



## Heaton Moor United Church

The United Reformed Church and The Methodist Church  
working together in partnership



### Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> Super Sunday 10.00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88566223496?pwd=YUwrc2NnT2huclZYQmlSZmJyK1JLdz09>

Meeting ID: 885 6622 3496 Password: 483732

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July Circuit Service 3.00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> July Coffee and Prayer 11.00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/95327541668?pwd=ekU2QWgzZjVKWTBFTjZsb0tERVQrdz09>

Meeting ID: 953 2754 1668 Password: 794265

### Joining by telephone

#### Step 1)

Dial any of the following numbers. If one doesn't work try another and another until you are able to connect:

0330 088 5830

0131 460 1196

0203 481 5237

0203 481 5240

0208 080 6591

0208 080 6592

#### Step 2)

Follow the prompts you hear on the phone.

You may be prompted to enter 3 different things:

1 -- Meeting ID followed by hash #

2 -- Password followed by hash #

3 -- Participants ID -- You will not have one of these, don't worry, all you need to do is enter "Hash" #

You should then be entered into the service.



*I received this email from Sue Jones this week:*

On behalf of the whole family, I would like to thank everyone for the lovely cards and messages that we received when Mum died recently. We were also very moved that so many of you met us at church last Friday to pay your respects to Mum. It was lovely to know that so many people cared for her too. I know too that there were many other people who would have been there under normal circumstances. We are hoping to have a service at church to celebrate her life when this is possible. Several people have asked about donations in her memory. These can be made to British Heart Foundation or Christian Aid at:

via <https://www.memorygiving.com/margaretdawson> (George Ball's have requested no cash or cheques please)

Sue



Heaton Moor United Church

*Opening for Private Prayer  
and Reflection  
Monday 10-12 am  
Thursday 6-8 pm*

*Office@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk*

A promotional graphic for Heaton Moor United Church. It features a blue background with a white cross logo in the top left corner. The text is written in a mix of black and white fonts, with the main message in a large, elegant script. The background image shows a beach at sunset.

Dear Heaton Moor United Church,

Greetings to you in the precious name of our friend and brother Jesus Christ. Trust you are all doing well.

Over the past few weeks it has been quite a learning experience for us as a church in reaching out to our community. We have learnt to do church differently by being involved in our community, building friendships with our neighbours and by offering prayers to the local shops. Following the guidance of the government and the church, and complying with the risk assessments done by our Property group, our church building will be open for private prayer on Mondays and Thursdays at set timings, and may I seek your prayers as we open the doors of our building nearly after 15 weeks. The guidance and the details of it are on our website.

Thanks to all who have joined for the circuit Agape service on Thursday on zoom. Thanks to Graham and Sheryl for organising Super Sunday service for families, and if you are interested please join along for it is on this Sunday. Details are in this weeks' notice sheet.

Herewith I am sending you the reflection and the worship resource kit from Action for Children, as it is observed as Action for Children Sunday on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Can I please kindly request you to support this ministry as our commitment to Christian mission today.

It was good to see so many of you at the church car park on last Friday offering our final respects to Margaret Dawson, thank you very much for being such a loving church family, which is really appreciated. Kindly remember the Dawson's families in your prayers. This week I was leading the funeral service of Mr. Wilf Roberts, who was a friend of our Dementia Drop in group, and request you to uphold the bereaved family in your prayers.

This week, kindly take time to ring a friend of another faith and pray for them.

May you all have a good week, and may the Spirit of God lead you and guide you in all your ways and paths.

Thanking you,

Regards,

Raj

10<sup>th</sup> July 2020

## Super Sunday – 12 July

*Imagine we're going to a Dance Party!*

*But don't worry – if you don't like dancing; no one is going to make you! We're just preparing for a party.*

Here are three things you can make – but you don't have to make all three! You choose –

1. **Party Invitation** ... Make a party invitation that you would like to receive. Decorate it. Who else do you think would like to receive it?
2. **Musical Instrument** ... It could be a shaker using rice or pasta in a plastic bottle – you can decorate it with coloured paper and stickers. Or a straw with holes in it, to make a flute ... Or what else?
3. **Dance Mobile** ... You need a stick or coat hanger, some string or cotton, & pictures of dancers (like the ones below, or find/draw your own) ...
  - a. Cut out the dancers, ideally stick them to card, and you can colour the other side ...
  - b. Attach each picture to a piece of cotton, and tie the other end to the stick or coat-hanger, spreading them along the length, so they hang down
  - c. You can add extra levels to the mobile, with extra sticks / coat-hangers, if you like!





## **Church unbound: Setting our minds on the things of the Spirit**

### **Reflecting on Romans 8: 1-11**

The first step to follow in reopening the church building for worship, post lockdown according to the Church guidance is to think missionally, where we are encouraged to engage creatively and responsibly in the context of our church's mission plan. In that missional reflection, the key point is to discern the hand of God in our plans, allowing the Spirit of God to lead and guide us, for our calling is to be a church unbound. Paul in writing to the church in Rome, as we have it from the text Romans 8:1-11, was explaining a contrast between flesh and spirit, inviting the early Christians to set their minds on the things of the Spirit of God, invoking them to think missionally in their being and becoming as a church.

