

Neath Port Talbot CONTACT

We were thrilled to welcome to our circuit Rev Kofi Amissah, his wife Justina, and their three sons, Adom, Nhyira and Sompaa, at the Circuit Welcome Service at Taibach on Saturday 31st August. It was a wonderful occasion, enlivened by the presence of many guests, not least the members of the Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship UK, whose singing led us all so joyfully into the presence of God. We were then equally pleased at the news of the birth of Dzinpa, a daughter to Justina and Kofi, just a few weeks later. Dzinpa's baptism will give us the opportunity to share in another circuit occasion on **Sunday 12th January 2014 at 6.00pm at Skewen Methodist Church**. Please continue to uphold Kofi and his family in your prayers as they settle into a new life among us in Wales.

At the September meeting of the Wales Synod of the Methodist Church my appointment as Assistant Synod Chair (South West) was approved. This was a post held in the past by Rev Linda Woollacott. It will mean that some of my time each week will have to be given to Synod work, but the circuit does benefit a little financially from this arrangement. Kofi's appointment makes this role easier for me to take on and I am very grateful for the continuing support of Viv, Clem Raymond and Christopher Jones.

You may notice from the plan that the Cwmavon Methodist Fellowship is no longer meeting. Following the closure of the Methodist church in Cwmavon in 2010, the fellowship meeting (based on the Sisterhood) provided an important means of mutual support for the former members of the church as they settled into other congregations. However, the fellowship has not met for some months and it has been decided to formally end the group. We are very grateful for the hospitality shown to us by the members of the Peniel Chapel in Cwmavon where the fellowship has been meeting.

Every Sunday we have a prayer focus on one of the churches in our circuit. They are named each week on the plan. Please make that church a focus for your prayers on that Sunday and during the week following. When praying for our friends at Skewen and Jersey Marine, please also pray for our outreach into the Coed Darcy development. A focus group from churches of a variety of denominations meets regularly to talk and pray about our Christian witness to that newly emerging community.

Finally, our good friend Clem Raymond celebrates 40 years as a fully accredited Local Preacher this year. We intend to acknowledge this wonderful achievement with him at a Circuit Advent Songs of Praise at Taibach at 7.00pm on Thursday 5th December. We do hope that you can join us for this special occasion.

The Advent, Christmas and Epiphany seasons are all marked as we go through the Sundays of this plan. A few years ago the evangelist, J. John, wrote a booklet entitled, *What's the point of Christmas?* He makes this point: "Christmas is coming. We watch as children's faces light up. We wait with growing excitement for the greatest celebration of the year. But behind the tinsel and the coloured lights, behind the Christmas carols, lies the greatest gift of all... the baby in the manger." Charles Wesley summed up the meaning of the birth of Jesus in the way that only he could: "Our God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man..." (H&P 109). I hope that amidst the trappings of the seasons all of us will find moments in worship when we simply are amazed once more at the wonder of God being born among us and taking human flesh.

With every blessing

Chris Gray