



Heaton Moor United Church

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



Church Services

Sunday 25th October 10.45 Heaton Moor United Church

Carol Jack

Duty 1 : Sharon H Duty 2:

Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 25th October Circuit Service 3.00pm service

The zoom log is

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

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881

Passcode: 974333

Wednesday 28th October Coffee and Prayer 11.00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/95327541668?pwd=ekU2QWgzZjVKWtBFTjZsb0tERVQrdz09>

Meeting ID: 953 2754 1668

Passcode: 794265

Wednesday 28st October Topsy Turvy Coffee Evening

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86111201405?pwd=ekU2QWgzZjVKWtBFTjZsb0tERVQrdz09>

Meeting ID: 861 1120 1405

Passcode: *please contact JoAnne for the passcode*

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.

Dear Heaton Moor United Church,

Hope you are all doing well. Starting this Friday, we are now under Tier 3 restrictions, and let us continue to keep praying for one another and specially for those who are vulnerable and for those whose livelihood is affected.

On Thursday, we were at our local primary school opening a food pantry, providing food for families who are facing holiday hunger. Thank you all for contributing food towards this cause, thanks to the volunteers and friends who helped in carrying and distributing food at the school. It was quite a moving experience loading food in our cars and taking to school and then distributing to the families. We will continue doing this again for Christmas holidays, and look forward to all your support.

Thanks to Carol Jack who is leading the service this Sunday at Church. Our circuit online zoom services continue to happen at 3pm every Sunday. Herewith I am sending you the reflection and the worship resources for this Sunday.

We had our worship group meeting this week, and had discussions about the preaching plan for next two months. We will have the service of Loving Remembrance this time on the first Wednesday in December at 6pm. There are also certain Christmas plans offered by the circuit and we shall keep you updated on it. As I have written last week, we will offer this year's Advent study in four sessions on zoom, and kindly pencil the dates on your diary please.

On Sunday 25th October Church on the Market will be happening once again and I seek prayers and support from you or this. For those interested I invite with you to meet with me at 13:00 at Tiviot Dale.

I will be on my annual leave during this half-term holiday, which is next week, and if you need any pastoral support please don't hesitate to call either our circuit office or our church office, as our colleagues are available to help.

My God's peace and love be with you all and may the grace of God embrace each of us during these uncertain times.

Thanking you,

With warm regards,

Raj

23rd October 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITOR

It's been another busy week and Friday has come round quickly once again. My role as Community Worker involves me with so many different things and this was evident in my work on Wednesday

I started the day preparing a social media post about Wear It Pink a charity day organised by Breast Cancer Now and I have included this post within the newsletter. I was then back in the office, picking up a donation of bread and milk for our School Pantry Project from the Co-op along the way, for the Space At The Table delivery. Photos from this week are further along in the newsletter. It was then a mad rush home as I was involved in a webinar on the market for illicit drugs with Professor Dame Carol Black. For some people the world we are living in now is hard and in the current pandemic it is getting harder. Illicit drugs are now more readily available and with the loss of many protective factors due to budgeting and COVID it is feared illicit drugs are going to be part of many more tragic human stories. Finally my day ended with an online meeting to find out about The Methodist Church Christmas Campaign #GodIsWithUs which looks amazing and a great way to end the day, even if I feel it is still too early to be thinking about Christmas!



This week we also held our School Pantry at Mersey Vale School which was a great success, we provided parcels for 15 families and took the left over fresh bread and milk to The Wellspring. Due to the generous donations received we have plenty of food to be able to offer the School Pantry at Christmas.



Finally on Thursday we held a trial Gaming Church with three young members. We played an avengers themed card game where as players we were heroes battling to stop the villainous green goblin from his devious scheme! We had great fun whilst playing, working together as a team and learning each characters strengths and unique abilities. At the end of the game we were reminded with a reading from Corinthians that God gave each of us unique talents and by working together as Christians we can do amazing things.

I'm off for a few days next week, we should have been in Germany but due to COVID ae staying home, but if you have any queries, comments suggestion on any of my work or future work please do get in touch.

JoAnne

community@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

07340 269 354



From midnight on Thursday Greater Manchester was put into the very high category alert level, attached with the notices is the government poster displaying information about the restrictions. As far as attending worship at Church the guidelines remain the same for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 however good practice should still be maintained with regards mask wearing, hand sanitising and social distancing on entry to church, during the service and upon exit from church.