The book of Romans was written by Paul to the early Christians living in an urban context of Rome, who were gathering as a house church. In contrast to the rest of the letters Paul had written, this letter to Romans was written to a church that Paul has not founded or visited, yet he writes some strong theological foundations of Christian faith in the context of Jewish traditions. The two main missional aims of Paul in writing this letter to Romans was firstly to convince and inspire the Christians in Rome to contribute towards the poor people in Jerusalem, and secondly to help in to spread the gospel to Spain (Romans 15:22-29). With such aims in his mind, Paul in Romans 8:1-11 was appealing his fellow followers of Christ in Rome to set their mind not on the things of flesh but on spirit, so that they belong to Christ. He also encourages them that "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (1v).

To set the mind on the things of the Spirit according to Paul can be done by those who are living according to the Spirit of God (5v). Secondly it is life and peace (6v). Thirdly, it is friendship with God, submitting to God's word and ultimately it is pleasing God (7v). Fourthly, it is belonging to Christ, as it is to have the Spirit of Christ in them. Fifthly, to set the mind on the things of the Spirit means to experience the indwelling of Christ and Spirit (8-9v). Sixthly, it is to be assured to have a new life experience in Christ (11v). Paul presents all these aspects of setting mind on the things of the Spirit over against setting mind on the things of the flesh. Herewith I tabulate the contrasts that Paul explains:

<b>Setting the mind on the things of the Spirit</b>	<b>Setting the mind on the things of the flesh</b>
People who live according to the spirit	People who live according to the flesh
Life and peace	Death
Friendship with God	Hostile to God
Submission to God's Law	Cannot not submit to God's law
Pleasing God	Cannot please God
Indwelling of the Spirit of God	No indwelling of the Spirit of God
Belonging to Christ	Does not belong to Christ
The spirit is life because of righteousness	Life denying

Setting the mind on the things of the Spirit is a way of Paul's call to the Christians in Rome towards new creation in Christ, where quality of life is affirmed and lived out. It also meant not to be limited by the written rules, rituals and regulations of the Law, but to be creative in

the mission of God, for the Spirit of God is unbound and so should the Christian ethos and discipleship be.

Setting the mind on the things of the Spirit today is primarily about giving up our old ways of doing things and engaging in doing new and creative things, which are lifegiving, lifesaving and life promoting. For the Christians living in Rome, they were on the one hand bound by the traditions and rituals of Jewish law, and on the other hand were bound by the Roman empire. In such a context Paul was inspiring the Christians in Rome, not to be bound by law and flesh, but to set the mind on the things of the Spirit, for there is freedom, there is inclusion, there is creativity and there is meaning to life. The relevance of this text for us today is to set our mind on the things of the Spirit, which is allowing the Spirit of God to break open the bindings in which we are fixed and to wide open the boundaries that we have drawn. "These are the things that have always worked," "These are the things that have not worked," "This is how things should be," are some of the words that I keep hearing from people around us. But when we turn and set our minds on the things of the Spirit, we are allowing the Spirit of God firstly helping us to understand that "yes, they have worked previously, but there are other ways, different from what we have always known that will work, so be open to them and take on it." The Spirit of God grants us courage to do things differently than what it was in the law, she grants us strength to do new things other than those that are in the law, and she grants us openness in (ad)venturing creative things other than that are in the law. To set our minds on the things of the flesh is allowing ourselves to be bound by law, ritual and to things that we have always known and have always done. We are called to be a church unbound.

Last night's Agape meal service was where I personally found meaning in the understanding of being united as Christians, though living in isolation, each of us sitting in our own homes, yet united by the grace of God. This is not what we have done previously, but the circumstances of lock down have called us to participate in such acts, where we can experience the Spirit of God, by joining in eating a cake/bread and drinking juice/wine in remembrance of the Jesus meal with his disciples, and by reflecting on the needs of the communities we live in. I also understand that the experience of the Spirit of God is different and diverse, for each of us experience it in ways which might be totally different to some others. We are therefore called to recognise that the Spirit of God works diversely, distinctly, dynamically and differentially.

This Sunday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 2020, we observe it as Action for Children Sunday, and the theme for this year has been "Choose Childhood," which is an invitation again for the people of God to set our minds on the things of the Spirit, in this case acting on the needs of children in need. When holiday hunger is so real in our contexts, when child poverty has been on the rise, when childhood hurts for so many children due to neglect, abuse, poor mental health, is not joining to support these children a small act in setting our minds on the things of the Spirit today?

As Christians, we have a spiritual responsibility in sharing our love of Christ with people in need today, particularly with those on the margins and those that are vulnerable. Let us prayerfully try to do church differently, by which I mean to say functionally and methodologically different, and perhaps this post lockdown scenario is an opportune time for



us to do church differently. This Sunday reflect on what are the things of the Spirit of God for us churches today? Where do we see the hand of God in our activities? It is time we give up things of the flesh, things of the law, things of the ritual, things of the routine and set our minds on the things of the Spirit of God. This is an opportune time for the birth of a new church, grounded on the things of the Spirit and witnessing for the things of the Spirit of God. In our journey towards a church unbound, there might be messiness and clumsiness, take strength for in Christ there is no condemnation, for we are only embraced by the love of Christ.

