

Methodist Church Thames Valley Circuit

Smaller Churches Newsletter

September – November 2017

A new Connexional year...and the tale of a tree

Hi everyone

He we are again having reached the end of another busy year and now beginning the new. I hope you have all enjoyed a good summer. Before my accident I was helping my sister, and I decided rather than trim a tree of overhanging branches, in an alleyway behind her house, we should cut it down. The trunk was only about a three inch diameter. What could be so hard? Equally the feet above only had small branches but I decided it could not be too bad. Wrong, it weighed a ton! Looking back now, as the scene unfolds in my mind's eye, it would have made a great comedy show but most people would believe it was too far-fetched but it is amazing what we can persuade ourselves to do. As I look back over the year there are comedy moments, tragedy moments and moments I would describe as 'God-incidences'. Now we look forward to the next chapters, the next series of moments.

At the Methodist Conference this year Rev Loraine Mellor and Mrs Jill Baker recognised the challenges and changes facing every community in the UK and the urgent call of God on all Christians from their perspective especially including the Methodist people to share the love of God in Jesus Christ in both word and deed. Prayer was identified as an emphasis as a way forward including a return to early Methodist principles leading to regular group prayer and re-introducing, sensitively, the idea of prayer and fasting. As a result of this the Conference called on every local church to launch the new Methodist year with a day of prayer and fasting.



This prayer and fasting could be on 1st September, the official start of our year, or on a date close to it to suit local circumstances. They have developed some resources to aid this idea including Bible notes for Acts 2: 42–47. The President and Vice President have produced a book called "Day by Day" which is "Prayers for a Spiritual Five-a-Day. I have bought some copies of this so if you would like one please let me know. Another obvious resource is the Methodist Prayer Handbook

There are other resources designed to help on the various websites including:

<http://methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/a-day-of-prayer-and-fasting>

<https://pray-as-you-go.org/> a daily prayer podcast designed to go with you wherever you go and facilitate prayer;

a Word in Time Bible found at <http://www.methodist.org.uk/bible>; with some reflections to follow and to spend time thinking about.

Think about this call to prayer and how we as individuals, as churches and as the Smaller Churches group could respond to this and start our new year focused on Jesus and the way forward.

With every blessing

Margaret

Stop Press

The Circuit has appointed a Lay Worker for a period of 12 months from 1 September 2017 to work with High St until we (hopefully!) get a presbyter to replace Gary Homewood in September 2018. Her name is Naomi Sharp and she is coming to us from a similar position in another Circuit. So, watch out for her and make her welcome if you meet her!

Confessions of a Conference junkie*

Some people can't understand why I enjoy Conference, and want to attend. It's a combination of curiosity and nosiness – I like to know what's going on and being decided. The main attraction is the people, meeting them and hearing them speaking with passion about whatever is the current topic. There's another attraction – that I can join in worship with hundreds, not with a handful – and I don't have to lead the singing!

This year Conference held a special place in my heart. Jill Baker was becoming Vice President. Jill, who with Andrew, brought so much to the Thames Valley. Jill, who with Connie, encouraged the circuit to get singing together through Thames Valley Voices. The "ceremony" of inducting the new President and Vice President is the first act of Conference, and always has a lovely warm atmosphere (not that the rest doesn't – but this is really special). As we watched, the platform party processed in, and there was Jill, resplendent in her Methodist tartan, seats were taken, and the handover took place, with handover speeches that were surprisingly short and funny.



Jill's theme of "Laughter and Lament" struck chords with many people. This was the piece that most people commented on – right through the week.

One of the things I really enjoy is breakfast conversations with other members of Conference. Where else would you discuss the ordination of women clergy with a Roman Catholic Bishop? Where else would you sing the praises of "Open the Book" to a Presbyter one year into ministry? Or at dinner time to talk to a member of the Conference Office staff about what his job entails – in this case to be interrupted by Jill and Andrew joining the table and widening out the conversation!

