

Dear Heaton Moor United Church,

May the peace of God which passes all understanding be with you all. Trust you are doing well.

June 1-7 is observed as National Volunteers Week, and I take this opportunity to thank all those volunteers in the church and in the community to express my sincere thanks for all your time, energy, and efforts. You are all total stars and any words of thanks are insufficient. We thank God for all your contributions.

Thanks to Deborah and Sharon who are leading our service at Church and on YouTube this Sunday.

We as a staff team will be on a pilgrimage visiting our church friends in the coming weeks and you will receive more info about it from our colleagues and a flyer is also posted in this week's newsletter.

It was good to visit few of our church friends taking Holy communion to them, and it is good to do these pastoral visits in person, face to face. It has been inspiring listening to people's stories of how they have coped with lockdown and the pandemic in the last one year. Prayer, pastoral phone calls, social distance visits from church friends have been people's source of strength in coping with the lockdown.

This week I was at Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) Interfaith Theological Advisory Group meeting, and it was quite a learning experience listening to the various theological perspectives.

5th of June is observed as World Environment Day, and it is more than ever, we as faith communities are called as a generation to make peace with nature. Let us strive to make

our world a greener place to live, for greening the planet is a faith commitment for us as people of faith. Join #GenerationRestoration in this journey of faith.

This year Sunday the 6th of June has been designated as Tax Justice Sunday, which is an opportunity for churches to reflect on tax justice issues in our world today as several corporations are involved in tax dodging. You can get to know more about it from Churches Action for Tax Justice website: <https://www.catj.org.uk/> If you get a chance kindly watch this 3-minute video on Tax Justice Sunday: https://youtu.be/tf_lQa2E-Ro

If any of you are interested in receiving Communion at home, please let us know and we can arrange it for you.

May you all have a blessed week ahead.

Thanking you,

With warm regards,

Raj

3rd June 2021

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITOR

It has a short notice again this week - I think everybody is too busy enjoying this lovely weather we have been having!

The weather being hot on Wednesday was not in my favour, I was panicking whilst delivering the Space At The Table Meals as I didn't want the chilled meals getting too hot in my car. Fortunately, traffic was on my side and I managed to get the meals delivered before my ice packs completely melted! I hope all recipients enjoyed their chicken curry and rice.

At our weekly team meeting we planned our first day of our team pilgrimage which Sharon explains further on in the notices - please pray for good weather next Thursday as we have agreed to complete the walk regardless of rain or sunshine!

Sadly our family Earth Day event which was due to take place on Saturday has had to be postponed. Over bank holiday weekend I had several families contact me who had booked but were now unable to make it due to isolating because of COVID. This is another reminder that as the world continues to open up and we are seeing more of each other we must continue to be vigilant and follow the guidelines.

As always if I can be of any help please do not hesitate to contact me.

JoAnne

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YouTube^{GB}

Heaton Moor United Church



Heaton Moor United Church



heaton_moor_united_church



Office Opening The office opening times
for next week will be:

Monday 10 - 2

Tuesday 10 - 2

Wednesday 10 - 2

Thursday Closed

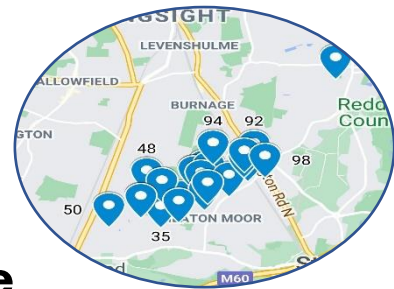
Friday 9-1



Moor than a walk



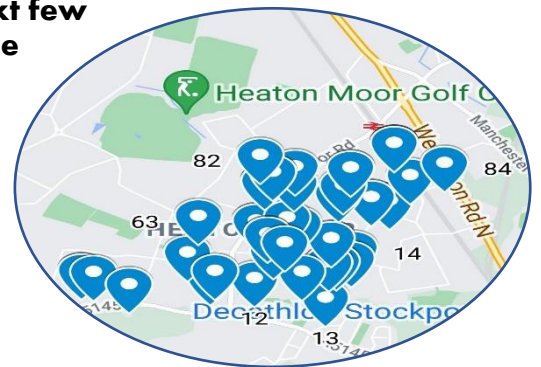
The Team is leaving the building on a Pilgrimage.



to be reached by car!) over the next few weeks. keep an eye out on your emails, you will be sent a message to say when we are walking near you. Hopefully, we will see you on our journey,

See you soon

Raj, Jo, Sharon and Linda



FUNDRAISING UPDATE

United Stockport Circuit has set up a JustGiving page to support the work of The Christian Service Agency in India. The Christian Service Agency is the Service Arm of the National Council of Churches in India. More information about the work they did during the first wave of the pandemic and what they are aiming to do during this second wave can be found on the JustGiving page.

