



The Methodist Church

**THAMES VALLEY
CIRCUIT**



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

(for the Church Year 1st September 2019 - 31st August 2020)

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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 2018), 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 2019. To see it, [click on this link](#).

Circuit Superintendent's Report

The lockdown caused by the COVID-19 virus has affected the Thames Valley Circuit in many ways. It has seriously impacted our fellowships, our ways of conferring and our finances. All the Circuit team have had to work hard to continue the work of God in this place. But there have been times of celebration too. For the first time in five years we had a fully functioning staff team as we welcomed Revd. Anne Ellis and Revd. Carmel Ieraci to the Circuit. Their Welcome Service took place in September with the new Chair of the South East District, Revd. Dr. David Hinchcliffe, preaching. It was a day of great rejoicing for the whole Circuit. It has been a joy and a blessing to have Carmel and Anne amongst us. They have shown a willingness to serve which has already borne fruit in the churches under their Pastoral Charge. Naturally, the lockdown has inhibited their full 'settling in' to these appointments, and we look forward to more face to face interaction with them both in the 'new normal'.

Just before lockdown commenced, the Circuit held a Local Preachers' Long Service Award ceremony during the evening at Windsor Church on March 15th. It was good to recognise the commitment of several of our Local Preachers. The preacher on that occasion was Jon Garde.

In April, Rev Tasawer Samuel decided to find alternate work which would be full-time. His services were greatly appreciated by the Urdu-speaking members who meet in St. Andrew's Church.

Deacon Andy Packer has served in this Circuit for the past eight years. His gentle humour and willingness will be missed by our Methodist family. Andy will begin a new appointment in the Barking, Dagenham and Ilford Circuit. We wish Andy, Lynn and Maxine all the very best and we thank Lynn especially for leading worship services, bible studies and serving as President of Methodist Women in Britain for the Circuit. We thank Maxine for sharing her gardening skills with most of the Circuit manse gardens. Her talents have been greatly valued by all.

I too will be leaving the Thames Valley Circuit after eight years. In all, I have had ten of the thirteen churches under my Pastoral Care during that time but, thankfully, not all at once! I have felt that it was a huge privilege to be appointed to this place with such amazing fellow travellers of The Way. You have supported me with love and friendship every step of the way. I particularly want to thank all who have served as Senior Circuit Stewards during my time as Superintendent. Both Connie Jeffery and Glenice White have been generous with their time, their prayerful concern and their graciousness. May God continue to uphold us all.

Sonia Hicks, July 2020

Senior Circuit Steward's Report

The Connexional year began with great joy as we welcomed Revd. Anne Ellis and the Revd. Carmel Ieraci to our team. They have been a blessing to the Circuit and contributed to the mission and hard work already being undertaken by Revd. Sonia Hicks, Revd. Margaret Dudley, Deacon Andy Packer and Pastor Josh Wilson.

When Covid struck, this did not deter any of them from making sure that our churches did not lack for pastoral support and worship. They have all grappled with the intricacies of Zoom both for services and meetings. During these recent months we have worshipped together as a Circuit and have appreciated seeing the faces of our friends. Some have joined our services from much further afield, so we have seen old friends as well.

Some of our thirteen congregations are considering returning to worship in our buildings, so Risk Assessments have been undertaken and the necessary preparations are being made. We do not know what the immediate future holds, but we go forward in faith but with great care being taken for our safety.

Until the Lockdown, our faithful band of Local Preachers were leading worship and we are grateful for their committed service. Mr Elijah Kommu continues as Local Preacher on Trial, and

Pastor Josh Wilson and Mrs Mwadzi Magisa have a Note to Preach. Mr Jon Garde continues in his Presbyteral training. The Circuit holds all these people in its prayers as they continue the work of God. We are grateful to Revd Andrew Reed, Superintendent of the Staines and Feltham Circuit, who continues to tutor our LPs on Trial.

In March, the Circuit was privileged to host the Presbyteral Synod at High Street in Maidenhead. A huge amount of work went into the planning as we were already hearing the siren voices about Covid. All went very well and a big thank you is due to the whole Circuit team with Ministers, stewards and caterers showing the Thames Valley Circuit at its best.

March should also have seen the dedication of the new additions to St Mark's Church. But this was not to be as we were into Lockdown when this should have taken place. However, many of us have been able to see the splendid improvements for ourselves. Well done to all at St Mark's who have made this dream a reality!

I must not forget to mention the enchanting Pantomime at St Mark's early in the year. Here we saw many old favourites, but some new talent as well. Why did Sonia leave it so long to show us her thespian skills?

Safeguarding has continued to be a high priority in this Circuit. We have been ably led by Kathy Rickman, our Circuit Safeguarding Officer, and she has been supported by all the individual Church Safeguarding Officers. All the Ministerial Staff have made very clear their commitment to its importance. Although they are on hold at present, thank you to all of you who have attended the Creating Safer Space training courses – it shows how seriously the Thames Valley Circuit considers Safeguarding to be.

The Circuit Stewards' Team for this Connexional year has been Glenice White (Senior Steward from September 2019), Joy Brown, Charles Buckman, Keith Machin, Liz Tottingham and Sue Le Page as Treasurer. I wish to say a personal thank you to all the team for their support of me and for all the hard work they do. For the Autumn months of the year we were blessed with Connie Jeffery on the team until she and Andrew moved just before Christmas to Northamptonshire. She has served the Circuit for several years as Steward and for four years as Senior Steward. The Circuit owes Connie a huge debt of gratitude for her leadership and hard work. We do miss her and wish her and Andrew every happiness in their new home.

Liz Tottingham stepped into the breach whilst we looked for a replacement for Connie. Liz had only recently retired from being a Circuit Steward, so special thanks to her for holding the fort.

During this year Stewards' responsibilities have been:

Charles – Particular care for Deacon Andy and his manse, Circuit representative on Ledgers Road and St Andrew's (Urdu language) Church Councils.

Joy – Particular care for Revd Margaret and her manse, Circuit representative on Windsor and Woodlands Park Church Councils. Although no longer the Circuit Property Steward, Joy has been invaluable in her support and expertise in property matters.

Keith – Particular care for Revd Anne and her manse, Circuit representative on St Andrew's and Hampshire Avenue Church Councils.

Liz – Particular care for Revd Sonia and her manse, Circuit representative on High Street and Colnbrook & Poyle Church Councils.

Glenice – particular care for Revd Carmel and her manse, Circuit representative on St Mark's, Cookham Rise and Burhan Church Councils

Sue – Circuit Treasurer and Circuit representative on Old Windsor and Eton Wick Church Councils.

With all our churches being closed, this has meant a considerably reduced income for many congregations. Sue has been keeping a close eye on Circuit finances. We realise that some churches will be finding it difficult to meet all their obligations. This could become a considerable problem in the year ahead.

On a very uplifting note, we were delighted to hear that Conference this year (held on Zoom, of course) had the wisdom to appoint Revd Sonia as President Elect and she will be President during 2021/2022. I think Sonia herself was a little surprised, but we in the Thames Valley were not and consider it an excellent choice. We wish her every success and blessing in this important role.

It would not be a Thames Valley Circuit report without mentioning property!

Revd Anne and Revd Carmel moved into the two new manses we acquired last year. They appear to have settled well into their new homes and we do hope they will be comfortable

Glenice White
August 2020