

# THIS MONTH: SEPTEMBER 2008

## RIDGEWAY METHODIST CHURCH



Dear Friends

### **Driving tests for Christians**

In 1935, Mr J Beene (not Bean!) was the first man to pass a British driving test. Driving tests became compulsory that year for all drivers who started driving after 1 April the previous year. Some of us remember being passengers with older drivers who boasted that they had never taken a test – sometimes that was obvious! Those of us with teenagers and young adults in our families are probably familiar with the stresses and strains of the modern driving test. There is no doubt that today's theory and practical tests are more rigorous than when I took my test in December 1974 (without hand signals) and rightly so but the key to safe and successful driving remains '*observe and assess*' so that the driver is able to respond accordingly.

Put simply, there are two dimensions in our Christian lives. How we are progressing as individual Christians and how we are progressing as a church. The complicating factor is that the church is made up of individual Christians. I must preface what I am about to write by saying that my article this month is based on my *observation and assessment* that, as a church, we are on the road and running pretty well. However, if we are to continue to make the progress that we should be making, we are rapidly approaching the time to move up a gear.

### **Time to move up a gear**

People who study church growth tell us that when a growing church reaches about 75% of its capacity, it will probably not continue to grow unless it either moves to a bigger building or plants another congregation. In an age when the church has far too many large and cumbersome buildings, another building is probably not the right option. We also have to face the fact that while we, in Plympton, are encouraged there are now vast areas of the city of Plymouth that have no numerically significant Christian witness. That said, our observation and assessment must not be limited to the growth in our Sunday morning congregation, encouraging as that is. We must still recognise that we find it hard to get people to move into positions of leadership and responsibility in just about every dimension of the church's life.

### **Equipping ourselves to move forward**

Every autumn many churches will have a drive to try to get people involved in its programme of Sunday services and midweek events. We are no exception to that but while many churches just want to keep going along in much the same way as before, I think it is time to think about how we can increase the speed in which we are able to move forward. The modern driving test reminds us that theory and practice are different dimensions of the one task. All our workers with children and young people are being encouraged to begin or

refresh their training with a programme produced by The Girls' Brigade, *Seek, Serve, Follow (SSF)*. I hope this will be well supported. Everyone is encouraged (indeed it is an obligation on all fit and active members) to join a midweek Bible study and fellowship group (whether a cell group meeting in a member's home or a group meeting at church – there are separate leaflets for you to indicate your interest in these) but I think we also need people who are going to take a really serious approach to becoming equipped to take up positions of responsibility and leadership within the local church. I recently received a pack from the Open Bible Institute ([www.open-bible-institute.org](http://www.open-bible-institute.org)) and my attention was particularly drawn to *Short Courses in Practical Ministry* (Administration, Mission and Ministry, Pastoral Care, Preaching, Youth and Children's Work) which might interest people who feel prompted in that direction and I would welcome conversations with members about how God might be calling them to prepare for new avenues of service or to serve more effectively.

### **Minister's Bible study**

This term we are looking at Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings and 2 Kings. We meet in the lounge and start on Monday 22 September (7.30-9.00 pm) which is the first of 10 sessions. Everyone is welcome and no prior knowledge is expected or required. We sing some songs, pray and look at the Bible passages with the aid of outlines shown on our data projector. We finish with tea or coffee and superior biscuits.

### **Welcome to our new office and minister's secretary**

We had a surprisingly high number of applicants for our job vacancy and after interviewing three candidates decided to offer the position to Mrs Jane Spry. Jane starts her work with us on Tuesday 2 September. It will take a while for her to settle in but I am sure that everyone will make Jane welcome. We are grateful to Catherine Stead for standing in for seven weeks. It has been a difficult time for Catherine's family with the sudden loss of Mrs Mary Bentley. We extend our condolences to all the family and wish Catherine well for the future.

### **Membership preparation**

Many of us have special memories of the membership service we held in July. At the time we promised that we would have another opportunity in the autumn for those who feel that the time has come to make a public commitment to their faith. Consequently, we are offering the opportunity to be part of a membership preparation group. The group will take place on Monday evenings, each from 6.15-7.15 pm, beginning on Monday 8 September and continuing on 15, 22 and 29 September. We hope to welcome new members in a special service on Sunday 5 October at 10.30 am (if necessary preceding that service with a service of baptism or renewal at 9.30 am). You do not need a special invitation to attend the membership preparation group – just come. Also, if you would really like to attend but cannot do so on Monday evenings, do not hesitate to speak to me or one of our church stewards and we will ensure that we make alternative arrangements.