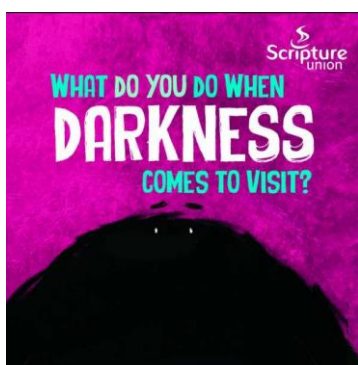
On Wednesday we had our second delivery of chilled meals which are being provided by Space At The Table. This 12 week pilot is being ran by The URC Synod and For The Love Of Food Salford CIC.

We are distributing our meals through The Dementia Café which usually meet at the Church on Fridays.

We received lots of positive feedback about the meals that were distributed last week, I hope they enjoy the sausages and mash just as much this week. The photo shows Joyce one of our Dementia Friends who sent the photograph showing how much she enjoyed her meal.



SHOEBOXES for Romania. You have been more generous than ever this year. We sent 16 complete boxes plus BAGFULs of lovely warm hats, mittens, other knitted garment and toilet pouches, crayons pens and cuddly toys. And money donations too. We ran out of shoe boxes !!! But all the extra goodies will be boxed up at the depot before transportation.
A BIG thank you to everyone who helped. From Betty

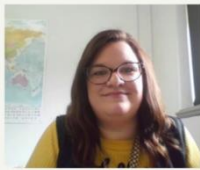


Over the weekend of the 30th October we will be taking part in The Heaton's Community Trail - this trail is a huge event in the community and this year is raising funds/awareness for The Savoy Cinema a local business. Some participants will be dressing windows with a Halloween theme whilst some will be dressing their windows in the theme of a film. As a Church we will be decorating our windows to show Jesus is the light of the world. I also hope to have goodies bags available for families sharing this message further.

Just as Paul did with the Athenians when he found a connection between their faith and his own this is what I am trying to do. I am not promoting Halloween - I am promoting our message about Jesus whilst showing that as a Church we are and want to be a part of the community and can do so whilst remaining true to our values. As always I welcome discussion on this and any other parts of my work.

CAN YOU HELP? Are you any good at carving Pumpkins?
Could you carve a cross, heart or fish into a pumpkin and bring to Church on 30th October? If so please contact JoAnne

Get it off
your chest.



Breast cancer awareness month
is the time to get checked.

October 23rd – Wear It Pink

Right now an estimated 600,000 people are living with or after a breast cancer diagnosis in the UK. Breast Cancer Now are asking people to get involved with Wear It Pink 2020 on 23rd October to raise money for cutting edge research and life-changing support for those affected by this terrible disease. Over social media we shared Bev's video – Bev is a member of Heaton Mersey Methodist Church and has her own personal experience of breast cancer. Bev has a justgiving page if you would like to donate to this much needed cause. www.justgiving.com/fundraising/beverley-wheeler



EXCLUSIVE BY AMANDA KILLELA

PARTED from his Irish gran by Covid-19, little Cormac Thompson recorded her favourite song Danny Boy as a surprise.

His mum Alison put a clip of him singing on YouTube and Twitter – and it wasn't only her mother Colleen's heart that was melted by the angelic performance.

Record label Decca saw the video and immediately offered a deal to 11-year-old Cormac, of Darwen, Lancs.

Now he has recorded an album at a top London studio, where he was able to warm up by playing the late Freddie Mercury's piano. Cormac says: "It was an

unbelievable experience. Very nerve-wracking but really fun at the same time.

"The producer made it easy for me."

Cormac started singing and playing the piano three years ago and Alison arranged lessons.

He has managed to keep his new career secret from his pals until now but can't wait to hear his music on the radio for the first time.

Alison says: "We aren't getting carried away but, no matter what, it has been an unbelievable experience for him."

■ Hear My Voice is out on Decca on December 4. A single and video of Snow Patrol song Run is out tomorrow.



FAMILY With his dad Anthony and mum Alison



CLIP On YouTube

Cormac is a member of Bravura Choir he sang a solo at the last concert that they gave at Heaton Moor United Church in June 2019. As a Choir we are so delighted for him and Daphne Sumblar who has worked so hard in lockdown training him doing virtual lessons. Cormac has been on Granada Reports, interviewed on Radio Lancashire, Radio Manchester, Ulster Radio and was on the Jeremy Vine Show.

