



Circuit Exchange

Quarterly Newsletter
of the
Wantage and Abingdon Methodist Circuit

March - May 2018



From the Manse in Wantage...

March this year, takes us on our continuing journey through Lent and right into Holy Week itself, with the last day of the month being Easter Saturday.

In our churches, we ponder on all that Jesus endured and faced as we use this period of Lent for reflection and self-examination. The various services during Holy Week focus our thoughts more directly on those events that took place in Jerusalem that are at the very heart of our faith.

I'd like to commend to you Mark Topping's one man passion play "Impossible God", based on the book written by his father, Frank Topping. It is a powerful tour de force and with just a few simple props, Mark introduces us to a whole host of individual characters who encountered Jesus in the days leading up to his crucifixion and resurrection.

We are very fortunate to be able to stage this event during Holy Week itself and you will find details elsewhere in this newsletter with all the information you will need about this evening event.

It is right that our attention is focussed very much on Jesus at this time and especially so in the days leading up to Easter, as we are reminded of all that he faced and went through.

However, don't let us forget that not only are the events of the passion his story, they are ours too. For they speak of the trials and tribulations of our shared, common humanity.

Ridicule, taunting, name-calling, denial and betrayal are things that speak to our own experience only too well. Likewise, violence, pain, doubt, desolation, loneliness and death are part and parcel of what it means to be human.

In all of these things, Jesus experienced and shared our human lot and this month ends with Jesus dead and in a tomb and all the ramifications of that for his friends and family.

That of course is not the end of the story, but we have to wait for the 1st day of the following month to rejoice in and experience that!

Never let us forget that he came to be like us, so that in the end, we may become like him.

With love and God Bless,

Keith

Sale of Chapels

Following the successful sale of Southmoor and Upton, the chapel at Blewbury is now on the market with Savills. They have already shown round a number of prospective buyers.

The financial resources these sales provide will help us plan for the future, as challenged to do by the President and Vice-President.

Circuit Website - www.wantab.org.uk

The first aim of the site is that people accessing the site from outside the circuit should find it welcoming and can easily navigate it and find out about our circuit and its churches. This aim was met during the stationing process, as we know that presbyters including Jocelyn Bennett looked at the site in early October (see a later article for more about Jocelyn.)

Each church has an entry on the “Churches” page, which link to an “online poster” with basic facts and picture(s), together with minister's contact details and information about the coming month's services; this page can be expanded to a “site within a site”, as has been done for Grove. There is a calendar, with colour-coded entries for upcoming Circuit and Church events, and news articles supplied from around the Circuit.

The second aim is that people within the circuit can use it to find or disseminate information – as a replacement for the online Circuit Directory, and a central repository for downloadable documents. Linked this is that a tool to assist in preparing the preaching plan, which will be put to the test in April.

ThenMedia are continually developing the tools used to build the site (the colour-coded calendar was added at our request, and is still being refined) and the site menu was recently modified to accommodate a page about the Youth Music and Drama Group.

Because of the laws on data privacy, we can only store contact details for those who clearly consent to this. Anyone who would like to share their email and/or phone details with others in the Circuit, especially those holding posts in the Churches, are encouraged to fill in the form at www.wantab.org.uk/signing-in.html

Safeguarding – further training sessions and new procedures

Most people requiring the Refresher Course for Creating Safer Space have now been trained and should have received a certificate. More sessions will be arranged as needed. The full Creating Safer Space training, which is required by new post-holders, is being arranged soon. If you are aware that you or other post-holders in your church need this training, please contact Keith Underhill who will be making the arrangements.

The safeguarding policies drawn up by the Connexion for circuits and churches will be held online and updated at intervals. The current versions can be printed for approval annually at the Circuit Meeting, and individual Church Councils – normally in the autumn.

Local Preachers update

Frederick Obeng and Esther Miller were both warmly welcomed as fully accredited Local Preachers at an inspiring service on Sunday 19th November. Keith spoke of the common reaction to hearing a call from God, “Who am I?” and reminded us that God's call sometimes comes to those who are feel themselves unsuitable for the task!

Daphne Savage, who arrived in Wallingford recently with long experience of preaching in the United Reformed Church, was also welcomed as a Methodist local preacher, and spoke warmly of the role played by those who welcome people across the threshold of a new church. A welcome was also extended to Andrew Dixon, a local preacher who joined us in the summer from Bristol, and who read one of the lessons.

All four of these preachers will be taking appointments throughout the Circuit on the new plan.

Circuit Stewards team

Carolyn Roche, from Wantage, has begun to ease herself into the role of Circuit Steward, and has taken a full part in the stationing process. This will continue as she finishes her term as Senior Steward at Wantage.

