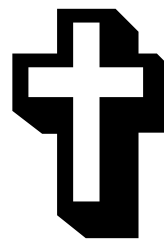


The Methodist Church – Bristol District

Upper Thames Circuit

Monthly Newsletter

No 25



December 2015/January 2016

Dear Friends

I think it is time for a cup of coffee; time to sit down and reflect. Last week at the Bristol District Superintendents' Conference, we spent most of our time dealing with important business, but began and finished the two days with prayers led by Jonathan Pye our District Chair. From there I travelled to Ffald Y Brenin, in Pembrokeshire for two nights at the prayer and retreat centre. The rhythm of prayer at Ffald Y Brenin is four times a day - morning, noon, evening and night prayers, each different and of course plenty of time for further prayer in between. I arrived back in time for a rather manic weekend to celebrate the church anniversary at Highworth. Seven sessions led by Paul and Carmel Ashby on 'Encountering God'. It was especially good to see people receiving the words and ministry from Paul and Carmel and to realise that God has much more to offer all of us.

Monday I found myself tired, but excited by what God had done, is doing and will do. And that brings me to Advent and Christmas, past, present and future. I am not a fan of Dickens or of the story of Scrooge in 'A Christmas Carol'. I think I have seen too many poor versions of it on TV; however I do believe that Dickens portrays very well the heart of the Christmas story and the redemption of human beings. Scrooge is shown his past, a miserable place; his present, with its inequality and unjust situation and then he is shown the future. As we prepare to celebrate Christmas and the birth of the Saviour of the world, I want to encourage you not to rush too soon to the stable at Bethlehem, but to linger a while with the prophets and their story of the now and not yet, of the past, present and future. You see, Paul says in Romans 3:23 that we all have sinned, we all have done things which rightfully cut us off from our maker and God, yet he comes to us, not in dreams but in reality, as the baby at Bethlehem; the Prince of Peace, Emanuel, God with us, as Jesus, our Saviour. If Scrooge's future depended on him turning (repenting) and acting differently, our future depends not only on our repentance, but on God's willingness to forgive and no one can surely doubt the love of a God who sent his Son into this world as a vulnerable baby, as a refugee, as one who had no home.

I pray that God will meet you as Prince of Peace, as Emanuel and as Jesus this Advent and Christmas. However I am not yet wishing you a Merry Christmas, but I am wishing you a Holy and God-filled Advent.

Grace and Peace to you in the name of Jesus

Keith

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

ADDITIONS and AMENDMENTS TO THE 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:

December 13th: 4.00pm Nativity; 6.00pm Carol Service led by David and Anne Pope

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.

DISTRICT NEWS/EVENTS:

Appendix 1 of this newsletter contains information about some of our District Youth events.

CIRCUIT NEWS/EVENTS:

Circuit Bible Study Day

Our Annual Circuit Study Day will be held on 23rd January 2016 at the **Church of Christ the Servant, Abbey Meads, Abbey Meads Village Centre, Elstree Way, Swindon, Wilts, SN25 4YX.**

We are delighted to welcome the President of Conference, Rev Steve Wild, to lead our Study Day, which will be based on the 1st Letter of Peter. Proceedings will commence with worship at 10.00am and close at 3.00pm. The three main sessions are entitled:

- Obedience and holiness
- Be ready to bear witness
- Mutual respect

Biographical note: Steve was born in Rochdale in 1954. In 1974, whilst at Taize, he responded to God's call for full-time ministry. He lives in Truro with his wife, Laura, who is an artist and they have three daughters. He is the National Director of Evangelism for the Methodist Church and Chairman of the Cornwall District.

Do come along for what we're sure will be an informative, entertaining and challenging day. Don't forget to bring your packed lunch - hot drinks will be provided. Please pray for Steve Wild as he prepares for this event.

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action: be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given to you when Jesus Christ is revealed." 1 Peter 1³

Fliers and posters for this event have been circulated. If you require further copies, please contact the Circuit Office.

Blunsdon Methodist Church

Christmas Fair

There will be a Christmas Gifts and Crafts Fair with Santa's Grotto on 5th December in Blunsdon Village Hall from 2.00pm until 5.00pm.

Highworth Methodist Church

Café Church

The first **Café Church** at HMC was a great success. The next one is scheduled for 17th January. Café Church provides a relaxed and informal event to which all are welcome! Free coffee, cake and a chat are all on offer.

Shrivenham Methodist Church

Alpha

The Alpha Course, hosted by Shrivenham Methodist Church, has its final session on Monday 7th December, starting with a meal at 7.00pm. It is being led jointly by Methodist and Anglican leaders and we are very grateful to all those volunteers who have been involved in its leadership, in providing and serving food and clearing up afterwards.

