THE LINK

Methodist Link Churches Magazine

December 2013 – January 2014 Volume 48. No. 10.

A Joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year



Minister's Letter

Time goes by so quickly. It doesn't seem like five minutes since we were putting on the sun cream and now here we are about to enter the Advent season once again.

One way in which I love to notice the passing seasons is through my fairly regular journey to Radstock, where I meet with a "band" of colleagues for prayer. I always journey through Cheddar and then turn off to the left heading towards the Waldegrave Estate, down my favourite stretch of road which is like a tunnel through the trees.

I have traveled this way in winter when snow has covered the ground and given the trees a white border, and in summer when the tunnel is green with bright shafts of sunlight shinning through the branches. Yesterday it was just beautiful with the yellows, reds and golds of the Autumn leaves.

Recently, when we had storms someone remarked that Autumn storms cause more damage to trees than winter ones because the leaves have not yet dropped - which reminded me of a story I remember reading as a boy:

It was about two trees - one an evergreen tree which boasted that it kept its beautiful green all year round, while the other trees lost their leaves and became bare and ugly. The second tree - whose leaves were turning beautiful golds and reds replied that it was preparing itself for the winter and warned the evergreen that pride comes before a fall. Sure enough when winter snow came it was unable to get much of a purchase on the bare branches, but it was able to stick heavily to the evergreen, weighing down its branches and causing them to snap and break. When a storm came, the wind blew right through the bare branches, but the evergreen put up a fight with its greenery providing severe resistance against the wind. In the morning the evergreen was lying on the ground while the other trees stood tall.

So Autumn is a time for preparation for the trees - preparation to stand against the storms of winter - just as Advent is a time of preparation for us. We prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. We prepare in the physical way for the celebration as we decorate, prepare good food and drink and buy presents for those we love and care for.

But much more important is our spiritual preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ for Advent has a dual purpose: not just to prepare for the The LINK December 2013 – January 2014 2

Festival of Christmas which celebrates the first coming of Jesus into the world, but also to prepare ourselves for when he fulfils his promise to return in the second coming. Jesus says that no one knows when that will happen so we must be ready (Matthew 24-25). In former times Advent was a time of fasting for many Christians - a prelude to the time of feasting. Nowadays we often take part in a bible study or overlook it altogether as we get caught up in the headlong rush of consumerism.

The Archbishop of Canterbury recently gave some important advice for those preparing for Christmas - he advised being sensible - not going over the top or getting into debt. "Giving at Christmas reflects the generosity of God. So be generous in a way that shows love and affection rather than trying to buy love and affection," he added¹.

So how will we prepare: like the trees in the story who prepared sensibly for winter, or like the evergreen who allowed vanity and pride to influence his decisions with disastrous consequences?

I wish you a Happy, stress free Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

Rev Andrew

Deaths.

Mrs. Pamela Horlock. Funeral at Sedgemoor Crematorium on November 5th

Calendar

NOVEMBER

Mon 25th

2.30pm B/K Bible Study led by Rev. Margaret Trapp at Brent Knoll

Tue 26th

2.30pm E/B "LINK Villages Fellowship – My Nativity – "Being

Tue 26th 2.30pm E/B "LINK Villages Fellowship – My Nativity – "Being Used by God". Mrs Iris Speed.

Fri 29th 10.00 - 12.00 W/H Coffee Morning Meet & Chat at West Huntspill See page 7

Sat 30th 10.30am. B/K Brent Knoll Christmas Coffee Morning & Bring & Buy

Sat 30th10.00 - 12.00 B/H Shoppers Coffee Morning

DECEMBER

Sun 1st Advent Sunday

¹ http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/nov/11/expensive-inexpensive-christmas-gifts-archbishop-canterbury

