

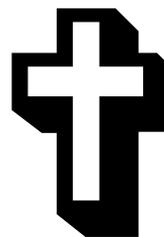
The Methodist Church – Bristol District

Upper Thames Circuit

Monthly Newsletter

No 17

March 2015



My dear friends

On my study wall is a map of the whole world, it measures roughly 6' by 4'. On it is marked every country there is, both large and small. Russia, China, Brazil, United States, Canada and Australia all stand out as large and dominant. Others like Netherlands, Czech Republic and Israel are quite small and insignificant. Even the UK and other European countries are dwarfed by others such as Kazakhstan, and Saudi Arabia.

Yesterday I spent the day with the Circuit Leadership Team looking at plans for the future of the Upper Thames Circuit, working out how to develop ministry and support over the next few years. We looked at finance, at stationing and at how we can support the whole circuit in the mission to go into all the world and tell them about Jesus. We are a relatively small circuit within the Methodist connexion, quite insignificant, yet as individuals and as churches, as a circuit we each of us can know the intimacy with God that Adam and Eve knew before the fall - the same intimacy that Jesus and the early disciples experienced.

Many in the past have portrayed God as vengeful, as one who seeks to destroy all that is wicked. Whilst it is true that God hates evil, it is also true that he loves those he has created. We are created in his Image, in his likeness. We are created to be creative, to show the glory of God and to please him in all we do. The psalmist asks: "What is man that you are mindful of him?" And elsewhere he says, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Through Jesus and through the Old Testament too we learn that God has deep passion and love for his people and will go to extraordinary lengths to win back their hearts. How far will he go? He will send out the one man search party, to bring back the lost sheep. As Easter approaches we see Jesus, the saviour of the world, God's only son, crucified upon cross, held not by nails, but by love for those he came to save:

John 3:16-17 For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

I feel so small when I look at my map on the wall, but when I look at Jesus upon the cross I feel loved and cared for and truly blessed by God, for he sought me and found me.

May God bless you by making his love known to you right now.

Keith

NB: The deadline for items for the April newsletter is Friday 20th March.

AMENDMENTS TO CIRCUIT PLAN

On 8th March the preacher for the morning service at Shrivenham Methodist Church will be Mr Godfrey Room.

On 17th May the morning service at Shrivenham Methodist Church will be a Local Arrangement, in place of Rev Clive Deverell (who, despite his many talents, cannot be in two places at once!).

DISTRICT NEWS/EVENTS:

The New Room

The New Room (John Wesley's Chapel) in Bristol has been awarded a grant of £2.5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund. For further information see the press release attached to the email to which this newsletter was also an attachment

Vocations Day: Wesley Methodist Church

If you, or anyone you know, are considering candidating for ordained ministry (presbyter/deacon) you should consider attending this Vocations Day in Tewkesbury on 28th March from 10am until 4pm. For further information see the flier attached to the email to which this newsletter was also an attachment, or contact: wickensc@methodistchurch.org.uk

CIRCUIT NEWS/EVENTS:

Cricklade United Church

Café Theos

Although this is rather short notice, it is notice of an event well worth making the effort to attend. At Cricklade United Church on Monday 2nd March at 6.30pm Rev Canon Michael Johnson (Vicar of Wroughton) will be speaking on the subject of, "Assisted dying – a licence to kill?" This is a subject that raises many mixed emotions and during the evening a number of difficult questions will be addressed. For further information, please see the two posters attached to the email to which this newsletter was an attachment.

Royal Wootton Bassett Methodist Church

Auction

There will be an auction at Royal Wootton Bassett Methodist Church on **Saturday, 7th March** at 2.00pm. Viewing will commence at 11.30am and light lunches will be served from 12 noon until 1.00pm. You can pay for your purchases by cash or cheque and the auctioneer will be Mr Paul Holloway.

Discipleship Day

This event will take place on **Saturday, 18th April** at RWBMC. Coffee will be served from 10.00am for a 10.30am start. There will be a short lunch break at 12.30pm (please bring your own) and the afternoon session will run from 1.00pm-2.30pm.

The day will consist of an introduction to the Inspire way of being a disciple and making disciples led by Rev Sharon Lovelock, Inspire co-ordinator for the Bristol District. The afternoon session will be an opportunity to take a more in depth look at what this might mean for individuals.

Inspire is an ecumenical movement based on Wesley's ideals of a more intimate life in Christ.

A poster advertising this event is attached to the email to which this newsletter was an attachment. For further information, please contact Chris German: missionenabler@rwbmc.co.uk.

