

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

TUESDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY at 7.30pm: meeting at the United Reformed Church to discuss the development of the church hall (the Meade Centre).

SUNDAY, 16TH FEBRUARY at 6pm: first of the new evening worship sessions called SOUL FOOD @ 6 at the United Reformed Church.

FRIDAY, 21ST FEBRUARY at 7.30pm: General knowledge quiz at St Bede's. Tables of 6 (you can join in with others on the night). £6 per person which includes a fish & chip supper. Tickets available from Mal Nally on 01908 611802.

SUNDAY, 23RD FEBRUARY: deadline for returning completed forms for Lent course.

FRIDAY, 7TH MARCH: Lent lunches start.

FRIDAY, 7TH MARCH at 7.30pm: united service at the United Reformed Church for Women's World Day of Prayer. The theme for this year's Day of Prayer is Egypt. Everyone is welcome to come to this service – not just women!

SATURDAY, 8TH MARCH: first day of 'Big Little Give' week.

SUNDAY, 9TH MARCH from 12 noon - 1pm: start of the new PILGRIM learning course at the United Reformed Church.

MONDAY, 10TH MARCH: Lent study groups begin this week.

THURSDAY, 3RD APRIL at 7.30pm: meeting at the United Reformed Church to raise awareness about the work of Christian Aid

CTNP President: Vacancy
Secretary: Beth MacKay, beth.mackay@yahoo.co.uk Tel. 612475
Treasurer: Paul Tolley, PTMERCEDES@aol.com Tel. 210048
CTNP web-site: - www.ctnp.org.uk



CONNECTIONS FEBRUARY 2014

*Jesus Christ is healing, healing in the streets;
curing those who suffer, touching those he
greet. Listen Lord Jesus, I have pity too; let
my care be active, healing just like you.*

John L Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958)

PRAYING FOR THE TOWN

What a great morning we had on Saturday, 25 January! And how easy it was to organise! A mixed bunch of us from the different Churches in the town arrived at 9.30am, put up the table, set out the pens, rescued the sand from the boot of Nita's car and put up the washing line and Prayer Trees! We then went into the Methodist Church to pray – to prepare ourselves for offering prayer to passers-by.

The words of the preparation prayer that stuck with me were - 'Help us avoid the rain but be showered with blessings'! And we were! What a privilege! Many people stopped and we were able to talk to them about 'Blue Monday', ask if they had concerns or worries or problems they would like to share and we offered them the chance to write a prayer on a card or leaf and hang it on the line or on one of the trees. It was amazing how people responded and opened up and wanted to talk and think about others too. Some walked by, some asked us what we were selling, but many were pleased that someone wanted to talk to them and listen and share with them.

At 12 noon, the sun had come out (but it was still quite cold!) and we packed up, having been showered with blessings and perhaps sown some seeds or prompted some thinking and, hopefully, offered God's love and hope through Praying with the Town. We all agreed it is worth doing again!

Revd Jenny Mills

Articles to the Editor, Beth MacKay
Preferably by e-mail to beth.mackay@yahoo.co.uk 612475
Copy Deadline - 20th of each month

LETTER FROM A MINISTER

When thinking of writing a letter for February, the first thing that comes to mind is 'What is February well known for?' Well, 'February brings the rain, Thaws the frozen lake again'. But I am sure we are all fed up of talking about the weather! And then we have Valentine's Day. The time we focus on love and those whom we love and we try not to be too taken in by the blatant commercialization of the day!

Well, that's where my thoughts settled. LOVE. We sang at Christmas: 'Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine'. And we remembered how God sent Jesus to live in this world as a human, to show us how to live and help us to live and love well.

So, what is LOVE? The Oxford Dictionary defines it in about 9 ways! From 'an intense feeling of deep affection or fondness for a person or thing' through to '(in some games) no score'! For most of us love is recognised as a feeling. It can be sensual love, family love, love for others (those not included in the first two!) and then I would say there is a fourth one that I would call 'agape'. This sort of love is what I feel we should all seek to express in our lives. This is a love that is unconditional, that goes beyond self, beyond personal prejudices and judgements, beyond easy relationships and preferred choices. It is a love that goes the extra mile, that loves even those hard to love, that thinks of the higher good.