May the Spirit of Christ in whom we have no condemnation be each of us, so that we can do the things as Christ is doing and belong to Christ in this our time and space. May we as a church baptise ourselves as a 'church unbound' participating in the acts of the Spirit of God here and now. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta  
10<sup>th</sup> July 2020



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church



# The Methodist Church

United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

A Message from the Superintendent Minister

July 8th 2020

Dear Friends,

Last week saw the annual Methodist Conference taking place – for the first time on Zoom and broadcast via YouTube. The Conference dealt with a briefer agenda than usual but I hope that the normal summary of key discussions will be published soon so that I can share them with you. Especially during times like these it is good to be reminded that we are part of something bigger – that our local church is part of a Circuit, and the Circuit part of a District, and our District part of the Connexion (which is the word used to describe the national church). An important part of every Methodist Conference is the inauguration of the new President and Vice-President of Conference, and they both offer an important inaugural address which is intended to set the tone and the agenda for their Presidential year. The Presidential address offers an insight into some of the important matters which we can expect the church to be thinking about in the coming year. To that end, I thought I would share a few snippets of this year's Presidential address with you. This year, the President of the Methodist Conference is Revd Richard Teal. Richard has been Chair of the Cumbria District returning last September to circuit ministry in East Yorkshire. Referencing the Psalms in particular, Richard based his address around three points in the human life cycle: points of **orientation**, points of **disorientation**, and points of **reorientation**. Here are some highlights from his sermon:

**“Orientation:** The Psalms which fall into this category are those where life is good. Take a perfect example: Psalm 104 v 24-28. In this Psalm life is good. There is a contentment about it and a feeling of thankfulness. This is a comfortable time in life, there is an inner peace, calm and purpose to life.

I shall never forget the feeling both at seeing and then holding my grandchild just a few hours after he was born. Words could not begin to explain the feeling. Emotion welled up inside me and I found it hard to hold back tears of absolute joy, thanksgiving and love. It was a moment of personal orientation.

And what about Methodism? Listen to a passage from John Wesley's Journal when he visited Cornwall: 'Both this morning and evening the congregation was as large as the house of God could well contain. In the society God did indeed sit upon his people as a refiner's fire. He darted into all the melting flame of love; so that their heads were as water and their eyes as fountains of tears'. What a wonderful depiction of a time of orientation for Methodism – when we were so clear who we were and what we were about.

**Disorientation:** The Psalms also take us to a very different place, a place of disorientation. There are times when you can see the human landscape change before your eyes. The pandemic known as COVID 19 has changed our lives and communities of the world for ever.

Psalm 88 is a perfect description of disorientation. Listen to its opening verses and hear them on the lips of a patient on a ventilator in the Intensive Care Unit of one of our hospitals:

O Lord, the God who saves me,  
Day and night, I cry out before you;  
Turn your ear to my cry.  
For my soul is full of trouble  
And my life draws near the grave  
I am counted among those who go to the pit;  
I am like a man without strength.  
I am set apart with the dead,  
Like the slain who lie in the grave,  
Who you remember no more,  
Who are cut off from your care. (v 1-5)

In this Psalm the writer is speaking out of intense personal suffering. There seems to be little hope and he is totally disorientated. It is at moments or times like these that we may feel that God is distant or absent. The relevance of the Psalms is that they understand this and offer us a way forward.

On a personal basis I have spent much of this past year preparing for my role as President of the Conference. My diary had become packed with anticipated visits .....in partnership with Global Relationships my first overseas trip at the beginning of March was by the invitation of the Methodist Church in Kenya and I came home inspired by the growth of that Church and the joyous faith of the Kenyan Methodist Community, which I was hoping to share on my travels. Within a few days after returning home we were in lockdown, and as far as the Presidency is concerned, the diary has had a lot of special visits cancelled and Conference, with all its joy and brightness of worship and fellowship has changed from its normal format to what we are doing on line today. For a period of time I have found myself feeling insecure and totally disorientated.

What about disorientation more widely in the Methodist Church? Who would ever have thought a few months ago we would have had to close our doors and lock them, even at Easter! Many of our congregations are feeling totally disorientated, fearful and cut off from the fellowship we enjoy with each other. We have been unable even to go out and visit our most vulnerable members. This has left us asking how we can keep faith and hope during this strange experience? How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

**Re-orientation:** Thankfully the Psalms go beyond the fog we are in right now and are full of verses of Thanksgiving and Praise. These Psalms speak of surprise and wonder, miracle and amazement when a breakthrough is found, a path emerges out of the woods, a friend gets better and we move from disorientation to re-orientation. Listen to the opening words of Psalm 40:

*'I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord' (40 v 1-3)*

There is huge realism within these words. God acts but, in this Psalm, action requires waiting and patience. The Psalmist does not expect God's action in a crisis situation to happen instantly, but there are lessons to learn and if we learn from them, the Kingdom of God will move closer to us. The values of the Kingdom so often turn our human values upside down. What are, those upside-down Kingdom values in our present situation which enable us to move from disorientation to reorientation? May I suggest three:

### **1: Seeing people through a different Lens:**

The Incarnation is about God in Christ becoming one of us. God doesn't practice social distancing but becomes close and personal, close enough to infect us with grace and love.

