

# News update

August 2025

Keeping our  
community  
connected

## A summary of what is happening in our Circuit....

The **Methodist Church**  
Oxford Circuit

### The Circuit Stewards

As we move forward and develop our plans for the future the Circuit Stewards and staff are very grateful for all your prayers. If those prayers lead you to reflect on what you might offer, we would love to hear from you and if that leads to offering to be a Circuit Steward please do get in touch, as some of us have been serving the circuit in this way for a long time. (Six years is the usual period of time). Miriam Moul, (superintendent) or Margaret Sawyer (Circuit Steward) look forward to hearing from you.

The Oxford Methodist Circuit has a Facebook page which can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/oxfordmethodistcircuit>

If you would like to publicise an event on the page, please send the information to the office, and don't forget to follow us.

If you are unable to get to church for any reason you can find an audio recording of a service every week on the circuit website:

<https://www.oxfordmethodists.org.uk/resources/worship/podcasts.html>

### Lime Walk

At Lime Walk, we have a range of weekly outreach activities, such as Tuesday afternoon drop-ins and a Friday ploughman's meal. These provide a wonderful opportunity for new friendships to flourish alongside enjoying homemade cakes.

On May 6th we combined a VE day celebration with 2 ninety-first birthdays, with a sing along of war time songs, a hearty rendition of *happy birthday*, and a cream tea. We ran out of chairs it proved so popular!

Friday ploughman's, every first Friday of the month, provides a simple meal with homemade puddings. In winter months we have started providing homemade soup instead of ham, or vegetarian quiche salads. Those who attend much appreciate the food and fellowship combination.

We have enjoyed a wide range of church services this year and a significant number of the church thoroughly enjoyed the circuit celebration service at Wesley Memorial. Recently the music group *Sanctified* led

our morning worship for the second time (see top photo) which was much appreciated by all who attended and can still be viewed on YouTube as one of our streamed services. Our quarterly Taizé service (photo below) took place in June, and we are very grateful to Stephen and Liz for organising such wonderful reflective worship.

Each year we fundraise for a range of charities, and over the years have raised a great deal of money. This year we are supporting the Red Cross, Water Aid, Community Cupboard and Cure Parkinson's.



## Great Milton

We enjoyed thoroughly the circuit gathering at the beginning of June with the opportunity to meet other members of the circuit and the new trainee presbyter Aqeela before she came to our church to lead a memorable service. Our prayer station of fish-shaped prayers suspended from a hat stand was a joint production between our congregation and Jo. Of course, the highlight of the whole gathering for us was the splendid performance from Bladon Junior Church – what a talented group!



During April we joined with local Anglicans in a series of Lent Lunches. Our tomato soup and a bread roll lunch contributed over £150 to the total.

A recent highlight was being able to celebrate, during one of our free monthly coffee mornings, the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of local village resident Tony with cake and a rousing

chorus. Tony is one of our regulars and always appears with a pack of chocolate fingers.

In July we were invited as a church to join with the congregation of St. Mary's, Great Milton for a family service. Further, we were invited to provide a reader of the Gospel lesson which was read by Alan Booker, and Stephen Spain was invited to preach (photos below). St. Mary's provided the coffee. As one of the members of their PCC is seriously ill in Northern Italy, it was a great opportunity for the whole village to join together in prayer for him.



## Biodiversity at Rose Hill

At Rose Hill, we are very fortunate to have a beautiful 200-year-old churchyard. Over the last few months, we have been discussing how we can best manage it not only to honour it as a sacred space, but also to protect and promote biodiversity.

Churchyards, where the ground has often been undisturbed for a very long time, are valuable havens for wildlife, and can be rich in plant and animal species. In a time of ecological crisis, it is our responsibility as stewards of God's creation to nurture these.

We are drawing up a simple management plan, following the guidance of Caring for God's Acre, a national charity for the conservation of burial sites. We are counting wildflowers (so far 51 species), and are making a detailed map of the churchyard, incorporating gravestones, trees, and other features, and also the congregation's memories.

As one member said, 'It has made the churchyard come alive'.





## Wesley Memorial

Our Church Weekend at High Leigh in Hertfordshire held at the end of April was very much enjoyed by the 71 people attending. We had a wonderful spread of ages (under 2 years old to octogenarians) and all enjoyed a beautifully sunny weekend. We prayed, made music together, participated in workshops with enriching discussions, had fun together, ate well and explored the grounds and local environment. It was a refreshing and nurturing time together – Miriam led us on the theme of growing together, Sabbath and rest.



We had joint services with St Columba's URC and New Baptist Church during Holy Week and again at the beginning of Christian Aid Week. Our annual Christian Aid Street Market was a huge success and raised our highest total ever of just over £2247.63. This together with a collection at church raised a grand total of £4012.48 for Christian Aid Week.



At the beginning of May we celebrated the 40th birthday of Rainbow House inviting past volunteers to join us for coffee and cake. We were also joined by the Deputy Mayor.