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2.30pm B/H Thursday Fellowship - "Christmas Message"
Thu. 5th
                          Rev. Andrew Biggs
      7th 10.00 - 12.00 B/H Fund Raising Coffee Morning
Sat
                          Circuit Prayer meeting at Brent Knoll.
Sat
     7th
             9.30am
             2.30pm E/B "LINK Villages Fellowship - Christmas Lunch and
Tue 10th
                          Entertainment"
            12.30pm B/H Church Lunch (Ros ~ Christmas)
Wed 11th
Wed 11th
             3.00pm
                          Carol Singing at Holywell N H Brent Knoll
                          B & H Choral Soc. Christmas Concert at St Andrew's
Thu 12th
             7.00pm
                           Church See page 6
Sat 14th 10.00 - 12.00 B/H Shoppers Coffee Morning
Mon 16th
             2.15pm
                          Carol Singing at Tudor Lodge Brightstowe Road
                          Carol Singing at The Towans Berrow Road
Mon 16th
             3.30pm
                          Carol Singing at Abbeyfield Berrow Road
Wed 18th
            10.30am
Fri 20th
             7.00pm E/B East Brent Carols by Candlelight Service
             7.00pm W/H Community Carol Service at East Huntspill
Fri 20th
                                                            see page 7
Sat 21st
            10.30am BR Coffee & Carols at Brean
Sat 21st10.00 - 12.00 B/H Coffee Morning
Sun 22nd
             6.00pm B/H Burnham Carol Service
Tue, 24th
             4.00pm BR "Brean Carol Service". An informal welcome to
                          Christmas with carols, readings and sketches
            11.15pm B/H Midnight Service at Burnham
Tue, 24th
             9.00am W/H Informal Service & Continental Breakfast at West
Wed 25th
                          Huntspill - Rev Andrew Biggs
Wed 25th
            10.00am E/B East Brent - Short 1/2 Hour Christmas Service
Wed 25th
            10.30am B/H Burnham Christmas Day Service ~ Rev. Andrew
                          Biggs
Fri
     27<sup>th</sup> 10.00 - 12.00 W/H Christmas Coffee Morning at West Huntspill
                                                     See page8
Sat 28th 10.00 - 12.00 B/H Coffee Morning at Burnham
            10.30am B/K Brent Knoll Carol Service ~ Rev. Andrew Biggs
Sun 29th
JANUARY
     4th 10.00 - 12.00 B/H Fund Raising Coffee Morning
Sat
            10.30am B/H Burnham Covenant Service
Sun 5th
Sun 5th
                          Joint Service at St Bridget's Brean
             9.15am
Sat 11th 10.00 - 12.00 B/H Shoppers Coffee Morning
             2.30pm E/B "LINK Villages Fellowship - Praying with Labyrinth
Tue 14th
                          Revd Margaret Trapp
Sat 18th 10.00 - 12.00 B/H Charity Coffee Morning
Sat 18th 10.00 - 4.00
                          PRAYER DAY at Balliol Hall West Huntspill all
                          Welcome
Sun. 19th
                          LAST DAY FOR FEBRUARY LINK
Sun. 19th
             3.00pm
                          Churches Together
Sat 25th 10.00 - 12.00 B/H Shoppers Coffee Morning
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Tue 28th 2.30pm E/B "LINK Villages Fellowship - My Story - Revd Tonia Nixon

FEBRUARY

Sat 1st 10.00 - 12.00 B/H Fund Raising Coffee Morning
Sat 8th 10.00 - 12.00 B/H Shoppers Coffee Morning
Tue 11th 2.30pm E/B "LINK Villages Fellowship - Bridgwater Street
Pastors - Terry Davis (Collection)"

B/H Burnham, BR Brean, B/K Brent Knoll, E/B East Brent, W/H West Huntspill

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE?

It doesn't take much imagination to realise that our numbers are going down, we are all getting older, and we are being asked to put more and more money into the collection plate (or bag). The inevitable consequence will be that within about five years we will have to make do with fewer ministers and that we can't then expect ministers to take on 6 or 7 churches each. Reducing numbers also means that assessments become more difficult to pay and that church officers become more difficult to recruit. And neither are larger churches exempt from the 'what are we going to do now?' tension. The yawning chasm begins to look a bit horrendous.

Unless we can do something about it, that is. Do we really think that the Spirit is saying to us that we should let the circuit gradually run down and then at a point in time, die off?

The Circuit Meeting felt that we ought at least to try to come to terms with our current predicament and ask ourselves that question. Where are we and what ought we to do?

Rev Stephen Marr was therefore asked to chair a small group of four others (calling itself the Circuit Development Group) to try to bring fresh thinking and most especially to try to co-ordinate the imagination of members and churches.

