



The Methodist Church

Blackheath and Crystal Palace Circuit

Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 4

December 2013

Superintendent Minister's Letter

Dear Friends,

Although the shops have been heralding the arrival of Christmas for some months now, we have only just entered the Advent season which means that Christmas is indeed nearly here. This is a busy time for many in their family and work lives, and our Church services will no doubt also have a sense of active joy as we celebrate the birth of Christ. I would hope, however, that together with the activity of our Church and everyday lives, there will also be opportunities to be still and to consider the wonder of all that we shall celebrate. Advent provides just such a time.

At the heart of the familiar stories of shepherds and angels, of the wise men and the bright star, at the heart of the carols and the candles, is a deep truth which is at the very centre of our faith. The truth, that in the birth of Christ, God demonstrates his love for us. That, in Christ, God comes amongst us to share in our joys and sorrows - not at a distance, but at the very heart of our humanity. The birth of Jesus heralds the new relationship which is established with God, as he demonstrates the ultimate caring for his creation, the giving of himself in Christ.

This truth gives us cause to celebrate and to be joyful, and we shall certainly be engaging in these emotions within our Services. But perhaps there is also a need for repentance together with our thanksgiving. 2000 years after the birth of Christ, the World still fails to take hold of God's goodness, and to show that goodness in lives of peace.

For most of our congregations, Christmas will then lead into Covenant services in the early days of 2014. These provide us with the means by which thanksgiving and repentance finds its focus upon a commitment to God's service for the year ahead, as we resolve to be his people.

May we continue to know God's blessing in the weeks ahead and into the new year, as we celebrate the gift of Christ, Emmanuel - God with us. Stephen.

Opportunities for Coffee and Fellowship within the Circuit:

Burnt Ash:	
Wednesday mornings	10am-12 noon
Eltham Park:	
3 rd Saturday of every month	10.30-12 noon
Forest Hill:	
Tuesday Fellowship	2pm-3.30pm
Sunfields:	
Saturday mornings	10am-12 noon



Church Events around the Circuit

Burnt Ash

Thur. 4th, Fri 5th December 7.45pm; Sat. 6th December 2.30pm

College Park Players Present "Out of Focus"

Details and booking: rynld@aol.com

Wesley Hall

Saturday 7th December 11.00-15.00

Christmas Bazaar

Details map2610@aol.com

Carols Services around the Circuit

15th December

6.30pm: Anerley and Upper Norwood

22nd December

10.30am Hither Green

4pm Eltham Park and Wesley Hall

5.30pm Sunfields

6pm Burnt Ash

6.30pm Lewisham



Marsha Phoenix Trust

Christmas Coffee Morning: Friday 13 December 9.30-1pm

Civic Suite Foyer, Lewisham Town Hall

**Anerley Burnt Ash Eltham Park Forest Hill Hither Green
Lewisham Sunfields Upper Norwood Wesley Hall**

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Focus on... Forest Hill

Unlike many churches, Forest Hill Methodist Church is in a modern building on an otherwise residential street. One of the concerns when considering development of the site at Normanton Street was whether it would not be too out of the way. Thankfully that has proved not to be the case, and our membership now numbers 146. There is a tennis court/five-a-side football pitch to the left of the entrance gate, a few parking spaces and spacious gardens. Some of the stained glass windows remembering members who died in the 2nd World War were brought from the old church and installed in the new one, set with back lights, complimenting a very modern, attractive, stained glass window. We also brought along the old wooden cross even though we also have a shiny new one.

The original church in Forest Hill dates back to 1856. A "Central Methodist Church" was erected on the South Circular (A205) in 1913 and, after amalgamation with two other churches it became Forest Hill Methodist Church. In 1926, the Trustees, by means of gifts and loans from their own pockets, bought a piece of land to be used as a sports club in an effort to "hold young people". It took 36 years to pay off the loans, and was a significant act of faith by all concerned. In the mid-1990s the sports club finally closed, so the church was left with a plot of land on Normanton Street that rapidly fell into disuse. At the same time the building on the South Circular found itself surrounded by light industries and in need of extensive modernisation. The decision was made to apply for permission to build a new church on the disused sports ground. After eight years of difficult negotiations with the local council, permission was obtained and part of the land was sold for public housing.

In October 2003 planning permission was finally obtained, to a great deal of rejoicing. In 2007 we became owners of fairly large premises in the heart of a growing residential community. The premises were named "Forest Hill Methodist Church and Centre" in hope of numerous community activities to come. These hopes have been more than fulfilled. As well as the chapel which is the heart of the building, there are two large halls, smaller meeting rooms and an office that is open four days a week 09.30-1.30. These spaces enable us to host a wide variety of groups and activities throughout each week, both church and community based: Guiding groups, parent and toddler groups, choirs, training courses, dance groups, breakfast and after

School clubs, sports clubs, art exhibitions, storytelling workshops, Local Assembly consultation meetings etc., a branch of Narcotics Anonymous. These lets enable us to maintain the building. Children from the adjacent school, some with disabilities, use the tennis courts/football pitch as an extended play space. Other churches also use the building, and an occasional school assembly is conducted in the church. The building is fully accessible and comfortable for all ages of worshippers and other users, and there's no doubt that members enjoy coming to church.

The congregation is very diverse, with people originating from all over the world, as evidenced by the collection of flags on display in the cloister area of the building. Like many other churches, a large portion of our congregation is elderly, and we are finding it quite challenging "holding" young people. Fluctuations in Junior Church attendance are a concern, but we pray that a way will be found to keep the younger worshippers coming, for they are the future of the church.

Wednesday December 4th 8.00-9.30 p.m. "Encounter" - a new informal worship initiative at Eltham Park Methodist Church. The first, of what will be a monthly mid-week opportunity to worship in a different way, will be entitled '*Advent: watching & waiting*'. Snacks & drinks will be available as well as tea and coffee. We hope that it will be an uplifting, relaxing and refreshing experience of alternative forms of worship to enhance and enrich our encounter with God. All are welcome.

Circuit Forthcoming Events

Tuesday 21 st Jan.	Circuit Meeting 7.45pm	Burnt Ash
Thursday 30 th Jan	LWP meeting 7.45pm	Forest Hill

Circuit Website: bhcpmethodist.org.uk

Deadline for information for next newsletter:

1ST March 2014

Please email details to: office.bcpc@btinternet.com

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