

Hampton Methodist Church News

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Hampton Methodist Church

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Happy New Year! Except although it is New Year as I write this, as you read it, it will be February if not March. But then, it is a different sort of New Year for me because I will have had what my friends insist on calling “a significant birthday” but which I will admit to you is actually my 50th. And there is indeed something significant about starting the second half of my personal century.

New beginnings and significant points in our lives are part of the rhythm of our years that allow us to re-engage with ourselves, our faith journey and our hopes for the future. New Year’s Day is a time that many people use to do that, but of course it’s just a day and we can make resolutions and focus on where we want to be on any day. Still, there is something about certain dates that allow us to do it more easily and the Church recognises this in two ways. First of all, we have a lot of new beginnings: Advent, which starts the Church year as we prepare for the journey to the manger; New Year when we not only make resolutions and stay up till midnight and all the other things that people of all faiths and none may do, but also re-commit to our relationship with God through the Covenant Service and re-state our promises as Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. Then there is Lent which starts our preparation for Easter and the new beginning that is Resurrection Sunday; the birthday of the Church on Pentecost Sunday and finally the beginning of the administrative year on the 1st of September. Each of these days offers us an opportunity to recognise where we have been and where we hope to travel to.

As you read this magazine, we will be approaching the start of Lent. This comes quite late this year with Ash Wednesday falling on the 6th of March. As we wonder whether we managed to keep our New Year’s resolutions and start to prepare ourselves for the events of Holy Week, we may make new resolves to give up chocolate or sugar or meat or whatever for Lent. It is perhaps an easier thing than a New Year’s resolution as we do it only for a short time. However, when we do this, we could ask ourselves whether we are doing it in the same spirit as a New Year’s resolution, or whether we are doing something different. If we use the new start of Lent to help spring-board a better diet, then that is great, but it is not a spiritual discipline. If we use the tradition of giving something up for Lent as a discipline to help prepare ourselves for Easter and to remind ourselves that we are God’s and he is ours, then that is great, but it fails to recall that we are on the other side of the first Easter.

As we enter Lent, I would encourage you to remember that Sunday can never be a fast day for a Christian. Sunday is the new beginning which comes every week and which reminds us that Jesus rose and lives and calls us into eternity. And so, there is an argument which says if you have given up chocolate for Lent, then on Sunday have just one little square to remind you that Jesus has risen; if you have given up technology for Lent, then on Sunday watch just one YouTube video to remind you that we are a Sunday people and if you are using Lent to change a habit that you wish to remove from your life, then on Sunday do something positive to remind you that we preach not just Christ crucified, but Christ risen. We journey through Lent to Good Friday, but Sunday is not only coming, Sunday has come and all our new beginnings originate in that one glorious new beginning that was the first Easter morning.

May God bless you and yours this new day.

Vicci

Getting to know you, getting to know all about you

The early church spread out from Judea and Galilee into the Greek and Roman world. New converts gave the church, just as it does today, a powerful diversity. We do not in the UK see massive growth in congregational numbers, although church going across London is bucking the trend. However, it is always very special when someone comes to our church for the first time. We make them feel welcome, and learn something about them over a cuppa after the service. Sometimes people come to visit the local area and want to worship the Lord while they are away from home. We so enjoyed having Josephine from Sweden with us while she was studying. What a joy to also have a visit from her mum and sister Matilda at Breakfast Church. Often people who come to church are seeking something, something that is important to them. Many want to learn about God, what plans he has for them and how he can come to the challenges that life throws at them.

We try hard as a church family to reach out to these seekers; not just to make them know that they are welcome but to provide a place and person to pray with them and to assist them on their faith journey in a non-judgemental way. The outreach that we undertake, the Extra Mile, Messy Church and Memory Café helps hone us to be outward looking, while Breakfast Church and our All-Age services enable us to offer a variety of worship options.

We have been joined over the past few months by our friends from Hampton Baptist Church. This has been a blessing and a challenge for both faith communities. We are trying to find the best style of partnership between the two of us. In this endeavour we have highlighted three key activities in our search. These are:

- 1) Prayer
- 2) The legal stuff
- 3) Partnership behaviour

Prayer can be one of the most neglected Christian privileges, but we are urged to be persistent prayer-ers, like the woman in the parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8). The legal stuff is not for the faint-hearted and we can never be certain of the outcome until all the legal questions have been answered not just by us but also the national powers to be in both churches. However, partnership behaviour is something that we all do! In the words of the famous song it starts with “getting to know you, getting to know all about you”. Unlike a number of others, I did not know anyone at the Baptist Church but now, I feel blessed in getting to know these lovely Christians who are faced with the loss of their chapel.

So, let us continue to talk, learn and empathise, for these are the skills that build fellowship and partnership just as it did for the early church. Clearly there is still much to discuss, advice to be garnered, and meetings to be held but let all of us in both churches hold out our arms in Christian agape.

Mark Gilks

Our Church Family

For many of you reading this, Hampton Methodist Church is where you come to worship with your church family and to serve others in the community. In this issue of the magazine you will soon discover items from people you may not know! Keep reading! Our church family extends far and wide, and each month the magazine is sent to folk who no longer live in Hampton but who will always be part of our extended church family.

If you would like to share your story, as several people have in this issue, please do get in touch with Willem or Liz. Also, if you have read a particularly good book that would encourage others, and you would like to recommend it here, please also let us know.