A new aspect of Conference this year was the allocating of representatives from the World Church to different Districts, instead of all sitting together as a group. South-East District welcomed Rev César Llanco-Zavaleta from Peru. Good thing that Mindy had some Spanish! He had an ear-piece for the business from the podium, but not for small groups, and he had much better English than any of us had Spanish. He was a joy to be with – so enthusiastic, and grateful for the opportunity to be present.

During the business sessions, the President and Vice President alternate taking the chair. So there was Jill, calmly sitting in the chair, making sure that all the business was conducted correctly, always looking interested, always with that half-smile on her face – except when a full smile, or even laughter broke out. Conference has a lot of laughs – there are jokes, funny stories, mishaps, confusion.



A couple of other notes from Conference. I was asked to be a scrutineer – ready to count votes, if the show of hands was too close to call. I was allocated two districts to cover, should this be necessary. Some years there are many counts ... this year – only one! And it was something sufficiently minor for me now not to remember what it was about! Just across the gangway from where I was sitting was someone with hearing aids. Most of the time there was a “signer” sitting facing her, also repeating what was being said, so she could lip-read. The signer told me what a joy it was to be asked to do this kind of work – but how exhausting it was, and how much water he consumed to keep his mouth from getting dry.

Just by the Hilton Conference centre in Birmingham is a lake with wildfowl and “sculptures”. I used to walk round it regularly, as a way of winding down at the end of the day. One day I watched with fascination for several minutes as a rabbit and a magpie “eye-balled” each other, neither giving way initially – and then the magpie decided nothing was happening and flew away.

Just a few impressions of Conference.!

Anne Haggarty

**Sorry Anne! - Ed*

News from Burnham

When our Editor, in a well-judged attempt to suggest topics for the Newsletter, mentioned 'recipes', it gave the writer of these notes food for thought. Recipes aren't just for food and drink, although, if I may briefly digress, did anyone ever have to 'feed' a ginger beer 'plant' or attempt to make yoghurt in the airing cupboard? Not the most enjoyable of recipes!*

Recipes are about what we need - how we put the ingredients together - and what the outcome is. On the first Sunday in August, part of the reading was this writer's favourite verse - yes - Romans 8.28 - 'All things work together for good for those who love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.' If that's not a recipe for Christian service, I don't know what is!

So, what's the outcome? A close relation of mine who is having a quick 40 minutes snooze before we go out for a nice healthy walk, awoke long enough to say - 'well, the proof of the pudding is in the eating'. So, what has 'worked together for good' - and what has been the outcome?

The Alpha course has finished, and there has been enough interest to start another one this Autumn. The Lighthouse project, (held on Burnham Grammar School playing fields) in which Burnham Methodist had a strong interest, attracted over 800 young people at the end of July. If your area has the facilities to hold a Lighthouse week, please do find out more. We have welcomed a new member into fellowship - one who has certainly contributed to the well-being of the Church and to The Well@ Lent Rise, our ecumenical partners. Another 'ingredient' has been the very welcome



addition of an occasional Sunday morning organist. This has been warmly welcomed as the present organist, who has played at Burnham for over 50 years, could do with the occasional break!

So here we are - a mixed bag of ingredients - perhaps we don't always follow the recipe - but all working for God and His work in our community.

Hilary Evans

** Does anyone remember those 'Friendship Cakes' in the '70s and '80s? A bit like a ginger beer plant in that you 'fed' a starter and then baked it into a cake, keeping some back to form another starter, half of which you gave to a friend – who might (or might not) be glad to receive it.*

News from Colnbrook

At our monthly Fellowship meeting on Tuesday, 1st August, we were pleased to welcome two representatives from Macmillan Cancer Care, who both work at their pop-in-office at Wexham Park Hospital. We listened with great interest, finding out just what these wonderful volunteers do to assist people who are suffering from this dreadful disease. It was somewhat unfortunate that we only had nine people in attendance on this occasion. However, after a number of interesting questions and whilst having the traditional cup of tea and biscuits, we managed to donate £250 towards their work. For which they were most grateful.



On another subject, we are most pleased that our bi-monthly joint services with our friends from the Anglican Church in Colnbrook are to continue for the time being.

