

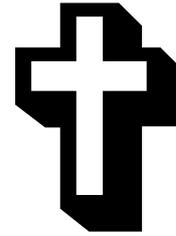
The Methodist Church – Bristol District

Upper Thames Circuit

Monthly Newsletter

No 28

April 2016



Dear Friends,

Famously, Margaret Thatcher claimed that there was no such thing as society. I would and do disagree with that statement. I wonder if anyone can tell me where we might find the bible verse below and what is its context:

"To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God."

Elsewhere, in 2 Chronicles 7:14 God spoke the following words to Solomon during his prayer of dedication of the temple:

"if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

The Old Testament is littered with references calling for humility rather than sacrifice, usually accompanied by a call for justice. A call for the people of God to treat each other and in particular, the poor: the widow: the orphan: the refugee, with compassion and not to rip them off.

Another theme of the Old Testament is about taking care of the land, about treating the environment with respect. At the beginning in Genesis Adam and Eve were charged with looking after the place where they lived. Later as the rules for settlement were outlined in Leviticus we see how the land itself was to be cared for by resting every seven years.

Just a few weeks ago at our circuit meeting we spent over an hour discussing in groups issues around justice and the environment. We began with the question; what does it mean to be an outward looking circuit? We highlighted areas of justice, environment and even politics and when the Circuit Leadership Team next meets we hope to develop some proposals to bring to circuit meeting.

The Westminster confession says the primary purpose of man is to glorify God. If Gods primary purpose in sending his son into the world was to save it, as John 3:16 says, then it must be extremely valuable to him and should be to us. So I am encouraging you to receive the message of Easter, the message of sins forgiven by Jesus death upon the cross and of resurrection to eternal life and to take it personally for yourself, God loves you. But unlike Margaret Thatcher I believe that there is such a thing as society and that we have a duty, a call from God to act responsibly toward other people and toward the planet on which we live.

And if you are still looking for that passage about justice and mercy, you will find it in a box later in this newsletter.

God bless you richly

Keith

NB: The deadline for items for the May newsletter is Tuesday, 26th April

DISTRICT NEWS/EVENTS:

Bristol District - Circuit Stewards weekend conference, Ammerdown 2016

I am one of four Circuit Stewards for the Upper Thames Circuit. Our Circuit is part of Bristol District. I had the privilege to attend the above conference for one full day. Ammerdown is a Conference and Retreat Centre nestling in woods next to a Stately Home, surrounded by beautiful landscaped gardens and parkland, with an exquisitely beautiful chapel in its midst. The whole place is steeped in peace and tranquillity. The focus of the weekend was to encourage a network of Circuit Stewards supported and supporting through learning and caring. Sessions were mostly led by Liam McKenna, from the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN). Liam is the Learning and Development Officer for our area, Bristol and West Midlands. We also heard from the District Safeguarding Officer, Kevin Maidment, our District Chair, Revd Dr Jonathan Pye and Revd Mandy Briggs.

Mandy shared about progress of the Horsefair Project at the New Room, Bristol, which commenced in January 2016 and will continue until Spring 2017. The Horsefair Project is an exciting scheme to construct a new three-storey building in the Horsefair Courtyard at the rear of the building that will help to solve many of the problems facing the New Room. <http://www.newroombristol.org.uk/Home/1-Horsefair-Project>

The website gives lots of information about project progress but also lists events held at the New Room. One that caught my eye was 'Holy Habits' – The Nature and Nurture of Discipleship, an evening with Revd Andrew Roberts, May 12 (7.30pm to 9pm) to explore the themes of his critically acclaimed new book. This is a free event but places do need to be booked by emailing holyhabits@btinternet.com

I also offer from the Ammerdown conference the following links of general interest:

A Look Back at Conference 2015 <http://www.methodist.org.uk/conference/conference-2015>

DMLN <http://www.methodist.org.uk/learning/network-regions/bristol-west-midlands-region>

A discipleship movement shaped for mission <http://www.methodist.org.uk/deepening-discipleship>

Jane Phoenix-Stone

RISE & SHINE: YOUNG LEADER'S WEEKEND

Organised by the Methodist Church's Youth President Craig Gaffney

The event will be looking at Biblical leadership and how that can be applied in the context of the 21st century. It is open to any young person aged between 16 and 23 who has been identified by their Churches, Circuits or Districts as having leadership potential. It will be a low key event to allow for depth in conversation and learning.