Books

Your Verdict on the Empty Tomb by Val Grieve (EP Books)

I suspect that you might think that I am going over the top when I say that Val Grieve's brief booklet is one of the best ever short tracts on the Christian faith. The thing is, it is true! The book was first published in 1988, but a new edition came out in 2017. Val was a very successful lawyer in Manchester and brings his sharp legal mind to scrutinising the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection.

The conclusion is that the case is absolutely water tight. If you ever have enjoyed a court room scene on the telly or a film you will really take to the style of the book. The 75-page booklet is so easy to read, even for someone with no Bible knowledge or Christian faith. Indeed, this is the ideal book to give to a sceptic. I have used it as a resource for a mock trial with Year 9 pupils at SpringWest Academy (formerly Feltham Community College), and even though none of the pupils were church goers, their verdict on the evidence was that it clearly points to the truth of the resurrection. I have put a copy of the book on the book rack in the narthex, please read it, enjoy it and get your own copy to pass on!

Mark Gilks

Crazy Christians: a call to follow Jesus by Michael B Curry

Think back to the wedding last year of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. What do you remember? For me it is the amazing breath of fresh air that was Rev Michael Curry's address. Most of the chapters in this book began as sermons or addresses he delivered over several years and all are full of his passion for Jesus and God's transforming love. He says: -

'Over time I began to see that being a Christian is not essentially about joining a church or being a nice person, but about following in the footsteps of Jesus, taking his teachings seriously, letting his Spirit take the lead in our lives, and in so doing helping to change the world from our nightmare into God's dream.'

If you liked his talk at the wedding, I think you will also enjoy this book. There is a copy on the church bookstand that you can borrow.

Liz Windaybank

Women and Power: A Manifesto by Mary Beard

Professor Mary Beard is a familiar face on our televisions, bringing the Ancient World into our own homes through programmes such as Ancient Rome and Pompeii. The Manifesto is based on two

lectures she gave in 2014 and 2017. The first, is about the public voice of women and starts with Homer's "Odyssey"; whilst for decades Odysseus is off on his adventures, his wife Penelope is at home loyally running the palace and fending off suitors, she has occasion to ask the bard to sing a more cheerful tune, whereupon, their son the teenage Telemachus tells her to go back to her quarters and her loom because speech was the business of men, she promptly turns and leaves. Thus, 3000 years ago, near the very beginning of recorded Western literature is the first case of a man putting a woman in "her place." Public speaking and oratory were skills that were taught to the young boys and men but never to the girls or women, this she explains has underpinned how Western society has evolved and she includes many examples bringing it right up to the present day, right into today's Parliament.

The second lecture entitled "Women in Power" starts in 1915 with Charlotte Perkins Gilman's book "Herland," about a country that is successfully run by women who have managed to reproduce (always girls of course) so they don't require the presence of men. Herland is a veritable utopia, they live peacefully and work collaboratively, the environment is not polluted and their produce is sustainable. On the scene arrive three men who Beard describes as "somewhere on the spectrum between spineless and scumbag," who seek to undermine the women's confidence, a device that Beard sees in evidence today. Beard develops and updates the themes in this brave 1915 book with illustrations of ancient vases etc which are cleverly woven round modern political adverts, (Trump's face superimposed on the statue of Perseus whilst he holds up Medusa's head superimposed with Hilary Clinton's face). The many examples Beard has chosen are apt for her argument and help make the Manifesto a highly enjoyable and informative read. I thoroughly recommend the book.

Eunice Gilks

Those of you who enjoy these recommendations may also like to know that Vicci is setting up a Circuit-wide book club. The plan is to meet once a quarter to discuss a book which we have agreed to read (not necessarily a religious one, although we will ask the "Where was God in that?" question). It is envisaged that this will involve meeting up over coffee or a meal and be a relaxed social time as well as a chance to share thoughts about the book. The books will be recommended by members of the group, so a varied diet is anticipated. Exact times and dates are still to be confirmed based on what those who are interested can manage, so do please let Vicci know (rev.vicci@mail.com) if this is for you.

Operation Christmas Child

The 31 shoeboxes we collected at the end of last year were sent to children in Bulgaria. Altogether 41,378 boxes were sent there. Each shoebox gift is a tangible expression of God's amazing love and after receiving the gift the children have the opportunity to enrol in 'The Greatest Journey' - 12 fun and interactive Bible lessons, where they get the chance to discover who Jesus is and how to begin their own journey of faith. This is free of charge and without obligation and with the consent of the parent or guardian. At the end of the course they receive a New Testament in their own language.

Local partners in Bulgaria shared these comments: -

'Peter, aged 6, loves Maths. When he received a shoebox gift at his primary school in Dobrich, he was delighted to find the calculator he had been dreaming of.'

'In the town of Byala, the children were very happy when we gave them the gifts because they come from very poor families and no one had ever given them a gift before. When the parents saw the happiness in their children's eyes, they asked us to come to church and see what it is all about. Ever since then they started attending our church regularly together with their children. Thank you so much!'

Church Christmas Lunch at Sunbury Court

I have passed the Salvation Army Conference Centre at Sunbury so many times, and often wondered what the building is like inside. Many years ago, my mother had been there for afternoon tea with the ladies group from her Methodist Church in Wood Green, so I thought visits might be possible. However, I failed to make any enquiries regarding such a visit.

Fortunately an opportunity arose last summer, when I saw an Open Day with cream teas advertised. Brian and I went along and found that, in addition to the delicious tea, we could wander freely around the building and grounds and enjoy the programme of entertainments on offer.

During this visit we asked if there were other opportunities for the public to visit and were told about the Christmas lunches. These are open to groups with church affiliations and are served for one week in December. Booking would be necessary, and we should look for details in the autumn.

