



# Heaton Moor United Church

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



## Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September Circuit Service 10.30am **There is no 3.00pm service**

This service is also going to be live streamed on YouTube

<http://bit.ly/USCworship>

The zoom log is

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

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 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.

## Private Prayer and Reflection Opening Times

**Monday 11.00am to 12.00am**

**Thursday 6.00pm to 7.00pm**

**I am off Thursday/ Friday**

Dear Heaton Moor United Church,

Hope you are all doing well.

As I have informed in the previous week, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September we have our new circuit inauguration service and it will be live streamed from Tiviot Dale Methodist Church. The details of the service as available on circuit website. Kindly pray for our new circuit and for our mission engagements in the borough of Stockport.

Thank you to all those that have made a booking for the services on the 13<sup>th</sup> September onwards, and thanks to those who have booked as reserved to give their places if more people turn up.

Thanks to Graham and Sheryl for leading the Super Sunday on Zoom. Thanks to Paul Brewerton for leading the Good Read on the Zoom as well. We appreciate their contributions and commitments.

Herewith I am sending you the reflection for this Sunday along with the worship services for your kind perusal and meditations.

It has been a decade since we became Heaton Moor United Church, and we thank God for all the contributions of our church thus far, and at the same time we are called to rededicate ourselves in our love for our community, offering to be a site of love and hospitality for all of God's creation.

May God's guidance always be with us and help us to be living testimonies to Christ during these uncertain times.

Thanking you,

With Warm Regards,

Raj

4<sup>th</sup> September 2020



Here is the plan for the services for the September:  
 Unfortunately the 13<sup>th</sup> is now at full capacity – An email has been sent out to the attendees for this service  
 You can book for the other services by contacting Sharon or your Pastoral Visitor

Re-opening for Worship Plan		
6 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Circuit Service	Live Stream/Zoom
13 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Rev Raj Patta	Full
20 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Rev Graham Adams	
27 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Carol Jack	

SLH presents...



[www.slheatons.org](http://www.slheatons.org)



@HeatonsClimateActionFestival



@SLHeatons

## Who We Are

Climate change and biodiversity loss is real. The pace of its change is increasing. It will create increasingly menacing problems for future generations, but it is not inevitable. The festival is about what you as an individual and the Heaton's as a community can do to adapt and support behavioural change. There are **twelve FREE, inspiring, informative events over the weekends of 12/13 and 19/20 September.**

We are using Zoom webinars with the support of professional event managers (Fountain May), funding from Stockport Local, and the enthusiasm of our volunteers. **Choose your events from the programme and then register using the relevant link. [Click here to the go to the programme.](#)**

# Back to school

This week we have seen children returning to school, many haven't attended since March.

JoAnne and Tracy(From Heaton Mersey) have sent this card out to all the schools in the local area to let them know we are thinking of them and thier pupils.



Please remember them all in your prayers.





The  
United  
Reformed  
Church



# The Methodist Church

## United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

**A Message from the Superintendent Minister  
2020**

**September 1<sup>st</sup>**

Dear Friends,

The 1<sup>st</sup> September marks a new start for us as the churches in the Romiley Circuit join those in United Stockport to form a brand-new Circuit. During lockdown I have been sending out a fortnightly pastoral letter to all members in the old US Circuit, so I must begin by saying welcome to friends in the churches in Romiley, Woodley, The Ridge, Marple and Jubilee who will be receiving this for the first time.

I've been away for a while, and it's good to be back after a break. Thanks to my colleagues Lindsay and Raj for stepping in and writing the last two letters while I was away. I had been out of the area for around 8 days when the 'local lockdown' in Greater Manchester was announced which meant that I was able to say to those friends I had been planning to stay with that I was 'safe'! I started off travelling to visit my mother who lives near Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire; together we travelled to Norfolk where my aunt holds a caravan on a beautiful holiday park near the coast. My mum and I were able to stay there together but meet up every day with my aunt who lives nearby and spend some quality time together. Having dropped my mum back home I made my way into London to catch up with some friends and family there, before heading West to stay with a friend in Abergavenny and finally ending up in Wincanton for a few days. A day trip to Exmouth saw me narrowly miss several members of the church in Hazel Grove who I discovered were there the day after me! It's a small world and I don't know how many county borders I crossed on my travels, but it must have been a good few. I then arrived home to the rather strange situation of the local lockdown and realised on a trip into Poynton that – just a couple of miles away from my home – there was no lockdown because they are just over the border in Cheshire. Thankfully as I write, news of the local lockdown being lifted for Stockport is coming through. That's great for us, but tough for those people just over the border in more densely populated areas who will look enviously at us, as we are able once again to visit one another in our homes and socialise together.

