

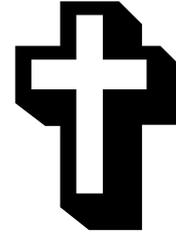
The Methodist Church – Bristol District

Upper Thames Circuit

Monthly Newsletter

No 30

June 2016



God's Spirit is moving – but are we standing still?

The job of a circuit steward is interesting because it creates opportunities for not only meeting with the folk of our own circuit churches but also those from other backgrounds.

It's been my privilege during the last few months to attend meetings in different denominational contexts where I have met and heard Christians from Baptist, United Reform, Free-evangelical, Church of England and Catholic churches and have recognised a common challenge: ***how do we live to be the people that Jesus wants us to be and to serve God in the midst of our ordinary, routine daily lives and in a way that makes a difference? And how do we ensure that the difference is what God wills and not just our own plan or scheme for the next steps?***

I recently listened to **Gavin Calver**, formerly of Youth for Christ and now of the Evangelical Alliance, talking about the largest piece of research recently carried out by the Barna Group (commissioned by the Church of England and the Evangelical Alliance) on ***Perceptions of Jesus, Christians and Evangelism in England***. This research showed that the majority of English non-Christians know a Christian and that three out of five of these say they enjoy being around Christian friends or family members. What is more the research showed that many of those non-Christians have had a conversation with their Christian friend/s or acquaintances about Jesus. And while many Christians may feel tentative about 'speaking their faith' with others, there is a greater respect for our faith than we sometimes credit and a greater willingness by our non-Christian friends to engage with us in faith matters (particularly as they face life's challenges and knocks) than we often have the confidence to admit. This should give us real hope!

In the talks that God's people are having about the challenge of presenting Christ's love in a relevant way in an ever more challenging world there seem to be some common themes:

- The need for us **to build confidence to 'speak and live our faith'** in the regular contexts in which we find ourselves (not just in Church!) so that Christian witness is a natural way of expressing ourselves rather than something to feel inhibited or embarrassed about. Gavin Calver has written a challenging book called "Game Changers – encountering God and changing the world" published by Monarch Books 2016.
- The need to find **new ways of expressing God's love and Jesus's presence with us** which extends beyond church walls – such that we seek to "go out" as Jesus instructed his disciples and that our 'inviting in' is done in a way that welcomes and affirms all-comers rather than only those who are similar to ourselves or know what our worship ways and theological language mean. The Bristol Diocese has published a toolkit "Creating Connections" which has the theme of Connecting with God, Connecting with each other and Connecting with our communities (www.bristol.anglican.org/creating-connections– 2016).
- The need for us **to make disciples** (remembering that disciples are people who are on a learning journey and who model themselves on the one they follow). Andrew Roberts in his book "Holy Habits" published by Malcolm Down 2016 describes our work as disciples as "a great adventure" with its goal being "the transformation of the world – for the kingdom of heaven is to be real on earth!"

- The need **to be Spirit powered and passionate about God's love** such that it is the grace of Jesus that clothes us in that love, fills us with His peace, but activates us to strive for what He wants in His kingdom.

I am not alone in believing that the Holy Spirit is moving in our churches and in our circuit and calling us to "let go" and to "let God" – "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom." 2 Corinthians 3 v17. Some of the new expressions of worship and opportunities for prayer in house groups, prayer walks and Bible studies are vital in building us up as God's people and most importantly in discerning the gifts He has given to be used in mission and ministry.

Paul warned "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12 v2

But it is not a choice between being '**spiritual**' and being '**practical**'; between being '**evangelical**' and being '**social**'. The gospel message is about word and action. God is also calling us to spearhead those causes that bring His compassion, justice and change to bear in the face of both secular society and inequalities and the wrongs of our modern world. And there's a challenge!

"Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the courts." Amos 5 v15.

At the Circuit Meeting in February we dealt with routine business in just 30 minutes!! (It must be a world record!) and spent the remainder of the meeting in groups discussing the ways in which the Upper Thames Circuit might support our churches in **being outward looking and further engaged in action for God in our communities**. A report on the outcomes of this debate with possible actions will be brought to our Circuit Meeting in June. Please pray for this.