Church Councils have already been asked to complete a questionnaire outlining their vision of where the churches seek to

be. Most have said they want to grow, but we are all left with that inevitable question. How?

After consultation with the District, three people have kindly agreed to come and act as consultants to listen and act as a sounding board for our dreams: Rev Rachel Borgars from Bath, Andrew Owen the District Development and Training Officer, and Robert Beckham the District Treasurer.

There are still a couple of Church Councils who want to discuss the questionnaire more widely because there wasn't enough time for the full Council to do so originally (Stewards completed the form on their behalf). The Development Group then plan to discuss the responses more fully with the Church Councils having had initial debate with the District Advisors, in order to tease out more fully and with open minds, the options that might be available.

This process is likely to take until the end of February and the District group will again be involved at that stage. After the March Circuit Meeting, an Away Day will be planned for Church Representatives to meet with the Development Group, the Circuit Leadership team and the District members, to try to form a development plan based on the responses from Churches.

This will then be put to the June Circuit Meeting for agreement. It will reflect our hopes and plans because we have all been involved in its formulation and commitments. It will also be reflected in the profiles for Circuit Team members to replace Rev Robert Channon and Rev Carol Gill when they retire in 2015.

It is a process that hopefully we can work through prayerfully and carefully together. Malcolm Gale has already given us a start by creating this circuit website into which churches can link their own websites:

http://westonburnham.wix.com/w-s-mb-o-smethodists#

The Circuit Development Group is Rev Stephen Marr, Rosemary Krull, Marion Robinson, Malcolm Gale and Harvey Allen (Secretary).

BRENT KNOLL METHODIST CHURCH

CHRISTMAS COFFEE MORNING and Bring and Buy



Saturday November 30th 10.30am Everyone Welcome

West Huntspill Methodist Church



Community Carol Service Friday 20th December 2013

At 7pm

Led by

Revd Andrew Biggs



Christmas Day Come and Celebrate with us Continental Breakfast

Served from 9am

Informal service led by

Revd Andrew Biggs commencing at 9.30am



Come and join us for Our Christmas Coffee Morning On Friday 27th December 10am - 12md



Opportunity to Meet and Chat with others and enjoy free coffee and cakes



Diary Date

Prayer Day on January 18th

10am - 4pm at Balliol Hall

Note change of Venue

Methodist Book Centre

Methodist Book Centre in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, has been trading for nearly 70 years and is now the only large Methodist Bookshop in the Connexion. The Centre, which is part of the Chester and Stoke District, has recently been presented with the Large Christian Retailer of the Year 2013 award. It has just set up an online trading facility especially to help those people who live too far away to visit the shop (which has been described as an oasis in the centre of a busy shopping and commercial environment). The name of the site is "Christian Resources for Life" to emphasise the ecumenical nature of its products and that it supplies not just books but a wide range of resources – books, study materials, music, DVDs, gifts, cards etc. The website is www.crfl.co.uk and you are invited to register with the site to receive occasional special offers and newsletters. You are also most welcome to call Julie Ann Ellis (the Centre Manager) on 01782 212146 if you need help in choosing the right resources for you.



HARRY'S PAGE

How Long?

READ: Psalm 13

How long, 0 Lord? Will You forget me forever? --Psalm 13:1 For 9 long years, Saul hounded David as "one hunts a partridge in the mountains" (1 Sam. 26:20).

"How long, 0 LORD? Will You forget me forever?" David prayed. "How long will You hide Your face from me? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?" (Ps. 13:1-2).

Prolonged affliction often vexes us as well. We want a sudden solution, a quick fix. But some things can't be fixed. They can only be borne.

But we can complain to God in our troubles. We have a heavenly Father who wants us to engage with Him in our struggles. He understands His children as no one else can.

When we turn to Him with our com- plaints, we come to our senses. In David's case, his thoughts went back to life's certainty: God's love. David reminded himself: "I have trusted in your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me" (vv.5-6). Sufferings may persist, but David could sing in the midst of his trials, for he was God's beloved child. That's all he needed to know.

A. W. Thorold writes, "The highest pinnacle of the spiritual life is not happy joy in unbroken sunshine, but absolute and undoubting trust in the love of God."

