



The Methodist Church

**THAMES VALLEY
CIRCUIT**



ANNUAL REPORT 2018

(for the Church Year 1st September 2017 - 31st August 2018)

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Note: Every year the Circuit produces an Annual Report.

Once every 4 or 5 years, the Annual Report covers *every* church and organisation, etc, in the Circuit. As the content of many of the reports does not change significantly from year to year, in most years the Circuit issues a short Annual Report (such as this in 2018), containing reports from:

- The Superintendent Minister
- The Senior Circuit Steward

and the Circuit Treasurer's report which is circulated to all trustees.

However, we also aim to reflect changes, as they occur, in the relevant section on this website.

The previous detailed annual report covering *every* church and organisation, etc, in the Circuit was that for 2014. To see it, [click on this link](#).
And for the one in 2010, [this link](#).

Circuit Superintendent's Report

Possibly the greatest highlight of the year was the news that one of our own members in this Circuit, Jon Garde, had been accepted for training as a Methodist Presbyter. This means that Jon will not be available for preaching appointments for the next Connexional year. The Circuit has assured Jon and his wife, Rosemary, that we will continue to pray for them as they begin a new chapter in Christian service. Jon's accreditation service as a Methodist Local Preacher, a requirement before training can begin, took place on Easter Sunday at Windsor Methodist Church in the evening. The preacher was Dr John Long. It was good to be a part of such a joyful occasion. At this service, Evan Richardson was presented with a long service award after twenty-five years of loyal service as a Local Preacher.

As staffing shortages continued to have an impact on mission and outreach in this Circuit, it was good to have the assistance of Ms Naomi Sharp as a Lay Worker for a year. This employment ceased in August 2018, but I know that Naomi's cheerful willingness was a source of joy for High Street Maidenhead and for the wider Circuit. Naomi was instrumental in planning the Ash Wednesday labyrinth at St. Andrew's and in the Blue Christmas service at Burnham in December. Rev Julie Underwood continues to support the development work at St. Mark's

Crescent. Her appointment is for four sessions per week, which equates to a third-time appointment. We have also had valued support from Rev. Richard Cattley, an Anglican priest, who retired to Maidenhead and has been assisting with Communion services on our Plan. We continue to benefit from the presence of Dr. Malcolm White, a supernumerary minister in this Circuit who preached at Naomi's Farewell Service. We pray that Dr. White may continue to bless this Circuit with his wisdom and his faithful service.

It was decided not to have a Circuit theme for the year. Instead, the Circuit Leadership Team began to plan a way forward acknowledging that the number of vacant appointments will rise as a greater number of ministers retire and the recruitment of new ones is not meeting the shortfall. A strategy paper was circulated and there was a clear preference for grouping the churches around the three main towns of Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead. Already some churches in the Circuit can see that their mission has entered its end-time in the surrounding community. For others, there might be more sense in actively working with their neighbours whether with other Methodist churches in the town or perhaps ecumenically. It is also hoped that more employed lay workers may strengthen the work already being done and help to initiate new areas of mission.

For the moment, the proposed re-alignment with the Staines & Feltham Circuit has been postponed. However, we continue to work together in terms of running the Circuit Training Day. The Thames Valley Circuit is grateful that Revd. Andrew Reed, Superintendent in the Staines & Feltham Circuit, has generously agreed to be the tutor for the Local Preachers on Trial here.

We continue to hold several Circuit Healing Services a year. These take place at Windsor Methodist Church and are appreciated by those that attend. All the Circuit Staff, when not on annual leave, participate in these acts of worship.

This year, Deacon Andy Packer was on sabbatical from mid-May to mid-August. Andy spent the three months looking at Religious Orders around the British Isles. Sabbaticals are a source of refreshment for ministers and it is good that the Methodist church offers these every seven years.

It is anticipated that a new Lay Worker will be employed to replace Naomi Sharp. The first advert for this role did not yield a wide enough selection of applicants but it is hoped that someone will be appointed soon.

Towards the end of her time with us, Naomi with the assistance of Anne Haggarty ran a workshop based on the Worship Foundations course. This is another resource to train Worship Leaders. The workshop ran over two afternoons, was well attended and received. Hopefully, a few more Worship leaders will be available to the churches in the future.

As the number of Local Arrangement services on the Plan has increased, the Circuit has decided to better resource the churches by subscribing to *The Vine*. Worship materials for Local Arrangement services are sent to a church contact every month. I am sure this resource will greatly enhance the worship offered in the Circuit.

Sonia Hicks
November 2018

Senior Circuit Steward's Report

Once again staffing has loomed very large on the Circuit's agenda this year as we learned in January 2018 that a presbyter would not be stationed in the Circuit from September 2018 to replace Rev Gary Homewood, who had curtailed his appointment: the circuit continued to be staffed by three presbyters and a deacon. We were delighted, however, to be able to appoint Naomi Sharp as a Lay Worker at High Street Maidenhead on a one-year contract commencing September 2017. With Naomi's hard work and continued assistance from Rev Richard Cattley (retired Anglican priest) and Rev Julie Underwood (Methodist Supernumerary residing in the Staines & Feltham Circuit), the Maidenhead section has managed to keep going: heartfelt thanks to Richard and Julie and indeed to all the Circuit staff who have been so stretched again this year but have continued to give 110% to the Circuit! Thanks too to local preachers and presbyters from outside the Circuit who have continued to offer preaching appointments during the course of the year. Hopefully from September 2019 we will have a third presbyter in the Circuit.

