



Heaton Moor United Church

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



Church Services

Sunday 13th December 10.45 Heaton Moor United Church

Leo Roberts

Duty 1 : Ian A Duty 2: Bob

Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 13th December Circuit Service 3:00pm service

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

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881

Passcode: 974333

Wednesday 16th December More Than A Good Book 10:00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86886449976?pwd=ekU2QWgzZjVKWTBFTjZsb0tERVQrdz09>

Meeting ID: 868 8644 9976

Passcode: 714757

Wednesday 16th December Coffee and Prayer 11:00am

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

Meeting ID: 953 2754 1668

Passcode: 794265

Wednesday 16th December Advent Bible Study

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88415953758?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 884 1595 3758

Passcode: 593070

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,

Advent seasons' greetings to you all in the name of Lord and Liberator Jesus Christ.

I hope you have all received the pots of bulbs distributed by our church friends this week, as a sign of hope, reminding there is light at the end of this pandemic tunnel. Thanks to all those friends who have worked hard in distributing them to all our church family. Special thanks to Linda and Deborah for organising them.

Thanks to all who are helping with the worship services at the Church building. Thanks to Leo Roberts, who is leading the service this Sunday, and also for providing the video reflection for our YouTube channel. I also want to thank Graham Adams for leading the Super Sunday last week, which I gather was very interesting. Our special thanks to Paul Brewerton for leading the 'Good read' group with some lively discussions. I also want to thank those of you who have been attending the Advent Bible Study on Wednesdays.

We had a meaningful virtual pilgrimage event of 'Come and see Bethlehem this Christmas' on Thursday, with some important discussions and action plans. Thank you for friends who have joined in that event and have expressed solidarity with the struggles in Bethlehem today.

On the 11th Dec, we will be at the local school organising a food pantry, and I thank all those who are involved in organising it and those who have generously supported with your contributions.

The Circuit is organising 'Carols in the Car' a drive-in carols service on Saturday, the 19th December, and the details are on our website, and I encourage you all join in that event. And on the 24th December, the Circuit is also organising Christingle service on Zoom and contact the church office for more details.

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

May you all have a blessed week as you prepare for Christmas, and may God's peace and joy remain with you all.

Thanking you,

With warm regards,

Raj

11th December 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITOR

I started this week by taking part in my first Super Sunday - and it was Super! Me and my little man had lots of fun building a Lego stable and then, inspired by others who had taken part, we built a stable out of our living room furniture. Also this week I joined in with the Space At The Table / Dementia Friends Christmas Week and today we are holding our second school pantry at Mersey Vale School.

This week I am sharing information about two trails that you can take part in:

- **A Trail of The Year** - Christmas is not always a time of joy and delight for some people, especially this year where many have experienced anxiety, disappointment, fear and loneliness. This trail is designed as a prayer space for an individual to wander through and reflect on their reality of Christmas. The trail can be done in any open space where you can find stones. From Saturday there will be copies left on the railings at Heaton Moor Park and copies will be in the foyer at Church. I can email copies of the trail, but I would encourage you to print out rather than use your mobile phone so that you can immerse yourself in the trail and not be distracted.
- **In Search of Christmas** - on Saturday 19th December between 10:30am and 3pm at Heaton Mersey Methodist Church. A short QR code trail on what Christmas is really about. This event is suitable for pre-school and primary school children. For more information and booking please see the poster within the notices.

If you have anything you would like included in the weekly notice's please let me know. As always if you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact me.