On September 6<sup>th</sup> we will be celebrating the coming together of the United Stockport and Romiley Circuits. This means that our circuit and our borough will have more or less the same boundary. The border between the US Circuit and the Romiley Circuit (which used to be somewhere on the A626/627 between Hazel Grove and Woodley/Romiley/Marple) will no longer exist, giving us a strong presence and hopefully a loud voice in the borough. It makes a lot of sense and I am privileged to be able to lead us into this new borderless arrangement.

Sometimes borders can be very confusing! For people whose road has a border running through the middle of it can feel very much like 'one rule for you and one rule for me'. Borders can be imperceptible, or they can be impenetrable. They can offer identity and security, or they can trap and confine. Sometimes they make sense and sometimes they seem non-sensical. Many parts of the world are riddled with conflict because of borders drawn in the past, often randomly, often

after other conflicts, in a vain attempt to keep peace and repress tension and separate peoples. Yet all such attempts to divide up the earth will inevitably create division because they ignore the unspoken truth that we are one human race, and God's intention is for us to share the rich resources of the planet which has been entrusted to us. Yet we have come so, so far from that. We see difference as threat rather than delight, and seek to label and constrict those who are not like us. Issues such as Brexit and Donald Trump's insistence on building a wall between Mexico and the USA have highlighted in recent times the significance we have come to place on borders. Over the last few weeks we have been hearing about refugees trying to sail across the English Channel from Calais, escaping various situations of oppression and unrest, trying to make it, usually, to friends and family already settled in the UK. The English Channel is an unforgiving border, some make it across, some are intercepted and returned, some die on the perilous journey. It is not illegal to seek refuge, the notion of an 'illegal asylum seeker' is a false one; it is a basic human right to seek asylum in a safe country, yet there is an increasing voice in government which seeks to deny people this right, sending people back across the border before they ever make it here. In my prayers of intercession, a couple of weeks ago, I prayed that as Christians, we might be people who have 'borderless hearts'. Some of you have told me that this expression resonated with you. We may not feel we are in a position to change government policy (although to some extent of course we are and we can) but we are definitely in control of our own sense of what is right or wrong, our own sense of what is at the heart of our Christian tradition, following one for whom borders were things to be crossed and questioned. Our love needs know no borders, even when and where the world creates them.

One border which is the cause of great tension at the moment is that between the main land of China and Hong Kong ( a special administrative region of China). Many people will know about the current situation in Hong Kong, with new National Security Laws and the aggression which is being shown from China towards Hong Kong nationals. As a result, the British Government has offered British National Overseas (BNO) passport holders in Hong Kong a new visa scheme, from January 2021, which will be a lifeline for many people. Even though not everybody can afford or will leave, a lot of Hong Kongers are thinking about taking the BNO scheme offer and moving to the UK. Some of them have already arrived in the UK seeking safety and freedom. The Methodist Church has been approached through one of it's Lay Workers in the United Stockport Circuit to ask if there are individuals or households who may be able to offer a spare room and hospitality to someone from Hong Kong, on a short term basis, to make them feel welcome and enable them to start a new life in the UK. Under the Visa Scheme, most of those arriving will have permission to work or study and to access the NHS, but will have no recourse to public funds, meaning that there is likely to be an initial period when some people will be vulnerable, until they are able to find employment and permanent accommodation. If you might have a room to spare and would like to think about offering some short term hospitality and would like to know more about what might be involved, please contact Mei Yuk Wong 07825 507416 [mei\\_yuk\\_wong@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mei_yuk_wong@yahoo.co.uk)

In the next few weeks, some of us will be crossing the borders back into our churches! As I write, risk assessments are being completed and chairs placed into socially distanced positions. I urge us all to be patient at this time. Things will not be quite like they were and church stewards will need plenty of support as they do what they can to ensure that our return to worship is safe, but also meaningful. If you don't feel able to return because you are still isolating or living with someone else who is then please don't despair. Zoom services will continue for the foreseeable future, as will these letters and the high standard of pastoral care that I hope we have all come to know. If

you are able to return to worship, and feel you might be able to help out, then please let your minister or Senior Steward know – there may well be additional tasks that need to be undertaken during worship times.