Bob Quarterman

News from Cookham Rise

There is a definite smell of new paint at Cookham Rise at the moment! During the school summer holidays we have had the Wesley Hall, toilets and kitchen repainted – it all looks nice and fresh. We have also had a door put in between the kitchen and the church, to enable us to serve refreshments easily in the church as well as the Wesley Hall. The carpenter has made a really good job of it and we have a lovely new door. Some of us are still a bit confused – it seems very odd when the door is open to be able to see into the church! We have also had new flooring in the kitchen as there was a gap where the door was put in and matching the existing flooring would have been impossible. After our redecoration and refurbishment we are looking forward to welcoming back our Come & Play carers and children and our Bump Camp mums and babies: they have been asking hopefully when we are going to re-start – it's nice to know that what we do is appreciated.



I am writing this just before the Allotment Service on 27 August – it will start on the allotment and then move down to the church for Communion. We hope that maybe some of the people who come to the allotment regularly might join us there for the beginning of our worship.

During the summer we have had two successful Sunday evenings using 'Grave Talk' – Anglican material facilitating conversation about death and dying. After the first one people were so enthusiastic that we decided to run another one. People are

always interested in talking about death and associated topics – funerals, undertakers, cremation or burial etc etc. If any other small church would like to borrow the booklet and conversation cards you would be very welcome.

We also had a successful evening, attended by about 30 people, about the Olive Tree Project run by Embrace the Middle East. To quote from Embrace:

The olive tree is a universal symbol of peace and a powerful symbol of Palestinian rootedness in their land. But in the political turmoil of the Middle East today, trees that have survived hundreds of years have become casualties in the struggle for the control of the land. Olive trees have been a major source of income for Palestinians for centuries, with olive trees covering over 50% of agricultural land. The olive and olive oil industry supports the livelihoods of around 100,000 Palestinian families. Since the Israeli occupation of the West Bank began in 1967, Palestinian farmers have lost hundreds of thousands of olive trees. Trees planted and cared for by generations of the same family have been destroyed or uprooted as Israeli settlers seek to claim Palestinian land as their own.



People were given the opportunity to sponsor an olive tree. If you would like to know more about this project please go to: <http://www.embraceme.org/olive-tree-project>.

In June this year we hosted a Christian Aid Big Brekkie when we offered a full English breakfast and invited people to donate whatever they felt was right for what they had eaten to Christian Aid. It was very well-supported and we raised £265.00. However, Kathy Rickman and I have decided that we are not cut out to run a bed and breakfast – we *think* everybody got what they ordered!

Also in June we used the Methodist Bible Month material on the book of James, which was good in parts – I felt there was more material in there for weekly Sunday sermons than there were notes for weekly Bible study sessions. But it sparked some good discussions.

And now another Connexional year is starting! We at Cookham Rise send greetings to the other smaller churches in the Circuit.

Connie Jeffery

News from Eton Wick

Eton Wick chose Pentecost as an opportune occasion to unite with our 'sister' churches in the village. We met on the recreation ground with our favourite bears, so naturally we had a 'Teddy Bears' Picnic'. Children playing on the 'rec' joined us and were particularly helpful in disposing of the 'leftovers'! Tea and coffee were available 'on site' thanks to the Vicar's giant hot water carriers, and the three churches supplied a great variety of cakes and savouries, which we enjoyed after some games. The weather was not ideal but we managed a short prayer before the rain finally set in.

The first week of July was marked by two couples celebrating wedding anniversaries – sixty-one and sixty years together. Peter and Valerie Morris celebrated their Diamond Wedding at the chapel with an excellent lunch prepared by the second 'bride' and friends (guess who!) Most of our congregation were able to share in this very special occasion.



Daphne would like to thank everyone from the Smaller Churches who made her birthday so memorable by their presence and all the lovely cards. She is still trying to trace the donors of (1) a decorated pot of lavender and (2) a pink/yellow pen, which got separated from their cards. If you are out there please make yourself known! She would like to thank you.