However, Andrew is expecting to move away during 2018, and Mary Hancock is into “extra time” having agreed to extend her term until summer 2018, so we still need new blood to join the team. Our vision is of someone representing each of the larger churches – with a team of six, no-one's share would be unbearably large. The scope of the job may also be adjusted to suit the people who are available. Everyone who has been a Circuit Steward agrees that it is a fascinating and richly rewarding thing to do.

Are you hearing a call? Please pray about this situation, and don't assume someone more suitable will step forward!

To find out more, talk to your minister or to one of the current team: ***Andrew Lockley (Senior)***

Mary Hancock

Alan Smith

Carolyn Roche

Message from the Editor of the Childrey , Grove & Wantage Sector Newsletter

Please note that our deadline for material for the Sector Newsletter is normally the third Sunday in the month. It would help if notices being shared around the circuit could be received by this date each month, as they will then reach a wider public and ensure publication as this cannot be guaranteed in the weekly notices. Our email address is : wantage.sector.newsletter@gmail.com

New worship format launched

A new worship format, suggested at Grove Worship Consultation, has been launched successfully.

A feature film is screened in the Meeting Room at 4pm. After the film, light refreshments are served, followed by a short act of worship in the Church, based on themes and issues from the film. A collection is taken as usual during the service - there is no charge for the film.

The premiere:

The first "Film Plus" service was held on 4 January, led by Rev. Keith Underhill. The film on this occasion was "Of Gods and Men", which portrays the life of a community of French monks who share in the life of a village the mountains of rural Algeria, as terrorists move into the area and they must decide whether to return to France or stay.

Around 20 people attended the service and the consensus was that the worship drew out our responses to the film, providing some challenging questions and opening avenues into prayer which are newly relevant today, although the film is based on events over 20 years ago.

The sequel:

On 11 February; the film "Amazing Grace," telling the story of the idealist William Wilberforce as he works to end the British transatlantic slave trade, was shown. Andrew Lockley linked the film with the theme of Racial Justice Sunday.

The trilogy:

One more service is currently planned, on March 18th at 4 pm. The film will be "The Way", and Rev. Keith Underhill will lead. All are welcome to attend. After this, the outcome will be reviewed and further services may be arranged.

Circuit Youth Music and Drama Group

We welcome young people aged 9 upwards to:

- **meet** at Methodist churches around the Wantage and Abingdon circuit, one Sunday a month;
- **practise** singing, music, reading and/or drama;
- **eat** some pizza together; and
- **contribute** towards the evening worship service.

The group meets 3.45pm for **4.00pm rehearsal start**. We have pizza at 5.30pm and the evening service starts at 6.30pm, finishing at 7.30pm.

We invite young people to **have fun**, taking part as much or as little as they feel comfortable with and will enjoy - whether singing, playing an instrument or reading. There is **no cost** for taking part.

Who we are

The group is led by Esther Miller and Abigail Perrow, with assistance from Gill Skidmore.

Esther is a Methodist local preacher and musician, and Abigail is a horn teacher.

For more information about the group, please contact Abi, or fill in the form at <http://www.wantab.org.uk/contact-us.html>

Next date

18th March - All Saints Methodist Church, Appleford Drive, OX14 2AQ

Stationing – seeking a replacement for Katherine

Whilst Rev. Katherine Pickering is still very much with us and making her mark in so many ways, she decided to move on next summer. The Circuit therefore entered the Stationing process, hoping to be matched with a Presbyterian to replace Katherine next September.

Since the last Circuit Exchange, the carefully-prepared profiles of 145 vacant appointments, and of 85 available ministers, were circulated. Each circuit Invitations Committee, ours included, prepared a shortlist of ministers, and each minister a shortlist of circuits. The Stationing panel met in late October, and matched us with Rev. Jocelyn Bennett, currently working in the Hyde & Denton circuit. A visit was arranged, and Jocelyn and her husband Neil visited Milton, Great Western Park, Wallingford and Didcot on Saturday 18th November. After they set out for Manchester later that day, the committee discussed the match and unanimously agreed that we would invite her. Over the phone the following evening, she was pleased to accept.

So next August, Jocelyn and Neil, and their teenage son Elliott, will move into the manse in Lydalls Road, to start work in our Circuit at the beginning of September.

Meanwhile, Katherine and Ian visited the South-west Worcester circuit, and she in turn was invited there, and accepted, so she will take up her new appointment in charge of two churches in Worcester at the same time.

Grateful thanks are due to all those who gave their time and effort in the three churches to make Jocelyn's visit a success.

Rev. Helen Cameron, new Chair of the Northampton District, assures us that the approval of Conference is a formality, and joins us in celebrating all this good news!

Update on Community Chaplains at Great Western Park



Sarah and Libby have now been based at Great Western Park for over 9 months and they have now passed their probationary period with flying colours. The time seems to have flown!