As a result, a group of 15 church and Ladies Guild members enjoyed an excellent lunch on December 18th, served in the glass roofed dining room which overlooks the garden. On arrival we were warmly welcomed and shown into a large, comfortable room where we could have pre-lunch tea or coffee. There was a large party from Hayes Salvation Army also there for lunch. After our meal, we returned to the same room to have our tea or coffee, plus mince pies, individually wrapped with some sweets included. The group from Hayes kindly shared hymn books with us so that we could join in with their carol singing from across the hallway.

Everyone agreed that this had been a very enjoyable occasion, and that we had been made to feel very welcome and would hopefully return, possibly for an afternoon tea this summer. Dates for teas will be publicised later, so we do recommend a visit.

Janice Thompson



A Brief History of Sunbury Court

Sunbury Court was originally called Sunbury Place and is an 18th Century mansion built in 1733. At that time the estate covered more than 100 acres, extending to the banks of the Thames and including the two islands, one now covered by private houses and one by an open green space.

Earlier, the land had been part of the Royal Manor of Kempton, a convenient stopping place for the Court as it moved from London to Windsor. There is no trace of any building of this period, but the Walled Garden was part of this manor.

Sunbury Place changed hands many times and saw periods when the higher circles of society were lavishly entertained there. From 1799 until 1863 there were many owners and the building underwent changes. The last private owner was William Horacio Harfield, after whom Harfield Road is named. He was responsible for the building of the East and West wings. After his death in 1910, the building became the Sunbury Court Club, which eventually ran into financial difficulties. In 1918 Sunbury Court was taken over for housing troops.

In 1926 the Salvation Army bought the building, by now derelict and likely to be demolished. Since then, it has been used, among other purposes, as a home for the elderly and a recreational facility for servicemen during the war. Now Sunbury Court is the Salvation Army International Conference and Training Centre, with accommodation and lecture facilities in the extensive grounds.

Janice Thompson

(Source - Booklet "Sunbury Court, A place always making history")

World Day of Prayer

This year the word Women's has been dropped from the name. It seems that we were one of only three countries still including the word in the title. Although the service will still be prepared by women of the country involved, it is hoped that people will not get the impression that only women should attend!

The service this year has been prepared by women in Slovenia and will be held at St James's Church at 2 pm on Friday 1 March. There will be a Traidcraft stall and refreshments after the service. There will also be local services both in the morning and evening for anyone who finds the afternoon time difficult. Please see me for times and details of these.

Please try to attend – everyone is very welcome.

Janice Thompson

Happy new year to you all and every blessing for 2019 from Sue Croucher

When we relocated to Devon in 2001, I was a very busy working mum and although I loved HMC and the super bunch of friends I had made it took me until 2018 to REALLY SEE the true nature of God in my friends in Hampton. You know who you are - THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

Our move to Devon was God given. We had wanted to move to Devon for many years but the right opening never came along. So I kept praying Then one school holiday I had gone home to my mum and dad who live in North Devon. I was just about to board a coach to come back to Hampton and I brought the local newspaper to read on my journey home. In there was a job with my name written on it! A warden of sheltered housing for the elderly (part time with a 2-bedroom bungalow included.) I got back home and showed the job to Barry (the closing date for applications was the very next day!) So, a sleep limited night later Barry faxed my application form through for me (thank you my love.) The rest as they say is history - God had his hand completely on this. I was back to Devon a week later, interviewed, offered and accepted the job. A huge life change then followed where I so experienced the loving nature of Jesus.

As I am writing this article it's SO lovely to recall those happy times in our lives (with a sprinkling of challenges included of course!) A new job for me and new school for Tom. Barry stayed in Hampton and sold our home so we had to live apart for a while. I loved my new job and Tom soon settled into his new school; we joined a new Church in Tiverton. Barry was a huge support albeit from a distance and our family weekends spent together - then in 2002 we brought our family home in Devon.

I joined a 'Flower arranging is fun' class in Willand Village Hall - those took place whilst Tom was at school and I could walk to them from my job. As a complete beginner it really was fun - oh the mistakes I made! I became a dab hand at finding the right foliage in the Devon countryside! My amazing tutor would move one or two bits of material and transform my creation. I am forever thankful for the amazing gift and to this day I find flower arranging very relaxing and joy filled. I have been on flower arranging rotas at church.

I had been watching the property market in Devon (vastly different to Hampton in so many ways - Hilary you will know all about this.) We wanted to buy our home in the village Tom went to school in, so he could walk to school and spend time with friends, so I registered with all estate agents (no Purple Bricks etc then !) asking for Uffculme properties only but none came up meeting our family needs.

So I continued to pray (I was taught and have always practiced the Acts way to pray)

A - adoration

C - confession

T - thanksgiving

S- supplication

One day I was collecting Tom from school (a three mile drive from my job.) I always parked near the village shop and walked the rest. I loved this walk with Tom - we would share our news of the day as we walked along. That day when I parked, a new house for sale sign had appeared on the large gates I always parked near; it looked a family size home so I fished out my (brick!) mobile phone and rang the estate agent immediately. The house had three double bedrooms and all the space we needed, so I arranged a viewing the very next day. Again, the rest is history - that house became our next home.

We were SO thankful - it was a lovely home. (I did ask why the Estate Agent had not contacted me about it first - but never really got a suitable answer!)