Shrivenham Methodist Church

Café Inspire

The next Café Inspire will be held in the Shrivenham Primary School on **Saturday, 14th March**, from 10.00am until 11.30am. Come along for a coffee, 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. If you would be interested in joining Café Inspire's trip to London for Prom Praise at the Royal Albert Hall on **Saturday 25th April**, please contact Paul or Michele Holloway on (01793) 784479.

Phakamisa

We are eagerly anticipating a visit to the UK from Thokozani Poswa, Director of Phakamisa in South Africa. She will join the Phakamisa UK Trust for its meeting in London on 18th April and will be travelling to Shrivenham on the evening of Sunday 19th April. Thokozani will be visiting Gloucester on the Monday and Witney Methodist Church on the Tuesday. Thokozani will be the guest speaker at a "late afternoon tea" event at 6.30pm on **Tuesday evening, 21st April**, at Shrivenham Methodist Church, to which all are invited. Do come along to hear all the latest news and information about what God is doing through this amazing work among AIDS orphans and others who live on the breadline in the townships around Pinetown, South Africa. You can also purchase Christmas Cards and Beadwork to support Phakamisa's work. Christmas cards are available in various designs to pre-order from July onwards and are usually available from early November. You can find out more about Phakamisa at www.phakamisa.org which is a web site run jointly by the UK and South African Trusts (or contact Bob Mawer at the Circuit Office – contact details at the end of this newsletter).

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS:

In March we, the Defence Academy community, have a new Methodist Youth and Children's Worker arriving to take up his post. Due to the nature of his role with the Methodist Forces Board, he is keen to live in Watchfield Village (as close to the Defence Academy as possible), in order to be an active member of the community in which he is ministering. Unfortunately there are no single occupancy lettings at present and he therefore needs to rent a 2 or 3 bed property. However he needs to share the cost of this in order for it to be affordable! Do you know of any young Christian men who might be interested in sharing a house in Watchfield?

His name is Tim Stokes and he is about 19 or 20. The son of an Army Padre, he has been working for the past couple of years as a youth worker with the British Army in Germany. If you'd like further information about him or the house please do email Lisa Parkinson or ring her (Tel: 01793 780174, Mob: 07905 188185, Email: lparkinson.afcu@gmail.com).

THE CONNEXION:

You may recently have seen a new magazine called *the connexion* in your church.

This new venture aims to improve communications across the Connexion, by letting people know what is going on, sharing ideas and inspiring us all.

Previous connexional magazines have always struggled with the question of distribution, so we are trying something different this time. We have sent three copies to a variety of office holders drawn from the connexional database.

If you want to find out more, [please check out the website](http://www.methodist.org.uk/news-and-events/the-connexion-magazine). For those of you who do not receive the newsletter electronically, the web site is:

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/news-and-events/the-connexion-magazine>.

We are committed to producing three editions this connexional year: the next will be in April, and then a third in September. We will then decide its future, so please let me know what you think: theconnexioneditor@methodistchurch.org.uk

Every blessing

Gareth Hill
Editor

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Monday 2 nd March	Café Theos at Cricklade United Church 7.30pm
Thursday 5 th March	Ministerial Synod 10.00am-3.00pm
Saturday 7 th March	Auction at Royal Wootton Bassett Methodist Church at 2pm Viewing from 11.30am, light lunches from 12 noon until 1pm
Wednesday 11 th March	Circuit Meeting at Cricklade United Church 7.30pm
Friday 20 th – Sunday 22 nd March	Hi Jinks week-end (Highworth and Blunsdon – fully booked)
Monday 30 th March	Circuit Leadership Team Meeting at 32 Bodiam Drive 4.30pm
Sunday 12 th April	Circuit Service at Cricklade United Church 6.30pm
Saturday 18 th April	Discipleship Day at Royal Wootton Bassett Methodist Church
Tuesday 21 st April	Late Afternoon Tea at Shrivenham Methodist Church 6.30pm Guest speaker Thokozani Poswa (Phakamisa, Pinetown, SA)
Wednesday 22 nd April	Local Preachers' Meeting, Shrivenham Methodist Church, 7.30pm

Saturday 25th April

District Synod

Saturday 16th May

Mission and Discipleship Training Day (further details to follow)

UPPER THAMES CIRCUIT OFFICE CONTACT DETAILS:

Office hours: 9.30am – 12.30pm on Wednesdays and Fridays

Telephone: (01793) 764544

Email: upperthamescircuit@gmail.com