Most of you will have heard or read that owing to the very difficult situation in the Circuit, occasioned by the long-term illness of a presbyter, the plan-makers can no longer guarantee a preacher for a second Sunday service. Our morning worship-time is usually poorly-attended and the Church Council have very regretfully taken the decision to discontinue it as from 3 September for a trial period of three months. We are grateful to the friends who occasionally join us, and we hope you will continue to do so at 6.30 p.m.

Daphne Hogg

News from Old Windsor

We are thrilled to be invited back into our local First School for next year with Open the Book. The school has a new head, so we have had to wait with more trepidation than usual – but all is well, and we really do begin again. We're back to year 1, and the Creation.

We are thinking about possibly going into the shopping area of the village the day before our Harvest service, and handing out pieces of fruit, and a harvest message to those using the area. Thinking ... and planning, and by the time you read this, we should know what we have decided.

We are also thinking of talking to two of the pre-school groups in the village and seeing about offering story-time (Bible based, or with a Bible message in a non-Biblical story).

We are also thinking about our Christmas activities and events – more next time!

Old Windsor is thinking ... how we can use our limited resources without overstretching us?

We appreciate your prayers for our ventures, as we offer our prayers for yours.

Anne Haggarty

What's new on the Christian Book front?

If you're looking for something new to read, try one of these!

Pilgrim's guide to sacred London by Jason Goodwin and John Michell

Argonaut Books, £7.99



Beneath the carapace of busy London lie relics of an old enchantment, when Guildhall was the palace of Trojan kings and Westminster Abbey was the holy of holies, secluded on Thorney Island. Follow the itineraries or dip into pages at will, and Sacred London will let you see the capital in a new light. Bathed in the gleam of saints and angels, discover a city of river worship, ancient stones, and holy wells. Visit places of sanctuary and haunts of peace, picked out from the scrum of the modern city, quiet churches and forgotten wildernesses, in the very heart of London.

Come let us age! An invitation to grow old boldly by Wanda Nash

Bible Reading Fellowship, £6.99

In this unique book, established writer on spirituality Wanda Nash reflects on growing old with faith and a positive spirit. This compelling invitation to grow old boldly includes Wanda's reflection on her encounter later in life with terminal cancer, and her thoughts on coping with the daily challenges of living a Christian life in ageing and in illness.

Love is his meaning: understanding the teachings of Jesus by Keith Ward

SPCK, £9.98

In *Love Is His Meaning*, Keith Ward explores the various figures of speech and images that Jesus used, and finds they are all ways of expressing and evoking the self-giving love of God, manifested supremely in Jesus' life. They communicate spiritual truths, often not in a literal but in a poetic way. They encourage us to take our own moral decisions with sensitivity and care for others.

Seven prayers of Jesus by Laszlo Gallusz

Intervarsity Press, £9.99

Millions of Christians believe that prayer is the breath of the soul, on which depends the quality of their spiritual life. The reality, however, is that genuine prayer is something we need to learn repeatedly. We share the helplessness of the disciples who asked Jesus, 'Lord, teach us to pray' (Luke 11:1). This volume focuses on the praying of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

If, like me, you love the paintings and greetings cards which Hannah Dunnett produces, then you will love this:

More than words: a collection of paintings and reflections by Hannah Dunnett

Lion Hudson £12.99

Hannah Dunnett's beautiful artwork, interweaving Bible verses and images, has inspired many people. From sailing boats bobbing on the river and lighthouses standing tall, to majestic trees and soaring mountains, to welcoming cottages and cosy kitchens, Hannah paints pictures that help us understand scripture and reflect on God's word in a fresh way. In this book, Hannah has chosen twenty-four of her favourite pictures and tells the story behind each one. As she draws out key verses and their meaning and offers questions to reflect on, readers will gain new insight and understanding.