I was living three miles from our new home now so decided to prayerfully look for a new job. Along came my next job- Interflora delivery driver. My joy of flowers and flower arranging was now part of my job. Thank you Lord. I did this job for 18 months and although I enjoyed it very much it was pre sat nav days and I got lost so much and was often ' greeted ' by mean dogs so again prayerfully considered another job. Nothing came along so I continued the job. Mean dogs along with being lost often in the middle of nowhere was quite frustrating!

One day our car was having a service and MOT and I had to get the bus to work. I got on an empty bus on the way home - then just as the bus pulled away it came to a sudden halt and a lady rushed on. She smiled at me and said, as we are the only two on this bus, let's sit together. We got chatting and amongst other things I explained my frustrations with my job and mean dogs. Tara told me about her job - a Matron in a boarding school - and she said my Nursing qualification would be really useful if I would like to be a Matron. Being quite new to the area I asked where the boarding schools were and she said this bus will pass the local one soon!

Again, the rest is history.... We passed Blundells School and I got home and fished out the yellow pages (no Google then) and rang the HR department. I was put through to a House Mistress who explained her Matron had handed in her notice THAT morning and she set me an interview date.

This was a wow God moment. I was interviewed and offered the job and had six very happy years then as NC Matron. I am forever thankful I had to get a bus to work that day! Our Lord had this all-in hand for me.

So 15 academic years later as Matron / Head Matron I have job changed again. I loved those busy, challenging years. Training as a Nurse in 1985 has opened so many job doors for me and I am very grateful.

I met Jesus through the Hampton Methodist Church Mother and Toddler group - I am so very thankful I did. Thank you to the lovely volunteers during those years 1992- 1994 when Tom and I came along to group - such happy years for us both. I joined a lovely house group too. I am now a volunteer for my church Mother and Toddler group and also for the Age Concern toe nail cutting service at Okehampton Hospital. We became Grandparents in 2016 - Jacob brings us huge joy.

I am self-employed now as a live in or out carer / house and pet sitter.
I am also training to become a Foot Practitioner.

We will be opening an Air B&B in our home soon so if you fancy a break in lovely Tavistock do book up and come - at the end of our road is a gate onto Dartmoor. It would be lovely to see you.



Nailed it!

How did a chance encounter in a car park become one of Teddington Methodist Circuit's newest projects? Read on...

'Nailed it!' launched in November 2018 at Hanworth Methodist Church – a new group for girls aged 11-16. It sprang from an encounter between Vicci and a number of girls from the Butts Farm Estate who were hanging around in the church car park after dark. When asked what the church could provide that might interest them, the girls responded that they wanted a 'girls only' space where they could be pampered. As a church, we pondered this conversation, together with a recent survey of the community in which the children interviewed voiced concerns about gang culture and areas of the estate where they did not feel safe. For many of us, the idea of a pamper group for teenage girls fell firmly outside our comfort zone – and yet here was an opportunity to respond, not just to what we *thought* the estate needed, but to a direct request from our local community. Were we up to the challenge?

Having prayed, waited and wondered, we decided to launch a group for teenage girls, offering not only pampering but a 'safe space' and opportunities to develop new life skills. Thankfully, we are never called to do God's work in our own strength, and we have seen God at work in the support we have received. Anne, one of the newest additions to our church family, has offered her many gifts and skills and is co-leading the project with Naomi. Members of the church and circuit have donated make-up, made cakes, and helped us wrestle with the technology for our recent movie night! Local businesses, residents' associations and schools have helped to promote the project and donated funds and resources. In all of this, we have experienced God's generosity and grace.

We now have a small but committed group of girls from the local area who attend the project, who are helping to shape the programme for 2019 and beyond, and who are starting to offer their own gifts and skills and to take the lead in sessions. So far, we've unleashed our inner scientists and made slime (disgusting) and bath bombs (gorgeous); talked about healthy eating and made smoothies (delicious) – and, of course, had plenty of makeovers and tasty treats along the way! We're so excited to see how the project grows and develops.

So, how can you help?

- Pray for the future of the project.
- Spread the word among families with girls aged 11-16 – we'd love to see them!
- Donate new and unwanted make-up and hair and beauty supplies.
- Let us know if you might be willing to lead a 'life skills' session – anything from cooking on a budget, to crafts, to languages, to first aid!

'Nailed it!' runs fortnightly during term time from 7-8pm on Fridays at Hanworth Methodist Church. Sessions will be taking place on 15 February / 1 March / 15 March / 29 March / 26 April / 10 May / 24 May / 7 June / 21 June / 5 July / 19 July 2019.

If you have any questions, please contact Naomi (07931870111 / naomioates@hotmail.co.uk) or text Anne (07707516458).

Naomi Oates



LOUDER STILL!!

When we started ALOUD!! the singing and ukulele group at Sunbury, we were extremely lucky to attract a group of highly engaged, musical, outgoing girls who all knew each other through school and Brownies. It gave us a remarkably strong core group to start with and those girls have demonstrated enthusiasm and leadership to younger children who have come along. Of course, eventually everyone grows up and those children who were six and seven are now ten and eleven and very good at what they do.

How then do we keep them? Well the decision was taken to start a new group which would meet immediately after ALOUD!! and so encourage our brilliant young leaders to continue to rehearse, encourage and inspire the younger children but which would give them something additional just for them.

We started in September with LOUDER STILL!! a group for year 5s and over and we are working on song and dance and playing instruments in the context of a band (guitar, keyboard, drummer, singer). This December, we did a mini-musical based on the 1823 poem "The Night Before Christmas". The group performed this twice, once at our children's service #kidzclub@smc and once at Cod and Carols. We were astounded at the absolute silence and focus of the under-8 congregation at #kidzclub@smc as they watched the children perform.