Peace, Panic and Pandemic
Advent Bible Study Group 2020

2nd December: The vision of peaceful kingdom - Isaiah 11

9th December: The vision of a just Kingdom - Amos 8

16th December: The vision of an anti-empire Kingdom - Kingdom of God

23rd December: The vision of a Kingdom of hope - Revelation 21

Zoom details to follow.



DATED EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

25th October – 13:00 - Church On The Market

If you are interested in joining Raj with please meet at Tiviot Dale at 13:00. People will be paired up and spend an hour walking round the town centre speaking with people. For further information please contact Raj directly.

28th October – Topsy Turvy Coffee Evening

Join us on Zoom at 7pm as we turn traditional Church Coffee Mornings on their heads! This month's guided coffee evening will be "Welcome To Wonderland" and we hope you can join us for fellowship and fun.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=NN6J-aYIOd4>

30th October - Christmas Card Competition Deadline

If you have children in the family who would like to enter our Christmas Card Design Competition then please ask them to send in a picture either by email to community@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk or to 07340 269 354 or they can drop it in the office. The winning entry will be the design for the front of our Church Christmas Card. Other designs will be used to send postcards to local schools and business's

2nd December - Peace, Panic and Pandemic : Advent Bible Study Group

See poster for further information

A coffee morning with a difference!

TOPSY TURVY COFFEE EVENINGS

Come and join us at our new monthly
guided coffee evenings for fellowship & fun!
Last Wednesday of the month starting
28th October 2020 at 7pm via zoom

TO REGISTER INTEREST - JO-ANNE 07340 269 354
COMMUNITY@HEATONMOORUNITEDCHURCH.ORG.UK



Prayers from Linda



Prayers for our Topsy Turvy Coffee Evening.

Lord Jesus, this week we ask for prayers, as we start on a new Topsy Turvy Coffee Evening, an adventure that we share with one another, I pray that it will bring us all closer to knowing you, Help us all to share in your love and wisdom, bring the Holy Spirit on the people who will run the coffee evening. Support them in their work that lies ahead of them. Assist us all in opening our hearts and minds to you that we may share in God's love of us.

Amen

I was thinking of people in nursing homes, residential homes and all kind of home where you get help.

Jesus, I ask for comfort and hope for those who are in nursing homes residential homes and other homes. May they feel your presence and know you see them as precious and having your love in their hearts, May they be treated with dignity. I also pray for the caregivers They have such a hard job and many times don't receive acknowledgement for what they do. May they know the importance and beauty of their job? Please give them strength when they become tired and when the job becomes very stressful help them. May the people who make the decisions regarding nursing homes, residential homes and other homes remember they too will be older one day and to be sensitive to the needs and challenges of our wonderful people

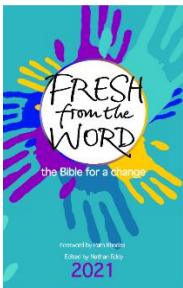
Amen

If anyone would like to share a Prayer with the church family, please call Linda on 07564839380 or E-mail lindawfling625@gmail.com.



No names required because God Knows.

Bible Reading notes-Fresh from the Word 2021 = £10 for the year



Themes: The Bible through the Seasons: The Underside of History-women of spirit and the word: On eagles' wings. Face the unknown with the spirit of discipleship, sustained by--rooted on growing; walking as one; God on the inside. The writers come from all traditions and from different countries and so give us new perspectives on the Scriptures.

The URC Prayer Handbook 2021---Conversations - £5

This comes in 2 sections: the first has prayers relating to the Lectionary readings for the year and the second has prayers for everyday and extraordinary situations for deep reflection and to respond to God's voice.

If you would like to order a copy of one or both of these. please contact

Anne Hunt on 442 2380 by November 8th

Dear Friends,

I write to fulfil the second promise I made when “attending” a meeting on Zoom last week – the first was to write to our MP Navendu Mishra, urging him to vote on an immigration bill on Monday 19th and the second was to outline, briefly, what the focus of the meeting was. The title was

Supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers

There were 50+ attendees from Italy, London, Belgium and widespread from the UK. Recent events in Moria camp on the island of Lesbos caused great despair and anguish across the world. One of the outcomes from churches and church based groups was an Advocacy statement on the situation of migrants and refugees in Europe.

The vote on 19 October in the House of Commons proposes that rights under UK law to family reunion should continue after the transition period, and that unaccompanied child refugees in Europe will have a legal route to sanctuary in the UK

“Jesus himself was a refugee. He took refuge in Egypt as a child when Mary and Joseph fled Herod’s threat to kill him. He also experienced life under Roman occupation that deprived people of their freedom and trampled their dignity” (from the Advocacy statement).

