



September - November 2008

Letter from the Superintendent Minister

Martin Smithson

Dear Friends,

Every September is the beginning of a new Methodist year but this September brings more changes than many to this particular Methodist Circuit.

First of all, if you are reading this in time, please come if you can to the **Circuit Welcome Service at Peachcroft at 2:00p.m. on Saturday 6th September** to give a warm welcome to Rev. Peter Bennett and Phil Wood, our new Circuit Development Worker. I have written about both of them in earlier Exchanges. So, with Richard Bittleston having arrived in June we now have a full Circuit Staff, which is a good start! Thanks be to God.

This year, however, we not only welcome new people but begin the new arrangement in the Circuit which is reflected in the Circuit Plan, with the sections now consisting of Wantage, Grove, Childrey and Southmoor in one group; Didcot, Wallingford, Blewbury and Upton in another; All Saints, Peachcroft and Milton in the third, plus Trinity. This means that nearly all of our churches will be getting used to new relationships. In addition, and it's a very important addition and a further new way of working, we will have Phil who will not be attached to a particular section. Indeed, his main brief being the developments at Didcot and Grove, he will be working across sections.

So as we begin this new year with these new arrangements in place let us pray that we will be open to God's calling as we continue to seek to serve him.

I was privileged to be a representative to the Methodist Conference again this year. Rev. David Deeks gave his last report as General Secretary before retiring. I was struck by a number of statements in his report. Such as *"the Methodist Church, like many sister Churches who are strongly rooted in the Christian past, has – by the grace of God – **seen things begin to turn round**. God is helping the churches to **refocus on their core purpose and empower Christian disciples** tentatively to speak with a measure of confidence of God and faith....."*

We have been through big changes in reorganising our Connexional Team. We have a new General Secretary in Martyn Atkins who takes on an enormous task and who needs to be upheld by our prayers. There are more changes to come in the Mapping a Way Forward – Regrouping for Mission process which will ask us to look at the nature of Circuits and Circuit boundaries and eventually at the nature of Districts and their boundaries. I believe that our new Circuit arrangements have been a 'regrouping for mission'. I pray and ask you to pray and work with me to ensure that they will serve us well for the next stage of our journey even as we recognise that the process of change continues. In every age, however, we need to focus on our core purpose which can be expressed in so many ways: to love God and our neighbour as ourselves; to pray for and work for the coming of God's Kingdom; or as it's expressed in 'Our Calling': Worship; Learning and Caring; Service and Evangelism.

One aspect of this is our work of Pastoral Care. Our Pastoral Visitors offer a vital ministry within the life of the church and we want to support and encourage you all. So all Pastoral Visitors in the Circuit and others who are involved in or interested in pastoral care are invited to the launch within this Circuit of a new Connexional resource for Pastoral Visitors entitled '**Encircled in Care**'. It looks like good material and we want to have a first look at it together on **Saturday 8th November 2008 at All Saints, Abingdon from 10:00a.m. – 3:00p.m.** The day will be led by members of the Circuit Staff and **lunch will be provided** (unashamed added attraction). After that we hope to offer further sessions on more specific issues according to need and interest at intervals over the next few years. Please book the date in your diary now if this is for you.

May God bless us with a good year,

Martin.

Encircled in care - a new resource for **Pastoral Visitors**
and all who offer care in the church and community



Encircled in care will be launched in this Circuit on:

Saturday 8th November 2008
10:00a.m. – 3:00p.m.
at All Saints, Abingdon

Lunch provided

Led by Circuit Staff

During this launch day we will use the Foundation Sessions which look at:

- **Why we care**
- **Developing Skills**
- **Good Practice**

And then over the next few years we will organise further, shorter sessions using the material which looks at specific issues.

Please would **Pastoral Visitors**, and anyone else interested in coming, book the date now.
Nearer the time we will ask for numbers from each church.

Trinity Church

Richard Bittleston

They inducted me (in great style), they've welcomed me (with warmth and friendship) and now they're starting to let me know what the job really entails!

I am very excited to be here in Abingdon, and particularly looking forward to reaching out and meeting the churches in the Circuit.

I hope to share lots of news of Trinity as the months and years go by, but for now can I encourage you to come along to a special event

The **Organ Revival : 27th September 2008, 7 p.m.**

The organ in Trinity has been extensively restored. It's a fine example of a fully mechanical (tracker) action with some very beautiful stops.

To celebrate it's revival we're having an evening with a **short illustrated talk by the restorer Andrew Fearn** followed by a **short recital** of diverse pieces to show off the delightful colours of the organ.

Admission is **free**. Any **contributions** will go towards the **maintenance of the organ** for future generations.

Childrey events

Doreen Roberts

Harvest festival service: **Sunday 7 September**, 3 p.m., in St Mary's Church

Harvest supper: **Monday 8 September**, 7.00 for 7.30 p.m., in Childrey Village Hall
Contact Jean Cliffe (01235-751203) for **tickets**

Chapel anniversary: **Thursday 16 October**, 7.30 p.m.

