

The Link

MK Methodist and URC News

Issue 23 Winter 2014



***Planet photos by local photographer David Lack.
Do you recognise the churches? (Answers on back page)***

Venture MK - Yearly review



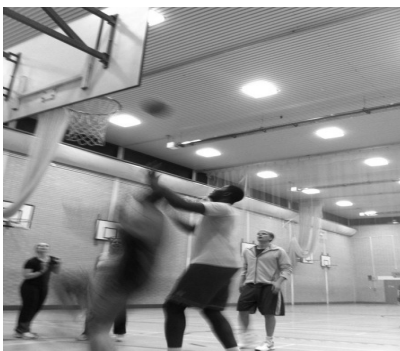
As we welcome in the New Year it is always good to take a moment to look back over the last 12 months and reflect on some of the many things that have been happening.

Engaging Spiritual Seekers

One of the highlights of the year has been engaging with spiritual seekers in Milton Keynes. In June we hosted a conference at the Church of Christ the Cornerstone which we called "Engaging". Talks and workshops were led by Andrea Campanale, Steve Hollinghurst and Ian Mobsby. The event covered subjects like communicating our faith; statistics for what society in Britain believes; and practices from the Christian tradition that can help others on their spiritual journeys. This event led the way for a smaller, local group to take up further training in the use of Ruach Cards with Andrea Campanale. Using all these skills and learning we ran a stall at Milton Keynes' Mind Body Spirit (MBS) fair in September. At the MBS fair we set up a stall that offered creative prayer and conversation with the general public who attended the event. Our stall was very well received by all who attended.

Love:MK Volunteering Collective

This year we have launched "Love:MK Volunteering Collective" – a group for young adults to volunteer their time to run activities and events to raise money and awareness for good causes. We had our launch event in April, a charity quiz night, and raised over £200 for Macmillan. We have also run a charity rounders match, Halloween party and since October, a weekly quiz night in partnership with UCMK students union. Over the year we have raised over £850 for charity.



MK Recreational Sports

One of the things I have most enjoyed this year is getting involved in the management group for the Milton Keynes Recreational Sports group. Each week I run a basketball group and plan to start a table tennis group in January 2014. It's exciting to be involved in conversations about how we can make the group open to everyone by making concessions for those who can't afford to play and by building new friendships among young adults.

University Campus Milton Keynes

September saw the arrival of students enrolled at the new University Campus Milton Keynes in Saxon Court. To support the new students, a chaplaincy team has been formed, which I'm a part of. In December we put on a carol service for students, staff and council workers who share the building. In the New Year we will be starting monthly community lunches and meditation classes.



The Parks Trust

It has been good to develop a relationship with The Parks Trust through events like the Animal Blessing Service and charity sports matches. I was pleased to be able to help out at the last minute with the Carols by the Lake – luckily I had the music for all the carols stored on my phone!



Good Friday

Using the perspex box from last year's "Following the Star" Advent art exhibition, we invited the public to write prayers on the outside for friends and family on Good Friday. The installation was then used as part of the city centre walk of witness.



Tequila Talk

Starting in January we hope to launch a new discussion group, especially for young adults working in the retail sector (and especially for people who wouldn't want or be able to make it to church on a Sunday morning). If you know of anyone who might be interested please put them in touch.



YMCA

Work also continues with the YMCA, visiting the residents lounge each week, supporting conversations about their Christian ethos and helping out with occasional events and activities.



Our perspex box also housed a Christmas photography exhibition in Midsummer Place using photos submitted online with the hashtag **#ChristmasIs** – people were encouraged to use a camera to capture what Christmas means to them. To see more photos and to see descriptions and contributors names go to www.ChristmasIs.info.



I'd like to finish by thanking everyone who has helped and supported me in my role and for all the people who work with me in each of the projects and activities I take part in. I continue to enjoy the variety and the challenge of my work and am excited about what might be possible in 2014!

If you are interested in joining the prayer newsletter please contact Jeff Newall at jeff@newallj.fsnet.co.uk.

If you would like to get involved or find out any more about Venture:MK please email me at rob@venturemk.org.

Best wishes for a happy 2014,

Rob Winn

Cook@Chapel

Cook@Chapel has continued to grow and develop over the past six months with our numbers regularly up to fifteen young people on Fridays. We have needed to incorporate extra Christian art and craft activities (more mature Messy Church in style) into our evening meetings and in January a new monthly discipleship group for the older young people will start.