We were delighted to be joined by people from across the circuit at the Oxford Pride event on 7th June and show witness to our commitment to inclusivity.



## Bladon Junior Church

We are delighted to announce that we have the rights to stage Andrew Lloyd Webber's rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar. We last performed this show back in 2012 so only our very oldest members will remember this. We also staged the show back in 1990 and then again in 2002, when the chief priest was played by Graham Kirby! Please make sure you have the dates of this year's show in your diaries – Monday 27 October to Saturday 1 November.

We are looking forward to returning to 3Generate where will perform songs from Jesus Christ Superstar and run a musical theatre workshop. We will also be taking the opportunity to compare and contrast how Jesus Christ Superstar portrays the last week of Christ's life with what we know from biblical records, in a special service with Paul.

Earlier in the year Heather ran the Manchester Marathon in 4 hours and 15 minutes on behalf of Bladon Junior Church. She was delighted to raise a total of £786 for church funds – thank you so much to everyone in the Circuit who sponsored her so generously. Not to be outdone by the younger generation, Philip completed the Eastbourne Marathon last month, although he took 10 minutes longer than Heather's time! He raised £500 for BJC funds from his

work colleagues. Also, in July we said goodbye to Heather as she is leaving us for a teaching job in Brazil. She has attended church every week since birth so it will be very strange without her, however we gave her a joyful send-off with an outdoor party including a giant bouncy castle!



In May we staged a very successful concert *Magic at the Musicals* with musical numbers from shows including Hamilton, Pippin, 42nd Street, Sister Act, We Will Rock You and The Pirates of Penzance. You can get a flavour of the concert in the gallery on our website [www.juniorchurch](http://www.juniorchurch).



## Kidlington

I suspect that many churches, Methodist or otherwise enjoy serving food and Kidlington is no different! It has Biblical precedents too as so many of Jesus' encounters with others involved a meal. On Good Friday we joined other churches in Kidlington for the Walk of Witness. This starts at St John's (Anglican) church then stops at the Catholic and Methodist churches before finishing in the village centre with a short act of worship before we then go back to KMC for coffee and hot cross buns!

In May we followed our annual church meeting with a bring and share lunch to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE day. Food, a quiz and background music were all themed accordingly. We were pleased to be joined by a number of those who attend our Saturday morning coffee mornings. Also, in May we had a soup lunch and a cream tea to raise money for Christian Aid. The two events were very successful and raised a good sum.

Our Grave Talk café sessions held last year were so successful that we repeated them. This is an opportunity for people to talk about life, death and related topics over coffee and cake. Those who have attended tell us that the conversations have been really helpful.

Young people also enjoy food at various activities – pizza or hot dogs at the monthly Friday Film Club, edible craft at ZacPack and there's always yummy refreshments at Minecraft Church.



Looking ahead, Marilyn King is once again running *Holiday at Home* in August. This is aimed at people who might feel lonelier during the summer holidays when some regular activities take a break and families might be away. There will be three days of companionship, entertainment and (of course) food.

A new venture for us is that we will be running a repair café on the second Saturday of the month – initially for a six-month pilot. This will be for people to drop in with household, electrical, bicycle, sewing or other repairs. We are pleased that a number of people from the local community have come forward to volunteer for the event. This is a good way to reach out to the community as well as being an eco-project.





## Watlington – Tree of Hope

At the end of June Watlington held its Mid-Summer Fair where Watlington Methodists had a table under the welcome shade of one of the trees in the Paddock. We decided to make this a Tree of Hope. Here anyone, though usually children, could decorate card hearts and write a message of what they hoped for on it and hang the heart on the tree. There were also bookmarks to decorate and take home as well as pencils.

Children, and parents took to this enthusiastically and at the end of the day we collected 59 hearts off the tree and took them back to display on a table in our church making it easier for people to read the messages. Young people really thought about what they were writing, as Graham Pitman wrote last month “many young people are rejecting materialism and have a passion for a better world”. Here are some of the Hopes we collected:

*People start doing things about climate change.  
I wish for a unicorn.  
Love, Peace – spread love – stop wars.  
My hope is that we all become MORE hopeful.  
World peace – No Donald Trump – No more climate change.  
May all homes be filled with love and laughter.  
Dunno!*

We had pictures of rainbows, families holding hands, birds, clouds and lots of hearts.

But what about the “Dunno”? I dunno what to hope for because there’s so much, or so little? I dunno because it’s not worth hoping for anything? The question is so big and I dunno where to start? I dunno how to express what my hopes are.

The final hope comes, I think, from Robert Burns:

*Then let us pray  
That come it may  
And come it will for aw that.  
That man to man the world o’er  
Will brothers be for aw that.*



## Kennington

We continue to enjoy being together each Sunday morning and do our best to look after one another but our numbers are small. However, we are doing our best to find different approaches. At Kennington we now have a variety of different styles of worship which attract a different congregation to some of them. The Together Services are still happening, and we have Cafe Style services too where we enjoy fellowship more informally with one another. The remaining two Sundays are our monthly Holy Communion service and one ordinary service. We are starting a games afternoon in the church garden one afternoon a month and have advertised widely in Kennington including at Rainbows and in the Kennington chronicle and so we hope this will grow.