Compassion in some dictionaries says “feeling of sympathy or pity for others” – I much prefer “to suffer together”. Some journeys are hard to walk as we haven’t made the journey. Maybe we’ve stepped on the path during the pandemic – missing the hugs, chats, tea and coffee and spending time listening and meeting friends and family. How must it feel to be totally cut off from family because of laws and barriers being built to prevent family reunion.

People on the Move – in boats, mountain ranges, walking, tramping, dangerous sea crossings to the “unknown” but seeking refuge and then what?

*My third promise is can we do anything in a more practical way?
Any thoughts?*

With love and thank you for your friendship

Jean James



LOCAL COVID ALERT LEVEL

VERY HIGH

Social Contact

1 household / bubble in most locations, indoors and outdoors. Rule of six applies in some outdoors settings like parks, public gardens and sports courts.

Weddings and Funerals

Up to 15 guests for weddings and up to 30 guests for funerals. 15 for wakes and related ceremonies. Wedding receptions not permitted.

Overnight Stays

Those in area advised against overnight stays in other parts of UK. People outside area advised against overnight stays in area.

Working from home guidance

Work from home where possible.

Shopping and Retail

Open.

Leisure and gyms

Any closures or additional restrictions subject to consultation.

Hospitality

Pubs and bars must close except where they operate as a restaurant, meaning they can only serve alcohol with a substantial meal. Further closures subject to consultation.

Entertainment and tourist attractions

Any closures / additional restrictions subject to consultation. Nightclubs and adult entertainment remain closed.

Education

Schools, FE colleges open. Universities must reflect wider restrictions with option to move to greater online provision.

Healthcare Services

Open.

Residential Care

Closed to external visitors other than in exceptional circumstances.

Travel and Transport

May continue to travel to open venues, but reduce number of journeys where possible. Avoid travel where possible in or out of the affected area with exceptions including work and school.

Sporting Activity

Organised sport / licensed physical activity allowed in outdoor settings. Indoor organised sport must follow social contact rules (other than youth or disabled sport).

Worship

Open, subject to social contact rules.

Childcare

Registered and wraparound childcare. Supervised activities permitted in private homes. Children's groups permitted. Childcare bubbles for under 14s.

Youth Clubs and Activities

Permitted.

There are three simple actions we must all do to keep on protecting each other:

**Wash hands**

keep washing your hands regularly

**Cover face**

wear a face covering in enclosed spaces

**Make space**

stay at least 2 metres apart - or 1 metre with a face covering or other precautions

For more information and detailed guidance visit:
gov.uk/coronavirus

When tricked by Law, treat with Love

Reflecting on Matthew 22: 34-40

On Halloweens Day last year, few children on our street went around the houses asking “Trick or Treat?” and they really looked forward for a treat of chocolates, which they enjoyed doing. Tricking people with difficult questions is in a way trying to confuse people in agreeing to one’s requests. Way back in Jesus time, particularly as recorded in Matthew chapter 22, we see Jesus being tricked by the Pharisees and Sadducees with certain difficult questions. In this chapter we notice three trick or treat questions that Jesus had to encounter from the religious leaders. The first of those was a political question, 22:15-22, where they ask about paying taxes to the emperor. The second was a doctrinal question in 22: 23-33, where they ask about levirate marriage, husband and resurrection. The third set of tricks or treat question to Jesus is from the passage from this week’s lectionary reading 22:34-40, which is an ethical/legal question about the greatest of the laws in the Torah.

In verse 36, we read that in the presence of the religious leaders of the temple and law, a certain lawyer was asking Jesus, “Teacher, which commandment in the Law is the greatest?” By asking such a question about the greatest commandment, this certain lawyers and the religious leaders’ lust for power and privilege is only exposed. Since the lives of these religious people in the temple are always conditioned and led by power, principalities, privilege and prestige, they try to look for the greatest in everything including the commandments. This question is also like a legal expert asking today among all the Acts of the Parliament (as UK doesn’t have one codified written Constitution like in other modern States), which Act is the greatest? It is surely a difficult question to pin down to one particular law or Act, and name that as greatest. As each and every law or Act that was made has a history, context and situation, certain discussion on it, by which they had to come into effect. For example, in the UK, the Equality Act 2010, is an Act of the Parliament that legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in the wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. By bringing this example, the point I am trying to make is that each Act or a law has a background that needs to be taken into consideration, and one cannot put against another Act or law as the greatest. The expert in Law, a certain lawyer when asked Jesus, “which commandment in the Law is the greatest?”, they were really trying trick Jesus, fix Jesus with Law which the religious community held very sacred and dear to them.