I have a poster on my office window which greets people when they come to the Manse. In the middle of it are the words of St Paul, '*we always thank God for all of you*'. Around those words are symbols which represent shops and supermarket workers, lorry drivers, Post Office staff, NHS, Pharmacies, Police, Farmers, Foodbank, local businesses, a rainbow and so on. People who have been risking their lives to serve the community.

Pre-Covid, we knew the price of everything and the value of nothing, now with COVID 19 this is being reversed and the upside-down kingdom comes to the fore. Different people all of a sudden become very important in society. We see through a different lens about who is of value, and see the gospel – God's dynamic energy unleashed in our world and causing us to tell and hear different stories of good news to that we have been used to.

## **2: Seeing the Environment through a different Lens:**

There was a growing recognition of the challenges to the environment before COVID 19; the way we were living as a world-wide community was bringing devastation. Because of COVID 19 we have not only talked but been forced to live differently and that difference in our living has begun to change our environment.

New data suggests that global CO2 emissions are set to fall by nearly 8% this year which will be to their lowest level since 2010. This gives us an opportunity to reflect on the way the global economy can be redesigned to accentuate our role as stewards of God's creation and make sure that we love our neighbours by emphasising sustainable development and social equity.

Recovery from Covid-19 offers a huge amount of choice and opportunity. We can, if we wish, choose to invest in new jobs, cleaner air and improved wellbeing. As we rebuild our economy, we can do so alongside rebuilding the wellbeing of the environment, the two are not mutually exclusive. The biggest mistake would be to go back to the version of normal that we had been used to and lock in high emissions, social deprivation, a stressed environment and a lack of well-being.

It is true to say that Jesus did not preach in his ministry about climate change, global warming, travel emissions or other environmental issues, but he did preach about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God means the reign of God over the whole earth, which he created as good.

Creation is a gift; therefore, it is imperative that humankind renews and strengthens it. In the words of Pope Benedict XV1 'that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying'.

## **3: Seeing the Church through a different Lens:**

What are we going to do when we lift our heads up from our many Zoom meetings and online worship and reopen our church buildings? What will be the new normal for the Methodist Church, indeed what will be the new normal for the Christian church? Personally, I really hope it will mean two things:

- **a renewed emphasis on the Faithfulness of God:**

One of the great truths which the Old Testament has given to us is of the faithfulness of God, come what may. The Psalmists knew this in the depth of their being. The Psalms express through all the difficulties and trauma of Gods people in their history, that God was faithful come what may. The Covenant relationship

never wavered on God's side, even though his people broke it many times. He was Faithful! Throughout their history right through to today that faithfulness has been part of God's nature.

Dr Colin Morris in one of his writings illustrates this truth with the true story of the American preacher and novelist, Lloyd C. Douglas. When he was a university student, he rented a room in a big house, on the ground floor of which lived an old music teacher, housebound through infirmity. Douglas would visit him every day, popping his head round the door and asking the same ritual question, 'Well, what's the good news today?' And he would get the same ritual answer. The old man would pick up a tuning fork and strike it on the table. 'Hear that? It's middle C. It is Middle C today. It was Middle C yesterday and the day before. It will be Middle C tomorrow and the day after and for a thousand years to come. The tenor across the hall sings flat and the piano upstairs is out of tune. Noise! Noise all around me, but that my friend is Middle C.'

We do not know at this stage what the middle C, the new normal for the people called Methodist or indeed for the church of Jesus Christ will be. For some people this is exciting, for others it is frightening and concerning, but there is one certainty, God will be faithful to his people as he has been in the past, as he is in the present and as he leads us into the future.

- **a greater reliance on the Cross, Resurrection and power of the Holy Spirit:**

John Wesley said, *'I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist, but I am afraid lest they should exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power.'*

A church which loses its memory about its basic foundation has no future. Yet we are a resurrection community empowered by the Holy Spirit. Without this message of faith, and the life which Easter gives us we are helpless.

The church of Christ has been hit hard in the last few months by COVID 19 but we live by the much older and enduring story of Jesus, who's cross and resurrection declares that his life is not over. For the community of faith to believe in the resurrection is to trust that we live by the generative power of God who brings, in the words of Rowan Williams, 'transformation, recreation and empowerment in the present'. Now that's the sort of new normal I want to see. Not a return to the same old same old but a church which has the reputation for transformation, for recreation and for empowerment of what we are living through in the present in response to a faithful God who redeems history and promises the brightest of futures.