JoAnne

community@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

07340 269 354

www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk



Heaton Moor United Church



Heaton Moor United Church



heaton_moor_united_church



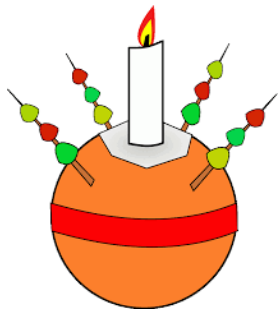
Greater Manchester remains in Tier 3 restrictions and will be reviewed on 16th December. Please continue to follow the guidelines and stay safe. As we return to tier 3 restriction the Church will re-open for services. If you have not already done so please use the following link to book in for Worship, if you have any problems please contact Sharon

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdAWGZmTfE21O1dQnXIPjVLrv6e6AnT1mi7O539wPxuSRx0gA/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0&gxids=7628>

Services and Reflections

Don't forget we have services and reflections available for you to watch on our YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyhynK2FIPDTbOuqBiO6D9A>



The Circuit Christingle Service is taking part via zoom this year on the 24th December. If you are planning to attend then please pick up your Christingle pack from Church on Friday 18th between 10:00 – 16:00. If you are unable to collect but would like a pack please contact Sharon office@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk



**MONDAY 21ST DECEMBER
ZOOM 6PM**

Nativity Escape Room -the Bible is filled with sound wisdom, great advice . . and **BIG MYSTERIES THAT NEED SOLVING!**
Join this event to solve 4 mysteries to do with the Birth of Jesus.

If you are interested please contact JoAnne at community@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk



If you are interested in joining the above event please register here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/virtual-parliamentary-carol-service-tickets-129666884141>



It was the penultimate week of our 12 week project Space At The Table on Wednesday and the Dementia Friends marked it in style. As they were unable to have their usual Christmas Celebrations this year due to COVID they invited members to a COVID safe car park celebration. The meals were given out, along with a small Christmas gift, whilst students from Priestnall School Brass Band played a selection of

Carols. There was even a surprise visit from Santa! It was a wonderful afternoon and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. Well done to Beryl and the Committee for organising.



Amos 8

From Hebrew (amas), Amos means “load, burden”. Amos is one the 12 minor prophets, who spoke against greed, corruption and oppression of the poor.

Amos was a shepherd boy – God called him to be a prophet

Amos replied ‘I am no prophet, nor a prophet’s son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycomore trees, ¹⁵ and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, “Go, prophesy to my people Israel.”

(Amos 7:14)

God calls the ordinary to do God’s challenging work – to speak for God’s justice

The context of the book of Amos – He was active in the northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jerobam II – the kingdom was enjoying political security and economic prosperity – the gap between the rich and the poor was widening – exploitation of the poor was on the high

1. **Peace as recognising the signs of the times** (basket of ripe fruit v2):

God speaks to us through signs of the times – Lord showing Amos a basket of fruit and asking “what do you see Amos?”
- How do we read the signs of our times today?

The wording in Amos indicates that God is talking about fruit that is just at its peak — like the nation Israel was — but as a result is on its way to rotteness.

How far have we fallen from God’s calling? How rotten are we as a people becoming?

2. **Peace-lessness at its heights: Exploitation of the poor and the needy:** (6v)

“...Buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals”

3. **Famine in the land – Where is Peace?** (11v)

“The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign LORD,
“when I will send a famine through the land—
not a famine of food or a thirst for water,
but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.

4. **Prayer for Peace:**

“But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” (Amos 5:24)

Questions for reflection:

1. What do you do with basket of summer fruit today?
2. What do we see around us as a church?
What are the inequalities this pandemic has exposed? How have we responded?
3. How can we turn this prayer for peace as a reality in our context?

ADVENT PARTNERSHIP EVENTS

with Greater Manchester South & Cheshire URC

Advent Retreat

28th November 10:30 – 12:00 and repeated at 14:30 – 16:00



Weariness & Wonder

Wednesday 2nd, 9th, and 16th December at 19:30

Meeting ID: 862 4634 9125 Passcode: 024468

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86246349125?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2l5bVJWYURVaG>

Advent Bible Study

Monday 30th November 7th, 14th and 21st December at 10:00

Meeting ID: 893 0699 8422 Passcode: 935820

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89306998422?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2l5bVJWYURVaG>

