margaret explains them, enjoy traditional Passover food, have lunch and fellowship with us. For catering purposes we need to know by Friday, 31st March how many are likely to come. I'll send out a reminder during March.

We are also bringing back our Lent Brunches – similar, but not quite the same. There will be a fixed menu, and a fixed price, but the same warm Old Windsor welcome. On Saturdays 4th, 11th, and 25th March we shall be open between 9 am and 11 am, and we shall be delighted to see you. All profits will go to Action for Children.

Anne Haggarty

Dates for diaries

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| Friday 24 February | Echoes of Swing in Concert at Cookham Rise. 8.00 - 10.00 p.m. £10.00 on the door including refreshments |
| Saturday 4, 11, 25 March | Lent brunch at Old Windsor between 9 and 11 a.m. |
| Thursday 13 April | Maundy Thursday lunch at Old Windsor. |
| Friday 14 April | Prayer stations at Cookham Rise. Between 6 and 10 on Friday evening and |
| Saturday 15 April | 8 and 12 on Saturday morning. |

Hymn headache!

How well do you know the hymns of Charles Wesley? Below are twelve 'first lines', from which all the vowels have been removed and the consonants have been scrunched up together. Can you name them all? The first one has been done for you to give you the idea! The numbers in brackets indicate the number of words in the line.

1. FRTHSNDTNGSTSNG (7) O for a thousand tongues to sing
2. HRKTHHRLDNGLSSNG (5)
3. WHTSHLLDMYGDTLV (8)
4. CPTNFSRL'SHSTNDGD (6)
5. CMTHLNG-XPCTDJSS (4)
6. LVDVNLLLVSXCLLNG (5)
7. CHRSTHLRDSRSNTDY (6)
8. NDCNTBTHTSHLDGN (8)
9. LHCMSWTHCLDSDSCNDNG (6)
10. YSRVNTSFGDYRMSTRPRCLM (7)
11. THGDFTRTHNDLV (6)
12. FRTHNTHYNMELRDG (8)

Post-script to dates – don't forget to come and support the Circuit Missions Quiz on Saturday 22nd April at 7.00 p.m. at Cookham Rise. £5 including hot supper and pudding. Churches are asked to bring a pudding each and let Connie (01628 662500) or Kathy (01628 522797) know numbers. Teams of 6 or come on your own and be put in a team.