I believe that is what Jesus came to show us. In the Bible we can read of stories where Jesus spent time with those who were outcasts from society; where he spent time with those that others would turn away from; where he actively went against social norms to show people they were loved and included. So although Christmas is gone (some of the signs of it are harder to shift than others...!), we can still find our lives touched by the message of Christmas and take with us the message of love, precious love that includes and enables and values; going beyond self and working together. If we all try a little harder to show that sort of love to those whom we meet, the world will be a safer, happier, more caring place. **Happy February!**

Revd Jenny Mills

MK FOODBANK BIG LITTLE GIVE 2014

Many of our congregations already make regular contributions to the Foodbank for which we are extremely grateful - in fact there would not be a Foodbank without you! Many others make a donation at Harvest festival time which fills the shelves at the warehouse for a while but then there is no other 'major' boost to stocks for another year. The 'Big Little Give' (BLG) was introduced to bridge that gap by asking people to donate one item to the Foodbank in March.

This year BLG week starts on the weekend of the **8th March**. If you can donate an item of non-perishable food that week, it would be greatly appreciated. Perhaps you could even organise a collection at your place of work or your local school?

There is no need to stick with that week if it is not convenient - collections go on for a while afterwards and I am happy to arrange to pick up any donations. I am also happy to come along and talk to your group about the Foodbank if that would help. For any further information please contact me (Geoff Morris) on 617050.

NIGHT SHELTER

For one night each week Lovat Hall has been hosting the Milton Keynes cold weather shelter for homeless people which runs up to the end of February. Although most of the volunteers this year are from the Baptist Church, there has also been some support from other churches. So far the shelter has been at full capacity and figures as at 30th January show that 25 of those attending have been found long-term accommodation (figure does not include those found accommodation on their first day).

*To the lost Christ shows his face;
to the unloved he gives his embrace;
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,
Christ makes with his friends a touching place.*

John L Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958)

THE EMERGENCY HELP SCHEME

The Scheme continues to offer transport to those who have difficulty getting to clinical appointments.

Although the last quarter has been unusually quiet, the frequency of requests since the turn of the new year is once again increasing. We have dealt with 284 calls in the last 12 months, each request requiring approx 4-5 outgoing calls to find a driver. To cope with this we have increased the number of co-ordinators to take calls and assign drivers. Trips vary in length from the local medical centre to Oxford and Stoke Mandeville Hospitals.

We are only able to offer transport for those who live within the Newport Pagnell boundaries. Occasionally we have requests from people who live in the surrounding area. Unfortunately we can't help these folk. We feel sure that there will be some people living in Stoke Goldington, Willen, North Crawley or other villages who are able to help their neighbours in this way.

Please contact Nita if you feel you would like to do this. Likewise, if you can help with transporting those who live in the town we would welcome your call. It's a great way to serve your neighbour. Expenses will be paid. Please contact Nita Tolley on 01908 615729 or email nitagt53@aol.com.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S MUSIC AND SINGING GROUP (Y-SING)

If you have children or grandchildren in School Years 4, 5 or 6 who are free between 5.45 and 6.30pm on Mondays during term time, do encourage them to come along to the Parish Church to sing and/or play musical instruments with us. There is no charge and we have a break in the middle for refreshments. The children taking part over the last two years have ranged from Year 3 to Year 8.

We sing worship songs, hymns and even gospel music. At the moment we are preparing to sing at the Mothering Sunday service at 9.30am on 30th March.

Richard Heyes

CAN YOU HELP WITH OUR LENT LUNCHESES?

Lent Lunches 2014 to raise money for Christian Aid will take place at the URC Hall for six weeks from **Friday 7th March – Friday 11th April**. Offers of help for this annual CTNP event are requested from ALL the churches in Newport Pagnell and from anyone in our community who has two hours to spare on a Friday, even if it is only for one Friday during the six weeks.