Messy Christmas Family & Children's Event

20th December at 15:00

Meeting ID: 870 8539 9030 Passcode: 599369

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87085399030?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2l5bVJWYURVaG>

Scratch Carol Service

20th December at 18:30

Meeting ID: 862 4634 9125 Passcode: 024468

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86246349125?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2l5bVJWYURVaG>

Christmas Eve Communion

24th December at 11:30

Meeting ID: 824 7647 3548 Passcode: 528678

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82476473548?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2l5bVJWYURVaG>

Christmas Day Service

25th December at 9:00

Meeting ID: 871 5576 3393 Passcode: 751659

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87155763393?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2l5bVJWYURVaG>

For venues and zoom links please contact Dave Fraser at
davefraser24@gmail.com



DATED EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

16th December – More than a Good Book 10:00

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86886449976?pwd=R3ZSeFQ4U1crMXRTNHBuakxGYldjQT09>

Zoom ID 868 8644 9976

Passcode 714757

16th December - Bible Study Group 19:00

Peace, Panic and Pandemic : Advent Bible Study Group

Zoom details on header sheet

18th December - Christingle Pack Collection 10:00 – 16:00

Please call into the office to collect your Christingle pack if you wish to take part in the service on the 24th December. If you are unable to make today please contact Sharon 0161 431 0262

office@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

19th December – Carols in the car

Go to www.carolsinthecar.co.uk to purchase tickets and further information

24th December – Circuit Christingle Service 15:00

This year this service will be held over zoom, further details to follow

30th December – Topsy Turvy Coffee Evening 19:00

Happy End of Year Celebrations – come and join the party!

Contact JoAnne if you'd like to attend



Heaton Mersey Methodist Church



**What is Christmas
really all about?**

Scan the code and let
the adventure begin!



SCAN ME

Saturday 19th December

10.30am till 3pm

Join in the trail.. In search of Christmas

Please book at

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/in-search-of-christmas-tickets-132378945991>

Booking also tracy@hmmc.org.uk

You will need a mobile phone to scan codes.

Suitable for pre-school and primary
school children.

Family event.

Please remember to social distance

Please ensure you follow current government guidance
around social distancing as you take part in this trail.





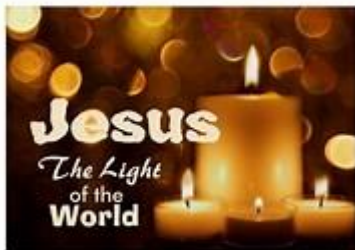
Prayers from Linda

Family'n Friends



Prayer for Family and Friends

Blessed are you, loving Father, for all your gifts to us. Blessed are you for giving us family and friends to be with us in times of joy and sorrow, to help us in days of need, And to rejoice with us in moments of celebration. Father, we praise you for Your Son Jesus, Who knew the happiness of family and friends, And in the love of Your Holy Spirit. Blessed are you for ever and ever. *Amen*



If anyone would like to share a Prayer with the church family, please call Linda on 07564839380 or

E-mail lindawfleming625@gmail.com.



No names required because God Knows.

By the light and truth of Jesus I lift our loved one to you.

By the hope of the Redeemer, we pray for your healing power to break through.

By the peace and the grace of the Living One, I place them safely in your care.

By the death and resurrection of the King of Kings May your restoration now flow through my prayers.

By the greatest gift of love ever known, help us care for them as you would do.

By the hope and strength of the living God, I place my trust and faith in you.

Amen.

The Stokers' 2020 Quiz - Items of clothing

The answer to each question is an item of clothing (if it's a hat, we need the type of hat - e.g. "Trilby" or "Stetson" etc)

All money donated will go to **Action for Children** – a national charity which "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." (actionforchildren.org.uk). If you are able, please donate via our "Just Giving" webpage at <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/stokerquiz2020> - which enables Gift Aid to be claimed automatically.

