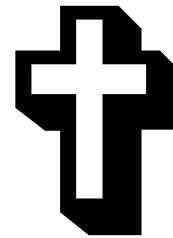


The Methodist Church – Bristol District

Upper Thames Circuit

Monthly Newsletter

No 26



February 2016

Dear Friends,

A few years ago, I was invited by a close friend to be a bridesmaid at her wedding. I was delighted to say yes, not least because it gave me several excuses to travel from Cornwall to see her so that we could make arrangements for the big day. One of the things we did in the February half-term holiday, which was about 6 weeks before the wedding, was to go together for the final fitting for her wedding dress. She always looks very glamorous anyway, but it was still very exciting to see her all dressed up and transformed into a beautiful bride. As the dressmaker was doing up all the buttons and checking that everything was perfect she told my friend, in no uncertain terms, “You must stay exactly as you are now for the wedding.” She was told not to lose or gain any weight at all, and the dress would continue to be a perfect fit. Her wedding day arrived just before Easter, and thankfully all was well, and she looked fantastic!

It occurs to me that we are fast approaching the season of Lent which will lead us ultimately to Easter. This is a time in which we, the church, will be preparing to meet our bridegroom, risen from the tomb on Easter morning, and so this perhaps should be a time of excitement for us. We often think of Lent as a time for sober reflection, a time of austerity, a time for giving up, and perhaps there is a place for all of that in it. In recent years many people have placed a greater emphasis on the idea of *taking* something up for Lent. This might include trying to have a more positive outlook on life, or spending more time in prayer and Bible study, or making more effort to help those in need around us. But I’m not sure I ever really think about Lent as a time of excitement. That might be because I have to face Good Friday before we get to Easter Day.

Perhaps in the coming weeks we might all think about the ways in which we can prepare ourselves to greet the risen Christ as though we are preparing for a wedding. A wedding is a life-changing event, and anyone who has ever prepared for one will know that it has a huge impact on your life before you even get to the big day. How much more important are the preparations we will make during this time of Lent? How much more life-changing is our encounter with Jesus?

My friend was told to stay exactly as she is now, and that’s where the metaphor falls down. If we take seriously the challenges of Lent and the call to follow the risen Christ, then we will change and be changed in the weeks ahead. May we be open to see with God’s eyes where we need to slim down and where we need to be built up, so that we will be ready for that great wedding feast which has been prepared for all of us.

Every blessing,

Rachael

NB: The deadline for items for the March newsletter is Friday, 22nd February.

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Mr Ray Jones on 29th January. Ray was instrumental in the life of Blunsdon Methodist Church and made a significant contribution to the Circuit. Our thoughts and prayers are with Joy and the family at this time. Ray's funeral will be held at Blunsdon Methodist Church on Monday 8th February at 2.30pm.

ADDITIONS and AMENDMENTS TO THE CURRENT CIRCUIT PLAN

Unfortunately, the 6.00pm line of entry for **Royal Wootton Bassett Methodist Church** was omitted from the current plan. Please note the following:

February 7th: 6.00pm Café

February 14th: 6.30pm Circuit Service at Cricklade

At **Cricklade United Church**, the service planned at 10.30am on Sunday, 21st February has been postponed until 3rd April. The service on 21st February will therefore be a Local Arrangement.

CIRCUIT PLAN FOR MARCH - MAY 2016

It is hoped that the next Plan will be distributed in time for copies to be available in churches on Sunday 14th February.

DISTRICT NEWS/EVENTS:

NEW ROOM HALF TERM ACTIVITY DAYS

Feb 8th and 15th

(There are two different half term weeks in our area, hence the two different dates)

Fun activities in the chapel for anyone who wants to pop in.

For further information please see the poster attached to the email to which this newsletter was attached.

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>

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Training in Youth Work organised by the District and taking place at Highworth Methodist Church

THE KEY

This training day on the 5th March is *CRUCIAL* for ALL those working with children and young people who have not attended any ‘introduction to children’s and youth work’ training in the last 5 years. *Methodist Church Standing Orders suggest that engaging with this kind of training is mandatory along with the Safeguarding training.*

It's also a great opportunity to reflect on what you do, to meet other people in similar roles and have the chance to share stories with each other. It's fun and informative providing practical ideas and gives space for reflection and problem solving. If you have attended similar training many years ago (such as Spectrum or Kaleidoscope) then we still strongly encourage you to attend this as an essential refresher.

For further information please see the poster attached to the email to which this newsletter was attached.

The event will run from 10.00am until 4.00pm and costs just £5 per person - you might want to suggest that your church can help with this cost.