There were 613 laws in the Torah, and to pick one law as the greatest law was not only a herculean task for Jesus, but also was an awkward task of pulling one among all important laws. Jesus as always rose up to occasion and replied to this lawyer, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (37-40v) For Jesus, when the lawyers, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and other religious leaders of the temple tried to trick with the Law, Jesus always treated them with love, which is love for God and love for neighbour, for he emphasised that these two commandments are like two pillars on which the entire laws and prophets hang.

These two pillars, therefore become the core pillars where Christian discipleship finds its basis. There are five important directives for our discipleship in understanding these two pillars. Firstly, without any of these two pillars, the entire Law and the prophet's messages will simply fall and cannot withstand. For me both these pillars are in perfect equilibrium, by which I want to say that neither of these pillars are taller than the other, for both the pillar of loving God and the pillar of loving neighbour are of equal height, equal width, equal length and equal in every measurement. Secondly, both these pillars, co-exist, for neither of them can exist on its own. Loving God is directly proportional to loving neighbour, and loving neighbour is a reflection of loving God. Neither the Law nor the prophets can hang on just one pillar. Thirdly, it is important to recognise that it is love that is the common material on both these pillars, love for God and love for neighbour, for the message of law and the prophets have all been entwined on this core foundation of love. Fourthly, with both these pillars of loving God and loving neighbour, it is love which becomes the hermeneutic in interpreting the law and the prophets. Fifthly, with love being the core and common for both these two pillars, love becomes the commandment of life, of Cross and of the Kingdom of God.

In drawing a relevance of this text, today we recognise there are many tricks that are being played against our Christian living and discipleship. In whatever situations and with any kind of tricks, the gospel of Jesus Christ is to treat with love, and only with love. The first learning for us as a church in the 21st century is, love should be the hermeneutic of interpreting our scriptures. Today, there are many people who try to trick people and situations quoting scriptures out of their contexts. Love should be the interpreting principle in every situation and to every person. Love for God is not expressed by hatred towards neighbour based on any text, in any given situation. Scriptures need to be understood as love letters of God to a faith community in a given context with a relevance to the readers in demonstrating love for God and for neighbour. Anything that discounts love, cannot stand the test of understanding scriptures. The second learning for us as a church is today when we are tricked by forces of market in accumulating more and more material goods, when we are tricked by forces of racism to enjoy privilege and power, when we are tricked by forces of greed to overpower the creation, we as followers of Jesus Christ are called to treat with love, again by demonstrating love for God by loving our neighbour as ourselves. Love for God and love for neighbour is in affirming equality, justice and peace for all in the creation. Love is always about selflessness and self is all about lovelessness.

In the context of growing child hunger, particularly when the government in the UK has voted against providing food to children during holidays, we as a church are called to treat it with love. For child hunger is a reality today, and it needs justice and compassion as expressions of love. When we as a church collected food and opened a food pantry at a local school today, it was our expression of love for God by showing our love for our neighbour. We as a church should not compromise in showing our love in action, for the call for us as a church is only to love God and love our neighbour. A church that is self-seeking about its own survival and which is not demonstrating the love of God to all neighbours, loses its relevance and significance in a community, for it is only love for God and love for neighbour that matters for the being and becoming of church led by the Spirit of God.

I want to conclude this reflection with the cartoon from Rev. David Hayward from Canada who draws his cartoons in the name of @nakedpastor, where he explains love in the context of texts. When people try to trick us with laws, we are called to treat with love.



May the God of love who is embodied in Jesus Christ fill our lives with love for God and love for neighbour, so that we are indefatigable in demonstrating that love towards all of God's creation. May the world know us as Christians by our love, yes, they will know that we are Christians by our love.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta,
23rd October 2020

Sunday 25th October 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.

Call to worship

Wherever we worship, whether alone or with others; whether in chapel, at home or elsewhere; whether we are full of joy or overwhelmed by fear and despair; we are thankful that we worship together as a community of Christ. Amen.