We operate a "Trust the Puzzler" policy and welcome a donation of at least **£1.50** from anyone who uses this quiz. If not using *Just Giving*, please pay us by cash or cheque (payable to "Dialstone Lane Methodist Church") and we'll pass it on.

This year, we are again indebted to Jane and Mike Hollins, who road-tested the rough clues we produced.

Please add your name and contact details on the bottom this sheet before you return it.

Please send answers to us at 162 Mile End Lane, Stockport, Cheshire SK2 6BY or to andy.stoker@btinternet.com before midnight(!) on **31st January 2021**. A gift token prize will be awarded to the best set of answers. Feel free to use this quiz for your own purposes after this date - electronic version of this, and past quizzes, available. Answers available after 31 Jan (SAE /email please).

| | | | | | |
|----|--|--|----|--|--|
| 1 | Apparently accommodates 40 quarts up top | | 21 | What Desmond wears for ballet? | |
| 2 | Connecting the head of a large marine reptile to its body | | 22 | As worn (musically) by a small rodent in a Dutch windmill | |
| 3 | From an atoll, sometimes yellow with polka dots | | 23 | Baseball equipment poetically lost by young cats | |
| 4 | Helmet exposing part of the face and possibly worn by the gallant six hundred | | 24 | Maybe coming from Wormwood to be worn in hospital | |
| 5 | Fosbury, Edwards and Beamon, sometimes woolly | | 25 | Is in to garb like a Roman | |
| 6 | Neckwear for William Tell and Robin | | 26 | Knitted opening sweater from the west Wales bay? | |
| 7 | Often feather, worn loosely around the neck but sometimes can constrict | | 27 | Not long - and ideal underwear for Cooper, London and Liston | |
| 8 | Sounds like they steal female underwear | | 28 | Casual top, said to be got after going there. | |
| 9 | Sounds wholly minty - worn for chukkas? | | 29 | Headwear in a well-fed or a satiated type | |
| 10 | The topping from Melton Mowbray perhaps | | 30 | Took property without permission - worn around the neck | |
| 11 | Trousers that might be thought to include a clanger at the end | | 31 | Straw headwear for three men but probably not Montmorency | |
| 12 | Workwear covering everything | | 32 | Sleeveless garment - the craft of William Schwenck and Arthur | |
| 13 | (<i>groan alert</i>) - what the constable jokingly said his chest was under | | 33 | Worn over and goes with gooseberry, Cod, Horn and Wrath | |
| 14 | Directional marine headgear | | 34 | A two-piece in the rain or a one-piece for the water | |
| 15 | A former PM was said to have encouraged embracing this casual top (or the person wearing it) | | 35 | Tailored briefs that might be expected to disappear in a triangle | |
| 16 | A hooded coat, found in tartan or a knitted object | | 36 | Worn on top by Trueman, Anderson and Willis? | |
| 17 | Footwear formed from transgressive additions to coffee and cocoa mix? | | 37 | Footwear created when Notts shopkeeper Jesse met an Iron nobleman | |
| 18 | Headwear found in a sombre room | | 38 | A schoolchild's jacket from a roaring fire | |
| 19 | A type of bread, flowers on display or knee-length knickers | | 39 | Protection in the kitchen or the front of a stage | |
| 20 | Apparently belonging to Ms Harlow, Ms Shrimpton, M. Cocteau or M. Renoir | | 40 | Headgear traditionally worn by Dr John's companion solving a speckled band mystery | |

Please add your name and contact details:

My spirit rejoices in God my saviour: Rejoice always!

Reflecting on I Thessalonians 5: 16-24

The profound moments in our life were the days when Shiny and me were blessed with our sons. The days they were born, were moments of sheer joy in our lives. When I recollect and reflect on those moments, all I can say is that those experiences of joy are captured for me in the word "Rejoice." Those were the moments to rejoice, because our joy knew no bounds. As I write this reflection, I am nostalgic of all those awesome moments of holding the 'bundle of love' (our sons) into hands, and they are very precious and priceless. I am sure each of you might have a different experience of moments of sheer joy in your lives, where you can sum that as 'rejoice' moments.