LOUDER STILL!! and ALOUD!! will be performing at several events over the coming year - do keep an eye on the Circuit Diary to be found bound with the Circuit Plan at the back of the church.

Vicci

New Beginnings/New Life

'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' Jeremiah 29:11

It's the time of year when we make New Year resolutions and try to make fresh starts. However, for many years my start of a new year was mid-August; this was officially the start of a new academic year in education institutions and a time I used to really enjoy. So, the start of the 2017/18 academic year in August 2017 found me as usual in an enormous sports hall (the size of a football pitch) busy with enrolments of new students or those returning for their second year. It was a time full of energy and excitement of starting something new and not quite knowing what the year ahead would bring – good or not so good. Looking around me at the time a thought came into my head – can I really see myself here this time next year – probably not; just did not seem to be the right thing for me to stay another year after this one. This was **reason to retire number 1**.

So, with a 60th birthday approaching the following year and changes which I knew were around the corner, I set about seriously considering and planning my retirement after 17 years with Kingston College. During the latter half of the first Autumn term I was talking to a colleague in the corridor, he was a year or two older than me and when I said I was thinking of not being here next year he said why, age should not mean you need to retire; then off he went with child development books in his arms to teach his class. About two weeks later we heard he was ill in hospital and a few days after that it was announced he was terminally ill with cancer and by Christmas he had died. He had gone from being perfectly fine to terminally ill in a matter of weeks and sadly never got to retire which he was hoping to do, we found out at the funeral, the following year. This was **reason to retire number 2**, you never know what is around the corner and having paid into a pension since I was 21 years old, I wanted to have some time to do something different before it was too late.

His funeral was held in Woking and my close colleague, who was desperate I should not retire and stay with her, joked that I would not be able to afford to go out for coffee as much if I retired; we had found a café near the crematorium that had tea and coffee for £1, an absolute bargain. Well I can't go to Woking every time I want a coffee; however, when people threw these *'you won't be able to afford....'* comments at me this bible verse came to mind:

'Look at the birds of the air: they do not sow or reap or gather into barns and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?' Mathew 6:26.

By the start of January, I had to seriously start planning what I would do after retirement. Having been quite a busy person I knew I would need something else to do where I would be useful, as well as some kind of new routine. Enter, The Extra Mile team; some of my friends from church had been asking for some time how long I had to carry on working as I could be of use with this fabulous outreach work. This would mean I would have two mornings taken up on a regular basis and with my online tutoring work I already have, plans were beginning to take shape. An exam board I worked with also had asked me to do the occasional bit of external work; so, I felt a good flexible plan was in place, including more time to read for pleasure. Time to look forward. During the Spring the college announced big changes and cut backs so voluntary redundancy was offered and I accepted that and saw my department absorbed into another. **Reason to retire number 3**. Everything seemed to be falling into place. (By the way, my close colleague who I had shared an office with for 17 years, also retired in the end as well.)

As the end of the year approached there were mixed feelings – excitement as to what lay ahead, but also some sadness and anxiety, sorry to be leaving some lovely people behind – but also, was I doing the right thing and would I get bored? It was a big change.

Well I needn't have been concerned at all! I have been busier than ever and The Extra Mile takes up a lot of my time. Eunice, Liz and Wendy have been great and so welcoming to a new permanent person on their team. However, I have found that everyone on the team is really dedicated and it is so nice that we all work together for one common cause – helping those less fortunate than ourselves. I have met some wonderful new people and it is like I have known them for ages and the good thing is no one is in charge, we all have opinions and contribute. My main role is answering all the emails that come to us from the health professionals with referrals. It certainly has highlighted the amount of poverty locally and how some families live hand to mouth, sometimes unable to clothe their children with appropriate clothes. One of the health professionals who collected items from us before Christmas made a point of thanking us saying that if we did not exist their job would be more difficult and our service was a huge benefit to them in helping needy families. **Reason for retiring number 4.**

I am so pleased to have found something where I can make a significant contribution of time and skills and make a difference, however small, to others. Our church is fantastic at outreach work and we should be proud of how we all, not only make newcomers welcome, but also supporting those who are going through major changes in their journey through life.

So, did I make the right decision? Well I met some colleagues recently, post all the cuts and changes, who said 'if you had one tiny doubt about retiring, forget it, you did exactly the right thing.' **Reason for retiring number 5.**

Pam Harrison

The Bike Project

The Bike Project began at HMC in May 2018 after it was an idea put forward to me by Liz Chadwick, who used to run the 'Merry-go-round' children's music and movement class on a Wednesday morning. I wasn't sure if we would have many bikes donated to the Project but I was willing to give it a go and Church Council approved our church becoming a 'Bike Hub' for a trial period of six months. The response has totally exceeded all our expectations. On Friday 25 January Mike handed over another 26 bicycles to the van driver making a total of 127 collected since we started!

You can donate your bikes (adults' and children's) on any Sunday between 11.45 and 12.15. Take them to the halls entrance behind the church. Bikes can be in any condition as they will be refurbished by the mechanics at 'The Bike Project.'

Jess Miller, Customer Service and Office Manager at The Bike Project sent us this: -

'After the Bike Project collects bikes from bike hubs around London, we take them back to our workshop where they are registered and assessed for level of repairs. Usually the bikes will be repaired during the following week by our team of mechanics. Once repaired, the majority of bikes are donated to asylum seekers and refugees at our weekly workshop donation sessions. A smaller number of bikes are sold on our online store. The money raised from our store goes back into the charity and helps to support our projects.

