



Kitbag!

Volume 9, Issue 4

June 2009

Raising the profile

Cowley Road Evening Worship

Contemporary

Relaxed

Honest

Throughout May, a series of contemporary worship services have been held at Cowley Road on a Sunday evening at 8pm under the title *Questioning Easter*. These have attracted 35—40 people each evening, including people who have not had much contact with church before and who have wanted to explore things for themselves.

The basic format has been for an initial time of worship with the CREW worship band, a short talk about the question and theme of the day, and then a chance for people to experience the various prayer stations around the room, before a concluding song. The prayer stations themselves have always included one focused on social action, one that has been creative in some way and one a reflective space.

You can get a flavour of what CREW has been about by visiting their website at crew.oxfordmethodists.org.uk. There you will find outlines of the services along with links to the relevant Bible passages, scripts of some of the talks, worship songs on *YouTube* (CREW has a live band but the songs are the same!), and some of the material used in the prayer stations.

About 20 of us gathered one Saturday afternoon in January to discuss our vision for Cowley Road Methodist Church. We acknowledged the strengths of the church, including its friendliness, openness, racial diversity and commitment to social justice. But we agreed that we needed to review our communications with the outside world. We thought that we should aim for consistent messages and images, including greater use of the church logo. A Publicity Group was established to co-ordinate our work in this area, reporting to Church Council. Two of the major areas of discussion have been noticeboards and websites.

We had been planning to have two new noticeboards at the front of the church for a while. Now we have them, and they look great! We're very pleased that a large mosaic of our church logo, which we made in 2004 for the church centenary, is now on display outside (see picture below).

We have discussed wayside pulpits and have agreed to aim for direct messages with a maximum of ten words.

We now have our own website. It's already on the first page of Google searches for 'cowley road' and 'east oxford church'. Please have a look at www.cowleyroad.org.uk and raise its profile further. The primary audience for the website are those who are new to the church or wish to find out more. So, our pages assume no prior knowledge of the church, and are updated regularly to let people know of events and new initiatives at the church. There is also a new website for Cowley Road Evening Worship (CREW) (see adjoining panel), thanks to the efforts of Jonathan Todd. Both sites are well worth a visit.

Other things we're planning include new church leaflets and welcome packs, and making better use of the church forecourt. Any other ideas would be gratefully received.

John Boylan



JWS goes to Brighton

Over the past six months, the John Wesley Society (JWS) for students, based at Wesley Memorial Church, has grown to around 20 members and, on the back of our 125th anniversary celebrations last September, feel to be in a period of growth and strength. With 15 students, we travelled to my home church in Brighton for our annual retreat just before Easter. We had fish & chips on the pier and visited the historic town of Lewes, as well as joining in worship with the church and an evening club with the local young people. We were given a very warm welcome and each of us left Brighton with a greater understanding of our Christian communities in both the JWS and the wider Connexion. As students, we tend to visit many churches – in Oxford, the circuit and the country – and are always struck by the loving fellowship we find.

Pictures of our trip can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/jwsretreat09>.

Jonathan Brooks (President)



Left to Right: (back) Gemma Bailey, James Tweedie, Ted Holt, Jonathan Brooks, Rob Winn; (front) Sam Willis, Elanor Banks, Kim Fais, Mark Mills at the front of Patcham Church in Brighton.

Bladon Junior Church



Egg Hunt

During May we held our annual Egg Hunt and Egg Rolling event in Blenheim Park. The children first had to find their eggs which were

hidden in the woods in a variety of places – up trees, in rabbit holes or even floated out onto the lake! This was followed by traditional egg rolling down a hill. We then enjoyed a range of other games including, of course, an egg and spoon race! Great fun was had by everyone.

Karen Hodge

A small group of Junior Church members sung at the wedding of Karen Hodge and Jeff Conway in St Martin's Church during April. Karen started attending Junior Church when she was 3 years old and still joins us for special services, concerts and shows – she played the part of Nancy in last year's production of *Oliver!* More recently she started bringing Jeff along who sat patiently through many long hours of rehearsals! We were delighted to sing at their wedding.