I also enclose with this letter a summary of the main things which were discussed at the Annual Methodist Conference in July. Please do read this – it is so important that we recognise our part in the national church (in Methodist language, the Connexion). Although we have circuit borders, these cannot get in the way of the sense of connectedness which is so important in the Methodist tradition. We are part of One Church, the Methodist Church, and all we do at a local level sits within the Connexional Calling that is offered to us all, to express our faith through worship, service, caring, learning and evangelism. Continue to stay safe everyone and I offer you the blessings of our God whose borderless heart is the pattern for us all. 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**

**SUNDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 10.30AM**

***Please note the time. There will be no 3pm Zoom service on this day.***

***SERVICE OF CELEBRATION TO WELCOME REVD KATIE SMITH AND GIVE THANKS FOR THE COMING TOGETHER OF THE ROMILEY AND UNITED STOCKPORT CIRCUITS:***

***Preacher: Revd Dr. Andrew Lunn, Chair of District.***

***This service will be live streamed from Tiviot Dale Methodist Church so you can watch it as it happens. Only a very small invited congregation can be present but there are two ways you can watch:***

**Via You Tube, using the following link:**

<http://bit.ly/USCworship>

OR

**Via Zoom, using the following login details:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81147530228?pwd=bXNma2s4MTdrSnJPaW1lY3c4Z1c3QT09>

Meeting ID: 811 4753 0228 Passcode: 315233

*If you are used to connecting to Zoom via the telephone, the same telephone numbers as usual will apply.*

*On Zoom, people will be able to see each other, and use the chat function if they wish. But because you will be muted throughout you will not be able to talk to each other.*

*On YouTube, you can use the 'Live chat', but you won't be able to see anybody, just those who are in the church.*

***As local lockdown restrictions have been lifted, perhaps people who have access to the internet could think of inviting those with no such access to their homes, to watch the service together, but socially distanced.***

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September 3pm**

Login details as usual as follows:

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

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

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### **Circuit Prayer**

Even though some churches will be re-opening for worship, let's continue to say this prayer together when we can. This way we stay connected in a very really and tangible way. You will notice the list of churches has now expanded as the United Stockport Circuit and Romiley Circuits join together. 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**

**Dialstone Lane Methodist Church**

**Davenport Methodist Church**

**Edgeley Community Church**

**Hazel Grove Methodist Church**

**Heaton Mersey Methodist Church**

**Heaton Moor United Church**

**Jubilee Methodist Church, Marple Bridge**

**Marple Methodist Church and it's class**

**The Ridge Methodist Church, Marple**

**Romiley Methodist Church**

**St. Johns Methodist Church, Cheadle Heath**

**Tiviot Dale Methodist Church, centre of Stockport**

**Trinity Methodist Church, Bramhall Lane**

**Windlehurst Methodist Church, High Lane**

**Woodley Methodist Church**

**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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## **Do you know what time it is now? Recognising God's momentous time today**

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### *Reflecting on Romans 13:11-14*

Wearing a face mask now is compulsory at schools, as students returned to their new academic years. Wearing of masks when going indoors either to super markets or other places, including places of worship is now compulsory. As we return into our church buildings for worship, all of us must wear a face mask. This is to slow down the spread of the virus and to protect the most vulnerable among us, and perhaps is a sign of showing our love for our neighbour. It is understandable that for some it is uncomfortable to cover up the face with a mask in public spaces for a long time, but refusing to wear a mask out of sheer rebellion is unbecoming of the people of faith. As people of faith wearing a mask is one of the simplest forms of showing to the world that we care for our neighbours and show our love towards them, and our hope is in Jesus Christ and not in arrogance or in rebellion.

Paul when writing to the church at Rome as recorded in Romans 13:11-15 appeals in urgency to the early Christians to wake up and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, which comes to us with even more urgency with a challenge for our times. Putting on Jesus Christ today is shown by our love for our neighbour. It is now time for us to wake up from sleep, lay aside the works of the empire and to put on Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **1. Recognise this time as God's Momentous Time:**

Paul in verse 11, calls on the Church "to know what time it is", for the time is ripe and the Kingdom of God is at hand. It is now time to recognise this moment in time, as it is the time appointed by God to act and work. It is interesting to note that the word for 'time' used in Greek is '*kairos*' rather than '*chronos*'. It is not the 'chronological time,' that Paul is talking about here, rather it is the 'appointed time' (*kairos*), a time where God intervenes into our times at our end, a time for action, a time for introspection, and a time for an audit of truth.