We do not know what the new normal will be for the life of the Church of Christ, but one thing we do know is that it will be transformed, recreated and empowered by the heart of its faith, the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The Vice President and I have chosen the final words of John Wesley as our theme for this year, 'The best of all is, God is with us'. What better words could there be for a time such as this. Amen"

Richard J Teal May 2020

Thanks to our President for this message. Do pray for him and the Vice-President Carolyn Lawrence. Dear friends I will be taking some leave at the end of July and beginning of August, but these fortnightly letters will continue, written by my colleagues Raj and Lindsay. It is also possible that in the coming weeks some of our churches will be re-opening, either for silent prayer or for small and simple acts of worship. This is something to celebrate, but we are not rushing and each church has to complete all the necessary legal checks; already some churches have agreed they will not be opening until September. And what with the restrictions around social distancing and no singing etc, worship will be a strange experience for some time to come. Yet we remain as Church – within or without our buildings. We continue to care for and love one

another and seek ways to serve God in the communities in which God has placed us. As we re-orientate ourselves in the United Stockport Circuit we give thanks that indeed, God is with us!

And please remember as always:

**In this time of isolation and separation may we feel the unity of God's spirit in the bonds of peace and love which connect us to one another.**

- **When we feel lonely let us know that in Christ we are never alone.**
- **When we feel isolated may we be reminded that within the worldwide Body of Christ we are always connected.**
- **When we need a hug help us to feel the warmth of God's embrace**
- **When we are compelled to keep our distance, may we be drawn close to each other within the Spirit of Companionship that flows from God and which moves through and between each one of us.**

With love and blessings,

**Rev Cathy.**

### NOTICES

#### Worship

**Forthcoming weekly circuit services on Zoom are:**

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July and 19<sup>th</sup> July 3pm**

You can join all the above services via Zoom with a video link and see and hear everything and everyone else who is participating, or you can join just with audio, *or you can telephone in.*

Login details for *all forthcoming services* are as follows:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkc2R4dmV1QT09>

**Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333**

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#### Circuit Prayer

In addition, every **Sunday morning at 11am** – when we would all normally be in worship in church – we are encouraged to pray the following prayer. This way we stay connected in a very really and tangible way. This week I have added some specific information and prayer points for each of the churches. You can also read more about each church on the Circuit Website [www.stockportcircuit.org.uk](http://www.stockportcircuit.org.uk)

**God of Love and Life,**

**We pray to you this morning for the life the United Stockport Methodist Circuit, for our sisters and brothers who belong to:**

*(pausing briefly to reflect after each name)*

**Christ Church Methodist /URC** [A URC/Methodist LEP in a URC building. Please pray for the small congregation who are divided into a mature congregation who have worshipped and supported the church very faithfully for many years and younger folk and children who form Sunday Fun and meet downstairs. Many members of the church belong to the Green Group, a drama group whose performances go a long way to support the church]

**Dialstone Lane Methodist Church** [Please pray for the church's ongoing commitment to promoting a Good Society through its connections with local politicians. Also pray for the church coming out of lockdown, having lost several long-standing members and friends over the last few months, and for the church's pastoral worker Gill who has been so busy keeping everyone in touch with each other.]

**Davenport Methodist Church** *[A smaller church with a medium congregation including 1 family. Please pray for them as they have a lot of ideas to reach out into the community, including local schools and as they seek to embrace different styles of worship. This congregation also has strong links with the Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rainbows.]*

**Edgeley Community Church** *[A URC/Methodist LEP in a Methodist building. Please pray for their Church Development Worker who co-ordinates many activities including Messy Church, Baby and Toddler Group and Make it, Bake it, and goes out into Care Homes and Schools. The congregation is of mixed age, including 1 family with small children. This congregation has links with the Brownies.]*

**Hazel Grove Methodist Church** *[please pray for the uniformed organisations closely associated with the church, for their leaders who are trying to keep things going with the young people online during lockdown. Give thanks for a committed team of people who have worked hard to keep in touch with people during lockdown.]*

**Heaton Mersey Methodist Church** *[please pray for the family church at ten, for Sunday club, for Who let the Dad's out group, for the schools work, for their commitments to cafe worship in different styles of worship, for Lite church, for the mission engagements of the church.]*

**Heaton Moor United Church** *[please pray for the Dementia drop in, for the Super Sunday and cafe worships, for messy church group, for the community outreach, their engagements for social justice, for women's fellowship and men's fellowship .]*

**St. Johns Methodist Church, Cheadle Heath** *[please pray for the future of the church and for the directions we'll take as there are issues with the building here. For all the members of the congregation and for their ongoing fellowship.]*

**Tiviot Dale Methodist Church, centre of Stockport** *[Please pray for the newly formed Tiviot Dale management group who are helping the circuit to think through how we might develop new mission and ministry in the centre of Stockport, and for Revd Caroline Ryder who has been working with the church over the last few months and is now moving on to a new appointment in Bradford].*

**Trinity Methodist Church, Bramhall Lane** *[This is a large church building with a large car park and gardens, a Guide building in the grounds and a successful cricket club, the grounds of which are owned by the church. Please pray for the Sunday Club, even though very few children come now. The congregation is generally quite traditional in its worship style but does have links with the Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers and they have different styles of worship on Parade Sundays.]*

