



The Methodist Church

**THAMES VALLEY
CIRCUIT**



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

(for the Church Year 1st September 2015 - 31st August 2016)

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Note: Every year the Circuit produces an Annual Report.

Once every 4 or 5 years, the Annual Report covers *every* church and organisation, etc, in the Circuit. As the content of many of the reports does not change significantly from year to year, in most years the Circuit issues a short Annual Report (such as this in 2016), containing reports from:

- The Superintendent Minister
- The Senior Circuit Steward

and the Circuit Treasurer's report which is circulated to all trustees.

However, we also aim to reflect changes, as they occur, in the relevant section on this website.

The previous detailed annual report covering *every* church and organisation, etc, in the Circuit was that for 2014. To see it, [click on this link](#).
And for the one in 2010, [this link](#).

Circuit Superintendent's Report

The last Connexional year was marked by the fact that, for almost six months, the Thames Valley Circuit functioned on just four members of Staff. Between December and March, I was on sabbatical leave and after June, Mindy Bell also enjoyed a period of sabbatical from Circuit life. Sadly, another member of Staff, Gary Homewood, has also been absent due to sickness. I join with all the Circuit in praying that Gary may soon return to normal duties.

After almost four years working alongside the Circuit Staff as an authorised Presbyterian, Rev. Malcolm White asked that his formal ties with the Circuit be severed. Malcolm's ministry of wisdom, insight and godliness will be missed, especially among the folk at Cookham Rise. The Circuit wishes Malcolm and Veronica all the best as they find new ways to serve God.

Many across the Circuit gathered at Woodlands Park to remember Helen Banham, one of the band of faithful Local Preachers. It was good to welcome back Rev. Mary Austin who preached at the Thanksgiving Service that day. In the Spring, the Circuit gathered again to celebrate the accreditation of Kathy Rickman as a Local Preacher. It was a joyous occasion for all who attended.

The EU Referendum campaign was the subject of an impromptu Prayer Meeting at the Windsor Church. Although arranged initially for the Windsor congregation, this meeting attracted others across the Circuit. As Methodists, we continue to remember that being a good neighbour must involve taking an active interest in the political decisions in this nation.

The Thames Valley Circuit is one of a cluster of six Circuits in the Western part of the South-East District. Another Circuit within this grouping is the Staines & Feltham Circuit which is struggling with low membership across its ten churches. To strengthen our connexionalism with one another, the two Circuits have sought to find areas of common ground. So far, with the blessing of the Circuit Meetings, there have been joint Staff Meetings, a Joint Training Day and the superintendent, Rev. Andrew Reed, has agreed to help tutor trainee Local Preachers from this Circuit. We look forward to other initiatives in the New Year.

The Western Area Circuits planned a joint Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Study Day which took place in Woking. The guest speaker was Rev. Dr. Heather Morris from the Irish Methodist Conference. The day was very well received and plans are already in hand for a follow up next year.

The Circuit continues to offer innovative ways of spiritual engagement. Rev. Mindy Bell, along with Mr Henry Mensah-Brown, one of the Local Preachers, offered 'ashing' to passers-by in Slough on Ash Wednesday. The Smaller Churches group continues to provide inspirational events such as Sensory Worship at Old Windsor and an Allotment Service at Cookham. In true Thames Valley style, the Allotment Service finished with edible treats such as courgette cake and jam and potato squares!

2016 was a year which saw four of the five members of Staff up for re-invitation. The process began in May and continued throughout the Summer. Re-invitations can be a source of stress for those involved. Therefore, it was good that the Circuit Stewards did their best to ensure everything was done as transparently as possible. I would like to offer my gratitude to all the Circuit Stewards and particularly to Connie Jeffery, as senior Circuit Steward, who oversaw the procedure.

After a year of uncertainties and new beginnings, we look forward to strengthening the bonds of love and fellowship in the next connexional year. As I travel around the churches, I see people willing to go the extra mile for their congregations, for their communities and for their God. May we continue to seek out His will as we journey forth.

Sonia Hicks
November 2016

Senior Circuit Steward's Report

2015-16 has been a time of consolidation after change in the Thames Valley Circuit and also a time of prayerful consideration and preparation for staff and circuit stewards alike as we contemplated Stationing 2017. Circuit activity has continued unabated however.