The charity has had a really successful year! We have donated 1200 bikes in 2018 and piloted our Bike Buddies befriending programme. Furthermore, we now have three Pedal Power sessions a week that has taught 120 women how to ride in three spots around London. A lovely success story is one of our Pedal Power participants who started coming late 2017 and is now a volunteer Pedal Power cycle instructor teaching other women to cycle!' Find out more at www.thebikeproject.co.uk

Wendy Salmon

Sally and Andy's Big Adventure . . . or how I explored the U.S.A. and Canada without the use of wings, because I'm no angel! Part One.

Before I start this article a little background for you, so that you know why I'm writing in the Hampton Methodist magazine. I attended Hampton Methodist Church for over 30 years - from the early 70's until 2006 when I moved down the M3 to Lightwater from where I now travel to Bagshot to attend services at Bagshot Methodist Church. In my time at HMC I held a variety of positions, including being Christian Aid representative, a Church Steward, Church Council Secretary and running the Church magazine 'Contact'. My children, Lorna and Michael, were active members of the Boy's Brigade and both played in the church band.

In August of 2017 my husband, Andy, was diagnosed with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia - a condition we were reassured that you die with rather than die from! At this point we are on a system called 'Watch and wait', which means Andy has to have regular blood tests to check his condition, but so far, no treatment has been necessary. The condition means that he often feels fatigued. We had a chat about our best way forward and decided that making good memories was the best thing for us both. So, we told the 'children' that we'd be spending their inheritance - and they were right behind us! (Well done to the late Ethel Clark and Jeannie Trotter - your Sunday School teachings were obviously taken on board!).

Andy has always loved trains and had already 'done' the Trans-Mongolian train journey from Moscow to Beijing (and on to Hong Kong), and The Ghan railway (and Indian Pacific) in Australia, so where could we go together? We came up with travelling around the U.S. on the trains and then coming back across Canada on the train too. The only fly in the ointment (no pun intended) is that I **really** don't like flying, so getting across the Atlantic posed a bit of a problem! Then we thought 'Let's go by sea!'. Through Andy's son, Adrian, who is an airline pilot (see the irony there?!) we were able to use a travel site that gave us a nice discount on the price of a return Atlantic crossing on the Queen Mary 2. Andy then used the firm that had booked his other railway trips, Ffestiniog Travel, to book our trip around the U.S. and Canada.

This led to our Big Adventure of 2018 and 8 weeks of holiday (WOW!!).

Michael drove us to Southampton on 19th August where we boarded the QM2. The check-in procedure was amazing, 20 minutes from arriving at the port we were sitting on the balcony of our cabin watching all the stores being loaded on, and that was after having passports checked, photos and fingerprints and on-board pass created and hand luggage scanned - the airports could learn a lesson from these guys! The QM2 was an absolute experience. Among the attractions were a Planetarium, theatre, lecture hall, fitness suite, spa, library, shops, not to mention all sorts of other activities including an informal Christian gathering every morning. The food was out of this world and ranged from a self-service cafeteria to afternoon teas and formal dinners. We also discovered you could have room service at no charge and we used this on our journey home. We really enjoyed some of the lectures, those who know me will know that I would enjoy listening to a Coroner, Peter Dean, talking on the theme 'From Ancient China to Quincy - the history of coroners and suspicious death investigations.' On a less gruesome theme we enjoyed the theatre production 'Broadway



Rocks' and a wonderful string quartet in the Carinthia Lounge. In between the entertainment we 'ocean watched' and were privileged to see both whales and dolphins in their natural habitat. After a week on board we got up at 4.30 a.m. to watch as we passed by the Statue of Liberty, a truly amazing sight - the first of many - and the most marvellous way to arrive in the U.S.A.

Sally Knight

Circuit Prayer Course

During November, we ran the Circuit Prayer Course at the manse with participants from Hampton, Hanworth and East Molesey and it had previously run at Teddington. The aim of the course was to show that there are lots of different ways to pray. You just need to see what works for you. Why not try out different ways of praying? We're all different, so we should expect to respond to God in different ways.

Most people try to think their prayers. This can be very difficult. Our minds wander to what we're worried about and to what we need to do. It can be very useful to keep a pen and paper nearby so that you can write down things that come to mind so that you don't spend your prayer-time worrying about them! Sometimes, if things come to mind whilst we're praying, it might be God encouraging us to do something about them. Perhaps to visit someone who is lonely or to write to your MP about an issue.

But why do we try to think our prayers? Jesus said, "When you pray, say..." He expected us to speak out our prayers. That can help to stop our minds wandering. We can even use prayers written by others as you'll find in the Methodist Prayer Handbook or you can use the words of hymns or songs.

When I was university chaplain, quite a few students struggled to keep to their plans to pray. They easily forgot to pray or needed to rush on to something else. Yet, Jesus always sent his disciples out in pairs. They weren't trying to live out the Christian life alone. They could watch over each other and encourage each other and pray together. Why not find a prayer partner to pray together each week so that they can encourage you to keep on praying and you can encourage them too?

The Circuit Prayer Course covered lots of different styles of prayer. One of the first things that we did was to write a letter to God. This can be a useful way of praying, especially if you feel awkward because it is a long time since you prayed. Write a letter as you would to a friend. Tell God how you are feeling and what is on your mind. Most of the prayers in the New Testament are, surprisingly, about asking. Ask God for whatever you like. Expect to receive an answer, even if that answer is "No" or "Not Yet".

