

BIDEFORD METHODIST CIRCUIT MONTHLY NEWSLETTER January 2010 - Issue 93

Welcome to Edition Number 93

Please note my e-mail address bucklanddave@btinternet.com

Please continue to send details of future events, activities or 'anything', you wish to share with the Circuit to Dave Watson by e-mail; phone 01237 451437 or to 6 Greenings Road, Buckland Brewer, Bideford, EX39 5LU. Please send them before the 20th of each month if possible.

It has been decided that the Circuit Newsletter will now be free & therefore could you please urge you to 'dish them out' to as many people as possible. If this means more are needed by each church, then please let me know.

Thanks - Dave Watson

From the Superintendent Minister – Rev David Morris

Dear Friends,

You may have come across the suggestion, in some Christian circles, that we would all be a lot better off if we forgot about the Old Testament and concentrated on the New Testament. The argument is partly that the God who is revealed in the Old Testament is not as easy for people to relate to these days as the God we find in the pages of the New Testament. Yet one of the things that strikes me about the Old Testament, and which I think makes it essential to any understanding of our faith, is the number of times we see signs of development in the Old Testament which seem to speak directly to our Christian understanding and experience. A classic example of what I mean is the story in 2 Sam 7 about David's thoughts on building a temple for God. Here we see one of the many instances in which God seems to take the hopes, prayers and efforts of those who are trying to be his people and instead of going along with what seems right and proper to them, reinterprets and transforms their ideas. As we start a new year, this story has something to say to us.

David had established himself in Jerusalem after years of warfare and struggle. The accounts of his rise to power in 1 and 2 Sam are very vivid - we can feel the pressure of leadership, the strain of battle and the whole hotch-potch of human feelings. By the time we get to 2 Sam 7, David, this all-too-human personality, is settled in his walled city of Jerusalem, living in a palace built for him by Hiram King of Tyre (an early example of foreign aid with fairly obvious political motives). And once he's settled, David's thoughts turn back to God and he thinks about building a temple. After all, David had his house, why shouldn't God have one as well?

Then along comes Nathan the prophet, who had originally been in favour of the building scheme but has since understood God's purposes better. Nathan tells David that God doesn't want a temple, at least not in David's time anyway. David, at the height of his power, must have been deeply disappointed, even resentful. When God's answer to prayer is 'No', we too are often resentful. But was God really saying 'No'? In a limited sense he was, yet in a wider sense, God's 'No' was to lead to a fulfilment far beyond David's understanding. Far greater than the thought of God establishing his rule through David's building scheme, God promises that he will establish his rule through David's kingdom and throne - forever. And it is only with our hindsight and experience that we can see something of what it was impossible for David to see - that God was moving beyond a building, beyond a throne, to the kingly rule of Christ, the Son of David.

The point for David and for us is to acknowledge our ignorance of the wider purposes of God. Of course we plan and build and organize. These are among the tools God has given us to achieve the tasks that are within our grasp. But we as well as David need to recognize that God's ultimate purposes are probably beyond our ken and may not include the plans which are so dear to us. So while we must continue to plan, to organize and to work, we have to remember that it is not the end of the world if our plans are frustrated or if we do not see the results we would like to see. We live and work within the wider purposes of God, just like David. We may not be able to build a temple or do anything else we think ought to be done in our day but if it is needed at all, in God's good time it will happen. And when it does happen, it will take the form which it needs at that time, which is likely to be very different from whatever we envisaged in the first place.

It can be hard work sometimes, living in faith, hope and trust; much harder than building a temple. But we are more truly the people of God, even the God of the Old Testament, when we try it.

May God bless us all and give us a happy new year- David

Alwington Methodist Church

A warm welcome to our next Coffee Morning on Tuesday January 5th between 10.30am & 12 noon at Alwington Methodist Church. Coffee & biscuits £1, bring & buy, Homemade cakes. Proceeds for our church funds.

The ecumenical prayer meeting is held at 10am before the coffee morning. A warm welcome to all.

Torrington Methodist Church

'Inspire' Youth Service will take place on Sunday 31st January at 7pm at Torrington Chapel. All welcome.