Even in our troubles. God's love can be trusted. --David Roper

0 yes. He cares; I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Saviour cares! –Graeff

God's love stands when all else fails.

YOU'VE PROBABLY heard the story of the five wise virgins and the five Jesus foolish ones. told lt requirement for being allowed to participate in a wedding In those days, was that your lamp had to be burning. But when the bridegroom was arriving five of these virgins were out of oil. So they said to the other five, '...Give us some of your oil.' (Matthew 25:8 NKJV). But they said, '...No, lest there should not be enough for us and you..' (Matthew 25:9 NKJV). So while they went to town to buy oil the wedding started and they were locked out Christ's parable teaches us 'our important lessons:

1) The foolishness of depending on somebody else. Your mother and father may have been Christians, but that won't get you into heaven. You must accept Christ as your own personal Saviour.

The futility of 2) last-minute preparations, "...while they went to the bridegroom came...' buy, (Matthew 25:10 NKJV). Remember, Jesus is teaching about the kind of people who will be living when He returns. So here's the question: Are you putting salvation off until you're old? What if you don't live that long? 3) The finality of judgment '. And the door was shut Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But he answered and

said. "Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you" (Matthew 25:10-12 NKJV).
4) The fallacy of morality. They were 'virgins,' yet they were shut out Your character and good works wont get you into heaven. 'By grace are ye saved through faith...' (Ephesians 2:8 KJV). Are you ready to meet the Lord? If not put your faith in Him today and get ready.

EAST BRENT

We were so pleased to be able to welcome Julie (Biggs) to lead our service this plan, her first time at East Brent. We had heard such good reports of her services, -and we were not disappointed, we shall never think of Zacchaeus in the same way again!

The Rev'd. Peter Davis conducted our Remembrance Service starting at 10am in our Church and then we walked up to the War Memorial where the Rev'd Peter led the large assembled crowd in a short service where the village remembered their losses in two World Wars. Two policemen stopped the traffic for the two minutes silence. We were delighted that lot's of locals came back to our hall afterwards for coffee.

We pray that Margaret Green's health will soon improve and that the pain will lesson. Eileen Craig and Gwen Oldham are also not too well, we miss you all and hope to see you back in your pews soon.

Thank you to all from the Link who supported our Christmas Sale especially Brent Knoll & West Huntspill – we couldn't manage without you!

We give you all a warm welcome to our Annual Carols by Candlelight Service on Friday 20th December at **7.00pm** coffee and mince pies afterwards also on Christmas Morning a short half hour service at **10.00am** you may need to come early to get a seat!!

All donations at these services will be sent to help our two African villages.

Jill Legg

BURNHAM

www.methodistchurchburnhamonsea.org.uk

Letter from Burnham Stewards.

It's that time of year when we think about what has happened this year and what might be going to happen in the year to come. Some of us may have had a good year while others have had a very difficult one. My year has been interesting, especially as I have become a Church Steward for the first time. When I was asked to write this article I felt there was only one thing I could write about and that was a visit my husband and I made to the U.S.A. in this summer. He is a train enthusiast who has visited American train museums but had always wanted to 'ride the train' from New York south to Savannah, Georgia, with a few stops in-between. We travelled from New York to Savannah, by way of the American Civil War sites in Richmond, Virginia. We set off from Richmond, one early morning, expecting to be in Savannah in late evening. We finally arrived in Savannah at two o'clock the following morning. We had been delayed for many hours because the track had been damaged by the nearby swamp washing away some of the track bed. Just as we thought we were finally going to arrive a gigantic tree fell in front of our train, delaying us again while crews from the local town cut up the tree so we could pass. On our arrival the locals told us that it was not unusual and the trains often get delayed due to the weather.