Many people have interpreted this time of pandemic in their own ways, but this text is calling us to recognise that it is God's intervening time, the times at our end where the signs of our times calls us to wake up from our sleep as a church and act for justice and liberation. If we have to demonstrate to this world that this is God's momentous time, then we as church are called to demonstrate that love of God to all people, specially to those on the margins. I personally think, as a church we are called to do things differently from what we have always done to capture this God's momentous time during these times.

#### **2. Reaffirming in the Nearness of Salvation:**

In verse 11b, we see Paul further exhorts that "for the salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers." The distance and affinity to salvation becomes closer to people of God in their journey of faith, in relation to their love for their neighbour (8-10v). Salvation is a journeying gift of God that comes closer and nearer to those that wake up from their slumber of inaction and those that stand committed in their acts of love. Salvation oscillates between believing and discipling, and the call today is that salvation gets closer in our true discipleship to Christ, which is nothing but loving our neighbour. Is salvation nearer to us than before? If salvation is nearer to us, then we are invited to act along with God at this appointed time in transforming our lives and our world with love. Salvation is near to us, when we are near to our neighbour loving them unconditionally irrespective of their identity.

Many people have interpreted this pandemic as apocalyptic times, and we have seen a rise in people spending in the online activity of prayers. But one of the big questions that needs to be asked is how do we understand salvation today? One of the marks of salvation is love for the neighbour, and that is shown in actions of care for the vulnerable and to those on the margins.

### **3. Resisting the Works of Empire:**

In verse 12, Paul further appeals “the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.” In the context of the Roman empire, Paul explains in 13 verse the works of darkness as revelling, drunkenness, debauchery, licentiousness, quarrelling and jealousy, which have been the order of the day, for those in power indulged in such acts and exploited the vulnerable colonized communities. In contrast to these acts of the empire, Paul urges Christians to lay aside the ‘pyjamas’ of darkness and put on the ‘armour of light’, a vestment for the day, a vestment of the Kingdom of God, which primarily exposes those ungodly deeds, dispels darkness, and liberate people and communities with and towards light. Resisting the works of our neo-empire of our times, which include exploitation, oppression, discrimination and exclusion is a call for us to put on the ‘armour of light.’

In the context of the pandemic, I see ‘face mask’ as an armour of light, which is a sign of our love for the neighbour. For those who can, simply donning a mask during this public health crisis can model for our neighbours how we care about them more than keeping our glasses fog free or getting a stare or two. It shows those around us that we will put their health and livelihoods before our own comforts if that means slowing the spread of this deadly virus and saving lives, as we seek to open up our communities and provide for our families. To act as if wearing a mask in this season is cowardice or not trusting the Lord is not only reckless, but it is also a fundamental misunderstanding of how God calls us to live in a broken world.