Littleham Methodist Church

A Coffee Morning will be held on Wednesday 13th January from 10-30 --12 noon. Bring & buy Stall.

Thankyou to everyone who support our coffee mornings enabling us to help others. We wish you all good health & happiness for 2010.

Prayer & Praise

The next Prayer & Praise will be held at Gammaton on Thursday 7th January at 7.30pm
Contact person for Prayer & Praise is Shelia Babb on 01805 622949

Bideford Street Pastors

Just published is the book "Street Pastors" by the founder, Les Isaac. It is available from us or Goodliving at the price of £7.99 and well worth a read.

Duncan Withall - Bideford Street Pastors - 21a Chingswell Street, Bideford, EX39 2NF

01237 475755 or 07592 021464 - <http://www.bidefordstreetpastors.org.uk>
Bideford Street Pastors is a registered in England as a charitable company number 6800051. Charity registration number 1127853.

My night on the streets of Bideford by Jacqui Watson

After an encounter with Duncan in ASDA within a few days I found myself filling in forms to apply to be a street pastor. I was something that happened very quickly but also seemed very right.

So to my night on the streets. I went out as an observer on the 26th/27th December. We met at the Baptist Church hall at 9.15pm for prayer and a briefing (This itself was a bit of an eye opener for what to come as there was a group of young people on the church steps with drink etc.) we were a team of six four on the street and two in the hall praying for us the situations we came across and the situations that came across the radio's. We had one set of radios that was set for just ourselves and another two one with the street team and one with the prayer team which is part of the town system and linked us to some of the pub and club door stewards and the cctv observer.

Our first patrol was a very board sweep of the town we left the Baptist church and headed towards the park along the quay and then to bridge street and back along Allhalland Street. This was my first encounter with what I will call self patrolling someone approached us asked with we were the God patrol and told us of what they thought was a situation that was happening at the bottom of the high street. We went and observed I think that the clubbers and pubbers saw us as the independent voice of reason. After what seemed like

most of the evening but was only about 15mins the situation sorted itself out when the man and his lady got in a taxi and we assume went home. All our encounters like this we radioed back to the prayer team and they logged them and prayed for it. We had quite a few encounters like this first one.

I was an observer and when the team was talking to some people it seemed appropriate to stand back, I ended up talking to a couple of people who were waiting for their friends to finish talking with the Pastors. It was one of those questions asked to try and catch you out, Why when we are part of the God squad and could be home celebrating Christmas were we out, very aware that we are not meant to preach I was lost for an answer (hard though that might be to believe of me) but heard something along these lines coming out if they are out celebrating Christmas we were celebrating with them as God loves us all we were out to help take care of those that don't know his love for themselves, we care because God cares. No response no more questions but just we respect and appreciate what you lot do.

The other memory I have taken home with me is a conversation outside of Caesar's a young man asked why we do and what time were we off home at this point it was about 2.30 am so I answered the question I was young once and might of went out a little more if we had had something like this on the streets and if one encounter helped someone later in life come to faith it would have been worth it and we were going home at about 4am when the last club shut.

On reflection I realised it was not preaching it was just me repeating quotes from Sunday school teachers and church members that were there to answer that questions that I had asked at the same age as those people out celebrating. Our faith never changes we just have to change the way we go about sharing our faith.

I have just one embarrassing moment that I wish to share and that is not one from the streets but with the other pastor's as we walked around, I wanted to know as much as possible about the work so asked about which churches were involved, the Anglican's have a couple of pastor's from different churches, there are a few from independent churches many more from the Baptist churches in the area and one Methodist on the pray team and one hopefully soon to be two on the street team.

We take the word of God to the people if we are not on the street's to respond and answer questions how will we keep our churches open the Baptist churches of the area are growing they are answering God's call do we Methodist no longer listen to God for the church to grow we need to plant the seed as Sunday school numbers decline we need to plant the seed where the people are and that is on the streets.

Has my encounter with Duncan in ASDA got me to apply for the street pastor team so our encounter's on the street will eventually lead people to faith and places of worship.

Alverdiscott Methodist Church

A Coffee Morning will be held on Thursday 7th January from 10am-12noon in aid of Devon Air Ambulance.