In the spring we took on an allotment and this has been a great success although it is fairly quiet there at the moment. We grew a selection of vegetables and were especially successful with our potatoes, onions and courgettes: we even won a prize in the Hanslope Horticultural Show. It has been great for the young people to grow their own food from scratch and to realise the value of God's creation. In September we put together a Powerpoint presentation for Hanslope Methodist's Harvest Supper to show what we had learnt and grown throughout the year.



November was a busy time for Cook@Chapel with Christmas cake preparations taking place over two weeks and a fund-raising meal at the end of the month. We enjoyed cooking the Christmas cakes from a Mary Berry recipe, but icing the cakes was even more popular! The cakes were a great success and they sold out like the proverbial hot cakes.

The Cook@Chapel young people hosted a fund-raising meal on 29th November. They worked hard to make the event a success: peeling, chopping, cooking, waiting at table and of course the least favourite job, washing up! There was a great atmosphere and the chapel was full of people with over forty guests present, all enjoying a three course home cooked meal. The menu consisted of leek and potato soup (made from potatoes grown on the Cook@Chapel allotment), shepherd's pie, Eton mess and apple crumble. We were very pleased to raise £210 to be shared between Cook@Chapel and Hanslope Methodist Church who provide our venue.

We celebrated Advent learning about the importance of this time of year to pause and reflect in the preparations for Christmas. We lit the Advent candle at our prayer times, and in the early part of the month some very poignant prayers were offered giving thanks for the life of Nelson Mandela who was freed before any of the young people were born.

At our last meeting we cooked a tasty Christmas dinner to share, comprising turkey and all the trimmings, although by popular demand Christmas pudding was replaced with Yule log. Brussels sprouts, again from the allotment, were liked or hated in equal measure. We exchanged secret Santa presents around the Christmas tree and sang Christmas songs whilst we cleared up after


our meal!

Cook@Chapel now has a Facebook page www.fb.com/cookatchapel where you can follow us and receive updates, so please do 'like' us.

If you would like to visit Cook@Chapel or find out more about how to set it up please contact Katharine Crowsley on 07951 501 489.

Katharine Crowsley

Insurance for your church, your home, and your community.

METHODIST  **INSURANCE** is not just for Methodist Churches, not even just for

Methodists, it is open to everyone who is keen on supporting ethical practises. It also provides home and contents insurance (10% discount if both insured) as well as charity and community group insurance, weddings and other one-off events.

As the UK's oldest denominational church insurer it draws on 140 years of experience.

All the distributable profit is given back to the Methodist Church and Methodist charities in the UK and Ireland.

If unfortunate enough to have to make a claim it is not only dealt with in an extremely efficient and professional manner but with compassion and real concern. I speak from experience and I have yet to meet anyone who has not been dealt with similarly, a pleasure to do business with in fact.

EXTRA, EXTRA, EXTRA

Every time someone buys a new home insurance policy from Methodist Insurance, the company makes a donation to a church or charity of that customer's choice. The amount of the donation is equal to 20% of the first year's home insurance premium.

When your insurance renewal is due why not give Methodist Insurance a call and talk to the friendly team on 0845 606 1331 or email on enquiries@micmail.com. You will not only be doing yourself a favour but your Church as well.

www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

Anitra Bull

Library at The Well at Willen



Did you know that there's a library of books on religion and spirituality, free to join and available to everyone, here in Milton Keynes?

The library, part of The Well, in Newport Road, Willen, is comfortable, well-lit and welcoming, with wi-fi access, photocopying and plenty of space for reading and quiet study.

There is a comprehensive collection of books to help with theological studies, including Bible study material, church history and doctrine, as well as books on pastoral care, spiritual direction, ministry and preaching. New titles are added to stock regularly, and almost all the books can be borrowed.

Library opening hours are Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm, and the librarian is available on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9:30am to 4:00pm and on Thursdays, 9:30am to 12:30pm.

Drop in for a visit and see for yourself, or to find out more, go to www.thewellatwillen.org.uk and click on the library pages (where you'll also find the online catalogue), or email library@thewellatwillen.org.uk or telephone (01908) 242 693.

Methodist church highlights importance of religious education in schools with RE resources

The Methodist Schools and Education Service has completed a two year project that has produced accessible and informative Religious Education resources. The RE resources offer an insight into Christianity and Methodism for Key Stages 1-4.

The completion of the project follows the recent Ofsted report "Religious Education: Realising the Potential" that criticised the levels of RE provision in schools, placing responsibility for improvement with the government.