Please book by contacting Dan Jones (contact details on poster) or Emma Mills. Payment will be taken on the day. Emma’s contact details are:

Youth Work Enabler
Bristol District of the Methodist Church
07989 496316
Emma.YouthWorkEnabler@virginmedia.com

Please don't hesitate to contact Emma if you have any further queries or just to let her know you are hoping to attend.

CIRCUIT NEWS/EVENTS:

Cricklade United Church

Lent Talks

A series of six talks by high profile speakers (including Ann Widdecombe DSG, Major-General (Retired) Tim Cross CBE and Gary Grant, CEO of “The Entertainer” chain of toy shops) commences on Friday 26th February. Details are contained in the poster attached to the email to which this newsletter was attached. **For security reasons, please do not place this poster on any public web site.** Admission will be by ticket only. Further information and free tickets are available for all events from Graham Light, telephone: (01793) 752671 (daytime) or 759181 (evenings) or email: lightg@hotmail.co.uk.

Highworth Methodist Church

Beetle Drive

On Saturday 6th February at 6.00pm there will be a Beetle Drive for *all* the family. Come along for some free fun and games. Refreshments provided.

Kentwood Show Choir

The Kentwood Show Choir will be performing a concert on Saturday 27th February at 7.30pm. For further information please see the poster attached to the email to which this newsletter was attached.

Shrivenham Methodist Church

Alpha

Now in its 5th week, the 'new' Alpha Course, hosted by Shrivenham Methodist Church, is being held weekly on Mondays at 9.30am. It is being led jointly by Methodist and Anglican leaders and we are very grateful to all those volunteers who have been involved.

Café Inspire

The next Café Inspire events will be held in the Shrivenham Primary School on Saturday, 13th February, 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. Advanced notice of the first Café Inspire service - which 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.

Songs and Stories

The new Wednesday morning hour-long fun group for babies, toddlers and pre-school children and their parents/carers, which started Wednesday 6th January, has proved popular, with several now attending on a regular basis and new faces almost every week so far. There are nursery rhymes, action songs and stories for the children followed by a healthy snack, with some small toys to play with. Coffee and tea is available for the adults. Doors open at 8.45am and the session commences at approximately 9.05am, to cater for those dropping off older children elsewhere. There is no charge.

OTHER NEWS/EVENTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

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

5 February 2016 'Ammerdown Quiet Day – Finding a Spacious Place'. This Quiet Day offers an opportunity to take time out from our busy lives to rest, 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'. For more information or to book a place go to <http://ammerdown.org/Guided-Quiet-Days-Journey-of-the-Heart-Finding-a-Spacious-Place> or email centre@ammerdown.org or ring 01761 433709.

15 – 19 February 'The Engaged Spirituality of Jesus' led by John Bell. This year, John will be leading a mid-week retreat exploring the spirituality of Jesus. He writes: *"For many people, Jesus' spirituality consists of him occasionally going into the hills to be alone. Undoubtedly that was one of his practices, but not the only one. The fact that he was able to connect with so many people of different social backgrounds and intellectual capacities and speak to them clearly about God suggests that there were other things which nourished his inner life. His use of the Psalms – probably vastly different from ours – may be a starting point. But there may also be something in his interactive engagement with people who kept faith when illness,*

poverty, or discrimination could have embittered them against God. We do not meet a guru in Jesus, but an incarnate, rooted saviour. In this retreat we will reflect on what fed his spirituality in the hope that we might find some clues as to how we can nourish ours.” For more information or to book a place, please go to <http://www.ammerdown.org/The-Engaged-Spirituality-of-Jesus-2016> or ring 01761 433709.

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.

Thanks to all ResQ knitters!

If you knitted superheroes for the ResQ week-end, we say a big “Thank-you!” in the form of a card which is attached to the email to which this newsletter was attached.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Sunday 14 th February	Circuit Service, Cricklade United Church, 6.30pm
Monday 14 th March	Circuit Meeting, Church of Christ the Servant, Abbey Meads, 7.30pm
Saturday 5 th March	The Key – training for youth and children’s work - Highworth Methodist Church, 10.00am – 4.00pm
Sunday 3 rd April	Circuit Service, Church of Christ the Servant, Abbey Meads, 6.30pm
Thursday 14 th April	Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Meeting Highworth Methodist Church, 7.30pm

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 23rd December and will re-open at 9.30am on Wednesday 6th January.

Telephone: (01793) 764544

Email: upperthamescircuit@gmail.com

Email: superkeithosborn@gmail.com

Postal Address: Highworth Methodist Church
Vicarage Lane
Highworth
Swindon SN6 7AD