## Woodstock

Our regular programme of local arrangements continues on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month. These are all-age and usually café style in which we have explored different themes and styles of worship including Minecraft Church (which was led by Emma Huber from Kidlington), and a service around Asylum Welcome, where we welcomed Sarah Totterdell (Joint CEO), Emma Jones (Communications Coordinator) and Jack Lalmunsanga from Wesley Memorial who spoke about his experiences of coming to this country. From September we have services based on Bridewell Gardens and a Pet Service. We are always happy to share LA service plans we have run, if any church would like to see them.



At Easter we used the front, outside space to display the Easter Cross. On Palm Sunday it was decorated with Palm Crosses and an invitation to take a cross and a copy of the Easter story. On Easter Sunday, after the service, we flowered the cross with posies, again, inviting the community to participate in decorating the cross during the week.



In May, we held an afternoon tea for Christian Aid, which raised over £500.

We continue to progress our Churches Future Story, with a special focus on finances to increase giving and revenue for the church. One of the first ones will be selling bacon butties to coincide with Ride and Stride. If you are Riding and Striding in Woodstock on the morning of 13<sup>th</sup> September, why not pop along to the church and get one!

We have nominated our two church charities for 2025/27. These are *All We Can* and *Bridewell Gardens* (a mental health recovery service). We will be supporting them over the next 2 years.

The “Knit for Peace” group, that meets on an ad-hoc basis has 3 more dates planned, Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September, 6<sup>th</sup> October and 3<sup>rd</sup> November between 2-4pm at the church. All are welcome just bring yourself (and your knitting needles or crochet hook).

On the first Sunday evening of each month at 7pm we continue to hold a half hour service of *Stillness, Silence and Simplicity* to which we extend a very warm welcome to all.

## Rose Hill

In the context of our church’s aims to create opportunities for all to share God’s love and to be a welcoming church at the heart of our community, Rose Hill MC has embarked on a project to refurbish the kitchen and toilets, so that we can have facilities that are suitable to support the many activities that happen at the church on a weekly basis but particularly, the work of Community Cupboard Foodbank, which provides a hot meal for 30 - 40 people each week, and the Monday cafe which serves upwards of 20 people most weeks. It is hoped that most of the funding will be from grant applications, but the church has also embarked on some fundraising activities. Including an afternoon cream tea, a tabletop sale and currently a sponsored slim! Please look out for future events as we would love your support, to enable us to carry out this very important outreach work. Alternatively, you can donate directly by cash or cheque: please make payable to ‘Rose Hill Methodist Church – General’.

Bank transfer: Rose Hill Methodist Church – General  
Sort code: 30-12-51 Account no.: 00714858

If you are eligible for Gift Aid, please complete a Gift Aid declaration available on our website here.

[Renovation Project – Rose Hill Methodist Church, Oxford](#)



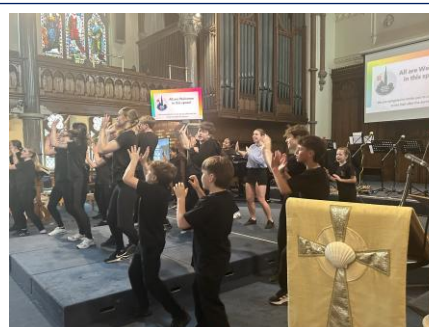
## News from the Circuit Meeting about the Stationing Process

After careful consultation, the Circuit Meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> August received the recommendation of the Circuit Invitation Committee that Revd Stephen Spain be invited for a further two years from September 2026.

We are delighted that Stephen's ministry along with that of Liz Spain will continue until the summer of 2028.



The Rev Paul Carter has made the decision to seek a new Circuit appointment from September 2026 and will be leaving the Circuit. Paul and Carol will be greatly missed amongst us and we hold them in our prayers.



In response to the commitment to retain three ordained presbyters in the Circuit, we will now enter the Stationing process and seek to be matched with a probationer Presbyter.

Probationers are required to be given a lighter pastoral load than already ordained presbyters. Consequently, the probationer profile will include Tackley, Bladon, Kidlington and Woodstock. Rose Hill will receive alternative ministerial oversight to support them with their property and outreach projects.

A probationer presbyter will bring energy and enthusiasm to a first appointment, and this Circuit has a long and fruitful history of welcoming and nurturing probationers.

If our profile for a probationer is not accepted or matched, we will enter Stationing for a presbyter through the normal channels. If we are matched with an experienced presbyter then the profile will include Tackley, Bladon, Kidlington, Woodstock and Rose Hill.

There are lots of factors at play here as you can see!

Please do pray for the stationing process and for us as a Circuit that we may be matched with the right person to join our team and further our mission together.

*Left – photos from our Circuit Celebration in June.*