The third Sunday in Advent is called "Gaudete" Sunday, where the word 'Gaudete' refers to the first word of the Entrance Antiphon, "Rejoice," in way inviting the church to reflect on the theology of rejoice, as we await in hope and joy for the coming of Jesus Christ. On this Sunday, the lectionary also suggests Mary's song from Luke 1:46-55, where she sings, "my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour" (47v). For Mary, the realisation to rejoice in God arrived, when Elizabeth affirmed the grace of God in her life, as she shared that she is going to bear a child. The reason to rejoice in God for Mary was because "God has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant" (48v). The ripple effect of rejoicing in God came along when Mary continued to be prophetic in her song, challenging the powerful and helping the hungry with good things. For Mary, that moment of sheer joy came when her cousin affirmed in the work of God's grace in her life as she was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and eventually she rejoiced in God, the saviour. We have been singing this new Christmas song, "Mary did you know?" in which we unknowingly de-celebrate the agency of Mary, and domesticate Mary of her confidence and strength as a young woman. Yes, Mary did know that the "child she delivers will soon deliver the world," which is the message for us to sing this Advent.

To the church at Thessalonica, Paul concludes his first ever NT letter with these words of exhortations as recorded in 5:16-24, the prescribed lectionary for this Sunday. He writes certain do's and don'ts for the church. The three do's for the church are: Rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances (16-18v). These do's are the will of God in Christ Jesus for the church. The three don'ts for the church are: do not quench the Spirit, do not despise the words of prophets and abstain from every form of evil (19-22v). These do's and don'ts appear to be simple but harder to follow.

Firstly, in the do's, we recognise that all of the three verbs mentioned are to be done forever, never ending, without any break or reservation and certainly without any 'conditions apply' terms on to it. Rejoice, prayer and thanksgiving are eternal and to be done at all times, both in season and off season. Secondly, rejoice, prayer and thanksgiving form the heart of the will of God, for I think they always co-exist together

and co-work together. Thirdly, rejoice, pray and give thanks are all verbs, that call for action and can't be limited to mere uttering of words. Fourthly, the do's and the don'ts are correlated and inter-related. For rejoice, prayer and thanksgiving are directly proportional to the Spirit of God for no one can stop her. They are directly proportionate to the prophetic words and also to the abstinence from every form of evil. To put it differently, the Spirit of God, the prophetic words and the abstinence from evil are all reflected in rejoice, prayer and thanksgiving. In other words, rejoice, prayer and thanksgiving should resonate the Spirit of God, the prophetic words and the abstinence from forms of evil.

After the exhortations of do's and don'ts to the Thessalonian church, Paul concludes by saying how one can live up to those do's and don'ts. His solution is simple and deep, that it is the "God of peace himself who will sanctify entirely" (23v) and makes a profound statement that "the one who calls you is faithful and he will do this (keeping our spirits, bodies and souls sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ)" (24v). Paul was invoking that one can fulfil the do's and don'ts only by the grace of God, only by God alone, as God is always faithful and help us to live a life worthy of our calling. By this invocation of God's grace and God's strength, Paul was exposing that no one should boast that they can fulfil all the aforementioned do's and don'ts by their own merit, faith and works, for they may turn to be futile, for unless the Lord builds the house all our labour will be in vain. This is a great matter to rejoice, for God is willing to help us live our lives as God wills for us.

Moltmann in writing that "Christianity is a religion of joy" explains that when God comes to judge the earth, the whole creation will rejoice (Psalm 96:11-13), and the day of judgement is a day of rejoicing and not of terror. He further explains that repentance is joining in the joy of God, for God finds his rejoicing in seeking and finding the lost ones. So, repentance is not self-afflicted pain or self-punishment, but is the joy of God. He finally says, "which is greater, the joy or the grief, the happiness of the pain, life or death? And my answer is this: existence is greater than nonexistence, life is more than death, hope is above despair, and so joy is greater than pain. Why? The answer is simple: because whereas in pain we want our suffering to disappear, in joy we want the things that make us happy to endure." This is what we need in our context today.