A Mission Prayer & Discussion Group will be held on Wednesday 13th January at 2.30pm at Elsie Potter's home at Webbery Cross Cottage. This will look at Mission in the Circuit.

Prayer Card Ministry

The Circuit Stewards have been exercised about the prayer card ministry at Clovelly – with no regular services there the prayers requested were not being prayed. Therefore we have agreed to hold prayer times at Clovelly Church twice per month during which time prayers will be specifically those requested on the cards. Please come and join us when you can. If you would like to become involved (perhaps in leading) in this very valuable ministry then please contact Roy Harris 01805 623 043.

Northam Methodist Church

The Bright Stars Theatre Group presents 'Aladdin' at Northam Methodist Hall with proceeds towards Edukid. Performances nightly at 7pm & Saturday Matinees at 2.30pm. Friday 22nd & 29th January and Saturday 23rd & 30th January. Admission adults £5, OAP's £4 & children £3. Tickets ring 01237 408226

Northam Methodist Church are having a New Year Concert on Sunday 10th January @ 3pm by the "Appledore Singers" and Chris on the Organ. This will be followed by an afternoon tea. Cost £3-00. Tickets/bookings - Please ring Marjorie on 01237 477292 or Les on 01237 470553.

Les Price - Church Council Secretary.

The Thursday Fellowship place every week and are followed by Tea & Cakes at 2.30pm. Admission £1

Parkham Methodist Church Ladies Club

Meeting at 2.30pm in Sunday School Rooms at Parkham Chapel
Wednesday 6th January – Mrs Elaine Shore – 'Coral reefs'
Wednesday 3rd February – Mrs Penny McRoberts – 'Cooking for Two'

Local Preachers

Local Preachers Quiet Day is planned to be held on Saturday 12th June 2010 at Lee Abbey. Cost to be £15 to include lunch & an afternoon tea/coffee. More details later in year.

Local Preachers Meeting Thursday 14th January 2010 at 7.30pm at Northam (Covenant Service)

Local Preachers Support Group on Thursday 21st January at 7.30pm at John Dennis' home at 'Harlyn' Hatchmoor Road, Torrington

JMA - Alicia Ash at Torrington

I have taken over as circuit JMA secretary from Pauline Davies. Because churches don't have regular collector's any longer I would like to have a collection box in each church. If you still have a church JMA secretary could they please contact me on 01805 623790 if you don't have a church JMA secretary could a church steward please contact me so that I can arrange to drop off your box and also arrange when you would like them emptied. Boxes are available for individuals if you would like one at home to put your loose change in. I am hoping that every church will have a box by the end of January.

Christians Together - From Julia Spencer

Churches Together in Devon seeks to appoint a COUNTY ECUMENICAL OFFICER to succeed the present Officer who is returning to full-time pastoral ministry in March.

The successful applicant will

- be Executive Officer and Secretary of Churches Together in Devon, and service the Devon Church Leaders' Meetings;
- encourage and support ecumenical partnership throughout Devon to express unity in Christ and further the purposes of his kingdom;
- resource and support local Churches / Christians Together groups, and encourage the formation of new groups and networks;
- facilitate the response of Churches Together in Devon on behalf of member Churches to proposals for major housing developments;
- coordinate the Advisory Group for Local Ecumenical Partnerships, and encourage the creation of appropriate new partnerships.

A salary of £12,500 is offered for 20 hours per week to a person - lay or ordained - who

- is enthusiastic to encourage and facilitate Christians working together;
- can plan their own time;
- has administrative skills;
- is computer-literate;
- is able to travel to meetings across the county of Devon.

Application forms and further details from

The Office of the South Western Synod of the United Reformed Church
The Manse, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, TA2 6RU
synodoffice@urcsouthwest.org.uk - 01823 275470

Closing date for applications: 30 January 2010 - Interviews will be held in Exeter on 24 February 2010.

More details please contact Julie Spencer on 01237 425361

Care for the Family - engaging with families

Care for the Family are organising a series of seminars for clergy, lay leaders and family workers at Kentisbeare, Nr. Cullompton on Saturday 23rd January 2010 on engaging with families in the local community. These will be led by the Revd Richard Hardy who heads up Care for the Family church relations initiative.

