

Newsletter of the Smaller Churches in the Thames Valley Circuit

March – April 2014

Minister's Letter

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings to you at this very wet season. As I write some of you are taking precautions in Old Windsor and the east side of Cookham has been cut off. I hope those affected by the floods know of the thoughts of the rest of the circuit at this stressful time. There has been a sense of solidarity among the smaller churches as there is an understanding of some of the shared challenges and dreams which are faced. There has been a spirit of encouragement and support amongst the group which has met regularly over recent years, as we have sought to be faithful to God's call to be salt and light in the communities where we serve. We have found ourselves able to rejoice together and weep together. In the present crisis brought upon us by the extreme weather conditions, we stand together with others in the community, looking out for those most vulnerable. Windows of opportunity to serve are opened to us, and we are called to be faithful, receiving the grace and strength to rise to the occasion.

All of us will face new challenges in ahead, and we may find ourselves yet we trust in the God who provides

We have held many healing services found them to be times when you God. We are wondering if God is worship together. We would value

By the time you read this we shall Awayday together. Thanks to a fruitful time. It is my hope that we shall have found refreshment and re-creation in our day spent with Julie and each other.



our churches in the years which lie having to make difficult decisions; grace sufficient for every task.

together, and a number of you have have received light and peace from calling us in a new direction in our your prayerful suggestions on this.

have had the Smaller Churches those who are working to make this

This is a significant period for Margaret, as she comes towards the end of her second year of being a probationer minister in the circuit. She will have much to complete over these coming weeks and we pray for her in all her preparation. We are hoping that she will go forward for ordination at the end of June at the Methodist Conference in Birmingham.

Thanks for all the encouragement you give to those who serve as ministers in this circuit among the smaller churches. You bring us great blessing as we share with you.

Peace and light.

Andrew

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.

News from the Churches

BURNHAM

It was a glorious Sunday morning last September, and we were driving through the National Park on our way to the British Columbian ice-fields. We were to 'walk on a glacier' amongst the Canadian Rockies. The trip of a lifetime for me! A CD of church music was playing and, as we turned the final corner, way up high above the whole world it seemed, 'How Great Thou Art' began to play. Wow! If ever a piece of music was appropriate, it was then, and I shall never, never, forget!

These words were spoken in Church on a Sunday in February during our 'do it yourself' (well, mostly) Songs of Praise, by one of our Church family to explain her choice of hymn. Although we were, of course, very sorry not to have our planned Preacher, it was a real joy to hear friends give testimonies and explain reasons for a choice of hymn. A very lively, happy morning, and one for which we certainly give praise.

Members from Burnham Church shared in a Churches Together Service to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. About 50 people attended a very reflective, yet quite challenging service in St Peter's Church. It was good to have fellowship together, but it was felt generally that we see very few new faces at these and similar gatherings. Perhaps Saturday afternoon is not the best time? Surely not everyone goes to B and Q?

The Lent Risers group (Tuesday and numbers are growing fast. of the Mums themselves and working alongside them.



mornings) is doing brilliantly Many thanks to the enthusiasm those from Church who are

As I write, we are looking smaller churches Away Day. experience, teaching us to think

most helpful. Advance information about this Away Day makes us feel we are going to be in for a very helpful – and perhaps very thought-provoking day.

forward very much to the Last year was a most valuable about prayer in new ways. It was

And finally – *Call the Midwife* comes to Burnham (nearly). Cast your mind back to Christmas morning. Done that? Right – into Burnham Church – for the first time – comes one of our Mums from The Mother and Toddler Group (The Lent Risers). Lovely to see her. She is (without wishing to put too fine a point on it) about to become a Mum again. Very soon. Very, very soon. Half-way through the Service she begins to feel uncomfortable. We sit her in the porch. My mind wanders over what supplies we've got – hot water, yes, fluffy towels, no (would tea-towels do?) Scissors and string (no, don't even go there). But, what do we have, not one, but two DOCTORS! One of them being the son of the Canadian tourist alluded to above. No worries there then. Except that one of them is a psychiatrist and the other one is very recently qualified. The Canadian tourist wishes me to point out that it is her son who is the psychiatrist. You will be glad to know that no extreme measures were called for, and the baby, which was due the following day, eventually arrived a fortnight late. She is a girl, and that makes 4 girls born to our Lent Risers Mums since Christmas. Must be something in the water. Sorry, didn't mean to mention water...

Hilary Evans

COOKHAM RISE

Coffee mornings, church lunches, Ladies Circle, Toddlers, Rainbow Pre-school, Open the Book and prayer meeting all continue as usual at Cookham Rise. We ended 2013 with Christmas Lunch on Sunday 22nd December when thirty-eight people sat down to turkey and all the trimmings. Kathy Rickman and I caused much mirth because we did the shopping for lunch and counted out the number of Brussels sprouts we thought we would need individually – all two hundred of them!

On Sunday 19th January we had a special celebration service led by Rev Andrew Baker and followed by lunch, to celebrate the arrival of our new chairs, to wonder about what the future might hold and to commission our pastoral visitors. The Looking to the Future Group met in January to think about the opportunities offered by our new *space* and new chairs and came up with several ideas, including a Bumps & Babies club for expectant Mums and Mums with new babies, which we hope will get off the ground soon. Toddlers are now meeting in the church instead of in the Wesley Hall, which everyone seems to be very happy with – it also gives Rainbow Pre-school the opportunity to run a Tuesday morning session and thus offer a session every weekday, plus it gives the toddlers and their carers the opportunity to go through to the Wesley Hall and see what Rainbow is all about and join them for their singing time. We are also taking a full page in March's Cookham Parish Magazine asking people to 'Come and See' what the worship space looks like now and also inviting anyone who runs, or is thinking of starting, a group of any kind to come and see whether our 'space' would meet their requirements. Also will be 4th at Cookham – alternative-style worship at on the fourth Sunday you don't have an evening give it a try, just come of alternative weekday watch this space.