Drawing a relevance of this text for our context today: we are called to offer Christian faith as a faith of joy that celebrates life over death, hope over despair and happiness over pain. This year 2020 has been one of the toughest years with death, grief, fear, anxiety, distance, separation, gloom and zoom, yet if we have to name some of the 'rejoicing' moments this year, I am sure there are certain pointers. The arrival of kindness from unexpected quarters of life during this year is unquantifiable, for they brought joy and consolation in many ways. In all of this God has been faithful, offering us hope to rejoice in the light at the end of the tunnel. Faith has always been (mis)understood as a sigh for those in pain, but the faith in Jesus Christ is a matter of

rejoicing in God, calling us to offer joy in this world, by protesting in the name of God against the forces that destroy the joy of God, which is in God's drawing nearer to God's creation. During this year, for some moments of rejoicing came through neighbours, through gardens, through families at home, through technology of at least catching up to meet virtually, through the songs of the birds, through the works of the essential workers, and through the arrival of the vaccine.

May we all join towards the end of this year to join with Mary in singing, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant (of all the people on the margins)." May we wait on God who is faithful and just, helping us to rejoice in God for God's grace and God's love. May we step into the New year rejoicing in God to be channels of sharing God's joy so that can share gladness to several people we meet. May the rejoice moments in our lives multiply. May we all have a meaningful season of Advent. Amen.

*Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta,
11th December 2020*

The **Methodist** Church United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

A Message from the Superintendent Minister

December 9th 2020



Wishing you all a peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year!!

Dear Friends,

As I write, the signs of Christmas are emerging, although truth be told, the lights and decorations did start to appear somewhat earlier this year as people grasped at the chance to introduce some much needed joy and frivolity into life. There is also of course the relentless Christmas marketing machine which we might think is somewhat hopeful in the face of the current economic uncertainty and what we have been told will be the worst recession in history! Perhaps, just perhaps, a more cautious approach to spending this year will allow people to focus on the story behind the festival and the meanings contained within that story. In all sorts of way, across the Circuit, we are trying to tap into the heart of the Christmas story, which leads us towards an understanding of pain and poverty and exclusion, rather than spending and overeating. Several churches in the United Stockport Circuit are part of programmes to address the reality of holiday hunger, offering food to local schools which they will redistribute to families of children who attend those schools. Many of you, through your churches, will be continuing to support food banks and toy collection projects to ensure that those who will be struggling financially at the moment can create at least a little bit of the Christmas Day atmosphere that so many of us take for granted. Many of our churches will, in one way or another be ensuring that our elderly and vulnerable members and friends receive a phone call or a greeting of some kind, although visiting is of course still very difficult, even with the relaxed rules for a few days over Christmas.

Of course, this is often a time of year with mixed feelings. It is a time when we are supposed to feel excited and happy and full of anticipation, Christmas gifts, family gatherings, New Year resolutions and so on. But of course, it is often a time of deep sadness – poverty, loneliness, unemployment and bereavement become all the harder to bear in the face of what we imagine is everyone else's happiness. Perhaps that is why it is

at Christmas time that the Church's call to hospitality and service becomes all the more important. To be a community – in whatever ways we can this year - of warmth and welcome, to be the ones who tell the Greatest Story with love and clarity and fun - these are privileges in which we can all share, lifting our own hearts and those of others. I am pleased that the Coronavirus will not stop us celebrating, in church, online and outside. As you take a look at our busy Circuit schedule you will see the life that is continuing to flow throughout our body. Join us for 'Drive-In Carols' at the Hazel Grove Park and Ride on Saturday 19th December - bring family and friends along to sing some of the great Christmas songs of our Church tradition (yes, you will be allowed to sing!) and hear the story of the birth of Christ, because no matter how many times you hear it, there is always something new to discover. Then join us for our online Zoom Christingle on Christmas Eve – both of these events are great ways of witnessing to the love of Christ in our local area, and we hope will attract and engage with people who we have not met before. On Christmas Day, some of our churches will be holding live worship services, but if you cannot make one of those then there will be a specially recorded Christmas Day service, led by all the ministers, which you can watch at any time on Christmas Day. Details of how to access all these events can be found on the circuit website www.stockportcircuit.org.uk or call your minister.