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/stockportcircuit>

[Thank you to all who have donated, to date £640 has been raised.](#)



RECYCLING NEWS

Our new recycling bins are all set up and in the cupboard under the stairs. We currently have white bins for bread bags, bottle tops and pill packets.

The crisp packets are in a large black box. If you are able to wash them in soapy water before bringing them to be recycled that would be helpful.

I am looking for volunteers who can help count the number of crisp packets we currently have - I am taking these to a charity who are making them into mats for the homeless. Each mat uses 160 crisp packets!



Prayers from Linda



Those who are ill

*Father in Heaven,
We pray for those who are hurting in our church family today. Lord, some have minor health problems while others have some very serious ones. I pray that you will be with them and heal them Father. You are the Great Healer and we believe in your power to heal. Lord, please give peace to those who are in the midst of serious health issues. Father I pray that they turn to you and know that you are right there beside them in their time of need. May your will be done in their lives. Amen*

The Church Pastoral team



Loving Heavenly Father, thank you for all the pastoral teams in our church family and for providing us with such a dedicated team of men and women, who work so hard in your service. Lord we pray for each one, that they would keep you as the focus in their lives. Give each one godly wisdom day by day as they tackle their ministry work, and keep them from adopting the actions and attitudes of this world. Keep them from becoming weary of well-doing or discouraged in their various work, and may each one be kept from trying to accomplish tasks in their own strength and wisdom, but rather we pray that each one may learn to rest in your love and to be open to your voice. Lord, give each member of our pastoral team a servant heart and a caring spirit for the whole body of Christ. May each one continue to grow in grace and show their love for those to whom they minister and a deep love for the Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray.

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.

Who do people say we are as a church? Missioning despite (Mis)branding

Reflecting on Mark 3:20-35

As the restrictions of lockdown are easing out, as we begin to rethink about the being and becoming of our churches, we are called to reflect on how are we known as a church in our community today? Perhaps the other way to ask is how better can we be known as a church apart from our buildings and locations? Some of the posters outside the church during the lockdown read, “we as a church have gone online” and they are still hanging outside some church buildings. How can we re-turn as churches offline again during this post lockdown? We are called prayerfully to wait on God to listen to God’s voice for our mission today.

In Mark 3:20-35, we read Jesus being misbranded by the people for his radical inclusive gospel. In verse 21, when his family members were trying to protect Jesus as people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.” Then later in verse 22, we see Sadducees (mis)branding Jesus that, “Jesus has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” Jesus confronted these allegations and misbranding of him and spoke to them in parable and again reiterated what they have said, which is, “He has unclean spirit” (30v). Right at the start of his ministry, Jesus received allegations and accusations by the religious authorities. There are many themes in this text, which include the conversations with Jesus’ family members and the unforgiveness of the sin on Holy Spirit, and about the parable of stealing a strong man. Jesus was known in his community as an insane person, as a demonic and as an untouchable.

Why was Jesus (mis)branded as an insane person? In the previous chapter 2, we see Jesus calling Levi, a tax-collector to follow him, and then was dining with tax-collectors, which the religious pharisees complained saying, “Why does he eat with sinners and tax-collectors?” (2:16) Jesus confronted them saying that he has come to call not the righteous but sinners at that point. Later he reinterpreted sabbath, when Pharisees complained against Jesus that he was breaking the law saying, “sabbath was made for humankind and not human kind for the sabbath, and the Son of Man is the lord even of the sabbath” (2:27-28). In Chapter 3:1-5, Jesus heals a withered man on a sabbath and the Pharisees conspiring with Herodian against Jesus, “how to destroy him” (3:6). Jesus then healed many people from different parts including the region around Tyre and Sidon, which are gentile areas. Perhaps such a thing of meeting the strangers and healing people from such non-Jewish regions would have also irked the religious authorities, for Jesus was healing and treating everyone equally transcending all boundaries. Many people who had unclean spirits were healed by Jesus and they were shouting at Jesus, “You are the Son of God” (3:11), which would have been blasphemous to the ears of Pharisees and Sadducees.

In essence, Jesus was (mis)branded as insane person for the way he has come out in the society radically altering the doctrine and practice of the law, and not according to the way of these religious authorities, who were considering themselves to be the custodians of the law. If Jesus upheld the status quo of the religious law and practice, these Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes from Jerusalem and Herodians wouldn’t have a problem with Jesus. On the contrary Jesus disrupts such status quo, breaks down the walls of division, resists empire, befriends with people who are considered outcasts, embraces the excluded and builds a just and inclusive community, for which the cost he has to pay was to be (mis)branded as a ‘person

who has lost his mind,' a person who has Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons inside him and as a person with unclean spirits.

