



Circuit Exchange

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Wantage and Abingdon Methodist Circuit

September - November 2009



Letter from the Superintendent Minister

Martin Smithson

Dear Friends,

I am writing this letter in the 'Pastor's Study' in **College United Methodist Church, Philomath, Oregon**. It is over 100F for the third day in row (they use Fahrenheit here). Yesterday saw the highest recorded temperatures here since records began in the 1880s.

It is quite hard to be thinking about the September - November quarter in the life of the Wantage and Abingdon Circuit from this distance in time and miles and in these climatic conditions! However, much as Judith and I are enjoying this exchange I look forward to beginning my fifth year with you.

We will begin the **new Methodist year** with a **new Chair of the District**. Some of you will have been to the District Welcome Service for **Rev. Peter Hancock** in August, others will be there when he chairs his first Synod on 12th September. You are **all invited** to come and hear him preach at **Childrey** at the **Church Anniversary Service** at **7:30p.m. on Thursday 15th October**. Peter will also chair at least part of the Circuit Meeting on Wednesday 16th September at Wantage.

The reason for that is that one item on the agenda will be a recommendation from the Invitations Committee relating to my appointment. I have asked for a **three year extension**, taking us to 2013, believing that we can do further good work together. I am grateful to the Circuit Stewards for arranging for the consultation of the churches to take place before our trip to the US and for the encouraging and helpful feedback which resulted. Now we await the decision of the Circuit Meeting.

I hope and pray that by the time you read this **Helen White** is in much better health and back among us. Sadly, from my point of view, and I know from that of many others in the Circuit too, Helen has decided that it will be right for her to leave the Circuit in 2010, after five years with us. That being the case the Invitations Committee will also bring a recommendation to the Circuit Meeting regarding a successor to Helen.

I ask your **prayers** for all of us who are involved in these decisions and processes, which really means the whole Circuit. The Circuit Stewards in particular have a lot of work to do and Helen will be waiting to see which Circuit she will be matched with next and that can be an anxious time.

I mentioned our new Chair earlier. Our "old" Chair, **Rev. Alison Tomlin**, has not retired this year after all and instead will serve for one year as Co-Superintendent of the Thames Valley Circuit, with her husband, Dave. However, at Conference this year she was elected to serve as **President of Conference 2010-2011**. I understand she will be the first Supernumerary Minister to serve as President. Those of us who know Alison are expecting a stimulating and challenging year for the church as the whole Connexion benefits from her gifts which this District has received for the last 8 years.

Finally, I would like to highlight a couple of Circuit dates in November. On **Sunday 1st November** we gather again at **All Saints** for a **Circuit Service** as the year of celebrating their 50th Anniversary draws to a close. On **Saturday 7th November** all Pastoral Visitors, and everyone who is interested, are invited to the next session of "**Encircled in Care**" which will focus on the pastoral care of the bereaved. This too will be at All Saints.

May God bless us all in the year ahead,

Martin

Letter from Bill Seagren

I thank God for the wonderful hospitality you have shown us, the Seagren family, during this pastor exchange. As I look back to last winter when we learned that we would be doing the exchange with Pastor Martin Smithson in Wantage, England I could only guess what kind of experience this would be. It went way beyond my expectations. As we now come towards the end of our time here it is clear to me that God has had His hand in this.

Chief among our purposes in doing the exchange was to experience living in a different part of the world. We wanted to experience the Body of Christ there, hoping that in the process all involved would grow in faith, be built up in love and be refreshed and encouraged. As word has come back from our town of Philomath it is evident that Martin and Judith's visit has brought those gifts to our church family. We have experienced those gifts from all of you.

My family has grown in faith as we have time experienced His goodness. He has used you to be instruments of that goodness time and time again. Just one example of this came concerning driving. I was quite intimidated about driving due to narrow roads, faster speeds, roundabouts, parked cars and bikes in driving lanes, not knowing where I was going and, of course, all of this from a different side of the road. I was given driving lessons, maps, sound advice from a couple who knew my first main destination well and the loan of a navigational device. God does care about the details of our lives and those times when I still made mistakes driving He watched over those as well.

We have experienced being built up in love. People have warmly welcomed us into their lives, homes and ministries at depths that would usually require much more than 6 weeks. Thank you. The only regret has been that it has been too short to have that opportunity with all of you. It was a privilege to worship with you, to share communion and to share from the scripture. My family was privileged to be a part of Holiday Bible Club. I got to look more deeply at your pastoral visitor program. We have many ideas to take home to Oregon with us.

Finally we come away from our time feeling refreshed. The beauty of your countryside has brought refreshment to our souls as we walked and biked through it. The history of your villages and cities has given us new perspectives. And the many special experiences; punting in Oxford, canal boating, hiking on the downs, bowling, seeing a play and eating authentic English foods will provide fond memories for years. Also, enjoying the differences in language, culture and traditions has caused us to laugh often and to appreciate your forgiveness when we blundered as Americans in your midst.