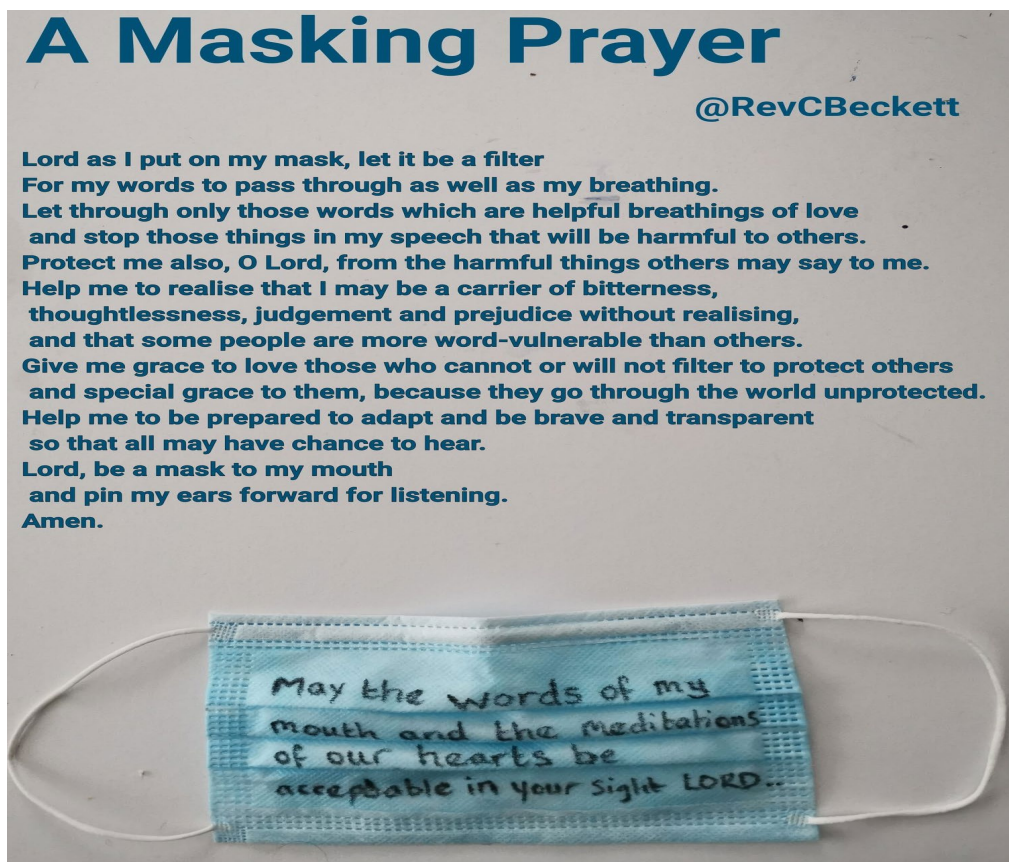
### **4. Re-covering ourselves with Lord Jesus Christ:**

In verse 14, Paul finally appeals in all urgency to put on Lord Jesus Christ, making no provisions to gratify the desires of flesh. In contrast to the Roman dress which is muddled with power, authority and exploitation, Paul urges the early Church to put on Lord Jesus Christ, who is stained in all dust and dirt to identify with those on the margins. ‘Putting on Lord Jesus Christ’ is an act of defiance to the colonial rules of ‘putting on Cesar’, the Lord of the colonial powers. This act is to affirm in the Lordship of Jesus Christ in opposition to the Lordship of the empire. Putting on Lord Jesus Christ calls us towards defiance to the powers, and to identifying with the people on the margins. Those in power are called to pitch their tents among the vulnerable communities, for it among them God works and Kingdom of God happens. During this momentous time we are called to de-cover ourselves from the stinking chores of power and re-cover ourselves by putting on Lord Jesus Christ. Putting on Jesus Christ today is wearing a mask as a sign of our love for the neighbour. St. Augustine in 4<sup>th</sup> Century heard the call of God from this text as he read and put on Lord Jesus Christ in his life, and eventually turned to become a great theologian for all times.

The relevance of this text today is therefore is to swiftly act in showing our love for our neighbour. The context of our times are so grim, for there has been a growing intolerance towards the other, increasing hatred against the stranger, increasing rise of consumerism where economy drives the society, where many people are pushed to invest on spending,

widening gap between the rich and the poor, increasing unaccountability of leadership, an increasing refugee crisis, an increasing changes on our climate and planet, increasing poverty, increasing homelessness etc. and there is a sense of more urgency than ever to wake up to face and address the realities of our times. Paul's words "The night is far gone and the day is near," therefore conveys to us that this is a momentous time for the church and to each of us as disciples of Christ to wake us up from deep slumber of doing things that we have always done, to know that this is God's momentous time, lay aside the works of empire and to put on Lord Jesus Christ onto our lives. Let us stop pretending to sleep and wake up with our eyes and hearts wide open to the ongoing acts of injustice and evil around us to raise an alarm for change, so that we can collectively partake and actively participate in transforming our world.

Let me conclude with this Masking Prayer by Caroline Beckett, which is relevant for us today.



Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta,  
4<sup>th</sup> September 2020

# Church on the margins

## An invitation

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**Would you like to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be a 'church on the margins', how to respond lovingly to your local context, and how to fully engage in Christian mission within marginalised communities? Would you like space to share and reflect on how your faith informs your action, and how your action deepens your faith?**

Through being part of a small 'peer learning set' with 4-5 other Churches or Christian projects in Greater Manchester during autumn 2020, would you like to both deepen your own understanding of what it means to be a 'church on the margins' and to encourage and motivate others in their own journeys towards becoming a 'church on the margins' where they are?