God bless

*John Haley*

## HARVEST FESTIVAL

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September will be Harvest Festival. Once again, we will be collecting money in the Sunday services and at Oasis on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> to support Eurovangelism. Eurovangelism is a small charity, and our annual gift to them means an enormous amount to needy people in Eastern Europe, where conditions and poverty are often extreme. I am personally grateful for your very generous support year after year, and ask you again to prayerfully consider how much you can give. (I understand that you may not feel able to give anything - I know there are many other causes in need of help.)

This year, there will be envelopes instead of matchboxes. There will be a powerpoint presentation during the service on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>, and if you have internet access you might also like to look at Eurovangelism's website ([www.eurovangelism.org.uk](http://www.eurovangelism.org.uk)), where you will find information about their work, including summer holiday camps, Alpha courses and EuroAid.

*Carol Sharman*

## September Diary

Tuesday 2:		
	7.45pm	Ladies' Group: Bag Beetle
Thursday 4:		
	2.45pm	Women's Fellowship: Revd John Haley
Saturday 6:		
	8.30 am	Monthly prayer meeting
	10.00am	Representative Synod (Exeter)
	10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Outreach (Christine and Lydia)
	5.00-11.00 pm	Recharge
<b>Sunday 7:</b>		
	<b>10.30 am</b>	<b>Revd John Haley (Holy Communion)</b>
	<b>7.00 pm</b>	<b>Mrs Danie Neads</b>
Monday 8:		
	6.15pm	Membership Preparation 1: Believing and Belonging
Tuesday 9:		
	7.45pm	Ladies' Group: Pauline Fox
Wednesday 10:		
	10.00-12.30	Coffee followed by lunches
Thursday 11:		
	2.45pm	Women's Fellowship: Colston Swift
Saturday 13:		
	10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Church Funds (Avril and Pamela)
<b>Sunday 14:</b>		
	<b>10.30 am</b>	<b>Miss Catherine Stead</b>
	<b>7.00 pm</b>	<b>Revd John Haley</b>
Monday 15:		
	6.15pm	Membership Preparation 2: Being a Christian I

Tuesday 16:	2.15 pm 7.45pm	Service at Pocklington Rise (all welcome) Ladies Group: Sarah Willcocks
Wednesday 17:	10.00-12.30 7.30 pm	Coffee followed by lunches Circuit Meeting (Crownhill)
Thursday 18:	2.45pm	Women's Fellowship: Roy Smith
Saturday 20:	10.00-12.00 1.00 pm	Oasis Coffee Bar: Youth Outreach (Miriam, Steve and Kim) Wedding of Ben Kadoche and Stacey Launce
<b>Sunday 21:</b>	<b>10.30 am 7.00 pm</b>	<b>Mrs Kate Konrad Revd John Haley (Holy Communion)</b>
Monday 22:	6.15 pm 7.30 pm	Membership Preparation 3: Being a Christian II Minister's Bible study 1
Tuesday 23:	7.45pm	Ladies Group: Alfreda Rogers
Wednesday 24:	10.00-12.30	Coffee followed by lunches
Thursday 25:	2.45pm	Women's Fellowship: Peter Gregory
Saturday 27:	10.00-12.00	Oasis Coffee Bar: Harvest (Carol Sharman)
<b>Sunday 28:</b>	<b>10.30 am 7.00 pm</b>	<b>Revd John Haley (Harvest Festival, All Age Worship) Mrs Pam Smith</b>
Monday 29:	6.15 pm 7.30 pm	Membership Preparation 4: Testimony and witness Minister's Bible study 2
Tuesday 30:	7.30pm	Ladies Group: Kenneth Snelling

**Church office hours: Tuesday-Friday 9.30 am - 12.30 pm**

**Church telephones: 348178 (office only); 331186 (pre-school and hall)**

**Church Office:** [admin@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk](mailto:admin@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk)

**Minister: The Revd John M Haley:** [min@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk](mailto:min@ridgewaymethodist.org.uk)

**[www.ridgewaymethodist.org.uk](http://www.ridgewaymethodist.org.uk)**

Information for October's *This Month* to the office by 25 September please.