John Keast OBE, Chair of the RE Council of England and Wales, said: "Good religious education in all our schools is more important than ever these days. Religion and belief have such a high profile in current affairs, community and social matters, and personal development nowadays that everybody needs to know, understand and be able to make sense of it."

The RE resources were commissioned by the Methodist Church to provide some non-statutory exemplification of good teaching and learning in RE. They were written by Lat Blaylock, adviser for Religious Education Today, and are intended to enable teaching of Christianity from a Methodist perspective. The resources include an "Introduction to Methodism" by the Revd Dr Martin Wellings and Sam Taylor, former Methodist Youth President, along with an outline of the "Distinctiveness of Methodism and Structure of the Methodist Church".

Lat Blaylock said: "It has been a great privilege to work with such high quality staff from Methodist Schools and the Education Service to create new materials for RE in Methodist schools. These materials give any teacher practically inspiring planning to use in their own classroom, enabling pupils to achieve more and learn about their Methodist and Christian heritage."

The RE resources offer guidance in teaching Christianity through planned units of work. The units include such topics as, "Warm hearts: what does it feel like to experience God's presence?" This particular unit is intended to make the life of John Wesley relevant to eight year old (year four) pupils. The resources have already been successfully piloted at Methodist schools around the country.

Lat Blaylock said: "There's a focus on pupils' open-hearted and broad-minded spiritual development too. Ofsted criticise schools for low standards, but the Methodist RE project has done something practical to help. RE in these schools will enable pupils to understand Christianity for themselves, and respond freely."

Jude Levermore, Head of Discipleship and Ministries, said: "We are proud of this top quality resource which will help teachers to engage with children in discussing things that really matter to them and will make relevant the heritage of Methodism to young people today."

If you would like to order a copy of the pack "Religious Education - Guidance in Teaching Christianity", please contact orders@norwichbooksandmusic.co.uk, telephone 0845 017 8220, quoting product code **RE100-CT-13**. Each pack is priced at £35 (including VAT, postage and packaging). No discounts are available.

Area Leader's Challenge

A new year- new possibilities, new hopes, new opportunities. Is that how you see it? Or is it just another year full of impossible problems, anxieties and uncertainties?

Whichever of those is uppermost in your mind as you read this, it has to be a year to look again at just what it means to be a follower of Christ, a disciple. Why? Quite simply because every year is. So is every month, week and day. We may think we've done all there is to be done. We've done all the jobs there are to do in church- more than once. We know all the hymns that there are to sing- and have read our way through the Bible. We've prayed prayers and sometimes seen them answered.

Of course, that may not describe you. You may be new in church and uncertain of how you belong and what you might be asked to take on. The hymns and songs may be a new world to you and much of the Bible may seem like a foreign language, even in the most recent translations.

Whichever is the case, at the beginning of this year, look again at what it means to follow Jesus. Take the opportunities given in worship, listening to preaching, studying (including being involved in the coMPass courses). And if the right opportunities aren't there for you- ask. If your church is not challenging you over discipleship, talk to the leaders and find out why not. There are so many possibilities open to you. It's not all about what you do in church. In fact it's not mostly about that. How will you be a follower of Jesus at home, at school, at work- or by a hospital bedside, signing on at the job centre, on the streets.

It's a new year. How will you make it a new year with Christ?

Brenda Mosedale

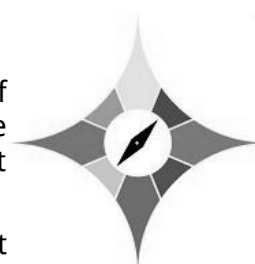
coMPass – Building Capacity for Mission

Why do we often find sharing our faith with others such a challenge? Of course, we all recognise the external pressures of society in general and the media in particular which make it difficult to dip our toe in the water, but it is easy to blame such things and to excuse ourselves from doing anything.

There are, however, a number of inhibiting factors which lie not outside but within ourselves. When I asked a representative sample of people across MK what would most help build capacity for mission the two top answers were prayer and adult learning about faith. That indicates, I think, that we can lack confidence in faith which holds us back from engaging in sharing our faith. How has this come about? For many of us, I suspect it goes back to a faith from our youth which never had the opportunity to grow up and develop: we found faith and were offered church rotas and committees! As a result our faith got stuck and we gradually lost confidence in it.

coMPass is the new guide to adult learning about Christian faith in MK which is designed to address just that problem. Through coMPass we hope to help you find new or renewed excitement, depth and confidence in your faith. We have already been running a blog on the Mission Partnership website looking at the person of Jesus and will be looking to extend that in 2014. We are also launching five courses on different aspects of faith in each of the five LEPs in the city, tackling reading the Bible, prayer, understanding faith and human identity. All are welcome: you don't need to be a member of a particular LEP, just choose the course that is right for you, be inspired and find that sharing faith comes more easily.