On behalf of my family a huge thank you to you all. We also extend an invitation to each of you to visit us if you find yourself in Oregon some day. We would love to return the warm welcome and hospitality you have given us. We pray that each of you will continue to grow in your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the deep love that the Father has for you and in the power of the Holy Spirit which indwells you. May He continue to enliven you and your congregations by His Spirit shining His light in this place.

With much love and thanks,
Bill

Peachcroft Christian Centre - appointment of new Youth Pastor

Peter Bennett

After a round of successful interviews and practical exercises **Lawrance Shama** has been appointed as the Youth Pastor at the Peachcroft Christian Centre in Abingdon. Lawrance started work on 1 July 2009 and brings to the role 7 years experience in Youth, Community and Mission work in Rosehill and Blackbird Leys in Oxford. Lawrance is married to Catherine and is the father of four children aged between 7 and 14.

Lawrance clearly has a heart to work with diverse communities, to engage with the people and challenges that lie within every local neighbourhood. He also expresses a clear calling not only to this work but specifically to Peachcroft. Even though it is the holiday season Lawrance has been actively engaged with the young people of the area and is beginning to be recognised by them.

Lawrance will be working closely with the other Youth Workers who work within the 'Desire' network and will be supporting lunchtime clubs in schools as well as taking an active role in the life of the Christian Centre.

We are looking forward to working with Lawrance, learning from him, benefiting from the particular insights that he will bring and sharing the next stage of the journey that God is leading us on.



TRINITY CHURCH –ABINGDON
(Methodist/United Reformed)
*is seeking to appoint, from September 2009,
or as soon as possible thereafter,
a part-time*

Education and Development Officer

who will:

- ◆ take forward a 'quality of life' educational programme linking the church and several schools
- ◆ co-ordinate, develop and participate in key projects including toddler, pre-school, schools workshops and extended educational support

and who has:

- ◆ a passion for the development of young people and their quality of life
- ◆ demonstrable communication skills
- ◆ experience in one or more areas of education

The post is part-time (2-3 days per week, to be negotiated).

Further information for the post is available from

Rev. Richard Bittleston, Minister
Trinity Church Conduit Road Abingdon OX14 1DB
Email: revrichardb@gmail.com Tel: 01235 206237

Action for Children

Carole Robbins

In July Action for Children celebrated its **140th birthday**. Wantage held an **Art and Craft Festival** on the Saturday featuring displays of work from the Monday Leisure Group artists, the sewing circle and items made by individuals. Some of the items were for sale and refreshments and cream teas were also available. We were pleased to see a few visitors from around the circuit. A total of £285 was raised.

On the Sunday Geoff Caudle lead a **special service** featuring a birthday cake which was enjoyed both by the congregation and the preacher!

This year's **Christmas Tree Festival** at **Wantage** on **4, 5, and 6 December** will also be for Action for Children, and the Sunday evening service will have as its **guest speaker Madeleine Clark from Action for Children**. We hope to see lots of you there.

Cream Tea Afternoon

Fran Esplin

Please join us for our Annual Cream Tea Afternoon on **Tuesday 8th September**, from **2.30 to 4.30 pm**, at **4 Westbrook Green, Blewbury**. Cream Teas, Plain Teas and Coffee will be served throughout the afternoon. There will be Bring & Buy and a Raffle, and cakes with an autumn theme.

We were very sorry we had to cancel the planned June Cream Teas at the last minute. We tried very hard to let everyone know, but inevitably missed a few people. A particular apology to the 4 people who arrived mid-afternoon – if they risk coming to the September Teas, we'll give them an extra slice of cake!

Southmoor Chapel

Charles Bone

It was a privilege for members of our Chapel to host the introduction of Bill Seagren and his family to the circuit on the 25th of July - an excellent afternoon service with a great **introduction to family life in Oregon**, followed by delicious refreshments provided by members of the Chapel.

This was followed by Bill taking the **Holy Communion service** and preaching on the 2nd of August, another thought provoking worship time at which we were delighted that Bill's family also participated.

Last May in addition to our regular weekly morning service, we experimented with an evening '**Worship Celebration**'. As it was between Easter and Pentecost our theme was 'Jesus is Alive'. We were joined by the JaM (Jesus and Music) group from Abingdon to lead our singing, and were surprised and delighted when over 40 people attended the service.

We have now planned to follow this up with three similar services, again the JaM group have agreed to lead the music. The dates for the services are:

27th September Speaker Rev. Tony Rogerson (Anglican)

25th October Speaker Mandy Patterson

22nd November Speaker Jenny Weaving

All three services start at **6.30pm**. **Anyone from the circuit** wishing to join us will be very **welcome**.

Those who joined us at Bill's introduction will have noticed that some of the **pews** were missing and chairs were being used. Some of the pews are at present being stored. More of our pews will follow as it is our intention to use chairs in the future. This will enable us to use the space in the Chapel more effectively with particular emphasis on Christian community work.

An amount of money has been allocated by the Church council for **essential refurbishment work** and this will be undertaken in the next few months to provide a new image to the public.

Our regular **Thursday morning cafe** run jointly with the Parish Anglican Church is growing and thriving with an average attendance of 20 plus children and babies. **Rainbows** now meet in our hall, and ideas for **further community work** are developing. We pray and ask you to join us in praying that the work at our Chapel will lead people to Christ and an acceptance of him as Lord and Saviour.