Ultimately, our aim is for the stories and insights from local churches and communities to be heard and effect wider change both locally and nationally, and to encourage greater support for the gospel priority of being and becoming a 'church on the margins.'

## Background to the project

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This new action research project seeks to respond to the challenge of Pope Francis: 'To become a poor church of and for the poor.' We seek to create space for those already engaged in Christian social action to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be a 'church on the margins' in a range of local contexts across Greater Manchester. Together, we will uncover forms of congregational life, theology, spirituality and discipleship that recast such communities as places of renewal and hope, and invite the wider church to celebrate and support this work nationally.

When they speak about their ministry in poor urban communities, the Churches frequently tell a depressing story of decline and failure. But we see a different story. In many of the most marginalised communities, there are seeds of growth and resurrection. Churches are finding radical new ways to build community. Being *with* people rather than talking *about* them. Being present and sharing in the forgottenness of these places. Seeing the face of Jesus in people, rather than treating them as problems to be solved.

By listening more deeply, churches will find new ways to enable individuals and communities to flourish. By allowing the insights of people with poverty to be heard throughout the Church's structures, we can ensure that the Church is able to engage more fully and effectively in mission.

# Would you like to join a Peer Learning Set this autumn?

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**To explore these questions, we are looking for 5 local Churches or Christian inspired social action projects across Greater Manchester to join a pilot peer learning set this autumn.**

We will use a version of appreciative inquiry, to enable each participating group to share their story with the other groups, and to reflect together on the question of what each story tells us about what it is to be a 'church on the margins.'

'Appreciative inquiry' involves creating a safe place for each participant to tell stories about the best of their worlds and lives. Built on relationships of listening, we will have conversations that share our stories. Starting with the idea that the places where we live and make our lives have lots of good things going on, we explore the past and the present together. As we respond to a series of questions, themes and creative ideas that reflect the best of our communities and experiences emerge. As we carry those ideas into the room and from there into collections of ideas, challenges, provocations, and dreams, we will be part of building hope for our future as 'church on the margins.'

Our hope is that through such cooperation and connection we will discover new possibilities and generate ideas for positive and powerful change for the 'church on the margins.' From our conversations and the themes that emerge we will impact present and future decision makers, leaders and as we create ways of amplifying voices from the margins we will impact the future of the church.

Session will be fortnightly and run from 11am – 1.30pm (including lunch). We envisage that there will be 7 sessions in total, provisionally starting on Friday 2 October and running through until Friday 18 December. Our intention is that sessions will take place face to face, and will identify an appropriate venue, depending on the location of the various participating groups, that fully complies with social distancing and any other Covid 19 regulations.

We would ask each participating group to commit to attending all the sessions. Each group will need to identify two people to take part – ideally one in a leadership role and one who has some personal experience of being on the margins. We will provide support with participant travel (eg taxi fares) and any other costs or practical issues affecting participation (eg access needs).

## To find out more contact

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Niall Cooper  
Church Action on Poverty  
[niallc@church-poverty.org.uk](mailto:niallc@church-poverty.org.uk)  
07800 784 035

Carmel Murphy Elliott  
Urban Life  
[carmel@urbanlife.org](mailto:carmel@urbanlife.org)  
07919 077 363

Deirdre Brower Latz  
Nazarene Theological College  
[dbrowerlatz@nazarene.ac.uk](mailto:dbrowerlatz@nazarene.ac.uk)

Working in partnership with



Manchester and Stockport  
**Methodist** District

**Sir Halley  
Stewart** Trust



**NTC**

Nazarene Theological College



**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

### Opening Prayer

Living God, we thank you for the gift of being able to speak directly to you through prayer. In the midst of this pandemic, when life feels more and more like an uphill battle, we pray for perseverance and that we would not grow weary of doing good. When the world tells us we are not good enough, you make us more than enough. When we don't feel strong enough, you provide the strength we need. Though we may stumble, you have promised not to let us fall. With Jesus as our ultimate example, we ask for endurance and refreshment so that we may continue to press on and do your work. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Written by Sydney McMichael Administrator Ministries: Vocations and Worship

### Hymn: 654

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or [listen to it here](#)