**Windlehurst Methodist Church, High Lane** *[Please pray for all the members of Active, the church's flagship project working to promote health and well-being and friendship, who are longing to return to their weekly meeting]*

**In this time of isolation and separation may we feel the unity of your spirit in the bonds of peace and love which connect us to one another. We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. We ask that this time of crisis might pass and that those who suffer might find comfort and strength within the knowledge of your grace, revealed through the kindness and compassion of the people of God. Eternal God, though the self-offering of your Son you have filled our lives with your presence. Help us in our sufferings and trials. Fill us with hope and strengthen us in our weakness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

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## **Moving into the Future**

- **A Monthly Circuit Service**

Before Covid-19 and the lock down hit, the Circuit Leadership Team had begun to talk about the possibility of starting a monthly Circuit Service at Tiviot Dale. Over the last few weeks, this idea has gained strength as we have enjoyed worshipping together as a Circuit on Zoom. Obviously, we cannot yet plan to hold this service, and it may be some time before we can. No decision has been taken about when the service will be – it could be a Sunday evening or a weekday evening for example – or about what sort of service it will be, but we hope it will be something a bit different and we want to be prepared. ***If you would be interested in being part of a group to help organise a monthly circuit service, and/or if you have musical ability and***

*would like to be part of a circuit worship band, then please let Revd Cathy Bird know so that as soon as we can gather again, we have something in place!*

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# Choose Childhood



A special worship service in  
support of Action for Children

# Act with justice and righteousness

Jeremiah 22:1-5

**Dear friends,**

Time really has flown by since our 150th anniversary celebrations in 2019. It was an incredibly special moment in our history and I'd like to thank you for being such an important part of it. Your love and commitment – your services, volunteering and fundraising – made it an unforgettable 12 months. We couldn't have marked this historic milestone without you.

While it was important to look back, it was even more important to reflect on why we're still needed today. Tragically, childhood continues to hurt for so many children in the UK. These children face neglect and abuse, poverty and poor mental health. They don't choose what happens in their lives. But we can choose to help.

That's why – this Action for Children Sunday – the theme of our worship outline is Choose Childhood. We launched the campaign last year to urge the government to do more to help children. We hope you'll join our call to action and spread the word through your special service. If you'd like to find out more about the campaign, please get in touch with your local fundraiser or go to: **[actionforchildren.org.uk/choosechildhood](https://actionforchildren.org.uk/choosechildhood)**

Finally, I'd like to thank the Reverend Sue Pegg and my Action for Children Christian Network colleagues, Megan Ludlow and Alison Smith, for their help with preparing this worship outline.

Thank you so much for all your support. I hope you have a wonderful Action for Children Sunday.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karis".

**Karis Kolawole**

Head of Faith Partnerships

[karis.kolawole@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:karis.kolawole@actionforchildren.org.uk)

# The essentials

## Planning your worship service

We hope this booklet will help you to plan a special worship service in support of Action for Children. You can use it on Action for Children Sunday, the second Sunday in July, or at any other time or event. Please feel free to choose different hymns, prayers and activities, or to change the format.

Your local community fundraiser can help you with your planning. You'll find their details on the contact sheet enclosed with this mailing or at: **[actionforchildren.org.uk/methodistfundraising](https://actionforchildren.org.uk/methodistfundraising)**. They can also send you lots of useful fundraising materials, including:

- **Gift Aid envelopes.**
- **Bookmarks.**
- **Posters.**
- **Leaflets.**

A great way to bring our work to life is to get one of our friendly speakers to talk at your church. Get in touch with your local fundraiser to find out more.

Our YouTube channel – **[youtube.com/user/ActionForChildrenUK](https://youtube.com/user/ActionForChildrenUK)** – also has a selection of fantastic videos about what we do. You can show them at your service or any other event.



### Share the joy

We love seeing pictures and videos from your events. Send them to us or post them on social media (make sure you tag us!).

# An outline for a worship service

## Welcome

*The worship leader encourages the congregation to welcome each other before explaining that the service will focus on Action for Children's work.*

The theme of today's service is 'Choose Childhood'.

Action for Children believes that every child should grow up safe and happy. To make this vision a reality, they offer practical and emotional care and support, make sure children's voices are heard, and campaign to bring lasting improvements to their lives. Doing this lays the foundations for children thrive.

The work Action for Children does is only possible with our support. The Methodist Church has been by the charity's side for more than 150 years. But, tragically, there are still thousands of vulnerable children who desperately need our help. With our worship, prayers and gifts, we can make a real difference to these children. Together we can choose safe and happy childhoods for every child.

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we gather today with thanksgiving and an open heart, help us to hear you.

Fill our hearts with love and compassion for those you have sent us to. Stir up our hearts and strengthen our arms to act with justice and righteousness in Jesus' name.

Amen.

*Prayer by Karis Kolawole,  
Head of Faith Partnerships*



## Gathering activity: A thankful heart

*Suggested activity on page 12.*

### Prayer

Lord, we lift up the work of Action for Children.