Hymn 503 (StF): Love divine

Sing/ read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here <https://youtu.be/sw5ZCZeS32M>

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Prayers of adoration, thanks and confession

We pray together

Holy God,
creator of all things and source of all holiness,
we praise you for all that you provide for us
materially and spiritually;
we give thanks for the gift of your Son, Jesus
Christ, who showed to us that perfect
example of human love;
we praise you for your Holy Spirit, who
empowers us to share that love with others.
We give thanks for our local Christian
communities and the worldwide church to
which we belong; may we praise you with one
voice.
God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
accept our praise and adoration. Amen.

We confess our sins to God.

Silence

We confess that we have not loved you with
heart, soul and mind. We have failed to love
our neighbours as ourselves. Help us to
become the loving people you want us to be.
Amen.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save
sinners. This is his gracious word:
"Your sins are forgiven."
Amen. Thanks be to God.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament

Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18

Today's Gospel Reading Matthew 22:34-46

Time to Reflect

The BBC's Question Time, for me, is compulsive viewing, even though I often find it infuriating when the politicians avoid answering questions by skirting round the issue or answering a question that wasn't asked. I'm sure I'm not alone in my frustration!

Many questions have been on our minds throughout the Covid-19 crisis. Would fewer lives have been lost if lockdown measures were introduced sooner? Were care homes, including MHA facilities, dealt with properly? Could more lives have been saved if...? All of these are difficult to answer. One slip of the tongue from a politician could lead to political trouble. No wonder they are reluctant to give a straight answer! In no way do I defend politicians, but concede that journalists' questions are often loaded to trip them up. This is nothing new. In the gospel reading, Jesus is asked a loaded question in similarly politically-charged times, not by a journalist but a lawyer.

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" *Matt. 22:36*

This question is dynamite. Jesus is being asked to make a judgement on which of God's commandments, written in the laws of Moses, is greatest. This is like asking a politician which law of the land is the most important. Imagine the field day the tabloid press would have!

I dare say that the lawyer was very pleased with his question, certain he had Jesus trapped. There was no answer he could give that would not land him in deep trouble.

How wrong could he be? Rather than picking out two of the laws, Jesus expertly sums up the whole of God's law: love God and neighbour. This answer silences the lawyer and the pharisees, as there is nothing for them to argue with.

We may argue over points of doctrine and practice within Methodism and across

denominations. It would be so much better if our primary motivation was always to simply love God and neighbour. The church and the world would certainly be better places and, as Charles Wesley writes, 'the joy of heaven' would 'to earth come down'.

Forget the difficult questions, focus instead on Christ's simple answer – love! Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind; and love your neighbour as yourself. Amen.

Take a time to sit quietly

Prayers of intercession

Loving God,
as we meditate on Christ's commandment to love,
we pray for the church throughout the world;
for justice and peace between and within
nations;
for political leaders and all in authority;
for the communities in which we live;
for people who suffer in any way;
and for all those on our minds today.

Silence

May the presence of your love be felt in every situation.

We give thanks for those who have died, especially those who have lived in the love of Christ.

May we be united with them in your eternal kingdom. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father...

Hymn 615 (StF): Let love be real, in giving and receiving. Listen to it here:

<https://youtu.be/SkBxZw5NxU>

or read the words

Let love be real, in giving and receiving,
without the need to manage and to own;
a haven free from posing and pretending,
where every weakness may be safely known.
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,
give me your love wherever we may go.

As God loves us, so let us love each other:
with no demands, just open hands
and space to grow.

Let love be real, not grasping or confining,
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;
that helps us face the risk of truly living,
and makes us brave to be what we might be.
Give me your strength when all my words are weakness;
give me your love in spite of all you know.

Let love be real, with no manipulation,
no secret wish to harness or control;
let us accept each other's incompleteness,
and share the joy of learning to be whole.
Give me your hope through dreams and disappointments;
give me your trust when all my failings show.
Michael Forster (b. 1946)

A prayer of blessing

May everything we do be guided by the law of Christ's love; and now may the blessing of God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us this day and forevermore. Amen.

Original Materials by Tom Ferguson

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Appendix

Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

² Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

¹⁵ You shall not render an unjust judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour. ¹⁶ You shall not go around as a slanderer^[a] among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood^[a] of your neighbour: I am the LORD.

¹⁷ You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. ¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD.

Matthew 22:34-46

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵ and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ 'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' ³⁷ He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴² 'What do you think of the Messiah?^[a] Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'The son of David.' ⁴³ He said to them, 'How is it then that David by the Spirit^[a] calls him Lord, saying,

⁴⁴ "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet'"?

⁴⁵ If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?' ⁴⁶ No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

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