Deddington Walk

At the time of writing we are preparing to take part in The Deddington Walk – a 6.5 miles themed walk through the Oxfordshire countryside which takes in some wonderful views of the Cherwell valley. The theme of this year's walk is "Music Makers" and our older members will be dressed in costume acting as route marshals. After the walk we shall look forward to a free lunch and entertainment at The Windmill Centre in Deddington. As part of the

entertainment the Junior Church will be performing two Elvis songs with our very own Elvis lookalike Steve Moss. Look out for a picture in the next edition of *Kit-bag!* We have taken part in the Deddington walk on several previous occasions and they have been extremely enjoyable – even if one time was very wet!

Anniversary

At the end of May we will be celebrating our 166th Anniversary with a special afternoon service.

Bladon Junior Church, formally known as Bladon Methodist Sunday School, started in May 1843 with the opening of the first Methodist Church in Bladon (which is now our current "schoolroom"). Every year we mark this Anniversary with a service during which we present awards to all the current Junior Church members. You can read more about the history of the Junior Church on our website at juniorchurch.co.uk/history and about the history of Methodism in Bladon on our church's website at bladonchurch.co.uk.



Bladon Feast

In June, the Junior Church are taking part in an evening concert in St Martin's Church as part of the Bladon Feast celebrations. The music has an Austrian theme so we shall be performing four numbers from *The Sound of Music*, a show we performed back in 2006.

Philip Rumsby

Engaging the community

In order to respond to the needs and expectations of our community, the two churches in Tackley (St Nicholas and Tackley Methodist) have recently been undertaking a survey. We hope that the results can then help us develop ideas for attracting more, and younger, people into our churches.

59 out of 400 households responded to the survey, and 14 people took part in the subsequent discussion groups which explored a number of themes in more depth.

The process identified some key reasons for the decline in church attendance, including the many competing demands on Sundays, the lack of child friendly facilities, and a lack of familiarity with church.

On the positive side, people like to have enjoyable and familiar music, a sense of celebration, good sermon and engaging prayers, opportunity for quiet time and contemplation, and also for social engagement. For those who attend sporadically, most come to religious festivals such as Christmas and Easter

As a result of the exercise we have identified some generic priorities for action, such as making services easy to understand, engaging, and enjoyable; making more of religious festivals; and using familiar music.

More significantly, however, we have developed proposals for some key changes and new initiatives, for consideration by the church councils. These include:

- using the village hall for a combined Churches of Tackley Sunday school, timed so that parents can leave their children there and collect them after the service;
- working with the village school to familiarise pupils with well known hymns and the concept of a church service;
- establishing a village choir to bring people together in a social environment, including performances at some church services, with the aim of raising their interest in and understanding of church to a point where they might want to engage more directly;
- producing a village magazine, to report back on our actions and also to include news items on individuals and how faith and/or their involvement in church has added to their life experience.

The key message from the survey and subsequent discussions is that we need to inject some energy into what we do so that people have a more positive image of church and will want to become involved. We have yet to decide which, if any, of the above we will implement and how – but one thing is for certain, we can't stand still. Things will be happening in Tackley!

*Tim Bailey and Anne Gwinnett
Tackley Methodist Church*

Rogation at Tackley

In most Methodist churches, Rogationtide would hardly be recognised, but here at Tackley for over fifty years we have joined with our friends from St Nicholas Church on a Rogation Walk of blessing for the farms, allotments and gardens of the village. The order of service has been revised to take in changes in rural life—we can no longer stand in a farmyard where the barns contain animals, hay and machinery when these have been converted to houses, offices and work units. So, whilst still praying for the farms and farmers (they need our prayers now as much as they ever did), the service includes other as-

pects of community life: our school, shop, village hall, homes and work places.

The original service contained a prayer for “moderate rain in due season” and on Sunday morning (May 17th), to the sound of heavy rain on the parish church roof, about a dozen brave souls gathered inside. Fortunately, the rain eased, allowing us to venture out in the more moderate rain to pray for our village and community. The service concluded in the Methodist Church.