Jesus counters these (mis)branding by raising several questions as he spoke in parables. Here are at least five things that Jesus spoke in this context.

How can Satan cast out Satan? (23v) - One of Jesus' mission was to cast out the demons of his times, which includes the empire who exploit the poor and the powerless and religious fundamentalism: the system that oppresses people based on law, texts and rituals. Therefore, when Jesus raised this question, he was revealing his mission on one hand and on the other exposing the nexus of evil with religious authorities and the empire.

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand (24v) – Jesus once again was challenging that there are divisions in their land in the name of identity, region, religion, gender etc. was calling on them to overcome their divisions so that they can all together and unitedly fight against the greater evil the Roman empire. One of the mantras of the empire is to divide and rule, so Jesus was provoking his listeners including the religious authorities to resist that division and stand united in their fight for liberation of their land.

If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand (25v) – Jesus was emphasising the unity, togetherness, co-operation, partnership among the people of the same household, for it is love that unites them all together in their diversity. If a house doesn't nurture a spirit of unity in diversity and either stives for uniformity or suppresses the difference, such a house will not be able to stand. This again was a challenge that Jesus was throwing at his listeners to strive to celebrate unity in love and humility in a house to stay together.

But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered (27v) – Now that Jesus and his people are living under the occupation of the Roman empire in that first century Palestine, by this parable Jesus was inspiring his people and calling them by saying in order to liberate their land from the Roman empire, they need to tie down the powers and principalities in their land for only then comes liberation, plundering back what was plundered from them. Jesus again was revealing his mission, which is to tie down the powers and principalities and inviting his fellow citizens to join in that mission so that collectively 'plunder' and liberate their land and people from the occupation.

Anyone who blasphemes against Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin (28v) – All that Jesus has been doing was by the Spirit of God in him, and so at this point Jesus warns his community that if anyone tries to chain this Spirit, wants to dictate terms to the Spirit of God or limit the ambit of the Spirit of God to only few chosen people, they will not enjoy the freedom that the Spirit of God offers. In a way Jesus was saying let us celebrate the unpredictability and ambiguity of the Spirit of God, for she is like a wind not knowing from where it comes and to where it goes.

What is the relevance of this text in our context today?

1. Today who do people say we are as Christians and as a Church? Are we known by our love or by our doctrine or by our tradition or by our ritual or by our texts? Perhaps this given text is call for us to be known in our community by our love. In that cause we might be (mis)branded, yet it is worth being (mis)branded for the cause of love rather being branded 'righteous' with our exclusive attitudes.
2. Jesus is inviting us to join with him in the mission of casting out the demons of our society today. Demons like inequality, racism, casteism, occupation, tax dodging, discrimination, consumerism, fundamentalism etc. – As churches we are called to contest these demons and strive for a just world.
3. We are called to celebrate unity in diversity, celebrating difference, practicing humility in accepting and receiving one another in all fronts of life today.
4. Let us be prepared to be surprised by the Spirit of God, for she comes with a spark of unpredictability and graciousness, calling to love everyone beyond any doubt.
5. As churches we have a role to support people with mental health issues, offering friendship, love and cordiality.

May the Spirit of God be with us in our being known as Christians and as a Church by our love for the 'other'

May the Spirit of God be with us in contesting the demons of our times and strive for the Kingdom of God here on the earth. Amen.

Raj Bharat Patta,
3rd June 2021

Sunday 13th June 2021 – Rev Nutan S J Suray

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

(With psalm 92: 1-5)

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep!” **Amen.**

Hymn: Seek ye first the kingdom (Singing the Faith 254)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

[Seek ye first the kingdom of God \(StF 254\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk/seek-ye-first-the-kingdom-of-god-stf-254)
[\(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk/)

Seek ye first the kingdom of God,
and his righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you;
Allelu-, alleluia:

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,
allelu-, alleluia!

Ask, and it shall be given unto you;
seek and ye shall find;
knock, and the door shall be opened unto to you;
Allelu-, alleluia:

We shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord;
Allelu-, alleluia:

Karen Lafferty (b. 1948)

Let us pray together

Lord, I come with thanksgiving and praises in my heart for your love and faithfulness. You are worthy of my heartfelt worship today.

Lord, thank you for sending your Son Jesus who inaugurated your kingdom on earth and for the continuing power of the Holy Spirit, which helps the kingdom to grow.

Forgive me Lord when I fail to see your will in my life and in others.

Forgive me when I am overcome with anxiety, when I become impatient and when I lose heart in times of suffering and prevailing evil in our world.