We think of all the families who come into contact with the charity and pray your blessing over them. We think of those struggling with their physical or mental health, and pray your peace descends on them. Lord, remove any barriers that may prevent people from reaching out.

We thank you for the thousands of staff members and volunteers who serve children and families, and pray that you would sustain them. Give them the energy and enthusiasm they need to lovingly support those most in need.

We thank you for the infrastructure that makes Action for Children's work possible: the buildings, the vehicles, the IT – all the variables that help them to reach and serve communities across the UK.

We pray for the leadership and the trustees – may your wisdom and guidance be present as they map out the future of the charity.

We pray for our wider society – we ask that your will be done; from

Westminster all the way down to our communities. We ask that lives led by love – love modelled so perfectly by Christ – transform the world we live in.

In the name of the King, Jesus,  
Amen.

*Prayer by Megan Ludlow, Bid Manager and  
Action for Children Christian Network*

## Our Lord's prayer

### Hymn

**Come, You Thankful People, Come**  
(Singing the Faith: 123) or  
**O Worship The King, All-Glorious  
Above** (Singing the Faith: 113) or  
**Come On And Celebrate!** (Singing  
the Faith: 44)

### Bible readings

#### **Jeremiah 22:1-5**

Act with justice and righteousness

#### **Luke 4:16-21**

Anointed and sent to those who  
need our support

### Opening the word

*The minister or worship leader may  
choose to either prepare their own  
sermon based on the Bible readings or  
use the material on page 13 to explore  
how 'Choose Childhood' is a call to act  
with justice and righteousness.*

## Hymn

**The Kingdom Of God Is Justice And Joy** (Singing the Faith: 255) or **Beauty For Brokenness** (Singing the Faith: 693) or

**I Will Offer Up My Life** (Matt Redman: [worshiptogether.com/songs/i-will-offer-up-my-life](http://worshiptogether.com/songs/i-will-offer-up-my-life))

## Talk about Action for Children's work

*At this point, one or more of the following can be used to explain how Action for Children's work makes a difference.*

- An invited speaker talks about Action for Children.
- Someone reads out Lyle's story on page 10.
- A short video clip – supplied by the community fundraiser or from Action for Children's YouTube collection – is played.





# Offering and prayers for the work of Action for Children

## Hymn

**Pray For A World Where Every Child**

(Singing the Faith: 527) or

**Let Us Build A House Where Love**

**Can Dwell** (Singing the Faith: 409)

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus, we ask that you bring healing to any child or young person who has been the victim of abuse or neglect. They are your children and have been called into your wonderful light.

Show them that you see them and know what they are going through. Show them that you are right beside them. No matter how terrible the situation, we pray that they will know that they can lean on you.

Open our eyes, Lord, to see any potential signs of abuse and remove every form of ignorance from us.

Give these children and young people hope and provide healing in their body, soul and mind. Ease their suffering, Father, and cause a complete restoration in their lives.

Amen.

*Prayer by Alison Smith, Fostering Marketing Officer and Action for Children Christian Network*

## Prayer of committal

*The congregation says the words in bold.*

In celebration of over 150 years of work and witness, we commit ourselves afresh:

Where children cry in need:

**We will hear their cry.**

Where children are denied the gifts of childhood:

**We will provide for them to delight in good things.**

Where there is exclusion or deprivation:

**We will challenge injustice.**

Where poverty is rife:

**We will share what we have.**

Where others also care:

**We will work with them.**

Wherever we see a need:

**We will pray for means to meet it.**

Let us pray:

Loving God, you have called us to be your people and to share in the ministry of your Son. Grant us, we pray, ears that are open to the cries of those in need, hearts that are eager to respond, voices that are ready to speak out for the



oppressed, and hands that are  
active in sharing your bounty.  
In the name of Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

*Prayer by the Reverend Dr Jonathan Hustler,  
Secretary of the Methodist Conference*

## Hymn

**I, The Lord Of Sea And Sky** (Here I  
Am Lord) (Singing the Faith: 663)

## Blessing



# Lyle's story

**Lyle\* was physically and emotionally abused by his parents. They punched and kicked him, and he'd often go hungry. After turning to alcohol to numb the pain, Lyle ran away from home. Action for Children stepped in to find him a safe and stable place to live.**

"Drugs were always a big problem in my family and there was a lot of violence," Lyle explains. "I wasn't fed at home and my big sister would sneak food into her room most nights. But we'd often go days without getting food."

Lyle was left to fend for himself after his parents threw his sister out. "I didn't have clean clothes. Mum and dad wouldn't let me bath or shower. I wasn't even allowed to get my hair cut," he says.

After getting bullied at school, Lyle started to isolate himself. At 14, he started drinking. "Mum and dad would offer me alcohol all the time, and eventually I said yes. I'd get home from school and they'd give me glasses of things. I'd just drink them. I couldn't feel anything. I thought nothing bad could ever happen when I was drunk."

