

# Weybridge Methodist Church

## Newsletter January 2017



## **The President and Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Dr Roger Walton and Rachel Lampard MBE, speak about the Nativity, Syria and unpromising situations in this year's Christmas and New Year Message**

The shabby collection of rooms was perched on the edge of a steep hill above Amman in Jordan. We were visiting a family of Syrian refugees who had just had a baby, and were being helped by funding provided by the Methodist charity, All We Can.

A woman, who we assumed was the grandmother, answered the door and invited us in. We sat on the floor, along with a local health worker. The father appeared with the baby, Yosra, and three other small children. It turned out that the woman was not the grandmother, but rather the mother of the family. She was just in her 30s, prematurely aged by the privations and stresses of recent years. They had left Syria four years ago, and now lived in a couple of basic rooms. The three children were similar ages to my own, but were tiny. As a refugee the father was banned from working and the family was reliant on support from a charity in order to be able to survive.

What an unpromising situation they were in. The family were underfed, with very little prospect of being able to improve their circumstances. They were desperate to go back to Syria, but recognised that this was unlikely any time soon. And their tiny baby, who slept in my arms, faced growing into adulthood in a foreign country, in poverty.

And yet. When we asked the father of the family what he wanted for the future, instead of talking about better housing, more food, or even a return to Syria, said "I want my children to be the best people that they can be". It was breath-taking. A family were facing immense poverty and dislocation, yet had the highest hopes for the character and contribution of their children.

A similarly unpromising set of circumstances surrounded another young family less than 50 miles away in Bethlehem two millennia ago. A young girl had given birth to a baby, far from her home and her family, in an outhouse, shared with animals. She had become pregnant outside marriage, and was only rescued from shame and rejection by her fiancé taking on a baby that wasn't his. Ahead lay real danger, as the ruler of the area would soon order his soldiers to slaughter all the baby boys. A

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dirty, shameful, dangerous situation. An unpromising set of circumstances. And yet. This is exactly the place the Messiah, the son of God, was born into.

But should we really be surprised? This is a God who said that the kingdom of heaven belonged, not to the rich or powerful or religious, but to little children. This is a God who chose women, tax collectors, fishermen to begin a worldwide movement for the salvation of all people. Unpromising is not a word which seems to put God off; on the contrary the Bible seems to suggest that God seeks out the unpromising, the weak, the outcast in order to build his kingdom. The apostle Paul, when writing to the Corinthians, said "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God." (1 Corinthians 27-19)

We are living in times which might be described as unpromising, or even "interesting" according to the old Chinese proverb. We face great uncertainty in our politics, our economics, our relationships with one another. Around the planet there is apparently relentless violence, and the poorest, as ever, bear the consequences of our inability to restrain our use of resources. Our own Methodist Church is seeing a continuing decline in members and a shortage of ministers for the churches we have. The future is surely unpromising.

And yet. Our faith surely prompts us not to turn away purely because any situation looks unpromising. This doesn't mean facing it with blind and passive optimism. Instead we have a hope which is grounded in the foolishness of God, which is wiser and stronger than wisdom and strength of the world. And God is at work in our world, and invites us to join in. As the theologian Ken Leech said: "hope isn't a state of mind; it's a piece of work". In the unpromising situations in our world, where is God inviting us to join in? Where is God asking us to see the treasure that is hidden within the clay jars? Where is God asking us, not to be optimistic, but rather to be hopeful?

We would like to suggest that you do three things over this "unpromising" Christmas season.

Firstly, the Methodist Church, together with the United Reformed Church, the Baptist Union and the Church of Scotland, have produced a short film, "A Very British Nativity", which suggests how Mary and Joseph might have fared arriving in the UK as asylum seekers. Why not

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watch it, share it and perhaps show it as part of your Christmas celebrations at church - and reflect on what this unpromising small family might mean for others, asylum seekers and refugees in particular, and how we can make their future more hopeful.

Secondly, we invite you to reflect on something that initially appeared unpromising. This might be something in your own life, the life of your church, or in the wider society or world. How was the potential or transformation within each situation revealed? What was the treasure in the clay jars?

And thirdly ask yourself: what is unpromising in your life or church or community at the moment? What might God be doing there already - or what might God do if only you would join in?

In this season we pray that you will have a happy and peace-filled Christmas, and that you will know the love of God who acts through the most unpromising things and people to bring about his kingdom of holiness and justice.

**The Revd Dr Roger Walton and Rachel Lampard MBE**

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## **Circuit Mission Supper, Trinity Methodist Church, Woking**

**February 4<sup>th</sup> 2017**

The President and Vice President of Conference are coming to the Wey Valley Circuit over the weekend 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> February next year. They will both be speaking at the Mission Supper at Trinity Methodist Church, Woking and we hope there will be a very good attendance.

There is a small group arranging the supper on behalf of the Circuit and we need assistance from each church.