The next day due to the sweltering heat, we rested on a bench next to a statue in a small park in Savannah. Looking up I suddenly realised the statue was of John Wesley. The plaque underneath explained a little about his stay in Savannah. John and Charles Wesley had sailed for Georgia on October 14th 1735, arriving in Savannah in February 1736. They were delayed because of terrible storms and because the mast of their ship broke. We learnt that his parish was a new parish and it was 'two hundred miles in length and the depth was immeasurable. There was also the diversity in the linguistics cultures'. We read that

John had problems preaching to the inhabitants as they were from many different countries and cultures, so he started to learn Spanish. Charles Wesley returned home later that year but John remained preaching up and down the state. The information said 'Upon arriving at these rather remote hamlets Wesley would read public prayers and counsel the French, German, and Swiss settlers living there. A typical Sunday as rector of the Church of Savannah went as:

5:00-6:30 English Prayers 9:00-10:00 Italian Prayers

10:30-12:30 English Communion and Service 1:00-2:00 French Prayers

2:00-3:00 Catechism of children 3:00-4:00 English Prayers

John Wesley left Savannah, Georgia on December 22nd 1737, and he said of his experience there. "The first rise of Methodism was in 1729 when four of us met together at Oxford. The second was at Savannah in 1736 when twenty or thirty persons met at my house." His legacy is that there are now many Methodist Churches in Savannah and the rest of Georgia as a direct result of people hearing him preach.

After learning about John Wesley's journeys and experiences in Georgia I felt our delayed train journey was only a minor inconvenience compared to the problems that the early Methodist had to suffer in Savannah in those days. I wondered, and still do, about their time in Georgia and the people who were lucky enough to meet them and hear them preach. I am glad we visited Savannah but I am also very pleased to have learnt a little of what John Wesley achieved there. I still think about their strong faith which sent them on such a dangerous journey. I had not expected to learn about Methodism in Savannah but it made me think again about what it is to be a Methodist and why I am glad I am one.

At this time of year we would like to send our best wishes to all of the Link congregation. We also send good wishes to members of our congregation who have been unable to be with us recently. Some members have been in hospital while others are recovering at home or with their families. We do wish them all the best and a speedy recovery; they are all missed and remembered in our prayers. A happy Christmas and peaceful New Year to you all.

I would like to convey my sincere appreciation, on behalf of the pupils of JOLAURABI School to all concerned who facilitated the use of 'your' premises for our annual fund raising event.

Once again it was a great success raising in excess of £1200.00. There was a lot of preparation before the event, and a lot of sorting after, but neither of these compared with the help & dedication of so members of the Methodist Church on the day. They gave their time freely and with a smile, even when purchasing.

A special mention of appreciation to husband & wife team – Cedric & Dorothy May.

You are all a friendly, welcoming group of people

Thank you

Sue Stevens

anderen

In addition to the report written by Sue, I would like to express thanks to everyone who has helped and to all who have supported the Coffee Mornings from August when the R N L I had to cease their fundraising due to lack of helpers.

We always been well supported and all money raised will be used to benefit all the children who attend Jolaurabi School.

Very Many Thanks,

Dorothy

CAROL SINGING

We will be Carol Singing on the following dates.

December 11th 3.00pm At Holywell N H at Brent Knoll.

16th 2.15pm At Tudor Lodge Brightstowe Road.

16th 3.30pm The Towans Berrow Road

18th10.30am Abbeyfield Berrow Road

Do come along, Enjoy singing the Carols and sharing in the fellowship meeting with the residents at the various Residential Homes. Anyone can come along; it is not just for the choir members.

We give a lot of pleasure to every one

BREAN

www.brean-methodist-church.home.dhs.org

The Rev Bill Kemm, who became vicar of Brean soon after we arrived back in the 1970s, always used to say that we shouldn't sing Christmas carols until after 23rd December. I guess he is right too because until then it is Advent. But then Advent has its cheerful songs also, though it has one of my pet hates as well. O come, O come, Immanuel, should be a hymn of excited expectation but how can you sing 'Rejoice!' to that dirge of a tune? It's a bit like the Easter hymn Christ the Lord is risen today, lovely sentiments but totally exhausting in a small rural to sing alleluia after each line, twenty times in all and jaw aching in the extreme!

I'm probably in a minority of one and I guess there are some who will say it is one of their favourites. But then the world would be a duller place if we are all of the same mind.

November has been a busy month. We joined with St Bridget's for Remembrance Day service which started at the War Memorial. Brean lost 7 or 8 men in the First World War but none in the second, so we remembered them and prayed for peace. The week after, East Brent and we went to Brent Knoll where more than 30 appreciated Rev Stephen Marr's leading worship on Prisons Sunday, telling us about some of his

experiences as a Prison Chaplain and introducing us to a few of the characters he met.