Rev David Gregory has written a second book of Bible stories called Eye Witness: Bible Stories Brought to Life. Stories from both Old & New Testaments, thought provoking & many of them amusing.

The narratives are suitable for dramatic presentation in services, mid-week meetings or just for personal enjoyments.

Nearly 700 copies of his first book have been sold with over £700 donated to North Devon Hospice. Profits from the second book will be donated to the North Devon Hospice & Exeter Hospice.

Both books are priced at £5 and are available from Trevor Sutton on 01805 622158 or The Goodliving Bookshop in Mill Street, Bideford.

LWPT – Leaders of Worship & Preachers Trust

You will be aware that when LPMA folded and LWPT followed, Sue Bolt, Mollie Brooks, Sue Jones and I endeavoured to keep the fellowship flowing by arranging an afternoon gathering on the same Saturday as the District Local Preachers Meeting which is held in the morning.

Last year it was taken out of our hands as the District Team arranged a moving Service of Rededication for Local Preachers with Communion.

On Saturday 13th March 2010 we are having a time of fellowship from 2pm to 4pm in Wonford Methodist Church. Mr. Roger Steer the Ringash Circuit Local Preacher Tutor will speak to us with an opportunity for input, followed by a short Rededication Service for LP's, Worship Leaders etc., and informal Holy Communion. We will then have fellowship over a Bring and Share tea.

Would you please inform as many people in your Circuit as possible for us, we have no funds available for advertising. This event is included in the District Web Site for those who have this facility.

POLL SHOWS HALF OF BRITISH HOMES USING LESS ENERGY

Over half of people in Britain have taken steps to reduce the amount of energy they use at home in the last year.

As governments meet in Copenhagen to discuss climate change, a new YouGov survey, on behalf of the Methodist Church, found that 55% of people have cut their home energy use by switching to low energy bulbs or switching appliances off rather than using standby, for example. By doing so, they have both saved money and cut their carbon footprint. For more results of the survey go to <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=openogod.newsDetail&newsid=403>.

The Revd David Gamble, president of the Methodist Conference, said, "These results show that people are already doing things that cut their carbon footprint, whether they know it or not. Helping to save the planet can often also be a way to save money. People might feel powerless in the face of climate change, but there are things we can all do."

David Gamble has joined the leaders of the Baptist and United Reformed Churches calling on the government to put pressure on the world's richest countries to reach a binding agreement at this week's climate change conference in Copenhagen.

The Churches argue that since developed countries such as the UK and the USA owe their wealth to activities producing high levels of carbon, they also have a moral responsibility to take the lead in setting measures to counter global warming.

PETE BRADY APPOINTED NEW FULL TIME YOUTH PRESIDENT

Last month, the Methodist Youth Assembly appointed Pete Brady from Bradford, aged 23, as its president.

Pete will be the Methodist youth president, working full-time for one year to serve the young people of the Methodist Church in Britain, making their voices heard and helping them to get more involved in every aspect of Church life. The youth president is a paid post as part of the Children and Youth Team of the Methodist Church in Britain.

"It's a real honour being appointed to this role," said Pete. "Ensuring the voices of young people are heard within our Church is something that I have felt passionately about for a long time and it's amazing to be given the opportunity to be that voice for young people across the country. My aim for the year is to be easily accessible to young people across the Connexion, to voice their opinions and represent them to the very best of my ability in everything I do."

Attendance at the Youth Assembly increased by 75% from last year. Over 200 11-23 year-olds gathered at the Ushaw Conference Centre in Durham to take part in a programme designed by young people for young people.

LEARNING AND CARING - Gloucestershire Methodists support interfaith suppers in a spirit of peace - From the Gloucestershire Circuit

Meeting around two monthly intervals, the aptly named Friendship Cafe in the Barton area of Gloucester is the venue for regular interfaith bring and share suppers coordinated by Spirit of Peace, a UK registered charity dedicated to building peace, person to person, in a spirit of friendship and non-violence. It also supports grassroots peacemakers in the Middle East and Hope Flowers School in Bethlehem.