Cliff College Fri 24th – Sun 26th June £60

There might be scope for some district funding to help towards costs for young people from our district wanting to attend this event so please contact Emma Mills if interested. Also as always please ask churches if there is any chance of part funding too.

For full details and booking click here <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/rise-and-shine-tickets-20779344579>

CIRCUIT NEWS/EVENTS:

Change of Time and Venue for Circuit Service on 3rd April

Please note that the Circuit Service on 3rd April will now take place at **Highworth Methodist Church** at 6.00pm and not Abbey Meads. A Circuit service will be held at Abbey Meads later in the year.

An Evening with Stuart Townend

The Upper Thames Circuit is delighted to present the above event, which will take place in St Joseph's Catholic College, Ocotol Way, Swindon SN3 3LR on Tuesday, 19th April at 7.30pm. **There are just 5 tickets remaining at the Lighthouse Bookshop, Highworth, priced at £15 for adults and £12 for children. All other tickets (both on-line sales and from the Rainbow Bookshop, Swindon) have now been sold.** The evening will include performance, chat and worship with one of today's leading worship songwriters and will feature songs from the new album. Free refreshments will be available during the interval (donations appreciated) and merchandise will be available to purchase.

Proposed Circuit trip to Oberammergau in 2020

In 2000 I organised a church pilgrimage/holiday to Austria and Bavaria to see the Passion Play that is performed every 10 years by the residents of the small Bavarian Village of Oberammergau. Several people have asked me whether I would be prepared to organise a similar trip to see the play when it is next performed in 2020.

Why mention this now when we are only part way through 2016, you may ask. Well there are a few reasons. Firstly, the play which is performed about 3 times a week throughout the summer (from memory from June to September I believe) gets booked up a long time in advance (with large numbers of tickets being taken by tour companies and operators) so to have any chance of getting seats for preferred dates it is necessary to apply in very good time. Secondly, the trip will, like most such trips, not be cheap, especially if there are several of one family wishing to come, so the sooner we start saving the better!

Michele and I have just returned from a holiday in Austria and whilst there I took the opportunity to speak to the director of the hotel that we regularly stay in, to ask whether he would be prepared, at a discounted rate for a fairly large party, to accommodate us. Not only was he happy to confirm that he would be prepared to do so but he also said that he would also be able to obtain the tickets for the play and to arrange coach transport for the party while we were staying at the hotel. That would only leave me to organise coach transport to and from the airport in the UK and also to organise the flights.

My suggestion at this stage is that if I can get some indication of the numbers of people who would be interested, then I could attempt to get some idea of the costs likely to be involved. I anticipate a coach from here to either Heathrow or Gatwick, flights to and from the UK to (preferably) Innsbruck or Munich, 7 days accommodation at Hotel Seespitz, Seefeld in Tyrol Austria and seats for a performance of the play.

I anticipate that some people may not know about the play, suffice it to say that it is a wonderful re-enactment of our Lord's Passion leading up to his crucifixion. If you put Oberammergau Passion Plays into Google you will find numerous websites which give information about the play, its history etc. and www.seespitz.at will take you to the Seespitz Hotel website. Seefeld itself is ideally placed to get to a host of interesting places in the Tyrol and Southern Germany.

I would be happy to come to your church to talk in more detail about this proposal, but if in principle you would be interested in being part of this holiday (no firm commitment necessary yet but a deposit will be required at some time) please let me know by April 30th at latest.

Paul Holloway, Circuit Steward.
01793 784479 or p.d.holloway@btinternet.com

Braydon Methodist Church

Musical Evening at Brinkworth Village Hall

A musical evening will be held on Saturday 30th April 2016 (7.00pm for 7.30pm start). Tickets cost £10 per person and will include supper. Tickets need to be booked in advance with:
Fliss Scott (felicity.scott12@yahoo.com/01793 840297 / 07470025251)

All proceeds will go towards Braydon Methodist Church Restoration Fund.