Café Inspire

The next Café Inspire events will be held in the Shrivenham Primary School on Saturday, 12th December (Christmas Special) and Saturday 9th January, 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.

Crib Fest

The church will be open on the mornings of 10th, 11th and 12th December in the mornings, for a celebration of nativity scenes from around the world. Entry is free and open to all.

Carols Round the Tree

This popular annual event will be held on 13th December, following the Christingle Service at St Andrew's Church. This is an ecumenical event and the Wroughton Silver Band will accompany the carols, with items from the local primary school.

Village Carol Service

Our afternoon Carol Service this year will be held on Wednesday 16th December at 2.15pm in the church. All are welcome.

Carols for Action for Children

We shall be singing carols outside Sainsbury's (Stratton St Margaret) from 6.00pm until 8.00pm on Thursday 17th December. Come and join us for some or all of this time as we seek to raise funds for this excellent children's charity.

Carols for Phakamisa

We shall be singing outside the Shrivenham Co-op from 10.00am on Saturday 19th December for about an hour to raise funds for Phakamisa, the charity in South Africa supported by Shrivenham Methodist Church. For further information, go to: www.phakamisa.org

Pre-Christmas Drop-in

The church will be open for coffee and mince pies on the mornings of 22nd, 23rd and 24th December from 10.00am until 12 noon.

New for 2016 – Songs and Stories

A new Wednesday morning hour-long fun group for babies, toddlers and pre-school children and their parents/carers will be starting on Wednesday 6th January. There will be nursery rhymes, action songs and stories for the children followed by a healthy snack, with some small toys to play with. Coffee and tea will be available for the adults. Doors will open at 8.45am and the session will commence at approximately 9.05am, to cater for those dropping off older children elsewhere. There will be no charge.

Vacancy for Youth Worker

Unfortunately, the post of part-time (20 hours per week) Youth Worker in Shrivenham has not been filled, so advertising continues into the New Year. The closing date for applications will be 31st January, with interviews being held early in February. Please pray that God will guide the right person/people to apply and for the selection panel as they consider their appointment decision. A copy of the slightly amended advertisement can be found at Appendix 4.

OTHER NEWS/EVENTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

Christmas Care 2015

Please see Appendix 2 of this newsletter for information about how you can help some of the lost, least and broken in the Swindon area in the run up to Christmas. Over 150 volunteers have already come forward to cover the 4-hour day-shifts and 8-hour night-shifts over the four days. *Even if you are too late to volunteer, it is not too late to donate.*

News from Ammerdown

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.

West Swindon & Lydiard Tregoze Partnership

A Nativity Festival is being held at St Mary’s, Lydiard Tregoze on the 10th-15th December from 10.00am until 4.00pm, featuring nativity scenes from all over the world (and local schools). Admission is free. For further details, please see Appendix 3 of this newsletter.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

Thursday 10 th December	Circuit Meeting, Blunsdon Methodist Church 7.30pm
Wednesday 13 th January	Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Meeting Royal Wootton Bassett Methodist Church 7.30pm
Friday 22 nd January	Copy deadline for the February issue of the Circuit newsletter
Saturday 23 rd January	Circuit Study Day with Rev Steve Wild (President of Conference) 10.00 – 3.00pm at the Church of Christ the Servant, Abbey Meads
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

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

Bristol District Children & Youth

1. European Methodist Youth Camp

We are looking for a youth worker (paid or voluntary worker) to possibly take 2 young people to Belfast in the summer! Can you help? Travel and the ticket price which includes accommodation & food will be covered!

We have 2 members of the NYC (age 17 and 14) really keen to go to this conference and it would be a great experience for them. Sadly we are struggling to find an adult to go with them and the organisation state that at least one adult needs to attend to be responsible for young people under the age of 18.

Check out the full details here, it really is a very exciting opportunity http://download.emk-jugend.de/201501161135_EMYC_CampProgrammeInformation.pdf

If you are interested in finding out more please contact Emma ASAP Emma.YoutWorkEnabler@VirginMedia.com or 07989 496316.

It is not 100% certain that we will be allocated the places or that we have got the funding yet but we are investigating all that at the moment. You will not be expected to pay for the event ticket or the transport costs. We are ideally looking for a male youth worker but would be grateful to hear from anyone who is interested (who has up to date CRB/DBS checks and safeguarding training).

2. DMLN : Bristol & West Midlands

Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network Facebook Group: A great way to connect with what's going on in our region of the Methodist Church

News, resources, articles and events from the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network in Bristol & West Midlands.

If the below link doesn't work then type "DMLN Bristol & West Midlands" into Facebook.
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/DMLN-Bristol-West-Midlands/334381623380567?fref=ts>

They are now on twitter too @DMLNbwm

Click on this link to see answers to frequently asked questions about the DMLN
<http://www.methodist.org.uk/learning/fags>

3. The Youth Work Foundation

Financial support to would-be youth workers across England to help them access [JNC recognized qualifications](#).