Beginning on Monday, 10th continuing for a further studying a Lent Course Must Begin', based on 'Les Miserables' which involves watching clips from the film version and discovering what various characters can tell us about the Christian life. It sounds 'different' and we are looking forward to it – well done Andrew for finding the book!

beginning in March there Iona or Taizé or other 6.30 pm at Cookham Rise evening of each month. If service and would like to along. I also have a vision worship at some stage –

March at 7.30 pm, and four Mondays, we will be entitled 'Another Story

Hopefully we will be offering our usual Holy Week 'Prayer Vigil' this year on Good Friday evening between 6 and 10 pm and on Easter Saturday morning between 8 am and 12 noon, when there will be an opportunity to follow the prayer stations in the church or just sit quietly and think/pray about the meaning of Good Friday and Easter. I am really looking forward to putting this year's vigil together as the chairs will give much more flexibility for prayer stations! Why not come along – you'll be very welcome and will hopefully find it a quiet and meaningful part of Holy Week.

And if you haven't seen our chairs – well, what are you waiting for?!

Connie Jeffery

COLNBROOK & POYLE

Colnbrook & Poyle United Church continues to work closely with St Thomas' – the local Parish Church. They enjoy a great relationship with the congregation including sharing a joint service once a month.

When there are other activities, our congregation supports those they can, and some members of the St Thomas' congregation join the Tuesday Fellowship at the United Church.

The Tuesday Fellowship continues to meet each month, exploring a variety of topics. In December we met twice because we had our Christmas meeting, and a *Carol and Mince Pie* afternoon. In January we celebrated Epiphany. In February we used broken pottery and candles to think about Strength and Vulnerability, Power and Weakness.



OLD WINDSOR

Old Windsor is having a rather an up-and-down time at the moment. We have been sharing the distress and worry with David and Sylvia over Diane. The latest news is that she is making very slow, but steady progress, and we rejoice at that. We hold the whole extended family all in our prayers.

The weather was not as unkind to us as other places, but the River Thames did threaten houses on the northern side of Straight Road, and sandbags were issued to some of us.

One of our older members, Babs Collins has died, and her funeral will have been held by the time you read this. We shall miss her, but we also rejoice for her time among us, and that she is now with her Lord.

In contrast, our Covenant Service was most uplifting and challenging – do we really mean the promises we make, and how do we go about putting them into practice? Our usual 10.30 am Good Friday Procession of Witness through the village will culminate around 11 am in a short service, to be led by Margaret, at Old Windsor Methodist Church.

Our Beetle Drive was a happy event, small numbers, but we had five tables, and it was great fun.

We are greatly looking forward to our next Travellers' Tales with Malcolm and Veronica White from Burnham. This will be on 13th March at 2.30 pm. Please do join us.

Open the Book is still our major outreach work, with children clamouring to take part! It helps when the story benefits from crowd scenes! We feel so uplifted when, as happened the other day, a small child, with his mother was crossing the road in pouring rain. He stopped dead in the middle of the road, waved, said to his mother "It's Open the Book!" What a privilege to acknowledge that with a wave back!

Anne Haggarty

ETON WICK

We are extremely grateful to have been virtually unaffected by the recent severe flooding in the area, undoubtedly due to the construction of the Jubilee river some years ago. We offer our thoughts and concern to those less fortunate who are facing a massive “clean up” exercise in the months to come.

Our usual range of activities continues and we are re-appraising the place of the *Pie and Praise* evening in our calendar. This was introduced many years ago, and until recently has been an effective form of outreach. Times have moved on and we are actively engaged in seeking the way forward so that we may continue to reach out to our village community.

We have seen a welcome increase in those attending the Ladies’ Club which meets fortnightly in the evening. With the passing years many of us have “grown old” in this meeting, and in an ideal world (which we haven’t got!) it would be wonderful if “us oldies” could “make the break” and transfer to the meeting for older women on Thursday afternoons, which is in serious decline. Consequently we would welcome any support it might be possible for the Circuit to give, to strengthen the Thursday Fellowship which meets at 2.30 pm on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays in the month (not in August or January).



We shall be represented at Daffodil Day in Westminster Central Hall on 3rd March and thank Jo and Peter for once again arranging the transport.

We look forward to welcoming Local Preachers for their meeting at Eton Wick on 12th March.

In Holy Week we are expecting to have a short service at 1 pm on 16th April especially for our Wednesday “diners”, and our 9.30 am service on Good Friday will be followed by coffee and buns.

We shall give a joyous welcome to Rev Heather Noel-Smith on Easter Day. Heather will conduct our 10.30 am Service, which will include the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Daphne Hogg

Editor’s note / Contact

My thanks to all contributors for this edition!

Stories, pictures, information for future editions will be much appreciated. Keep them coming!

Anne Haggarty

Joint Events ... dates for your diary

The next meeting of the Smaller Churches Group is on Thursday, 20th March, 7.30 pm at Colnbrook & Poyle United Church.

March

Thursday, 10th 2.30 pm at Old Windsor

Travellers' Tales – Holy Land and Jordan
Rev Malcolm and Mrs Veronica White

Saturday, 15th 7.15 pm at High Street Maidenhead

Circuit Missions Quiz – £6 including supper.

April

Tuesday, 8th 8 pm at St Andrew's Slough

The Voice of Passion – an evening with words and music for the Easter season, led by Thames Valley Voices.

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!