Rev Sonia Hicks has made an excellent beginning as Superintendent with the support of the other staff members: Sonia has pastoral charge of Ledgers Road, Burnham and Cookham Rise, Rev Gary Homewood has pastoral charge of High Street Maidenhead, St Mark's Crescent and Woodlands Park, Rev Margaret Dudley looks after Windsor, Old Windsor, Colnbrook & Poyle and Eton Wick and Rev Mindy Bell both congregations at St Andrew's plus Hampshire Avenue. Deacon Andy Packer has extended his remit to cover the whole Circuit and is particularly involved with the congregation at Woodlands Park at present. Both Revs Sonia Hicks and Mindy Bell have taken sabbaticals during this church year, which have enabled them to take time out and do things they would not normally be able to consider. The Circuit coped well with both absences thanks to thorough preparation, the hard work of staff and Circuit stewards and the understanding forbearance of churches.

The Circuit Steward team now consists of myself, Liz Tottingham, Alan Crowle, Elsa Daniel, Glenice White and Chris Wren. The stewards' responsibilities are as follows:

Connie Jeffery

Care of Spring Lane manse and Rev Sonia Hicks and family; High St, St Andrew's (English) and Woodlands Park Church Councils.

Liz Tottingham

Care of Upton Road manse and Rev Mindy Bell and family; St Andrew's (Urdu) and Ledgers Road Church Councils and Colnbrook & Poyle's Church Meeting.

Alan Crowle

Care of Priesthaus and Rev Gary Homewood and family; St Mark's Crescent and Burnham Church Councils.

Elsa Daniel

Care of the Salt Hill manse and Deacon Andy Packer and family; Eton Wick and Hampshire Avenue Church Councils.

Glenice White

Care of Clarence Road manse and Rev Margaret Dudley; Windsor and Cookham Rise Church Councils.

Chris Wren

Circuit Treasurer; Old Windsor Church Council.

The process for Stationing 2017 began in April 2016 with meetings for Circuit Stewards. In the event all four of the staff members eligible for reinvitation from September 2017 (Revs Sonia Hicks, Margaret Dudley, Gary Homewood and Deacon Andy Packer) asked to extend their invitations. After much hard work on the part of the Circuit Stewards conducting consultations with all churches across the Circuit in the case of Sonia, and with churches in the relevant sections for the other three ministers, the Circuit Invitation Committee was delighted to recommend to the September 2016 Circuit Meeting that all four should be reinvited. When all your ministers want to stay it does make you feel you must be doing something right!

The Circuit events/services arranged under the auspices of the Smaller Churches Support Group continued during the year, with an Awayday led by Rev Dr Claire Potter on the theme of the relevance of the Wesleys today, plus healing services and *Come & See* services, including an allotment service at Cookham Rise in the summer and a much-appreciated sensory worship service. Thames Valley Voices, the Circuit singing group (originally a Smaller Churches venture) continued to draw singers from the majority of Circuit churches and to offer seasonal worship services to the Circuit. The now annual Prayer Safari, based on the Methodist Prayer Handbook for the year, was also held in October 2015. *Alive in Slough* continued to engage the three Slough churches in worship and activities together, while some of the men in the Circuit (Thames Valley Journeymen) continued to explore various areas of the Circuit and outside on foot, followed by a pub lunch. A joint training morning with the Staines & Feltham Circuit was held in the Spring, which was greatly appreciated – particularly by the much smaller Staines & Feltham Circuit.

The South East District has been involved in a ministerial supervision pilot, emanating from the Past Cases Review: this has now ended and the District will feed back to the Connexion. Rev Sonia Hicks and myself continue to be involved in the Western Area Development Group, looking at how the Circuits in the west of the South East District can work more closely together and share resources, etc.

The churches in the Circuit continue to be involved in many and varied mission and outreach opportunities, from *Open the Book* and *Messy Church* to *Create & Craft* via all manner of groups for young people and the elderly, and night shelters for the homeless and fresh expressions of worship. It feels as though there is an energy in the Circuit which will continue to flow and grow in 2016-2017.

Connie Jeffery
Senior Circuit Steward
November 2016