Speaker: Rev Graham Tidmarsh
Chairman: Rev Martin Smithson
Musical items: Margaret Bett

Refreshments will be served. All welcome.

Didcot sponsored Marathon Hymn Sing

John Hunt

On Saturday September 20th, members of Didcot Methodist Church are holding a sponsored Marathon Hymn Sing in which an attempt will be made to sing 100 hymns in 5 hours, starting at 10am. in Didcot Methodist Church. This event is part of an ongoing fund-raising effort to raise money for the redevelopment of the buildings at the rear of the church, for which a total of £220,000 is required. If anyone would like to join us in this attempt, they will be most welcome. Singers can join in for £5, or a request for a favourite hymn to be sung can be made with a donation - (unlimited amount!) Please contact Esther Miller 01235 511694 or John Hunt 01235 835568.

"Drama in Worship" training day

Andrew Lockley

It was suggested at a Grove Worship Consultation last year that we might organise some form of **training on the use of drama in worship**. We felt others in the Circuit, especially the local preachers, would be interested in this idea, and it was mentioned at the Local Preachers' meeting where it was warmly received.

We have started discussions with the **Riding Lights theatre company**, based in York, who are keen to provide a day's **training by a professional actor** from the Company, if there is sufficient demand to make it worthwhile. They would charge a "going rate" with some discount to reflect their desire to support our work. (For information on them, go to www.ridinglights.org)

The event would be on a **Saturday, probably from 10:00 - 16:00** with a break to eat a picnic lunch. The venue is to be decided, but a "large, empty" space is required, so it probably will not be Grove!

We expect up to half the cost to come from the Circuit training budget, though this has not yet been raised at the Circuit Meeting. The remainder would come from those attending.

I need to **gauge the demand** from the Circuit generally, to assess whether we can afford to go ahead.

*The details of **dates and how to express an interest** have been forwarded to members of the Circuit meeting. If you are interested, please talk to your Circuit meeting representatives to find out more. [Editor]*

New care home at Carterton

Ruth Sillitoe, Circuit MHA representative

The Homestead is a new care home opened in August by Methodist Homes. It offers specialist care services for older people who are living with dementia or who require ongoing nursing care 24 hours a day. The aim is to place a strong emphasis on enabling older people to live as fulfilled and independent a life as possible, whilst providing a stimulating and secure residential environment. The staff team at the home believe that each resident should be treated with respect and as an individual in his or her own home.

Having met the senior staff before the home opened, I am sure that they will provide this kind of care.

A support committee is being set up to assist the staff in providing social activities for the residents and to fund raise for the home.

Any enquiries for accommodation or support should be made to 01993 845754 or home.car@mha.org.uk

Calling all young people in the Circuit!

Paul Taylor, District Training and Development Officer

Methodist Youth Conference

Friday 21st – Sunday 23rd November 2008

We are very pleased that the Methodist Youth Conference is coming to the Kings Park Conference Centre, in **Northampton, in November. Youth Conference** is the annual event when young people in the Methodist Church meet together and debate the issues they feel the church should be responding to. Many of these issues are then presented and discussed at the Methodist Conference in the following July. At the recent 2008 Methodist Conference, for example, the Youth Conference brought resolutions about Burma, the supply of Bibles to new Christians, issues relating to youth violence and Local Preacher training for young people.

Each District can have two **representatives** at Youth Conference and these are selected at our Synod in September – nomination forms have recently been sent to all Synod representatives and need to be returned to the Synod Secretary by August 27th 2008. There is space for 150 young people at Kings Park of which around 60 will be District representatives; this leaves around **90 places available to others**. These places are allocated on a first-come-first-served basis and more details and booking forms are now available at www.youthconference.co.uk. Please note that although District representatives need to be members of the Methodist Church, others do not.

The majority of Youth Conference is for those who are resident – this is mainly because the meeting space at Kings Park can only accommodate around 180. However, on Sunday morning we have booked the next door Benham Sports Arena for **Sunday morning worship**. This will begin at **10:30am** and will be led by **Revd Mike Lewis (District Youth Officer)** and some of the **young people who attended the Young Leader's of Worship course**, held in June 2008. This is an **open event for anyone of any age** and we hope it will be a fantastic time of worship – please circulate this information as widely as possible and book the date now!

We will have more information available at Synod in the autumn (*13 Sept*).

Yours sincerely,

Mike

Mike Lewis
District Youth Officer

Paul

Paul Taylor
District Training & Development Officer

Useful websites:

Methodist Youth Conference
Kings Park
Benham Sports Arena

www.youthconference.co.uk

www.actioncentres.co.uk/kings-park

www.actioncentres.co.uk/benhamsportsarena