

# S.O.F.T.

## Sharing Our Faith Together Team

Supporting the East Solent and Downs Methodist Circuit

### Who we are and what we offer

The Circuit Meeting in September ratified the setting up of a Circuit Team for Outreach and Evangelism to combine the summer meeting's projected two teams (one each for Outreach and Evangelism). The two are closely related and this was felt to be the best way of keeping both in focus and a better use of resources of personnel, time and fuel.

### The members of the SOFT Team are:

Garry Bagshaw  
Janet Baker  
Richard Baker

Laura Evans  
Jill Groom  
John Mills

David Musckett  
Jean Plummer  
Bob Temple

In line with the Circuit Mission Statement **our brief** is to resource and enable the churches of the Circuit in Outreach and Evangelism.

- Mission /Outreach is engaging with people outside the faith
- Evangelism is encouraging people to become disciples of Jesus

### The SOFT Team will:

- organise periodic days such as the one on 7 October to resource/enable churches on a Circuit-wide basis.
- seek training and advice in order better to be able to advise and help local churches.
- offer training and advice in order to build the confidence of churches and individuals in extending what is often excellent work in outreach into opportunities for evangelism.
- signpost churches towards other resources where appropriate.

### What YOU can do:

We hope churches will contact us to requests a session with members of the SOFT Team.

Consider what they want from the SOFT Team in your Leadership Team / Church Council.

There is **FUNDING AVAILABLE** in the Circuit budget to assist with Outreach/Evangelism projects. Criteria for this will be published separately and applications will have to be supported by the Church Council, state expected outcomes and anticipated follow-up and be approved by the Circuit Leadership Team.

# Mission Day: 7<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Festivals often compel people who do not attend worship regularly to come to church. People came to church at crisis times, to participate in a national event, or to support the participation of a family member in the Festival celebration, or in acknowledgement of something in their past. How can we make best use of these opportunities and spread the Gospel in a way that balances the integrity of church tradition and the need to 'make sense' in contemporary culture?

During the course of the morning each person rotated through three groups talking about opportunities for the local church to share their faith with the community using each of the up-and-coming major festivals – Remembrance, Advent and Christmas. It wasn't long before some common themes began to develop...

- ❖ **Begin where people are:** What might be their expectations? To sing familiar carols? Hear traditional words? Stillness and compassion? Celebration? Remember that Church customs may be unfamiliar and perhaps a little threatening. Don't assume people understand 'churchy' language or procedures, or know the familiar stories. Try looking at things through their eyes.
- ❖ **Offer a gift:** Some kind of reminder of their visit. Or a little invitational token to the next event of its kind – even the next Sunday's worship  
[www.methodistpublishing.org.uk](http://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk) produce excellent, inexpensive material on major festivals  
[www.cpo.org.uk](http://www.cpo.org.uk) or [www.biblesociety.org.uk](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk) are also good places to look.
- ❖ **Food:** Never under estimate the impact of sitting together, eating and sharing stories of faith.
- ❖ **Charity:** Regular contact or fundraising for charities provide opportunities to develop ready-made links. Perhaps even offer a follow-up event, and advertise it well using appropriate logos and good-quality printing, in order to maintain contact.
- ❖ **Make the event special:** Intentionally use it as a vehicle to teach and share the message. Who might be there? Why might they have come? What might you invite them to next?

**Remember: if WE are not enthused and inspired by what we are offering how can we expect the visitor to return?**

# Some ideas to get you started!

- ❖ Provide an alternative reflective Remembrance Sunday worship experience. Maybe even link it to All Saints Day.
- ❖ Themed Sermon Series!: Providing an opportunity to study a festival in depth. This is particularly helpful in Advent and Lent. Why not continue to explore the theme in mid-week activities?
- ❖ Activities for January – one of the loneliest months of the year. Are there elderly or lonely people in your community who might appreciate something a bit extra?
- ❖ Theology of the glow stick at Advent!
- ❖ Advertise your Christingle Service in local schools or to groups that use the Church building.
- ❖ Are there new and different ways to present the Christmas story? What about a Pass the Parcel Nativity?
- ❖ Nativity Sets/ Christmas Tree Festivals: community groups or those who use your building could each provide a nativity or Christmas tree
- ❖ Memory boxes. A great idea for craft mornings.
- ❖ How about organising a Walking Nativity? More about this on the next page.
- ❖ Be sure to get e-mail addresses for invitations to future events!



# ***Spotlight on... Portsmouth Walking***

Here's a date for your diaries... the Portsmouth Methodist churches are putting on a Walking Nativity on Saturday 9 December 2017.

The walking nativity entails adults and children walking along a designated route with brief stops along the way to collect the various characters from the Christian nativity story and to hear parts of that story... complete with live donkeys and carol singing!

This year we'll be starting in College Park, in Copnor, at 4pm and finishing at Copnor Methodist Church with refreshments.

Last year an amazing 400 people came along so we hope to see just as many smiling faces this year too, and that our Girls' and Boys' Brigade members and children from the Methodist churches in Portsmouth will take part dressed as characters from the story.

Could you:

- Deliver flyers about the event to local residents?
- Knit a toy angel for us to leave along the route? Ask Fran from Eastney Methodist Church for a pattern.
- Read one of the scripted parts along the route? You'll be allocated a reading of a couple of paragraphs to read into a microphone and will get to see the text in advance.
- Shake a charity collection bucket? We'll be collecting for two local charities as people make their way along the route.
- Serve refreshments at the church? We'll be serving non-alcoholic mulled wine or squash, and mince pies.
- Make a donation towards the cost of the event?
- Donate a box of mince pies for the event? Please ensure they have a best before date of after 9 December 2017.
- And much, much more.

One thing everyone can do for the event is pray! Please pray:

- For volunteers to come forward and serve.
- For local businesses to respond well to our request for donations or donated goods.
- For good weather on the event day itself.
- That excitement starts to build and that people are looking forward to coming along and joining in with this community event.

Please contact Catherine Burt on 07718 920719 or via Copnor Methodist Church if you can help in any way. It's a real team effort and fun for all the community and so we'd love to have you join us.

## ***Could you provide the next 'Spotlight on...' article?***

*It might be about a one-off event that's already happened or is about to happen. It might be about something your church does on a regular basis. Whatever the topic it would be great to hear from you so that we can share ideas and good news stories as widely as possible.*