Help me to be confident in your faithfulness even when things seem bleak and to know that you are in control of all things. **Amen.**

Today's Gospel Reading: Mark 4:26-34

Time to Reflect

Jesus' parable of the mustard seed reminds me of my own journey – the time when I was called to ministry. I had asked the question – how can I, such a small, insignificant person be called to serve the church? I was not convinced that God *had* the power to use me. How wrong I was! Little did I know that God was going to use me outside of my little village, even outside of my country of birth, to serve the church! It is perhaps human nature to judge things by appearance or capability, forgetting that God *does have* power to use whatever He sees fit for a purpose!

Jesus teaches that the growth of a seed is a mystery just like the growth of the Kingdom. We know that a seed needs soil, water and an adequate amount of sunshine to grow, but the question still is - who makes it grow? More importantly, a seed needs to be planted in the ground because a seed, if left alone on a windowsill will not grow. The Seed that Jesus talks about is God's word being sown in people's lives where it will take root and grow. Although for a time the seed seems inactive, Christians must not be anxious but trust in God's timing and sovereignty.

Likewise, the Kingdom of God will grow when the Gospel is shared with others as Romans 10:17 says: "So faith *comes* from hearing [what is told], and what is heard *comes* by the [preaching of the] message concerning Christ." I read online the testimony of a woman, who during this current pandemic was feeling utterly worthless – disappointed with life and did not want to live anymore. However, she decided that she would visit a church before making any final decision, and the turning point came for her during worship when she realised that God loved her deeply. She experienced total peace despite her life having been turned upside down! This woman did not know that her aunt had been praying for many years for her to come to know Jesus as her Saviour! Christians must continue to spread the gospel through prayer, word and actions, even when they do not see the results!

The other important thing to note in this text is that the Kingdom of God starts small, just like the mustard seed. No wonder Jesus' disciples and his contemporaries did not understand that he was not here to establish a 'political kingdom'! In fact, God's kingdom is so contrary to earthly kingdoms in every way that it requires only what are probably seen as the lowest of human standards, such as, humility, servanthood and willingness to serve. However, even though it starts small, it grows beyond expectation. God's word has far-reaching outcomes. In our world, there is

on-going persecution for Christians in every continent but the church never seems to die, it is never dulled and it is almost un-stoppable in some places. This is because the power of God helps the Kingdom to spread and grow strong. And so the disciples of Jesus must continue to do whatever they are called to do.

The final thought for us to consider is whether the Kingdom of God is a living reality (here and now) or it is some futuristic notion (eschatological). It will be unfortunate for us to assume that only when Jesus returns as judge and King, will he start his Kingdom too. The New Testament clearly tells us that Jesus already began the work of the Kingdom when he was on this earth. And it is so small, so hidden and invisible in places that we do not have the faintest idea that God is already doing the work. Christians must not lose heart when they feel that God is inactive or absent, when they see so much suffering, evil and the power of darkness taking over this world. God is present and that He will bring justice for each evil perpetrated in His own time. This is my experience that God also brings peace and comfort to all who trust in Him.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Lord God, we pray for all pastors, church ministers, missionaries and Aid workers who risk their lives for sake of spreading your gospel in word and deed.

We pray for those who have been overcome with struggles of life, doubt and fear and for whom faith means nothing.

We pray for the persecuted Christians in our world, for whom following Christ may mean much suffering.

We pray for those who have been bereaved, those who are in physical, mental or emotional pain.

Faithful God,
Be with us as we seek to serve you so that we may reflect kingdom values rather than worldly

values. We ask these prayers through the powerful name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.
Amen

The Lord's Prayer
Our Father

Hymn: Hear the call of the kingdom (Singing the Faith 407) OR Listen to
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL-UdwB0Qvc>

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

Hear the call of the kingdom,
lift your eyes to the King;
let his song rise within you
as a fragrant offering
of how God, rich in mercy,
came in Christ to redeem
all who trust in his unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the kingdom
to be children of light
with the mercy of heaven,
the humility of Christ;
walking justly before him,
loving all that is right,
that the life of Christ may shine through us.

King of heaven, we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
filled with passion, filled with power to
proclaim
salvation in Jesus' name.

Hear the call of the kingdom
to reach out to the lost
with the Father's compassion
in the wonder of the cross,
bringing peace and forgiveness,
and a hope yet to come:
let the nations put their trust in him.

King of heaven, we will answer the call ...
*Keith Getty (b. 1974), Kristyn Getty (b. 1980) and Stuart
Townend (b. 1963)*

A prayer of blessing

Father God, as we look forward to the new week, may your discerning knowledge fill our hearts and minds to see your will. May we play an active part in extending your kingdom. Help us to bring you praise and glory by being in your service with our words, deeds and thoughts. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Original Materials & all prayers by Rev. Nutan S J Suray

Mark 4: 26-34

26 He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, 27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. 28 The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

30 He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; 32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; 34 he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.