If you love the Christmas season then take the opportunity to share some of that love; if you dread it, find company and solace in the embrace of a Christian community, in prayer and in the service of God. Either way, be a part of ensuring that the message which is at the heart of Christmas still lives on: in simplicity God comes into the world, one who lives and breathes peace, and who calls us, no matter who we are, to follow in that way.

May I take this opportunity to personally wish you all a very happy Christmas and New Year! My next letter will be during the week commencing 4th January. Thanks for those early Christmas greetings which I have already received, and in anticipation of those which I'm sure will follow! I also include thanks for all the good wishes and prayers for my mother, who some of you will know is very seriously ill at the moment. Whether you celebrate the season with family, friends or on your own, may you experience the love and peace of the Christ Child.

And please remember as always, as we continue to live with lockdown measures:

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 in this special season, ***Rev Cathy.***

NOTICES

Worship

See your local church notices for details of 'live' worship in your church, but for the time being we are continuing our Circuit wide Zoom service at 3pm on Sundays.

Login details as usual as follows:

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

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Christmas Day, pre-recorded service available at any time to watch. See Circuit website for details.

Circuit Prayer

Even though some of our churches are once again able to open for worship, let's continue to say this prayer together when we can, at 11am on a Sunday morning. This way we stay connected in a very really and tangible way with all those who are not yet able to come back to church. You can also read more about each church on the Circuit Website 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 , Heaton Moor United Church, Jubilee Methodist Church, (Marple Bridge), Marple Methodist Church, 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

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.

Circuit Christingle Service 24th December 3pm

This year we will be holding our annual Christingle Service, jointly across the Circuit, on Zoom on Christmas Eve at 3pm. Look out for details about collecting your Christingle Kit from your local church – details for joining the service will be in the bag with everything else you need to make a wonderful Christingle.

Circuit 'Carols in the Car' Event Saturday 19th December

The United Stockport Methodist Circuit are organising and hosting a fabulous event on Saturday 19th December

Carols in the Car @ Hazel Grove Park and Ride

Choose your time: 4pm, 6pm or 8pm

Join us for a COVID-secure chance to sing your heart out to your favourite Christmas carols, brought to you by the United Stockport Circuit and played by local music groups.

This drive-in event will bring the Christmas Spirit and the Christmas Story to Stockport in a unique way.

Tickets are £6 per car, of which £5 will go to Mind, supporting mental health in our area.

To buy tickets, go to www.carolsinthecar.co.uk



Sunday 13th December

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

Loving Lord, as we worship we join with all those who are worshipping this day. Whether alone at home, or online, whether in a building or in an open space amongst others.

Constrained by circumstances, we lack opportunity to meet each other in love. Come amongst us generous, hospitable God, and welcome us into your loving presence as we worship you.
AMEN

Hymn: Singing the Faith 369

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/posts/baptise-us-with-your-spirit-stf-369/>

Baptise us with your Spirit,
majestic, humble Christ,
to overcome temptation;
assailed, but not enticed.
Baptise us with your Spirit,
that in each other's eyes
we may discern your purpose,
and cast away disguise.

Baptise us with your Spirit
to careful, patient, thought,
and habit-forming virtues
aspired to, copied, taught,
till clothed with new creation,
self-critical, reformed,
we demonstrate the gospel,
to you alone conformed.