Prayer is also vital for the initiatives we undertake together in the coming months:

- Rev. Rachael Wilson preparing to take up pastoral responsibility for the **Church of Christ the Servant, Abbey Meads** from September. The appointment of a full time Pioneer Worker for North Swindon – based at that church (We praise God that He has provided the funding for this through grants from the Bristol District, the Joseph Rank Trust, the Circuit and the Church).
- The visit of the new President of the Methodist Conference, **Rev. Dr. Roger Walton**, to the Bristol District 22nd – 24th July 2016
- A re-birth of the **Braydon Camp Meeting** at Brinkworth on Sunday 18th September 2016.
- Our Circuit service at 6.30 p.m. on 4th September at Abbey Meads; as Christ the Servant begin their new phase of ministry.
- Our **Circuit Day speakers programme** over the next year which now includes:

"Fresh Expressions" Saturday 16 th October 2016	Rev. Graham Horsley
Sunday 17 th October 2016 (Highworth)	

"Ezekiel: Seeking Spiritual Renewal"	Rev. Paul Wilson
Bible Study: Saturday 21 January 2017	
Sunday 22 nd January 2017 (Royal Wootton Bassett)	

"Holy Habits - Discipleship" Saturday 21 October 2017	Rev. Andrew Roberts
Sunday 22 nd October 2017 (Cricklade United Church)	

"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us.... as we make His ways known on earth and His salvation among the nations" Psalm 67 v1-2.

Andrew Fleet
Senior Circuit Steward

NB: The deadline for items for the July/August newsletter is Tuesday, 21st June

DISTRICT AND CONNEXION NEWS/EVENTS:

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:

Circuit Safeguarding Officer

Most of you will be aware that Nikki Curtis took up the post of Circuit Safeguarding Officer on 1st January. After a recent spell in hospital, Nikki is fully recovered and is taking her responsibilities seriously. On Saturday, 24th May Nikki, along with two ministers and six other representatives from within the circuit, attended the District Safeguarding Leadership Training in Chippenham. Arising from her recent appointment and this particular event, there are a number of initiatives that Nikki will be taking forward. We asked her to introduce herself in this edition of the Circuit Newsletter:

Having recently accepted the role as Circuit Safeguarding Officer, I would like to formally introduce myself. Throughout my career I have worked with vulnerable families and children, from small babies right up to the elderly. For the past ten years I have worked in settings specifically dealing with children and young people who are deemed 'At risk'. I have worked in a women's refuge and there after within social care for South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire County Council within the Safeguarding teams as a family support worker/social work assistant and specialist contact and assessment worker. As well as holding a degree in Early Childhood studies, throughout my career I have had ongoing training on Safeguarding issues, especially child protection.

As a mum with two young children of my own I worship at Cricklade United Church. I am very much looking forward to my new role and will be looking to meet individually with church safeguarding Officers and later as a group focusing on practices, training and policies.

Looking forward to meeting the new people this role will bring

Nikki Curtis
Circuit Safeguarding Officer

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 AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

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

Destiny Africa

In June we shall receive a visit from the Kampala Children's Centre in Uganda. They are touring Europe and will be performing song, dance and traditional drumming at Lydiard Park Academy at 7.00pm on Wednesday 29th June. Tickets are priced at £6.00 for adults and £4.00 for children (aged 2-18) and are available from www.destinyafricawiltshire.com. For further information, please see the small or large poster attached to the email to which this newsletter was attached.

Braydon Methodist Church

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.

Church of Christ the Servant, Abbey Meads

This will be the venue for a **Circuit Service** on the evening of 4th September, when Rev Rachael Wilson will be welcomed as the minister. This will coincide with Rachael's post as minister becoming a full-time post, thus allowing her to continue with her existing commitments as minister of Cricklade United Church and Blunsdon Methodist Church.

Cricklade United Church

Café Theos

On Monday 13th June Rev Samuel McBratney will be speaking on the subject, "Do Love and Marriage really go together? Sex, Relationships and the Modern Christian."

This event will be held in the Cricklade United Church at 7.30pm, with refreshments available from 7.00pm.