Time involved would be from 11.30am – 1.45pm. Tasks include, setting up and laying tables, stirring soup, making tea/coffee, serving tables, washing up, tidying the hall at the end of the session. This may sound like hard work, but working together as a team is enjoyable, and it's for such a good cause!

Please contact Jennifer Mazzone on 01908 613088 to let her know if/when you are able to give your time, and/or can contribute homemade soup, on one or more of these Friday lunchtimes.

OUR FIVE-WEEK LENT COURSE

This year's Lent course is a York course, 'Build on the Rock'. The five sessions are: Believing and Doubting; Jesus our Teacher; Jesus our Saviour; Jesus Conqueror of Death; and Jesus Lord and Brother. People from all the churches are invited to take part. Sign-up forms should be available in the churches from Sunday, 2nd February **for return by 23rd February**.

Study groups will begin from Monday, 10th March. There will be one large group on Tuesday afternoons and this will be held in the Methodist Church. We also hope to be able to set up several house groups on different week-day evenings depending on the availability and preferences of those who want to take part.

It can be so refreshing and stimulating to have Christians from different churches all working together in these groups and it's always good when reflecting on issues of faith to get input from other Christian traditions as well as our own. It's also a way of getting to know people in the wider church community better and strengthening relationships. So do sign-up for these study groups if you can. It's a great way to prepare for Easter!

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

On the 3rd Sunday of each month, beginning on **February 16th** at 6pm at the United Reformed Church (through the arch on the High Street), we have our new evening worship called SOUL FOOD @ 6. It is an alternative worship opportunity and will be different each month as we aim to have different leaders. We hope it will become a time of reflection and thinking, challenge and comfort, peace and conversation. We would love to welcome you to this non-threatening, relevant and accessible, alternative worship opportunity.

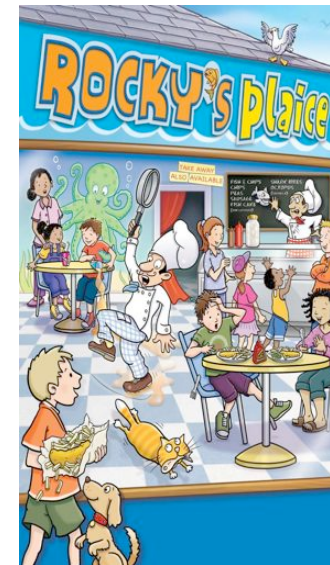
And beginning on **Sunday 9th March** from 12 noon to 1pm we will run our new PILGRIM learning course for five weeks. It is themed: *Turning to Christ (What do Christians believe?)*. It was published in October 2013 by the Church of England and this is what is written about it: "Pilgrim is a course for the Christian journey. For most people today, becoming a Christian is like a journey. We therefore need resources that will help turn fellow travellers and interested enquirers into pilgrims. This is what Pilgrim sets out to do. Like other courses it deals with the basics of the Christian faith and includes discipleship. Pilgrim encourages you to think and pray; to be an apostle as well as a disciple." Everyone is welcome to attend this learning course.

We are continuing our work on focusing on the development of our Church Hall (Mead Centre) and have our next meeting on **Tuesday 11th February at 7.30pm** in the room at the back of the Church. If you are interested in getting involved in this project as we seek to develop a flexible community space for all, please come along. For more information on all these opportunities please email revdjmills@btinternet.com.

HOLIDAY CLUB 11th – 15th August 2014

This year we are using Scripture Union's Rocky's Plaiice material (yes it is spelt like that!) We are planning and praying for 150 primary school age children and are busy recruiting the team. The Bible content centres on the life of Peter.

Join up and have great fun with the kids and the team. If you are inexperienced – don't worry, we will provide some training and support – and we're looking for help with all sorts of tasks, not just working with the children. For example, we need people to help prepare the hall, clear up afterwards, help run a crèche for younger children of volunteers, prepare mic morning refreshments and lunch for the helpers, etc... There are lots of ways you can help so contact us at Info@npbc.org.uk. It's a wonderful venture to be involved in so don't miss out!



Registration for children wishing to attend the Holiday Club will take place in advance **from March** via Cambourne Travel, 52 High Street, Newport Pagnell.