- 1 **The love of God comes close**  
where stands an open door  
to let the stranger in,  
to mingle rich and poor.  
*The love of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk his way.*
- 2 **The peace of God comes close**  
to those caught in the storm,  
foregoing lives of ease  
to ease the lives forlorn.  
*The peace of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk his way.*
- 3 **The joy of God comes close**  
where faith encounters fears,  
where heights and depths of life  
are found through smiles and tears.  
*The joy of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk his way.*

4 **The grace of God comes close**  
to those whose grace is spent,  
when hearts are tired or sore  
and hope is bruised and bent.  
*The grace of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk his way.*

5 **The Son of God comes close**  
where people praise his name,  
where bread and wine are blest  
and shared as when he came.  
*The Son of God is here to stay,  
embracing those who walk his way.*

John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958)  
Words: From Enemy of Apathy (c) 1988, WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH Scotland.  
<www.wgrg.co.uk>

Let us pray together

Loving and generous God, on this the first Sunday of a new Connexional year we are aware that so many people are still unable to gather in a church or chapel to worship you. We know you hear our prayers from wherever we are, but for many our desire is to gather together for mutual support and to praise your name.

Hear the prayers of our hearts as we long for a better world.

Hear the prayers of our minds as we try to find new ways to worship you.

Hear the prayer of our souls as we long to draw closer to you.

On this day, we thank you once again for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. How he modelled a way for us to live, and how he showed us that there is nothing in earth or heaven that can separate us from your love.

Forgive us Lord in the times when we doubt you.  
Give us strength when we feel weak. Hold us  
close, until the day finally comes when we might  
all gather as one to praise your name. Amen.

**Today's Gospel Reading:** Matthew 18: 15-20

### **Time to Reflect**

At the beginning of the COVID19 pandemic –  
when as a ministries team we began producing  
these worship at home sheets, I thought they  
might be needed for a few weeks. Now, 5 months  
in, I realise how naïve I was!

I want to thank all those people who volunteered  
to draft one of these acts of worship. An offering  
made, each week, by leaders of worship both lay  
and ordained, from across the connexion in good  
faith and often written under pressure.

To begin people were grateful for the acts of  
worship. Then, quite quickly, a few people began  
to write in to offer us advice or to blatantly tell us  
what we were doing wrong! Can, I wonder, the  
worship of God be wrong? Of course, liturgically  
we can all do things that might not suit everyone,  
but if your heart and my heart are in the right  
place, surely God will accept what we offer. My  
general response was they are offered in good  
faith, by a brother or sister in Christ – adapt them  
as you will.

In the trauma of dealing with the pandemic we  
have moved the phase when we declared, “we are  
all in this together” to a more destructive phase.  
A time of disillusionment, where nothing anyone  
does seems to be quite good enough for anyone  
else.

Jesus (our God on earth) knew people all too well.  
The emotional roller coasters we travel in life.  
Which is why, I suggest, he recommended that if  
you have a problem with someone you should go  
to him or her directly, before dragging in the  
wider community (which today would include the  
online communities many of us belong to).

We all make mistakes. (For the mistakes we've  
made on these sheets I apologise). We will all  
need at some point to point a mistake out to

another person, or to apologise for something we  
have done wrong. Let us do this graciously with  
love and care for another. As we move into this  
new Connexional year, let us all commit to  
reviewing not what might we do to please  
humankind but what we might do to the glory of  
God.

I pray may all our mistakes be made in good faith,  
and may our reprimands be smothered in the love  
of God. Amen

Take a time to sit quietly

### **A time of prayer**

Loving God we hold before you today:  
Those who began their period as a Probationary  
Minister today. Those ministers who have moved  
home this summer. Those preachers, who have not  
led worship for many months. For churches who are  
struggling to know when to re-open.

We pray for those we love:  
For those who mourn...  
For those who have been ill...  
For frontline workers.  
For those struggling to find work.  
For those who have started or who are about to start  
school.

We pray for your world:  
For those parts of the world devastated by COVID19.  
For refuges and those living in fear.

We pray for ourselves – in a moment of quiet hold  
before God what is on your heart today. Binding all  
our prayers together we say:

### **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Hymn: Listen to**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7bT4qfeZRY>

### **A prayer of blessing**

May the Grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the love  
of God our Father and the Fellowship of the Holy  
Spirit be with us all, for evermore, Amen

#### Matthew 18: 15-20

'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.