



Have you settled in yet?

This is the kindly question that is often posed to those of us in ministry who have taken up new posts. The fact that I have felt at home so quickly is in no small part to the hard work that has been done in preparation for the move and the kindness and support shown ever since.

My thanks to you all for your generosity and care.

Circuit Merger

The merger of the three circuits, Watford, Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted, and Harpenden in 2012 has been agreed by each Circuit meeting. Planning and decision making is going ahead, built upon the discussions and research of the past..

In October the former Strategy Group, made up of representatives of all three circuits, met to order the details of the way forward, to begin to consider a mission policy and appoint representatives to the Implementation Group, who now progress all the detailed planning and decision making that must take place before September 2012. The Implementation Group is made up of 1 minister and 2 Circuit Stewards/Officers from each the present circuit, myself as Superintendent and Richard Armiger, one of the District Training Officers. The Harpenden Circuit is represented by Rev. Jade Bath and Circuit Stewards – Adrian Bourne and Karen Lilley.

The Implementation Group met in early November. It was agreed that the Implementation group will meet once a month. It was also considered very important that the present Circuits have full representation at the meeting so substitutes will be accepted, provided that they are fully briefed by the person they are replacing.

Communication will be a high priority, with updates on progress being given on a bimonthly basis. Expect the first progress report in early December. As a taster of this, expect news on budget proposals, appointments of new presbyters to serve in Watford and Hemel Hempstead, a formal proposal to be put to Circuit Meetings about authorisation for decision making, proposals for the appointment of a part-time bursar, circuit meeting representation, and progress on a circuit mission statement. We have been busy people already!

Wheathampstead

Many of you will know that the URC/Methodist Project in Wheathampstead is going through huge change. The URC buildings are to be demolished, with four houses and a two storey combined church/community building being erected on the site.

A Thanksgiving Service in the present church will take place on Saturday 7th January 2012 at 2.30 p.m., to which you are warmly invited.

From Sunday 8th January the congregation will worship in St. Peter's Church, Lamer Lane, Gustard Wood (B651) at 10.00 a.m. The 1st Sunday of each month the congregation will worship together with the Anglican congregation, the 2nd and 4th Sundays will worship with planned preachers taking the service, the 3rd and 5th Sundays of each month the individual members of the congregation will make their own arrangements.

Rev. Heather Kent will be moving from the Pastorate at the end of December. We thank her for her collegueship and her loyal support of the church in Wheathampstead and wish her and her family well in their future plans.

Please remember our friends in Wheathampstead and Rev. Heather Kent in your prayers in the coming months.

Olympics

Those of us who travel past the Hertfordshire County Show Ground will know that the grounds are being used as an Olympic 'Park and Ride' venue. Details of the progress of the Olympic Flame have just been announced travelling via Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield into St. Albans on July 8th going forward to Hemel Hempstead and ending the day in Luton. Whether you are excited about or loath the whole idea of the Olympics there is no doubt that our area is well and truly 'on the map'.

The Methodist organisation is inviting us all to take seriously the mission opportunities the Olympics will present, details can be found on the Methodist Church website www.methodistchurch.org.uk.

Each church is urged to appoint a Gold Champion who can receive information and encourage congregations to participate in whichever way best suits the needs of your community.

Some ideas include:

- a) participation in a Cultural Olympiad that will take place 7 days before the games begin.
- b) Athlete Family Home Stay – providing free Bed and Breakfast accommodation, maximum of 7 days, to those whose family members are taking part in the games. (This will be particularly needed for families coming from less wealthy parts of the world). The other obligation will be to get the families to the nearest transport source for the games, possible airport pick-ups may also be required. (Details go live on the website this month).
- c) The Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire Methodist District is seeking a design for a prayer symbol which will be toured through the District churches beginning on May 19th.
- d) It may be that Games Pastors will be required at the Park and Ride i.e on hand to help people. Precise information is being investigated.
- e) Being aware of and joining in with Churches Together initiatives within your area.

If any of the above does not excite your interest take seriously the idea of declaring your church an 'Olympic Free Zone', there may well be others who wish to 'get away from it all'!

Change of Circuit Meeting Date

With apologies the Spring Circuit Meeting date will have to be changed to February 7th as we need to take a vote at Circuit level regarding the proposed change of wording to the Deed of Union, the deadline for which is mid February. Church Councils will have already voted on this proposal in their Autumn meetings.

On Duty Rota

Between Christmas Day and New Years Day the Staff have an 'on duty' rota to cover pastoral emergencies across the Circuit. If you have a pastoral emergency and need our support please contact:-
25th & 26th December Rev. Jenny Dyer
27th & 28th December Mrs. Jenny Cope
29th, 30th & 31st December Rev. Linda Woollacott
These details are also printed in the preaching plan.

Future Newsletters

It is hoped that future Circuit Newsletters will be published every 3 months – expect the next edition to be in February. If you have details of forthcoming church events you would like included please let either Jenny Frith (Circuit Administrator southdownchurch@btconnect.com) or me (LndWool@aol.com) know by the end of January.

Final thought

As I continue to put names to faces and hope to get it right, I am amused to have read this recently.

'The conductor Sir Thomas Beecham was attending a prestigious reception, and was in conversation with someone he recognised but whose name he could not recall. He began the conversation, desperate to find a clue to the person's identity.

"So are you well?"

"Yes, thank you."

"And the family?"

"Yes, they are fine."

"And your husband, is he well?"

"Yes, very well, thank you."

"And is he still in the same line of business?"

"Yes, he's still king."

(From *A Bundle of Laughs*, J. John and Mark Stibbe, Monarch Books)

Linda Woollacott
(Circuit Superintendent)