By the time that this issue of The Link appears in the churches, our Craft Fayre will have been held. We are looking forward to the fruits of this initiative with hope but also some uncertainty. There is a lot to be sold and we have that usual fear that not enough people will turn up. But whatever happens on the sales front, the Fayre is already a success because so many from the two Brean congregations have met together on a regular basis to exercise their creative flair and customary zeal to provide for the occasion (and to talk, I've no doubt!). So congratulations to all those involved, both men and women, and who have contributed to the Fayre. And thank you to all of you who have come and supported us.

On the first Sunday of December, after our joint service with St Bridget's, we have our Christmas lunch. That is always a festive occasion with up to 40 people enjoying their turkey and trimmings. And then we slowly build our way through to Christmas:

St Bridget's Church hold their carol service on Thursday 19th and a midnight communion on 24th:

Our Carol Service is at 4pm on Christmas Eve. It is an informal 40 minutes or so of carol verses, readings and sketches. We have been pleased that so many from the Link churches have supported us over the years and hope that you will do so again. It is a good way to get Christmas under way; and yes, as it is after 23rd, it is OK to sing Christmas carols!

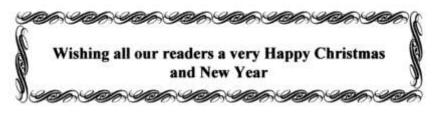
A preliminary notice to our congregation is to note that the joint service at St Bridget's on January 5th will commence at 9.15am at the request of St Bridget's, and not at 10.30am as in the Plan.

Meanwhile enjoy Advent as we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus. There are a good number of upbeat Advent hymns in our new hymnbook, so have a good sing, even if that does include O Come, O Come, Emanuel!

Happy Christmas from us all here at Brean

Harvey Allen

WEST HUNTSPILL





Diary Date

Prayer Day on January 18th

10am - 4pm at Balliol Hall

Note change of Venue

BRENT KNOLL

Minister Revd. Biggs

At the time of writing (mid-November), I'm already heartily sick and tired of the Christmas commercials which seem to have dominated television since August. Thinking about it, they probably have. Last year a friend of mine sent me an email containing two pictures. One was of Jesus with an accompanying caption "Where did it say that you should buy so much stuff to celebrate My birthday?" and a second was an image of the Nativity saying "Remember the reason for the season". They both made quite an impression on me when I saw them and they come to mind every time I see the "Buy stuff!!" commercials on TV. Particularly the one which is advising people to start saving up for Christmas 2014...

Like the rest of our Link Church family, we at Brent Knoll certainly love to keep the true spirit of Christmas going for as long as possible. As well as our family Christmas service, which will be a local arrangement on 22 December, we will be holding our carol service (led by Andrew) on 29 December. And we are, of course, all looking forward to attending the various other seasonal services held by the other churches within our Circuit.

Being the final issue of 2013 (and the first of 2014!) it's a time we look towards the future. Our Circuit has major challenges ahead of it. At the time of writing, we have not been matched with a minister to take over from our own Rev Andrew when he and Julie move on next year. All our prayers are needed and, to this end, the Circuit is holding a monthly time of prayer in each Church within it. Brent Knoll is hosting the next prayer meeting at 9.30am on 7th December. Please join us. Our Circuit needs our prayers!

To all of you, from all of us at Brent Knoll, we wish you a blessed Christmas and a joyful and peaceful New Year.

God bless Rosemary Krull



THE LINK

The annual subscriptions are due with this LINK or the February one.

Price £3.00 per annum. Inland Post £6.00 per annum.



Minister

Rev. Andrew Biggs, 28A Caernarvon Way. Burnham on Sea. TA8 2DQ apbiggs@gmail.com Tel. (01278) 782306

Editors

Cedric & Dorothy May, 6 Brightstowe Road. Burnham on Sea. TA8 2HW cedric.may@btinternet.com Tel. (01278) 784204

Web Sites

NAME

www.methodistchurchburnhamonsea.org.uk www.brean-methodist-church.home.dhs.org www.brentknollmethodistchurch.com

Circuit Web site

http://westonburnham.wix.com/w-s-mb-o-smethodists

The Deadline for the February 2014 "LINK" is Sunday 19th January 2014

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