The Foundation's mission is to support the most deserving applicants to become qualified youth workers regardless of their background.

This mission is built on a belief that young people benefit from youth workers who have a variety of backgrounds and life experiences

<http://www.nya.org.uk/supporting-youth-work/youth-work-foundation/>

Christmas Care 2015

Chairman: Patsy Moloney 01793 642368 Secretary: Paula Kimmel 07773302941 Catering Manager: Noreen Vitale 07533 065105 Coordinator: Diane Killick: 01793 336420 Life President: Betty Spence 01793 485483 Treasurer: John Davison 01793 827627

Providing temporary shelter for the homeless and lonely over the Christmas period

www.christmascare.co.uk Charity Number: 1131756

All enquiries to Patsy Moloney 01793 642368 or by email to care@christmascare.co.uk

Christmas Care 2015 will run from 11 am on Christmas Eve to 11 am on the 28th December. The venue is **Queens Drive Methodist Church Hall, Park South, SN3 2JX.**

Once again we are looking for volunteers to help run the shelter. Volunteers will be asked to work 4 hour shifts. 7 am to 11 am, 11 am to 3 pm, 3 pm to 7 pm and 7 pm to 11 pm; the longest shift is from 11 pm to 7 am. Please come to our volunteer meetings to find out more.

If you can't volunteer, we will gratefully receive donations of food such as non-perishable items, cheese, vegetables, tinned goods, fresh meat, milk, cereal etc.; we also require 12 turkeys by the 19th December. We require sleeping bags and clean duvets and bedding, toiletries, board games and books. Cash donations are greatly appreciated as they will help us to cover our expenses; cheques made payable to Christmas Care.

*We are extremely grateful for all donations of clothing however can we ask that only **clean adult winter clothing and footwear in good condition** are donated. Due to a change in circumstances which are beyond our control, we cannot accept summer clothing, children's clothing, dirty or worn out items.*

Volunteer Meetings

At Queens Drive Methodist Church Hall at 7.30 pm
Wednesday 18th November and Thursday 26th November.

Church Opening Times in December for All Donations

Donation Dates and Times

Saturday 12th December 10 am – 3 pm

Friday 18th December, 7 pm – 9 pm

Saturday 19th December 10 am – 3 pm

Sunday 20th December 12 noon – 2 pm

Tues 24th December, OPEN ALL DAY

The **Pilgrim Centre in Regent Circus** will take in donations Monday to Friday 10 am to 2 pm from 9th December.

Due to insurance requirements we are unable to accommodate either guests or volunteers who are under the age of 16.

Leading up to and over the Christmas period we will be adding the latest news and updates to our Facebook page. Please follow us on: www.facebook.com/ChristmasCareSwindon

West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership

NATIVITY FESTIVAL

at

St Mary's Lydiard Tregoze



Come and see the rest of the picture
in

***Nativity scenes from all over the
World***

and from local **Schools**

10th – 15th December 2015

10.00am – 4.00pm

Admission: Free

Kindly supported by



92 Ermin Street, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon, SN3 4NN. 01793 832072

St Mary's is part of the West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership

ADVERTISEMENT

The Upper Thames Circuit and Shrivenham Methodist Church together with Longcot Chapel are seeking an enthusiastic and committed:

Youth Worker

from March 2016. The successful candidate will be employed for 20 hours per week, working with the church and community to initiate and then develop activities for the 10+ (secondary) age group. Currently there are few youth activities in Shrivenham but it is an expanding area. The worker will have the opportunity to seed new initiatives, building on the already successful Café Inspire programme meeting in the local primary school and in conjunction with other church and community activities.

The appointee will, by experience and action, be committed to the values and ethos of the Christian faith. S/he will be a good communicator and prepared to work, in and out of church, with young people and their parents to build self-esteem and Christian understanding. They will create opportunities and connections for young people to realise their God-given potential, social commitment and engagement with the complexities of the world whilst making a positive difference. They will be supported by a caring church committed to Bible teaching and its practical reality.

To obtain an application form (Appendix 5.8 of Lay Employment Advisory information on Methodist Church Web Site) or further information please contact:

Bob Mawer
Circuit Administration Assistant
Highworth Methodist Church
Vicarage Lane
Highworth
Swindon
Wilts SN6 7AD

Email: upperthamescircuit@gmail.com

Tel: (01793) 764544 (Wednesday and Friday mornings)
www.upperthamescircuit.org.uk

Salary: £21,000 – 25,000 per annum (pro rata)

This is a fixed term contract for 2 years.

Closing date for applications: Sunday 31st January 2016

Interviews will be held early in February