And here are a couple of novels which you might like:

If you are a fan of '*Grantchester*' which was recently on ITV, you might like this:

Sidney Chambers and the shadow of death by James Runcie

Bloomsbury, £7.99

Sidney is an unconventional clergyman and can go where the police cannot. Together with his roguish friend Inspector Geordie Keating, Sidney inquires into the suspect suicide of a Cambridge solicitor, a scandalous jewellery theft at a New Year's Eve dinner party, the unexplained death of a well-known jazz

promoter and a shocking art forgery, the disclosure of which puts a close friend in danger. Sidney discovers that being a detective, like being a clergyman, means that you are never off duty

The second novel, I have to admit, contains some fairly strong language and might offend some people, but I am addicted to Catherine Fox's novels about the Church of England. She is a vicar's wife so knows what she is talking about – they are funny, enthralling and full of compassion. This is the latest offering:

Realms of glory by Catherine Fox

Marylebone House, £9.99

The final instalment of the Lindchester Chronicles. Set in the fictional Midlands Diocese of Lindchester, *Realms of Glory* guides the reader through the tumultuous twists and turns of 2016. Acting as the narrator, Catherine Fox leads the reader through a cast of nearly 50 residents as they negotiate news of celebrity deaths, unexpected election results and tragic attacks, as well as their everyday lives: new relationships, new schools, family dramas, grief and of course, ordinations!

Banana anyone?

Don't know about you, but when the weather is warm I always seem to have overripe bananas that are past their best. If you do too, try this Low-Fat Chocolate Banana Cake:

Whisk 1 egg with 75ml oil and 2 mashed bananas. Add 50g oats, 40g melted chocolate, 150g flour, 1 tsp cinnamon, ½ tsp baking soda, ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda, 1 tsp vanilla, 125g sugar and a bit of milk until it's cake-mix consistency. Put into greased cake tin and decorate with a sliced third banana. Bake at 180 °C for 40 minutes.

Gluts – and how to deal with them!

I am beginning to feel that if I see another courgette I may well scream! Gluts of vegetables can be a problem if you grow your own so try these recipes – and they're just as good if you buy your vegetables from the supermarket. Of course, if you have more veg than you need you could also try taking it to church on a Sunday and giving it away to those not lucky enough to have gardens or allotments of their own.

Courgette fritters

Makes six fritters

Ingredients

About 250g (8oz) courgettes

One large egg

2 tablespoons plain flour, plus more for coating

Half a packet of feta cheese, crumbled but still chunky

A handful of chopped mint, parsley and chives

Grate the courgette onto a clean tea towel then squeeze it into a ball over the sink to get all the excess moisture out. Tip into a bowl and mix in all of the other ingredients and heat some oil in a frying pan. Place a dollop of the mixture into the flour and coat on all sides, then fry until golden.

Baked Runner Beans with Mushrooms

Ingredients

500 g (1 lb) runner beans
250 g (½ lb) button mushrooms
50 g (2 oz) butter
3 eggs
150 ml (5 fl. oz) double cream
1 teaspoon freshly chopped basil
Salt and pepper to taste

Prepare the beans and slice into 50 mm (2") pieces. Cook in boiling salted water for 5 minutes, drain thoroughly in a colander. Whilst the beans are cooking, prepare the mushrooms. Clean and slice thickly then fry for a couple of minutes in butter.

Butter an oven-proof dish and place the drained runner beans in the base and layer the mushrooms over. Beat the eggs with the salt and pepper, basil and cream and pour over the beans and mushrooms.

Bake in the oven for 20 minutes at gas mark 4 or 180C. Serves 4 on its own or 6 as a side dish.

Looking for more ideas? Try this website:

<https://www.allotment-garden.org/recipe/>

Dates for diaries:

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| Sun 24 September | Come and sing from Singing the Faith at Cookham Rise at 3.30 p.m. Organised by the Smaller Churches Group. All welcome. |
| Sun 29 October | Circuit service at High Street Maidenhead at which Jill Baker, Vice-President of Conference will be the preacher. High Street will provide tea. Time <i>tba</i> . |
| Thu 23 November | Travellers' Tales at Old Windsor at 2.30 p.m. "A Journey Westwards: a call to service in the Americas and Ireland" with Rev Conrad Hicks. |

Copy for the September – November edition of the Smaller Churches Newsletter should be with Connie Jeffery by Sunday 13 November at the latest.