Baptise us with your Spirit
in unrestricted ways

that move us, mind and body,
to laugh and shout your praise.
Send us to clear the rubble
of each defensive wall,
inviting to your table
our neighbours, one and all.

Brian Wren (b. 1936)

Let us pray together

All seeing God,
You watch over every instant of our life,
showing us the glory of your creation
if we should but pause to look;
showing us the generosity of your Spirit
if we should but hold out our hands to
receive; showing us your work that needs to
be done if we should only use our eyes and
ears.
Turn us away, loving Lord, from our insistent
self
and lead us to see more clearly
what you give and what you ask of us this day
AMEN

Today's Gospel Reading: John 1; 6-8, 19-28

Time to Reflect

John the witness, whose testimony to the
Jewish leaders began with those negatives:
I am not the Messiah
I am not Elijah
I am not the Prophet....

It is tempting to think that the Jewish leaders
were also being negative, looking to point out
John's deficiencies, but what if they were
really looking for the Messiah.

What if they were sad and disappointed that
here they did not have whom they were

looking for?

They didn't know whom they were looking for – but they had to take some sort of answer back to those who had sent them, so they pressed John for more.

His reply still turns to the cryptic – I am not the one whom is to come, he is already amongst you, though you do not know him.

That the Messiah could be anyone was fully in the Jewish tradition.

The Messiah could be the person standing next to you.

The people who stand at the airport arrivals with a board with someone's name on do not know who they are to collect.

They rely on the right person to come over and introduce themselves, but they are expected.

They wait for the right person to reveal themselves so that they can move on.

Is this the way we should be looking for the Messiah? Standing in a prominent place, holding a board with his name on, relying on him to come and find us so that we can move on.

Or should we be looking around at the crowd, in case the Messiah has walked straight past us and is expecting us to follow where he leads.

Jesus will leave enough clues in our everyday lives for us to recognize where he has been, where he wants us to go.

We need to make a conscious effort every day to see when Jesus is amongst us and to ask what he is calling us to do.

Take a time to sit quietly



statement. It's a reminder that God is always with us. We are encouraged to share our story

During this season the Methodist Church is proclaiming "God is with us". God is with us is more than a

(and other people's stories) of walking with God in this extraordinary year. How might you share how God has been with you this week? Find out more here

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/christmas/>

A time of prayer

Answering God

we pray today for all those who have unanswered questions

we pray for refugees and displaced people, for the homeless and those who ask "when shall I have a home".

We pray for those worried about loss of work, shortage of money, collapse of plans, who ask "what happens now"?

We pray for the lonely, the scared, and the vulnerable who ask "who can help me"

We pray for those on our own hearts at this time.....

Answering God, bring your love to these your people in need and help them to see you in their life.

AMEN

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to Singing the Faith 175

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBKzCpkXJR4>

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

Light of the world,
you stepped down into darkness,
opened my eyes, let me see
beauty that made this heart adore you,
hope of a life spent with you.

So here I am to worship,
here I am to bow down,
here I am to say that you're my God,
and you're altogether lovely,

altogether worthy,
altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days
oh so highly exalted,
glorious in heaven above.
Humbly you came
to the earth you created,
all for love's sake became poor.

So here I am to worship ...

And I'll never know how much it cost
to see my sin upon that cross.
And I'll never know how much it cost
to see my sin upon that cross.

So here I am to worship ...

Tim Hughes

A prayer of blessing

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with
us in this week
May the love of God steer us in our actions
this week
and may the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be
beside us this week
AMEN

Original Materials by Pat Heynes

All

Hymns reproduced under CCLI 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCCLi No here

¹⁹ This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰ He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."^[a] ²¹ And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²² Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³ He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. ²⁴ Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵ They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah,^[b] nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶ John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷ the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸ This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Big Church Sing Christmas Special was broadcast live on the Methodist Church's YouTube channel on Sunday 29 November. Have you seen it yet? If you have access to the internet go to <https://www.youtube.com/methodistchurch>

John 1: 6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.