With this in mind the Circuit decided to sell the Maidenhead section manse, Priesthaus, as its age (built in the early 20th century) was an issue bringing increased maintenance costs. At present (November 2018) a sale appears to be going through and the Circuit stewards have put in an offer for a new manse of more recent build, which has been accepted. Thank you to Glenice White who has taken the lead on this project.

While on the subject of Circuit Stewards, thanks to Liz Tottingham, who came to the end of her appointment in August 2018, and welcome to Keith Machin, who joined the team in September 2018. In September 2018 we also welcomed Sue Le Page to the team as Circuit Treasurer, with huge thanks to Chris Wren, who had filled this position for more than his allotted six years. At the end of the current Connexional year (2018-2019) both myself and Elsa Daniel will be stepping down, so we are still looking for more Circuit Stewards to join the team. From September 2018 Circuit Stewards duties are as follows:

Connie Jeffery

Care of Spring Lane manse and Rev Sonia Hicks and family; High St Maidenhead, St Mark's Crescent and Colnbrook & Poyle Church Councils

Elsa Daniel

Hampshire Avenue and Eton Wick Church Councils.

Charles Buckman

Care of Upton Road manse and Rev Mindy Bell and family; St Andrew's (Asian) and Ledgers Road Church Councils.

Glenice White

Care of Clarence Road manse and Rev Margaret Dudley; Windsor, Cookham Rise and Woodlands Park Church Councils

Keith Machin

Care of Salt Hill Drive Manse and Deacon Andy Packer and family; St Andrew's (English) and Burnham Church Councils.

Sue Le Page

Circuit Treasurer; Old Windsor Church Council.

The Circuit has not been ignoring the staffing situation during the year, and in March 2018 a Strategy Document was issued to the churches to enable them to consider future arrangements for the Circuit including staffing and whether each church had a growth plan or an end-of-life plan (as outlined by Conference). This strategic planning is ongoing and the Circuit is now being asked to consider the practicalities of being grouped into three 'centres' based on Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead, and what the staffing and other issues might be if this course is implemented. The members of the Circuit Meeting have also been encouraged to read "Our Iceberg is melting" – a book about managing change. The Circuit Meeting has also approved the appointment of a Circuit Administrator.

The Circuit is grateful to its faithful Local Preachers and Worship Leaders who have continued to lead creative and consistent worship during the year. Three Local Preachers continue On Trial – Elijah Kommu, Azeem Bakhsh and Eddy Amponsah – with Rev Andrew Reed, Superintendent of Staines & Feltham as their tutor. The Circuit was delighted to hear that Jon Garde, who, having finished his Local Preacher studies and become accredited, was also accepted as a candidate for the Methodist presbyteral ministry. Members at all the churches in the Circuit have emphasised how well Jon leads worship and we all wish him well in his training. The Local Preachers and Worship Leaders in the Circuit were also invited to a Western Area Study Day at Trinity Methodist Church Woking on 14th July 2018 on the theme 'Worshipping Altogether'. The day was led by Gail Adcock and Bob Bartindale: Gail is a Family Ministries Specialist in the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network and Bob is the Officer for Worship & Local Preachers. The day explored what it means for us to be an intergenerational community and how this is reflected in

the ways we worship together.

There were also a few special services during the year, beginning with a welcome service for Naomi Sharp in September 2017, quickly followed by a service on 29 October 2017 led by Jill Baker, Vice-President of Conference for 2016-17 and of course no stranger to the Thames Valley. Jill led worship on the theme 'Day by Day' and the Circuit choir, Thames Valley Voices, were pleased to be able to lead the singing. On 27 May 2018 there was a Circuit Service for Aldersgate Sunday led by Naomi Sharp, Kathy Rickman and Connie Jeffery.

The proposed integration of some of the churches in the Staines and Feltham Circuit was put on the back burner this year after Teddington (the Circuit which would have received the rest of the Staines & Feltham Circuit churches) withdrew from the process. The initiative will be looked at again if and when another Circuit can be found to take Teddington's place.

The Smaller Churches in the Thames Valley Circuit continued to send representatives to the Support Group and also to offer each other encouragement and the occasional joint activity. There was another outing organised by the group this year, this time to St Alban's Abbey, where Rev Peter Hudson, formerly Superintendent of this Circuit, celebrated Holy Communion with the group as well as giving them a tour. In this Connexional Year (2018-2019) it is hoped a visit to The New Room in Bristol might be arranged. There was also another *Singing the Faith* afternoon in September 2017, this time led by Naomi Sharp.

There have been many challenges this year, not least the advent in May 2018 of the General Data Protection Regulations, which has involved the Circuit in data mapping and also in generally thinking about the way it handles people's data. Despite all these challenges it has been a great joy to engage in fellowship with the Circuit staff and with all the churches in the Circuit this year, and I look forward to my final year as Senior Circuit Steward in the 2017-2018 Connexional year.

Connie Jeffery
Senior Circuit Steward
October 2018