This is an exciting time at Southmoor Methodist Chapel and we look forward positively to the future, whilst giving thanks for the members who so consistently maintain our worship now and in the future.

Quiz night in Wallingford

Esther Chamberlain

Wallingford Methodist Church invites you to **enter a team** in their fun quiz on **Saturday 14th November 7.15 pm for 7.30 pm start**, in the new Church Hall. 4-6 in a team. Tickets £7.50p to include supper

Please contact Esther Chamberlain 01491 837242
or Joan Brewer 01491 834288 for an entry form or more information.

Macmillan nurses coffee morning (Wallingford)

Marlene Chalkley

On **Friday 25th Sept. 10am - 12noon**, we shall be sharing in this national event. Everyone welcome.

Wallingford Bunkfest

Marlene Chalkley

4 - 6 September : Music, dance, steam, food and drink. Concerts, folk groups, ceilidhs, many dance displays, children's events, camping, craft fair. This is a great weekend in Wallingford. We are sharing in it and will open the **church** for **refreshments**, lunches, teas, coffee etc. on **Sat. 5th Sept**. Come and join in the fun weekend, we would love to see you.

Gospel Singing Workshop at Wantage

June Grunwald

There will be a Gospel Singing Workshop at Wantage Methodist Church on **Saturday 27 February 2010** - a fund-raising project for **Project 21** (Chapel refurbishment project). It is a long time off, but keen singers / musicians might want to block the date in their diary now! The workshop is going to be run by Jo Sercombe.

Further details from June Grunwald june@nurdglaw.demon.co.uk, 01235 760488

Alison Tomlin for President

From Northampton District News (August 2009)

The chair of the Northampton District, the Revd Alison Tomlin, is to be the next president of the Methodist Church in Britain. This year's Methodist Conference, meeting in Wolverhampton in July, elected Alison as its **president-designate for 2010 to 2011**.

Following her election, Alison said, "It is a great privilege to be elected as president-designate, and I am humbled to be trusted with this role by the conference. In my year of presidency, I will seek to help the church be more receptive to go where God is inviting us. The church has not always been very good at risk taking but it is easier to take risks when we are confident in God's love, and listening for God's voice."

Central to Alison's ministry has been the imaginative use of the Bible in prayer. She said, "The church has designated **2011** as the '**Year of the Bible**', and this will be very important and exciting for me in my year of office."

Alison will be inducted as president at the beginning of the 2010 Methodist Conference, which will meet in Portsmouth from 24 June to 1 July. Alison is about to leave the district for a new appointment as cosuperintendent of the Thames Valley Circuit with her husband Dave. She has served the Methodist Church as a minister for 25 years, and was ordained in 1984 in the same town - Wolverhampton - in which she was elected as Methodism's next president. As Alison prepares to leave, she shares **three concerns**. She writes:

Launde Abbey

Launde Abbey is a place of refreshment and quiet space from which the Northampton District has benefited for many years. We go on retreat and hold a variety of gatherings there. Many of our people, ordained and lay, have spent time at the abbey to receive spiritual re-creation and continuing support. Launde Abbey has updated its stables block but is in urgent need of financial support in order to bring forward essential work on the main Tudor-Elizabethan manor house. Recently, a number of retreat houses have closed or said they will be closing, and we cannot afford to lose this ecumenical resource. Do visit the Launde Abbey web site at www.savelaundeabbey.co.uk, and please consider how you can help. Thank you.

Violence against women

One in four local authority areas has no specialised support services for women who experience violence. The government is concerned about this because of the cost to our children, young people and, indeed, whole communities, when violence tears families apart. It is estimated that violence to women costs £4 billion per year, which probably helps concentrate the government's mind. God's concern may be more about asking what we are doing to help. The Methodist-linked charity Action for Children – www.actionforchildren.org.uk - is part of the answer but what do local churches offer?

Sri Lanka

Thurairajah Samuel, known as the Revd Sam, is a Methodist minister in the Bristol District, and he has sent a request for support. The Rev. Sam runs a project that is responding to the suffering in Sri Lanka. Those involved began praying, sending aid, and visiting people in need just one month after a tsunami hit the Indian Ocean island nation on Boxing Day 2004. The project is now offering further help because of the thousands who are suffering in the former war zone in the north and east of Sri Lanka. For further information or to offer help, contact revsam@btinternet.com.

New Editor for Circuit Exchange

Gill Skidmore

From September the new editor of Circuit Exchange will be **Adam Hager** from Trinity Church in Abingdon. Adam has been a Circuit Steward since September 2008, and has always demonstrated a great willingness to volunteer assistance in whatever needs doing. I was delighted that Adam immediately declared himself willing to take over when I indicated to the Circuit Leadership Team that I thought this an appropriate time to step back from editing the Exchange. It is not often that that happens! So my very sincere thanks to Adam. I wish him well as he takes on this role, and I trust that you will continue to support him as you have always supported me. My thanks to you all for your contributions over the years.