The supper in September which attracted 80 people, coincided with the Iftar, eating dates and drinking water to break the daily fast for Ramadan. Before the meal Haroon Kadodia spoke about the fast, customs and observances made by Muslims during the Holy month of Ramadan.

At another supper, held this month, around 40 people heard from Jane Ozanne, UK Director of Spirit of Peace as she spoke about future events and opportunities, plus up-to-date news about the Jerusalem Peacemakers and support for Hope Flowers School, Bethlehem.

Gloucestershire Co-ordinator for Spirit of Peace and local Methodist, David Bennett, says "It's a brilliant experience. Real talking, sharing and dialogue take place between people of different faiths. I have been personally touched by the depth of that. I am delighted by the support we receive, which includes many Methodists from the Gloucestershire Circuit. Please pray for this vital work and a growing understanding".

SERVICE - Stratford-on-Avon's, Holiday at Home week given a 5* rating
From the Stratford and Evesham Circuit

"We got the idea for the Holiday at Home week from a booklet called A Mission-shaped Church for Older People produced by the Church Army and the Leveson Centre," explains organiser Joyce Powell. "But we decided from the start that our scheme would be for all ages as we have three toddlers' groups and some of our mums find August a long month, when their usual activities close. The invitation was also extended to members of the Contact the Elderly monthly tea group formed during Hope 08 by Churches Working Together in Stratford. A few people from other denominations also joined us.

Planning started months ago with a team of five. Others from the church and the circuit helped to deliver the event, including giving lifts, cooking the meals and leading some of the sessions. It was hard work but it was also fun, so it didn't seem at all arduous.

Our Holiday at Home day started with coffee between 10am and 10.30am. Then there was a choice of activities for all ages. We had a 'Thought for the Day' followed by a cooked meal. After lunch there were more activities to choose from before tea and cake at 3pm followed on some days by poetry, which was popular, any notices for the following day and departure by 4 pm.

Each day was themed, eg The Seaside, Water, Hills and Valleys and Bygones. There was a visual display to set the scene and the theme covered the activities, the 'Thought', the food and the poems. There were on-going activities such as books and magazines to browse through, a jigsaw puzzle of canal boats, a holiday collage and a Promise Box where everyone could take out God's promise for them each day.

On the Wednesday we had a coach trip to Bourton-on-the-Water. There isn't a Methodist church there but the Anglican church offered the use of their church for rest and shelter from the rain, including a facility for making drinks - a real bonus for us as it was the one wet day of the week.

Over the week we welcomed over 50 people between the ages of 3 and 105. On the last day we had a graffiti sheet so that any comments could be added - a kind of evaluation. All week our feeling grew that this was so worthwhile in the lives of all who came, whether for one day or every day. One participant commented: 'The last few days have been relaxing, full of fun and, at times, very stimulating. The all round friendliness and cheerfulness was like the warmth of the sun. The cossetting was 5 star.'

The challenge then was where to go from there. We invited those who do not come to church to 'Back to Church Sunday' and a few responded, enjoying this opportunity. All the 'holidayers' have been invited to tea at church before our Carol Service. We are planning one day in February and another week next August to be run on similar lines. Our new elderly friends, for this is what they are, all now enjoy the monthly Sunday afternoon teas under the Contact for the Elderly Scheme.

We thank God for the commitment of the leaders and the responses we are being blessed with through the work of the Holy Spirit."

Methodist President's Christmas Message

The President of the Methodist Conference has challenged people to look beyond the romanticism of the Christmas story in search of the reality.

Revd David Gamble Christmas said Christmas was actually much more about the real world than it was about a lovely story of far off places in far off times.

"It's about a young unmarried mother," he said. "And our country has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in the European Union. It's about a homeless couple and their young child out in the cold. Look on the streets of our cities. Think of the television pictures of refugees."

Rev David Gamble reminded people to consider the hungry, the hurting, the oppressed and the abused this Christmas. "That's the central part of the Christmas message," he said. "God is with us. And behind and within the lovely Christmas story is the truth of God with us in our world and in our lives."