This is what we would like your help with:

Please put your date in your diary.

To help us gauge numbers for supper, we are selling tickets as on previous Mission Suppers and in January we will post a batch of tickets to you for sale amongst your congregation. The cost will be £7 each which will cover the costs of the evening and should enable us to make

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a worthwhile donation to 'All We Can'. We will need to hear from you during the week before the supper about how many tickets have actually been sold, so that we can be confident about seating and catering arrangements.

As has been the custom for many years we will be asking each church to provide particular food which will be arranged in a large buffet for everyone to help themselves from.

We will send you more details about dealing with the money and timings for the evening, in due course.

So, we hope your church members will be enthused to attend what we believe will be a very special evening.

Best wishes

*Joan Tabraham, Janet Shaw, Liz Swift, Jean Normington and John Nelson*

*Circuit Mission Supper Group*

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## **Thank you**

- To the Stan and the Smith family for erecting and decorating the Christmas tree.
- To David Smith for organising and fitting a new door closure.
- To all those who contributed towards and helped at the Church family lunch on 18 December.
- To all those who help out at services by providing music, undertaking readings and providing refreshments. Your continued and regular help will be much appreciated.
- To those who help at the Old Folks club
- To those who help at the monthly coffee mornings
- To those who help at the Bedding & Clothes bank
- To those who donated to the Silver Tree collection: £50 was raised for 'New Life' charity.
- To those who donated to the Foodbank collection

# **CIRCUIT MISSION SUPPER AND TALK**

Trinity Methodist Church, Woking

**Sat 4<sup>th</sup> Feb 2017**



Speakers- **REVD. DR. ROGER WALTON**  
(President of the Methodist Conference)

*and*

**MS. RACHEL LAMPARD**  
(Vice President of the Methodist Conference)

*on the subject of:*

***The Syrian Refugee Camps***

6.00pm for 6.30pm

Tickets available (£7 each) from your Church Representative:

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## Dates for the diary

Sunday 1 Jan 2017	10.30 am Morning worship	Mr Hugh Bowerman <i>Steward – Jose</i> <i>Music - Adrian</i>
Thursday 5 Jan 2017	7.30 Barnabas Group	Venue TBC
Sunday 8 Jan 2017	10.30 Morning Worship	Rev Andrew Smith <i>Steward- Pru</i> <i>Music – i-pad</i>
Thursday 12 Jan 2017	1.45 pm Old Folks club	Weybridge Hall
Saturday 14 Jan 2017	10.00 am Coffee Morning	Run by us at Addlestone
Sunday 15 am 2017	<b>10.30 Covenant Service &amp; Communion</b>	Rev Dr Claire Potter <i>Steward – Linda</i> <i>Music – Adrian</i> <i>Gifts for the Foodbank</i>
Thursday 19 Jan 2017	7.30 Barnabas Group	Venue TBC
Saturday 21 Jan 2017	Bedding & Clothes Bank	
Sunday 22 Jan 2017	10.30 am Morning worship	Mrs Vivien Gerhold <i>Steward – Jose</i> <i>Music – i-pad</i>
Sunday 29 Jan 2017	10.30 am Morning worship	Rev Paul Chesworth <i>Steward – Linda</i> <i>Music - Jose</i>
Sunday 29 Jan 2017	6 for 6.30 <b>Café Church</b>	Mr Philip Beastall

## Advance Dates

Saturday 4 Feb 2017	<b>Circuit Mission Supper</b>	Trinity Methodist church
Friday 17 Feb 2017	Film 'My Fair Lady' and afternoon tea	<b>Byfleet</b> <b>14.00</b>
Sat 18 Feb 2017	Bedding & Clothes bank	
Thurs 23 Feb 2017	1.45 pm Old Folks club	Weybridge Hall
Sunday 26 Feb 2017	<b>Pudding &amp; Praise</b> 6 for 6.30pm	Walton Methodist Church

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## Prayers:

### Please pray for

- Reg, who has been in hospital since the beginning of December.
- Fiona, who is still experiencing pain with the leg.
- Brenda
- Mary & Stan
- Asif who is recovering well from his recent minor surgery
- Rev David Faulkner as he continues his sabbatical whilst dealing with the failing health of his aging father.

*Remember that Lili holds a time of prayer every Sunday before the morning service.*

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# A Night of Eastern Promise

***DRAMA FROM THE EAST AND MUSIC FROM THE  
MUSICALS***

**Thursday 9th March - 7:45pm**

**Friday 10th March - 7:45pm**

**Saturday 11th March - 7:15pm**

**Walton Methodist  
Church Hall  
Terrace Road  
Walton-On-Thames**

**Tickets £12 (to include a 'High Tea' )**

*Speak to any cast member or  
visit our page on [waltonmethodist.com](http://waltonmethodist.com) to get tickets!*

