

BASINGSTOKE AND READING CIRCUIT UPDATE 5

A **Prayer labyrinth** is planned to be held on 12th July 2014 at Tadley Common from 10:00am

What a fascinating experience!

I attended the Church Councils of Silchester, Tadley Main Road and Tadley Common. What a fascinating experience. They started off together with devotions and common business, before separating to focus on items pertaining to the individual churches. This was the second time this arrangement has been made. I hope it happens again. I think this for a number of reasons. Firstly here are 3 churches quite different, but which have considerable overlap of the communities they serve. A together time provides an opportunity for the development of a joint approach. There was also mentioned a common focus on work with the elderly. This common concern can also be addressed more readily if the churches are together. Secondly each separate Church Council was Lay Chaired. This possibility was aired during R&S's consultation process last year. It was good to see it being modelled and so well. I am told that a lot of work is required to get it organised, but I hope there is also the saving of time for some 1 evening instead of 3. There will be minuses as well as pluses, but after one visit it definitely feels like the pluses outweigh the minuses.

David Shaw

Messy Church - a new venture for Basingstoke

A bit like feeding the 5000 in the kitchen but I am sure it felt like 50,000 as they kept coming in.

It was a real circuit and ecumenical event with helpers from across the circuit and also from our 2 LEP's (Christchurch and Immanuel) as well as from St Michael's in town.

Our second one was on an advent theme. We had to contend with the junior schools' Christmas fetes and the children were let home early with their parents and with wet blustery weather, so many people didn't come back out for Messy Church - unsurprisingly, numbers dipped. However they all enjoyed their time with us and they made angels and crowns and wreaths with real greenery and little glittery clay tea-light holders: lovely craft! And many of them were 'returners' so that is good and someone had brought a friend- so still much to be thankful for.

But one lady's comment was my favourite: "It is so lovely to come here and make these lovely things and actually spend quality time with my children." Amen to that! After another one, a young lad at the end looked quite sad at the end. I said, "Why so glum?" And he said "I wish it could start all over from the beginning." God is with us! Numbers have settled down and are more manageable now. If you are interested in helping or coming along just to find out what it is like, we would love to see you so please contact me. The next messy church sessions are on 6 June and 19 September.

Debbie Veel

Update 6 will contain detailed proposals for how we run the new circuit. We hope it will be out by June.

VISIT TO TRINITY BASINGSTOKE

On a sunny Sunday morning in February, yes there was one, we set off from Mortimer and made our way to Trinity Methodist Church in Basingstoke. The idea of our visit was not only to meet the congregation and to experience another Methodist Church in our new circuit but also to invite them to visit our church and to send the congregation's wishes. Also to assure them of our prayers.

Everybody at Trinity made us feel very welcome from the moment we stepped over the threshold. After the initial greetings, by many members, we were taken on a conducted tour of the building. On arrival in the car park we had commented on the expanse of the frontage, not realising where it began and ended but it wasn't until we were inside that we realised just how many rooms are within the property! We learnt the extent of the usage and what facilities are on offer to church groups and outside organisations

Eventually we returned to the church for the morning service. It was a welcome change to be just part of the congregation with no other responsibilities. It was lovely to sit on old pews again. The church itself appears modern with a lovely feel to it but the seating is traditional

After the service more people came over and introduced themselves so we had the opportunity to ask many questions: a further chance to compare the two churches. Refreshments were offered in one of the church halls.

On leaving we felt it had been a very worthwhile experience and what a pleasure it was to meet so many Christians in the Basingstoke part of our new circuit. We would like to thank Trinity for such a warm welcome and extend out hand of friendship to them from Mortimer

Sue Goodwin & Jenny Graham Senior Stewards

OAKRIDGE CRAFT GROUP

Our craft group share a joy in making things and learning new crafts. It is also part of our faith, discussing ways of enhancing worship with craft and colour.

Designing and making banners for Easter, Pentecost and Harvest, Chrismons (Christian symbols) to decorate a Christmas tree, and items for the Church Sale are some of our efforts.

It has been a surprise, delight and blessing that leaders of outside groups meeting on the premises show interest in our meetings, popping in to see what we are doing, and having conversation. A member of the Medieval re-enactment group has offered to demonstrate braid and lace making using replica Medieval tools.

Our hope is that the craft evening will become a comfortable, non-threatening way of introducing people from the local community to church.