Lyle left school and found a job he really liked. But things at home got even worse. "I loved my job. But I was the only one putting money in the house. And if I didn't give the money to them for drugs, they'd take it out on me."

Lyle's depression and anxiety started to take their toll. "I just knew I had to get out," he says. "I left that house with nothing apart from the clothes on my back. I was in a really bad state. I came to Action for Children with nothing."

Action for Children found Lyle a safe place to live in supported accommodation. "They reminded me that I'm enough," he says. "They helped me recover from alcohol. Without them, I don't think I'd be alive. I nearly took my own life and, if it hadn't been for my support worker coming and just talking to me, I wouldn't be here."

***"I've got no memories of my childhood. Well, no good memories anyway. My childhood didn't exist."***



*“As a child I couldn’t leave the house, I wasn’t allowed to shower, I had lice... it was horrible.”*

# All-age activities

You might like to include an all-age activity or two in your service. Here are a few ideas.

## *Gathering activity*



### **A thankful heart**

*This can be done either as an individual or a group activity. Before explaining what to do, the worship leader reads Psalm 92:1 (NRSV):*

*“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High.”*

### **Instructions**

#### **a. Individual activity**

As people gather for worship, stewards or worship leaders hand out Post-it notes or tags. Everyone writes down something they take for granted but should be thankful for. Two or three worship leaders collect the Post-it notes and read them out.

#### **b. Group activity**

The worship leader asks people to huddle together in twos or threes. Each person tells the group about something they take for granted but should be thankful for.

You could also ask them to talk about why they're thankful and what might happen if they didn't have this thing. You can repeat the activity by mixing up groups.

**Top tip:** hang the tags on a gratitude tree or stick the Post-it notes on a board.

At the end of the activity, explain that Action for Children works with thousands of children, young people and families who don't have many of the things we're thankful for. This is why it's so important to help the charity give children a safe and happy childhood.

## Opening the word



Explore the Bible readings and the 'Choose Childhood' theme.

### A. Lyle's story

Watch the video (or read the story on page 10) about Lyle, and then have a chat.

- What touched you about Lyle's story?
- What should a safe and happy childhood look like for children?
- How do you think Action for Children helps young people like Lyle?

### B. What can we learn from the Bible readings?

Jeremiah 22:1-5 calls us to **act with justice** (NRSV) or to **rescue everyone who has suffered from injustice** (Contemporary English Bible).

Luke 4:16-21 reminds us that we're **sent** to people in our community who are marginalised or disadvantaged.

By choosing childhood, we're choosing to act with justice on behalf of those who God has sent us to.





### **C. How can we act with justice in support of young people like Lyle and Choose Childhood?**

Some answers include:

1. Give a regular cash donation to support Action for Children's work.
2. Leave a legacy gift in your will.
3. Sign up to Action for Children's Choose Childhood campaign and invite other people to do the same. Go to: **[actionforchildren.org.uk](https://actionforchildren.org.uk)**
4. Write to your MP about the state of childhood today and ask them to do something about it.
5. Find out if there are any volunteer opportunities near you.
6. Befriend a family or young person in your neighbourhood.
7. Pray for the work of Action for Children and the people they support.
8. Give to your local foodbank.



End this activity by summing up in your own words. Alternatively, read the following:

*For vulnerable children in the UK, childhood hurts. In recent years, the number of children at risk of abuse and neglect, poverty and poor mental health has increased. Every child deserves a safe and happy childhood. And you can help. To Choose Childhood, either talk to the guest speaker or get in touch with Action for Children.*

# ***An activity for children***

## **School holidays**



This activity encourages children to think about the challenges others face in the school holidays.

### **1. Ask the children:**

- What do you miss about school while you're on holiday?
- What do you like about being on holiday?
- What do you do while school is on holiday?

Ask them to share with the group or draw a picture to show everyone.

**2. Explain Lyle's story in your own words.** For example, he didn't have a shower, his parents didn't look after him, and he often went hungry. Ask them: "How would you feel if..."

- You wanted a shower really badly but couldn't have one?
- You were very, very hungry but had no food to eat?
- You only had clothes that had holes in them?

Explain that there are young people like Lyle who miss being

at school in the holidays because it's the only place they can have a shower or get a meal. We need to pray and do what we can to support them.

Ask the children to write some prayers for others. You could read these out and hang them on a prayer tree.

You could also ask them to think about ways they (or their families) could help these children. Suggestions include:

- 1. Pray for Action for Children and young people like Lyle.**
- 2. Give money to support Action for Children's work.**
- 3. Donate to a local foodbank.**
- 4. Give clothes or toys to a local charity.**
- 5. Write a letter or draw a picture to send to your MP, asking them to do something to help young people like Lyle.**
- 6. Check out any local volunteer opportunities.**
- 7. Be a good friend or neighbour, and make someone happy.**

# Safe and happy childhood



Action for Children protects and supports children and young people, providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.

## Get in touch

### Action for Children

3 The Boulevard  
Ascot Road  
Watford  
WD18 8AG

[actionforchildren.org.uk](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

0300 123 2112

 /actionforchildren

 @actnforchildren

 @actionforchildrenuk