

West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership

## **Toothill Church**

**Mission Statement** – To know Christ and to make him known

**Minister** – Vacant (Advice from Rev. Jan Partridge, retired)

**Church Officers.** Elected by the members at the Church Meeting

Chair of Church Committee-	Mark Dowling
Secretary-	Rebecca Johnson
Treasurer-	Gordon Partridge
Stewards-	David Hoar, Anthony Farfoull (part time)

**Musical Director-** Nicola Hoar

**Church Committee-** Minister, Church Officers and Stewards with elected members - Anthony Fairfoull, Debbie Fairfoull, Hazel Stacey, Rachel Dowling, Rev. Jan Partridge

**Church Organisation** – We operate under the Constitution of the West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Church Partnership and our local Standing Orders. The Church Committee is the decision-making body.

## FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR & SENIOR STEWARD

Father Thomas Keating writes:

The chief thing that separates us from God is the thought that we are separated from Him. If we get rid of that thought, our troubles will be greatly reduced. We fail to believe that we are always with God and that He is part of every reality. The present moment, every object we see, our inmost nature, are all rooted in Him. But we hesitate to believe this until our personal experience gives us confidence to believe in it. This involves the gradual development of intimacy with God [through contemplative prayer]. God constantly speaks to us through each other as well as within. The interior experience of God's presence activates our capacity to experience Him in everything else—in people, in events, in nature. We may enjoy union with God in any experience of the external senses as well as in prayer.

Clearly God has been with us in Toothill through 2016. We have seen him, and been blessed by him, in worship and witness, in coffee mornings and afternoon teas, in baptisms and memberships, in significant anniversaries and family celebrations, in children's outreach and singing together, in caring for each other and in the lives of our faithful friends who now find rest and peace in the very heart of God.

We move into 2017 full of hope and confidence. The closer we come to God, the greater that hope and confidence will be.

Remember absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:39). The absolute reality is we are always with God, and God is always with us, we are made by God and of God. God is part of every reality, the present moment, every object we see, our inmost nature, are all rooted in God, and God is rooted in us. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made (John 1:3).

It is my prayer and hope that we will continue to see and hear God in all that we do through 2017. I hope too that we will together explore ways we can see and hear him more clearly, in each other, and in our brothers and sisters that live in our community. That we will seek to deepen the bonds between us, and extend the bridges we are building. That we, and at least some of our neighbours, might come to truly believe in the absolute reality that God made us, loves us, and is always with us.

Mark.

### **Pastoral care**

This year has been eventful for our church family. While there has been a lot of illness and hospital visiting; we thank god that progress has been made by most of those who have been ill. We had a celebration of life after a funeral of a dear member.

There have also been several joyful occasions.

We began the year with a wedding blessing, we had three lovely baptisms, one a wonderful Ghanaian celebration, the other with 4 four generations of the church family together with their Moroccan relatives; and one unexpected but also with relatives from Norway. We feel very international Christians! We have welcomed new

members but said goodbye to others who have moved to another church.

We have had to re-group our pastoral visitors lists because some have had to retire and we thank them for their caring and hard work over the years.

### **Membership Statistics**

We have currently 35 members of whom most are Ecumenical members, 1 Methodist, 1 Baptist, 2 URC

We welcomed 2 new members

2 members transferred to another church in the Partnership.

1 Wedding blessing

3 Baptisms

1 Funeral

### **House Group**

The house group continue to meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month. We have at least 14 members and usually have 10-12 attending.

This year we have studied among other things Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Church at Corinth, and some of the characters of the New Testament.

It is good to meet together and reflect on the services we have had in Church as well as to share with each other our concerns.

### **Lunch Bunch**

We are grateful for the opportunity for fellowship and witness to the community which this monthly group provided but sadly, it had to close after March as there was no one to organise the event when Jan and Gordon were away as Diana and Barbara felt they were no longer able to continue. We still see some of the members at Coffee

Mornings and other special events and would like to thank all those who assisted in running the group.

### **Music Group Report**

The Music Group have been meeting regularly on most first and third Tuesdays of each month over the year to sing together and practice songs for our worship Sunday by Sunday. Apart from the joy of singing in a group there is fellowship, friendship and a short time of prayer.

Toothill Church and the Music Group said good-bye to a dear friend, Margaret Exton, who died in the first half of 2016, and were proud to be able to lead the Thanksgiving Service with Margaret's favourite hymns. Her encouragement and sweet voice has been missed.

We have led Sunday Worship twice this year; in May for Ascension, when we also learnt about Jesus praying for us, then in October when we thought about Moses and the Israelites leaving Egypt to start their forty years journeying to reach the Promised land which led us on to discover more about the first forty years of worship in Toothill.

Another highlight for the Music Group was the great fun of learning and then leading 'Prom Style Songs' at the Tea Party for the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday organised by Debbie.

I must thank the Music Group who have been a great support to our worship throughout the year and enthusiastically taking on anything asked of them whether singing, reading, praying and even acting.

Don't forget that we are always happy to welcome new members who like to sing or who can play an instrument - even just a little.

Nicola.

## **Social Events**

During Lent, we held a 'Fairtrade' Coffee Morning where we remembered the very real advantage buying Fairly-Traded goods gives to those countries growing, making and supplying them.

In Summer, we celebrated the Queen's Birthday with a cream tea and at Harvest we hosted a Partnership meal which included an opportunity for people to entertain us with their talents.