Advance Notice of Camp Service at Braydon

There will be a Camp Service at Braydon on Sunday 18th September. Gates will open at 12.30pm for a hog roast, followed by a service at 2.30pm. Watch this space for further updates as the date approaches.

Shrivenham Methodist Church

Café Inspire

The next Café Inspire events will be held in the Shrivenham Primary School on Saturday, 9th April, from 10.00am until 11.30am. Come along for a coffee, a bacon roll and/or some yummy cake and a chance to chat to folk of all ages who enjoy doing the same. Activities (creative and otherwise) are provided for younger and older children. The first Café Inspire Sunday service will take place at 4pm on Sunday 17th April, in Shrivenham Primary School. A worship band has been organised and this service will be suitable for all ages – do come along and support us if you can. If you cannot be there, please uphold this event in prayer.

OTHER NEWS/EVENTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

Christian Vision for Men – The Gathering

The Gathering – an annual event which includes powerful gospel ministry, Bible teaching and a range of seminars, will be held over the week-end of 24th – 26th June at Lynt Farm, SN6 7QZ, off the main road between Highworth and Lechlade. Worship will be led by Graham Kendrick, Mark Tate and band. Speakers include Carl Beech, Nathan Blackaby, Roy Crowne and Mike Vickers. The cost is £95 per person until 31st May, then £100 per person. Bookings can be made online at: www.thegatheringformen.com or by calling the CVM Office on: 01246 452483. This event is usually sold out, so make sure you book in good time. Other attractions include comedy, sport, inflatables, music, cool cars and a bar. It is a great opportunity for Christian men to bring along their mates who don't go to church as well as those who do.

Does anyone have a spare data projector they could donate?

Graham Stockill is looking to acquire a data projector to use at Cricklade United Church for a new film club that is being piloted. It goes under the name "Holywood" and aims to study theology through the medium of films, which are aimed mainly at youngsters and will be up to PG rating. Whilst Royal Wootton Bassett Methodist Church has kindly loaned a projector for the pilot, if the project takes off, a permanent replacement would be ideal. You can contact graham by email at: graham.stockill@gmail.com or by telephone on (01793) 750095.

News from Ammerdown

3 - 4 April 2016 'Healing the World - exploring the Environmental Crisis from Jewish and Christian Perspectives, led by Rabbi Natan Levy and Fiona Hulbert. We are very much looking forward to exploring the above subject in further detail, as the environment is very topical at present, one which affects us all and the generations to come. The environmental crisis is one of the biggest challenges of our time. A Jewish Rabbi and a Christian green activist sharing an interest in theology and ecology come together to help us rethink our prayer, theology and actions in response to a God who suffers for our sins against the earth. To help us look at this subject in greater detail Rabbi Natan Levy and Fiona Hulbert will be leading the way.

Please either go to <http://ammerdown.org/Healing-the-World-2016#> or email centre@ammerdown.org or ring 01761 433709.

Micah 6:8
"He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God."

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Sunday 3 rd April	Circuit Service, Highworth Methodist Church, 6.00pm
Thursday 14 th April	Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Meeting Highworth Methodist Church, 7.30pm
Tuesday 19 th April	An evening with Stuart Townend, St Joseph's Catholic College, 7.30pm
Saturday 23 rd April	District Synod, North Wilts Circuit TBA

A PRAYER FOR RENEWAL

Heavenly Father, in Jesus' name we ask for a fresh outpouring of your Holy Spirit on your church in our community. Help us to grow in our experience of your love, forgiveness and healing. Challenge our contentment to stay as we are. Renew our vision of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, that through our words and the way we live, others may be drawn to your way. Give us the wisdom to seek your will and grant us the joy that comes from wholeheartedly following it. For your glory and the good of all your people.

Amen

UPPER THAMES CIRCUIT CONTACT DETAILS:

Office hours:	9.30am – 12.30pm on Wednesdays and Fridays
Please note:	The Circuit Office will closed at noon on Wednesday 23 rd December and will re-open at 9.30am on Wednesday 6 th January.
Telephone:	(01793) 764544
Email:	upperthamescircuit@gmail.com
Email:	superkeithosborn@gmail.com
Postal Address:	Highworth Methodist Church Vicarage Lane Highworth Swindon SN6 7AD