They have made and are developing lots of connections in the area. Whilst continuing to wander the parks and alleys of Great Western Park, they are both very much welcomed by a number of people who live and work in the area.

They regularly go into one of the local secondary schools to have lunch with students, give the occasional assembly at Stephen Freeman School, and support the work of the Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, and various Mums & Tots groups.

They regularly meet with the Manager of The Station Pub; Salespeople at McCarthy & Stone - the local retirement home; the Manager of the corner shop; and Chair to the Residents Association.

They bring concerns to Residents Association meetings, share in the fellowship at the Thursday morning Community Cafe, and are valued members of the wider community.

In December, they trialled a different use for the chaplaincy motorhome, Hope, by turning her into a mobile prayer space. Many of the groups with whom they have contacts offered to host some time out in the busyness of the run-up to Christmas: Northern Community Centre on 30th November, Asda on 13th December, Boundary Park on 19th December and Costa on 27th December.

Following the successful “Chaplaincy Everywhere” training course in the Circuit, several people have expressed an interest in volunteering as Chaplains. This is great news, and the team are now considering how best to progress this extension to the project.

May they be assured of the prayers and encouragement of everyone in our churches as they seek to serve God in new and exciting ways. Please pray also for Katherine as she pioneers the extra role of line-managing the chaplains, and for the support group who help the team in so many ways.

Milton initiative off to a good start

One of the Milton congregation, Emma Mtendera, comes from Zimbabwe. Emma told the Church of the desperate plight of people as the social fabric - schools, medical services etcetera - has collapsed. Emma's sister Alice, who is aged nearly 80 and who trained as a teacher, runs a charity to feed and support blind women and their children, called 'Ray of Vision', in Harare. This presented a good opportunity for the church to get directly involved in a small charity, part of our extended church family.

At the beginning of November they held a coffee morning to support Alice's work. It made a very happy morning's fellowship, and £450 was raised. Shortly afterwards, Emma went to Didcot and wired the money directly to her sister.

Alice supplied a selection of pictures, telling the story of how they spent the money. The Milton folk were very pleased to see the large party bags of food at the bottom of the tree and the presents each child received, and look forward to their next fund raising effort for this charity.

Yotam Theu

Mark Sandels, of Grove Methodist Church, met Yotam Theu in 1988 when he visited his sister, who taught Yotam under her VSO placement in Malawi. Yotam registered "Christian Church" in Mzuzu, northern Malawi, with the Malawian Government, and Grove has sponsored Yotam and his work since 1998. There has been long-standing prayer and financial support, which has seen Christian Church grow to many congregations as Yotam's evangelistic programme has progressed.

This support has helped Christian Church to build new church buildings and paid for a truck, which has had 4 years of heavy use; funds towards replacing the truck will be provided this summer.

In a second new development of Yotam's work this year, he and the leaders of Christian Church have decided to build a campus in Mzuzu, the capital of the Northern District where Yotam lives. The campus will provide a focus for training leaders and evangelists.

Building work on the Campus is well underway, but additional funding will be needed to roof the buildings, and to resource the training programme based on the campus.

Yotam has recently sent his own report on the progress towards the Campus. This can be found on the Circuit website, or contact Mark Sandels, Circuit Mission Secretary, for a copy.

If you would like to help finance this initiative please could you give the money to your Church Treasurer, asking them to send it to Grove Methodist Church Treasurer, Eric Thomas, using the Circuit Giro account and asking for it to be credited to the "Yotam Theu - Campus project" account. Your Church Treasurer might also be able to Gift Aid your donation.

Mark Sandels

More news from wider Methodism

If you use email, you can sign-up to a number of newsletters, some more frequent than others, which will keep you up-to-date on other parts of the Connexion.

Go to <http://www.methodist.org.uk/news-and-events/sign-up-for-e-newsletters>

CIRCUIT MEETINGS / EVENTS

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| Wednesday 14 th March, 7:30pm Milton | Circuit Meeting |
| Wednesday 21 st March, 7:30pm Milton | Local Preachers' Meeting |
| Wednesday 22 nd April, 4pm All Saints | Circuit Service to include dedication of Easter offering |

The Circuit Calendar, with these and other events, can now be viewed at <http://www.wantab.org.uk/calendar.html>. The website and Circuit Exchange exist to link all parts of our Circuit together – let us know what's happening at your church. Send items for inclusion on the website at any time. June 2018 Circuit Exchange will be compiled from items received by a.lockley@tiscali.co.uk by 11th May 2018.

Wantage & Abingdon Methodist Circuit Churches are

**All Saints (Abingdon), Childrey, Didcot, Grove, Milton,
Peachcroft Christian Centre (Abingdon), Trinity
(Abingdon), Wallingford, Wantage**