You can pray the words of the Bible. Read a passage and turn it into a simple prayer. Perhaps, start with the Lord's Prayer. As you read each phrase, pray that it might be true for you. "Our Father"... Ask God to make himself known to you as your loving, heavenly Father - far better than any earthly father. And so on. You can go for a walk and imagine Jesus is walking with you. What would you say to him? As you walk, ask him to show you the beauty of the world and its needs too. Ask him how you can serve him. You can pray by lighting a candle. The candle will keep burning, so your prayer continues long after you have finished. Just be careful not to burn the house down. Put the candle in a safe place, perhaps in some sand.

Some ways of praying will appeal to us. Some might not be our cup of tea. God wants a close, special relationship with each one of us. Jesus came to make that possible. His Holy Spirit comes to us to bring us close to God. Why not try something different for your prayers and see what works for you? *"Speak in the stillness, God we pray, come to our hearts and meet us here. Bring us your peace for each new day, the gift of grace to earth from heaven."* (Singing the Faith 511)

The Circuit Prayer Course will be running for one last time at Sunbury on 6, 20 and 27 March 2019 at 8 pm. So, if you missed it so far, there is one more chance to come to explore prayer.

David Innes

I don't usually like birthdays at all but for some reason I couldn't stop going on about the fact that I was going to be 70 this year. I nearly drove my friends up here mad (or so they told me) by continually mentioning it! I was such a wet weekend on my 60th as I didn't like being 60 or being in Harlow, so my celebrations were rather dismal. But for my 70th it all changed and I decided to celebrate in grand style by going on a skiing holiday with Richmond Christian holidays. Yes, a skiing holiday!!

However, my celebrations started before the holiday when my dear friend Sue Croucher texted me to say Happy Birthday and to look behind the curtain in my spare room as there was a surprise for me. Sue had been to stay with me in September when we holidayed together in France at the Spring Harvest site Le Pas Opton. We attended a craft session where Sue secretly made me a card. On our return she gathered various 70 bits and pieces and put them all in one of those patterned cardboard envelopes and then placed it under the curtain that covers a piece of furniture in my spare room. What a lovely and much appreciated surprise that made me feel so special.

Later that day some friends took me out to lunch at our local Beefeater where they produced a 70 balloon that sat on our table throughout the meal and then the restaurant staff came out singing Happy Birthday whilst delivering a lemon log roll with sparklers. A memorable and happy birthday. Now back to the skiing holiday – I didn't actually ski but still had a wonderful time high up in the French Alps. It was a totally new experience for me as I usually enjoy a more sedate type holiday of sunbathing and swimming. I couldn't believe the amount of people on the piste enjoying the freedom and exhilaration of skiing. They start them very young and it was kind of cute to see the youngsters with their skis and helmets on. I found it difficult enough to walk and had to borrow a pair of walking sticks to keep me upright!! I enjoyed some walks and spent a lot of time in the hot tub and the sauna. There was something really surreal about sitting in a hot tub on the edge of the piste watching all the skiers going whizzing by. It was even more surreal sitting in the hot tub at night watching it snow. We had an ex-army chef providing our food so as you can imagine we were very well fed. The youngsters who ran the chalet made it such a pleasant time for all of us and nothing was too much trouble for them. On Christmas Day they had set the table very nicely and written a note of encouragement for each person. On the breakfast table they had spelt Merry Christmas using the cutlery. Each evening we enjoyed bible study and worship before our evening meal. After the meal we had various different entertainments which included quizzes, guessing games, charade type games, inventive type games and Christmas eve we watched the film Elf (not really my kind of film but I watched it anyway). Some of the games had all of us shrieking with delight and laughter. It was so good to be childlike and just to enjoy the nonsense and pure silliness of it all. It was a fantastic week after a wobbly start for me (I experienced some altitude sickness on my first day).

I doubt I will go again but was so very pleased that I did go as the work that the Lord has done in me since my move to Harlow was so evident in my complete change of attitude to so many different situations. I like being 70 and I like living in Harlow, although I still miss my friends in Hampton but the Lord has been so good and patient with me during the melting and moulding times (still a lot to go!) But I can safely say that I am not the person I was and find that I enjoy life so much more now. I'm told that 70 is the new 40 and I look forward to what the Lord may have in store for me, new beginnings and fresh challenges. 'For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not evil, to give you a future and a hope', Jer 29 v 11, and 'The Lord blessed the latter days of Job (Jenny) more than his (her) beginning' Job 42 v 12.

Jenny Chubb



Circuit Panto - Old King Cole

There is going to be a Panto in May. Oh yes there is!

We are delighted to announce that we are putting on 'Old King Cole', a brand-new Panto for the circuit, written by Geoff Buckingham, on Saturday 11th May at Sunbury Methodist Church. Our very own Rev Vicci Davidson will be Musical Director, as well as casting her evil spells as The Green Witch! There will be a matinee at 2.30 pm, and an evening performance at 7.30 pm. Tickets will be great value at just £8 for adults, with £5 for concessions. Lots of great songs for young and old, an original script, and brand-new corny jokes! Also, probably the world's largest mouse, a ferocious orangutan, and even a cameo appearance by 'Donald Trump'!

There will be lots of daft action, zany characters, and a storyline that at last reveals the real truth behind the well-known nursery rhyme of Old King Cole. We hope to give great entertainment, plus raise funds to support the activities of our Circuit. Entertainment for all ages. Give yourselves a few hours of fun, mirth and merriment as well as supporting the great work of our Churches!