Vi Banbury

Dance partners

In order to allow people from across the Northern Partnership to get to know each other, we have held two events in recent months. The first was purely social and was a Barn Dance, hosted at Kidlington. About forty of us gathered together and, under the expert eye of Derek Rawson, much fun was had by all. People also took part in a “mingling quiz”, designed to get people from different churches talking together. Amongst other things this led to the surprise discovery that at least two people there (ie 5%) had assisted the police in a murder enquiry!

Then, on 7th June, we had a partnership songs of praise service at Tackley. The hope had been for it to

be an open-air event on the village green, but the weather was against us. Instead, we used the village hall, where we had a good time together and heard a number of people share something of what was important about their faith. We also did our best to raise the roof as we sang our hymns, accompanied by the Bletchingdon Silver Band.



Jonathan Todd

Oxford Circuit

Circuit Office
Wesley Memorial Church
New Inn Hall Street
Oxford

Phone: 01865-243216

Fax: 01865-247706

Email:

newsletter@oxfordmethodists.org.uk

Web:

www.oxfordmethodists.org.uk



KEEPING
IN TOUCH

Please send contributions to the editor, Jonathan Todd, either via the circuit office or by email.

Deadline for next issue
18th August 2009

Dates for your Diary

Jun 18th—7.30pm

Local Preachers' Meeting at Tackley

Jun 20th—2.30pm & 7.00pm

The Lime Walk Players present a Memorial Concert in memory of Joyce Carpenter, a loyal member of Lime Walk for many years

Jun 21st—6.30pm at Wesley Memorial

Circuit Service—Preacher: Rev Alison Tomlin

Jun 27th—3pm until 5pm at Kidlington Methodist Church

Tea at Three—Cream teas served by Chrysalis Youth Club in aid of Helen & Douglas House

Jun 27th—6.30pm until 8.30pm at Kennington Methodist Church

Puddings and Puzzles—A quiz in aid of Action for Children

Jul 5th

NO Spirituality on Screen this month

Jul 19th—6.00pm at Rose Hill

Circuit Service to mark the Revd Jean King's retirement

Aug 2nd—5.30pm

Spirituality on Screen—*Slumdog Millionaire*

Venue: 10 Bletchingdon Road, Islip

Sep 6th—5.30pm

Spirituality on Screen—*The Boy in Striped Pyjamas*

Venue: 10 Bletchingdon Road, Islip

Sep 9th—7.30pm

Local Preachers' Meeting at Woodstock

Sep 15th—7.30pm

Circuit Meeting at Kidlington

*The Circuit Diary is now available online.
Click the "Circuit Diary" tab on the circuit website.*

Puddings and Puzzles

A quiz in aid of Action for Children is being held at Kennington Methodist Church on Saturday 27th June, 6.30pm – 8.30pm. All welcome! Tickets are available at the door and cost £3.50 for adults, children free and include a choice of puddings and refreshments. Teams can contain up to six people. Don't worry if you can't form a team before you come – in fact, forming a team on arrival is a great way of getting to know different people from around the circuit!

We'd be very grateful if you could let us know in advance if you intend to come, to help us with the catering. Please contact Maizie Johnson (tel. 01865 454296, email: maizie.johnson@ntlworld.com). Please don't worry if you aren't able to do this however – all are very welcome to turn up on the day!

Sponsors needed!

Ruth Clarkson and her twelve year old grandson are doing the Mid-night stroll in aid of Sobell House on July 11th. They would be grateful for sponsorship. For more information, please contact Ruth on 01865-326511 or email ruth.clarkson@oxfordmethodists.org.uk.

"TEA at 3"

CREAM TEAS WILL BE AVAILABLE.....

Chrysalis Youth Club will be hosting this event at the Methodist Church Hall Oxford Road Kidlington from 3pm to 5pm on Saturday 27 June 2009.

It is in aid of Helen & Douglas House and forms part of a national campaign they are running which we are happy to support.

We hope that as many of you as possible will come along for afternoon tea and support this initiative.....

WHY NOT TREAT YOURSELF TO A CREAM TEA OR TEA AND CAKE FOR ONLY £3