Jacqueline Simpson

Kenya Experience – part 2

We stayed initially at the Methodist Guest House, Nairobi. On one day, the Synod Bishop (like our District Chair) accompanied us on visits to a nursery in the Kibera township ('Africa's second biggest slum'), and schools at Kawangware and Limuru. Like other Methodist educational institutions, visits were moving and inspiring – the church offers education of a high standard, but often with very limited resources in very challenging contexts. All the staff we met were dedicated and professional, but in some places, the facilities were worse than basic (the exception being the beautiful Kenya Methodist University). Children were delighted to see us, and were well-behaved – Kenyans put a high value on education, and make enormous sacrifices to enable their children to have a good schooling.

We visited the Nairobi base and hangar of Mission Aviation Fellowship. MAF uses light aircraft to reach otherwise isolated parts of the world, delivering relief workers, doctors, pastors, school books, food, medicines - everything that can only be safely and speedily delivered by air.

Crossing the equator, we headed up country to Meru, a rural area. We had several intensive days of visits to Methodist churches, schools, and projects. One was a bore hole, which is bringing water to a local village, reducing the cost and travelling distance for people to collect water. The church's Bio-Intensive Agricultural Training Centre trains subsistence farmers to increase productivity by simple economic organic methods, whilst conserving the environment.

Gina has written of the wonderful hospitality we experienced everywhere. We had taken various gifts and financial donations with us, and it was a privilege to hand these over.

Our final two days were spent relaxing in luxury at Samburu Game Reserve. On game drives, we saw many species of animals and birds, though sadly, no big cats – just as well, perhaps, as on one occasion, one of our vehicles had a puncture, and our two amazing drivers, Joshua and Samuel, got out and changed the wheel!

Jenny Dowding

New Record for the Mug and Biscuit.

The Mug and Biscuit at St Andrew's in Basingstoke has been open for about 18 months now. It is open for coffee and cakes etc. from 10.00am – 12.00 noon on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. On Tuesdays it is open from 10.00am – 2.00pm with soup and bread or rolls, all home-made, available from 12.00 noon. On

Tuesday this week Marianne, Linda, Christine and Hannah welcomed a record number of 44 people, many of whom we had never seen before – it was truly amazing.

JOIN THE PILGRIMAGE!

Details of the route for our Pilgrimage between 16th and 24th August are now available from each of our Churches. This includes the various places being visited on which day and the expected times. A little flexibility is needed here as it is not possible to be exact; it depends on what unplanned events the pilgrims may encounter on the way! Booking forms are also available in each church and these should be completed by anyone who wishes to be involved in any way. We are requesting these to be returned by 25th May please. We would ask churches providing meals to decide if you wish to open this up to people from other churches as this information will need to be included in the Pilgrimage booklet which is now being prepared for distribution in mid July.

Your contacts are

Mary Ludlow (mary.ludlow@btinternet.com)

Richard Godfrey (rich24ard3@btinternet.com)

ART EXHIBITION

Gosbrook Road Methodist Art Group was invited to display their work at The Royal Berkshire Hospital for March and April. The paintings were for sale and 25% of the profit went to The Hospital's Arts and Gardens Fund. The display was on the corridors which lead to the South Wing. This is the second year an exhibition has been undertaken and last year's display was appreciated by the public and over £70 was raised for the RBH funds. The Art Group meets at Gosbrook Road, Caversham on Monday afternoon's from 2pm – 4pm.

Enquiries 0118 9478607

Launch and celebration of new circuit

Sunday, 31 Aug 2014

Venue: Sherfield School, on the Reading to Basingstoke A33. Starts 11.00 am, lots of activities.

Please bring your own picnic. Big service in the afternoon.

Would you like to help plan the day? We'd love you to! Join us at 11.00 on Mon 12 May at Silchester Methodist Church. End by 1.00. Bring some sandwiches if you wish!

Is there a qualified First Aider out there, who can be on duty for some of the time at the Celebration Launch? Please contact Marianne (details below).

Thanks! We plan to gather equipment from churches.

Contact: Terry Ayres hatfield.fcj@virgin.net;

Gill Lawson gill@lawson-net.co.uk

Marianne Sales mariannebunn1610@hotmail.com

Please send your news for the next UPDATE as soon as possible. Tell us a story about your church!