## **Toothill Scout Group**

As usual Toothill Scout Group, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, attended worship on Mothering Sunday, Harvest and Remembrance Sunday. The Scout Group brought offerings for The Filling Station at Harvest time and prepared two beautiful and thought provoking displays which added a great deal to our Remembrance Sunday Worship.

For the first time at the Beaver Leader's request the Beavers came to Toothill Church to make Christingles and learn about the Christmas Story. They were fascinated by the new knitted Nativity as some of them had played characters in the Christmas story at school. The Scout Leaders were also interested to hear about the beginning of Scouting in Toothill forty years ago and their association with Toothill Church and hope to follow it up during 2017.

## **Hazelwood Academy**

Hazelwood Academy has visited Toothill Church on several occasions throughout the year

enabled by our schools' worker, Gayle, who also goes into school to work with classes and take an assembly. Hazelwood had a Harvest Service also supporting The Filling Station with their gifts. We were happy to welcome Years 2 – 6 for their Christmas Carol Service along with their teachers and parents and of course this included some of our Friday club members too.

Oliver Tomkins infants have also visited Toothill Church to learn about what happens in a church and enthusiastically tried out the sound system and organ as well as learning about Jesus calming the storm.

A busy Easter activity was attended by both Hazelwood and Oliver Tomkins Schools.

On behalf of Toothill Church I would like to thank Gayle and all those who helped make these visits possible including those from Toothill Church and all around our Partnership.

Nicola

## **The Filling Station**

This year we have continued to collect tins and toiletries for The Filling Station and at Harvest time we will continue to do this as it is a good practical and visual way for our children at Hazelwood Academy and the Toothill Scout Group to take part in making their contribution to helping those in need. However, on the first Sunday of each month beginning on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2017 you will have the opportunity to make a donation of what

you would have spent on tins or toiletries for The Filling Station.

This is for several reasons: The Filling Station can use the money for exactly what is needed and will be able to buy in bulk thus making your gift go even further, you won't need to carry heavy items to church and another person will not need to transport all the heavy items to The Filling Station.

The committee would like to thank you all for your faithful support of The Filling Station.

### **Friday Club**

Friday club runs at the Toothill Church premises on Friday evenings from 5-7pm during term time. Children from the ages of 5-12 attend the sessions with around six helpers each week. The helpers are mostly members from the Toothill church family.

Weekly activities include knitting, arts and crafts, board games, sports, cookery, team games and many more. The average number of children that attend the club is around twenty-five to twenty-eight. Most of these children come from Oliver Tompkins School, Hazelwood Academy, Shaw Ridge and Toothill Village.

The annual Christmas disco in December 2016 was a combined program between Friday Club and Tinies and around 80 children attended the event.

## **Tinies**

Tinies runs every Thursday apart from Christmas week. Age ranges from new-born babies to pre-schoolers. On average the group records about 16 families every Thursday not just from Toothill but all over Swindon.

Tinies and Friday club organised two coach trips in 2016. A summer trip to Butlins in Minehead and a Christmas trip to winter wonderland in Hyde Park London. Both trips were very popular and the 61 seater coach hired on both occasions was full.

The annual summer fun day in July was well attended with numbers in excess of a hundred people. For the first time a graduation ceremony was held at Toothill church to honour children from Tinies who were leaving the group for school. A Christmas fete organised in December raised around £130 to support Swindon Cystic Fibrosis Trust. This group supports one of the baby's that attend tines who was diagnosed with the illness.

Both groups have planned a trip to Weston Super mare in July 2017 and the annual Fun day is schedule to take place on 27July and a graduation and prize giving day service on Sunday 30 July.

## **Property.**

Heating has been the main item of expenditure. It had become increasingly difficult in really cold weather to heat the church adequately and when one boiler was declared potentially unsafe on a routine service in late summer we had to act, replacing the 2 boilers with one and improving the circulation of air by lifting the radiators above the skirting. (Our thanks to

the Upper Thames Methodist Circuit for a grant towards this work.)

We would like to improve the insulation of the roof if we can obtain grant aid from other organisations.

We had already needed to replace the hot water heater as it literally caught fire in the early hours of January 1<sup>st</sup> as another Church using our premises to celebrate New Year were washing up.

The drains needed clearing in January. (DO NOT put 'Wet-Wipes' down the toilets)

The trees on the edges of our copse also needed professionally cutting back in the summer.

The blue curtains were rehung over the front windows to make it easier to see the screen and improve acoustics, and later in the year the blue blind rehung and high-level lights replaced.

The Committee would like to thank all those who keep the building and grounds clean and tidy, particularly Tony for his regular cleaning. (and grass cutting when David was unable to do it - We needed to purchase a new mower this year)

Our building is well used bringing in welcome extra revenue.

The Polish Church meet at least 3 Sunday afternoons a month and since The Summer, U3A are holding History, Travel and Craft groups for a total of 10 hours a month.

The building is also used for Birthday/Anniversary celebrations.

Our Partnership meets here for Committee meetings and for Lent Groups and Marriage Preparation courses.

Our thanks to Tony for handling the bookings.

We are aware that Mission is more important than Property but we endeavour to keep our building inviting and fit-for-purpose at minimum cost.

A reminder that we are committed to being a 'FairTrade' Church, and all tea, coffee, sugar and where possible other goods used on the premises should bear the 'FairTrade' Logo.