Details of all courses are on the Mission Partnership website www.missionpartnership.org.uk



Behind the pulpit with Local Preacher Dr Karl Rutledge

What is your favourite hymn – and why?

It's a toss-up between Wesley's "And Can It Be", which was our anthem when I was in MethSoc as a student in Durham and sounds amazing when sung with gusto, and "How Shall I Sing that Majesty", which is about the wonder and mystery of God and is simply beautiful.

Who, other than God and Jesus, is your favourite person from the Bible – and why?

I like the prophet Nathan, because he's willing to put himself at risk to tell David how it is and speak truth to power. I admire his integrity and he was clearly a powerful preacher. Esther's pretty cool, too - a feminist icon.

What is your favourite Christian festival – and why?

Not sure. Advent is definitely my favourite part of the Christian year, though. It's vital time to reflect on the miracle of God becoming human and changing the game forever, to wait for love to meet us and transform us once again.

When did you become accredited?

I was accredited as a local preacher in October 2013.

What is your favourite animal?

A duck-billed platypus - I feel an affinity with the quirkier bits of creation!

What is your favourite holiday destination - and why?

I don't have a favourite as such but I like visiting cities with lots of architecture, art, museums and history to explore.

What are your favourite foods?

Pizza and chocolate ice-cream, but not on the same plate!

If you could live in any country, which one would you choose, and why?

One that's not too hot and where LGBT rights are respected so I could live openly and safely.

If you were stranded on a desert island what four things (excluding basic survival items) would you want to have with you?

I'd take one of my wedding photos, my favourite book on General Relativity and plenty of writing materials so I could indulge in my passion for science, and a satellite phone so I can be rescued!

What are your hobbies?

I like reading, going to the cinema, photography, long walks and anything science and maths-related.

What is your favourite season of the year?

Autumn - I love the colours of the leaves and the cooler weather.

Tell me a little about your job?

I work for Santander in the Internal Validation team, so I review statistical models across the bank in northern Europe and make sure they work properly. Basically, I get paid to be a geek! I



do miss academia sometimes, but I think escaping the real-life "Big Bang Theory" has done me good!

Do you have a favourite church? Tell me a little about it.

Durham Cathedral. It's awesome. End of. If you haven't been, please go!

When do you feel closest to God?

When I'm walking in the middle of nowhere and have my camera with me.

What is your favourite book, other than the Bible?

"To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee. It should be compulsory reading in my opinion because it's an incredibly powerful, very funny, deeply moving and extremely well-written novel. I always find something new every time I re-read it, and it's the only book I had to read at school I've come back to in adult life.



Describe your perfect evening?

A romantic meal in a nice restaurant with my wife.

2nd "Any Questions?"

An evening giving you the opportunity to get answers to some of your questions from a panel of four local people from different walks of life

Thursday 30th January 2014

From 7:30pm to 9:30pm

@ The Beehive, Deanshanger

Please ask your questions on the night

Everyone Welcome

(Subject to Licensing Laws)

Sponsored by the Methodist Church, Deanshanger

Next one – the third in a series of "Any Questions" – will be in April

Dates for Your Diary

February 2014

Wednesday 26th Preachers Meeting, 7:45pm, Freeman Methodist Church, Bletchley.

March 2014

Saturday 1st Bridgebuilder Prayer Breakfast, 8:30am, Christ the Cornerstone

Saturday 15th URC Synod, Newport Pagnell URC

Tuesday 18th Mission Partnership Assembly, 7:30pm (venue TBA)

April 2014

Tuesday 1st United Area executive, 8 Cheriton, Furzton, 7:45pm

Wednesday 2nd Methodist Ministerial Synod

Monday 28th United Area Meeting, St Thomas', Simpson, 7:30pm

Front page "Planet" quiz answers:

Top left Newport Pagnell Methodist Church	Top right Christ Church, Stantonbury
Bottom left Deanshanger Methodist Church	Bottom right Hanslope Methodist Church

Please send me any items for the newsletter by 5th April ready for the next issue out on 28th April 2014.

Would you like to be the new Link editor? This is my 23rd issue and I am happy to let somebody else take on this role now. Please contact me if you would like to be the new editor.

Brook Cottage, 5 Northampton Road, Lavendon, Olney, MK46 4EY

(01234) 714 915

helen.ravenhall@gmail.com

Thank you!