Café Theos is an idea to create a space where anyone can come to explore the depths of theology and listen to theologians and inspirational speakers. Café Theos is a forum for debating theological and faith issues in an informal and accessible way, open to all. Café audiences are people who are interested in theology. Anyone can participate; speakers are there to be questioned. Café Theos will start with a talk by the speaker, after which there will be opportunity for refreshments, conversation, questions and answers.

Shrivenham Methodist Church

Café Inspire

We think the last Café Inspire in May holds the record for the highest number of bacon rolls served – 58. The next Café Inspire will be held in the Shrivenham Primary School on Saturday, 11th June, 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. Following the success of the first Café Inspire service that took place on Sunday 17th April, the management committee is looking at ways to improve the experience and is planning to hold another service later in the year, possibly in December. Please uphold Café Inspire in prayer.

West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Partnership

Big celebrations are planned for the Queen's official birthday at a number of churches in the Partnership on Sunday 12th June:

10.30am at Toothill Church

There will be a service of Holy Communion led by Rev Trevor Day and David Hoar. All are welcome and there is a gift for all attending.

4.00pm at Holy Trinity, Shaw

Messy Church rounds off the Queen's birthday celebrations, for children, with games, crafts and a birthday tea as well as thanks for our Queen and the King she serves. No age limit! Everyone is welcome.

5.00pm at St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze

The Bishop of Swindon, Dr Lee Rayfield and Rev Capt Clive Deverell will lead a celebration of the Queen's 90th birthday, to include a blessing of the restored Reredos. (Don't know what a Reredos is? It is an ornamental screen or decoration, usually behind the altar).

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

These are the courses and retreats that will be taking place over the next couple of months:

3 June Quiet Day- Finding a Spacious place - Ammerdown Guided Quiet Days offer an opportunity to take time out from our busy lives to pray, reflect and meditate in the Christian tradition with the help of Libby Dobson and Sarah Chabowska. They invite you to travel with God on a journey of discovery. The theme for this year will be 'Journey of the Heart - Finding a Spacious Place'.

Each day stands on its own or together they create a journey throughout the year.

For further information or to book a place go to www.ammerdown.org , ring 01761 433709 or email centre@ammerdown.org

3 -5 June The Inn at the Crossroads led by Margaret Silf. She is inviting you to join her on a journey – a journey to Emmaus. She writes: *"After Jesus' death, two disconsolate friends walk along the road to Emmaus, feeling disappointed and bewildered. They are joined by the risen, though still unrecognised, Jesus, who tells them their own story in a new way. When they reach the crossroads they persuade him to have supper with them at the inn. What happens next will change their whole view of themselves.* For further information or to book a place go to www.ammerdown.org , ring 01761 433709 or email centre@ammerdown.org

17 – 19 June Exploring the Spiritual Path with Dante and His Divine Comedy led by Kim Nataraja. Kim writes: *"Dante in his 'Divine Comedy' depicts poetically the spiritual journey. Much of what he describes so beautifully resonates with our own experience on the path to becoming fully alive and awake. His emphasis right from the beginning is on helping us to become aware of what motivates us and what blocks us on the way to reconnecting with the spiritual part of our being. Both 'mindfulness' and contemplative prayer go hand in hand in his poem. During this weekend we will explore his teaching and reflect on its meaning for us personally, with the experience of silence and stillness of meditation supporting the process."* For further information or to book a place go to www.ammerdown.org , ring 01761 433709 or email centre@ammerdown.org

18 June Mindfulness and Felt making led by Myra Ettridge and Sue Glanville Make your own piece of felt and learn to be mindful in the process. All instructions and materials provided. Beginners welcome. For further information or to book a place go to www.ammerdown.org , ring 01761 433709 or email centre@ammerdown.org

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Monday 6 th June	Circuit Leadership Team Meeting, 13 Charlbury Road, Shrivenham 7.30pm
Monday 13 th June	Café Theos, United Church Cricklade, 7.00pm for 7.30pm
Monday 20 th June	Circuit Meeting, Braydon Methodist Church, 7.30pm
Thursday 30 th June	Methodist Conference commences (until Thursday 7 th July) to include ordinations on Sunday 3 rd July.

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 office will be closed between 27 th May and 8 th June (inclusive).
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