We have a talented cast, including well-known faces from our circuit:

Rev Vicci and Mark Davidson, Bron and Tim Coveney, Denise Tomlinson, Naomi Oates, Sarah Waine, Geoff Buckingham, Jo Stockbridge, youngsters Lily Pratt and Katie Williams, plus some local favourites from The Manor Players, Robert A Hardy, Stephen Liddle, Rob Day and Alfie Batten. There may also be other familiar faces involved too! They would all greatly appreciate your support!

Please note the date, 11th May, in your diary. Better still, please book tickets for yourselves and friends and family asap from Michelle Coombes, on 01784 245621 or smcpanto@gmail.com

Geoff Buckingham

Quilts for Christmas Dinners

We all like to think that we'll be with our family and friends at Christmas. Some of us, through no fault of our own, are simply not that lucky. In 2013, poet Lemn Sissay MBE, founded The Christmas Dinner, specifically to be held for young people leaving the Care System. Currently, 1 in 5 young people will find themselves homeless within two years of leaving the state system. Having been in the system himself, Lemn wanted to engage local communities and encourage them to take responsibility for young people in their area. The first Christmas Dinner was hosted in 2013.

Each dinner is organised locally and run by volunteers for approx. 50 young people. Food, presents and decorations etc are donated by local businesses, organisations and individuals wherever possible or paid for from cash donations. On this one day, every effort is made to ensure the attendees feel and experience what we have come to expect in our own homes, so only the best will do: diners are taxied to and from their day's secret destination, not just for a meal but for a whole day of entertainment.

In 2018 three authorities were able to offer quilts to each care-leaver and this proved very popular. In Manchester only one person did not take a quilt. This year the idea of donating quilts is being expanded to other authorities. I am taking on the role of co-ordinator for the London Borough of Richmond, so if there is anyone out there who can offer a new, hand-made quilt, quilt top or large pieces of fabric do get in touch regarding sizes. You can find out more about the dinners here: <http://thechristmasdinners.org.uk/> And if you cannot quilt but would like to donate then this is the link: <https://paypal.me/quiltsforcareleavers> the smallest donation will help.

Jacquie Cranfield



Jacquie1837@gmail.com

01784 253927

(Jacquie is also the Project Linus Co-ordinator for North Surrey and West London and provides beautiful homemade patchwork quilts to Baby Basics and The Extra Mile.)

Dates for your diary around the circuit and beyond

Tuesday 19 February – Messy Church at Hampton Methodist. 10.30 – 12 noon.

Friday 22 February – Fish and Chips Film Night at East Molesey Methodist Church. The film is 'The Post' starring Meryl Streep and Tom Hanks. Fish and Chips at 6.30 pm; film at 7.30 pm. Advance booking necessary by 20 February to events@emmc.co.uk or telephone Val 01932 221247. £7.

Tuesday 26 February – Hampton Ladies Guild at 8 pm. Centre Court – Clive McIntyre, a Magistrate's Clerk.

Tuesday 12 March – Hampton Ladies Guild at 8 pm. Into the Spotlight – Jacquie Gosney.

Wednesday 13 March – Insights Bible study on the Gospel of John led by Vicci. 7.45 to 9.30 pm.

Saturday 16 March – Weybridge Male Voice Choir at East Molesey Methodist Church at 7.30 pm. An evening of exciting and varied music selected from opera choruses, songs from the musicals, spiritual, traditional and current popular music. Tickets £10 in advance or £12 on the door. Email events@emc.org.uk or telephone 020 8979 9593.

Saturday 23 March – Free family films at YMCA White House in partnership with the New Life Church. 4 pm Finding Nemo (U). 7 pm Soul Surfer (PG) – A true story about determination, courage and overcoming adversity.

Tuesday 26 March – From Fish Farming to the Fisherman's Mission – Dr Jonathan Shepherd.

Friday 29 March – Fish and Chips Film Night at East Molesey Methodist Church. Film to be confirmed.

Saturday 30 March – Premier Radio presents the Woman to Woman Conference at the Methodist Central Hall Westminster. 10 am to 9 pm. Book for the day, evening or both. The theme is, 'Be real' so there will be inspiring women sharing stories of struggles and victories in the Christian life. Tickets from www.womantowoman.events

Saturday 30 March – Café Arts at Hounslow Methodist Church. A return visit by Scottish Singer/songwriter Yvonne Lyon, who primarily plays acoustic folk music and combines poignant lyrics with strong, creative melodies. Doors open 7 pm for 8 pm start. Tickets £9 on the door or £8 in advance. Also enjoy delicious homemade cakes! More info at www.hounslowmethodist.org.uk

Saturday 6 April – Book Fair at East Molesey Methodist Church. 11 am to 2 pm. Free entry. Books, CDs, DVDs, tea, coffee, cakes.

Tuesday 9 April – Messy Church at Hampton Methodist. 10.30 – 12 noon.

Wednesday 17 April - Insights Bible study on the Gospel of John led by Vicci. 7.45 to 9.30 pm.

Saturday 27 April- All Souls Orchestra's annual Prom Praise at the Royal Albert Hall. A celebration of worship and ministry with classical and contemporary musicians. Starts at 7.30 pm. Tickets from www.royalalberthall.com/tickets More tickets will become available as privately-owned seats are returned to the box office.

Wednesday 15 May - Insights Bible study on the Gospel of John led by Vicci. 7.45 to 9.30 pm.

Tuesday 28 May – Messy Church at Hampton Methodist. 10.30 – 12 noon.