



# Heaton Moor United Church

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



## Sunday Services at Heaton Moor United Church

*Services at 10:45 unless otherwise stated*

19 <sup>th</sup> December	Rev Dr Raj Patta	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent with Communion
25 <sup>th</sup> December	Carol Jack	Christmas Day Service at 10:00am
2 <sup>nd</sup> January	Carol Jack	
9 <sup>th</sup> January	Rev Dr Raj Patta	Communion Service
16 <sup>th</sup> January	Local Arrangement	Thank You Service

## Additional Services

19 <sup>th</sup> December at 16:00	Dickens Inspired Carol Service	Heaton Moor United Church followed by light supper
9 <sup>th</sup> January at 16:00	Circuit Service	Heaton Moor United Church led by David Hardman

## Additional Events at Heaton Moor Church

Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> December at 19:30 (takes place every other Monday)	Men's Fellowship Christmas Anthology open to all
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> January at 10:00	Moor Than a Good Read

Dear Heaton Moor United Church,

Hope you are all doing well. With the rise of this Omicron variant which is highly transmissible and with the rates of infections on the high, we are all called to stay safe and get booster jabs.

The guidelines for the places of worship at the moment is that those joining at church for worship has to have a face mask, and along with it we will hand sanitise and maintain social distance as a good practice.

This Sunday, the fourth Sunday in Advent, we will have Holy communion service at church. We also have scheduled Charles Dickens themed Christmas Carols in the afternoon at 4pm, and those of you who are interested do join at this service. Our Circuit's Carols in the Car is happening on Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup> December at 4pm and 6pm and there are still some places available and if you are interested, please make a booking and join along. Our last session of the Advent study will be on Thursday the 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7pm on zoom, and do join in if you are interested.

Last Sunday, we had a very good Christingle service at our church along with St. Paul's church. Thanks to Laurel Lane choir for their singing. The Dementia Friends group had Christmas party last Friday and it was one of the joyous occasions of the season. Thanks to Priestnall Bass band and St. Thomas' choir for entertaining the Dementia friends Christmas event. We also had a very joyous toddler Christmas on Monday, and thanks to JoAnne who has organised these events so meticulously. Christmas bulbs and church Christmas cards were handed to all the members of our church, thanks to Deborah for organising the bulbs and to Sharon for organising the delivery of them all.

This week I was also on an interview panel for the CEO of Stockport Council, and it was quite a humbling experience to be on the panel representing the faith sector.

Sorry to cancel few of our scheduled home visits and home communions this week due to the rise in the infections. We will continue to keep in touch with you. If anyone is anxious and wants to have a chat or a prayer do let us know, we can pray along with you either on phone or over zoom or by a visit from a distance.

Be assured of our prayers with you all. May you all have a safe Christmas time with families. Herewith I am sending you my Christmas reflection for your kind perusal.

May the peace and joy of Christmas be with you all. Stay safe, stay warm and keep well.

Thanking you,

Regards,

Raj

16<sup>th</sup> December 2021

# MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITOR



WOW! What another busy but fun filled week.

We had our Christmas Party at Dementia Friends and were entertained by Priestnall School Brass Band and 30 Year 5 students from St Thomas's. We served up Christmas in a sandwich and some Christmas cake. Everybody had a brilliant time. This picture is of a very small number of volunteers who work tirelessly week in and week out to provide a space for our dementia friends and their carers to come.

On Saturday morning we had litter church, we were stopped by quite a few members of the community who all had positive feedback for what we were doing. We have noticed a few "hot spots" each month and so are in talks with local businesses to see if we can work together to find a solution -watch this space!

Sunday was a great day for children and families at Church - the nativity service was such good fun and opportunity together beforehand for a spot of breakfast was lovely. Thank you to Graham and Sheryl for another brilliant nativity video which they kindly allowed me to use with the toddlers. Sunday evening was our Christingle, and it was great to welcome Laurel Lane singers to the Church. They were a bit nervous as they were few in number this year but it certainly didn't affect their performance. I only had one scary moment where I thought one of the little ones was going to eat his lit candle! Did you spot it?!


As mentioned Monday was our nativity at toddlers - it was great to have 25 families in the worship space, even if at one point I felt like I was herding stray cats! The children were excited to welcome Santa who kindly gifted each child a book about the sleeping baby Jesus. It was so much fun I get to do it all again on Friday with Friday toddlers!

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

*JoAnne*

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07340 269 354

 @hmuccommunity

[www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk](http://www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk)

 Heaton Moor United Church

 YouTube<sup>GB</sup>

Heaton Moor United Church

 heaton\_moor\_united\_church



Coffee and Chat will be on next week  
22<sup>nd</sup> December at 10:30am

There will be no coffee and chat on  
the 29<sup>th</sup> December but will resume as  
normal on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## OFFICE OPENING TIMES THIS WEEK

Monday 10:00 – 14:00

Tuesday 10:00 – 14:00

Wednesday 10:00 – 14:00

The office will be closed until the

4<sup>th</sup> January at 10:00

## **NEW GUIDELINES - WEARING OF FACE COVERINGS**

Following the announcement from the Prime Minister on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December to move to Plan B measures to combat the spread of the Omicron variant, a number of restrictions will affect those worshipping within Methodist church property settings.

From **Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December** it will be a legal requirement to wear a face covering within the building. There are reasonable exemptions from this, while someone is leading worship or giving a reading for example.

We can continue to use the building without restrictions, and we can continue to sing!

As always, the leadership team will continue to monitor the Government guidance and that provided by The Methodist Church and will provide updates and further details as they become available.



## **LITTER CHURCH**

**Our next litter Church will be on**

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> January**

**Meeting outside Heaton Moor United Church at 10:00am.**

*Picture taken at our last litter pick – look how happy we look! Why not come and join us?*

## **What The Dickens?**


We have our Dickens Inspired Carol Service this Sunday at 16:00 and I've had a few people ask me what it is this week, so I thought I'd better explain!

**It is a traditional carol service** – but interspersed between the carols is a short reading from A Christmas Carol linked to a bible passage. So, if you enjoy singing such hymns as; Ding Dong Merrily On High, We Three Kings, Good Christian Men, O Come All Ye Faithful and others then do come along.

The Victorian Inspired Supper is in-fact shepherd's pie! There's still time to join us for the supper, just let JoAnne know on 07340 269354 or at Church on Sunday morning.

Many of you will have heard the statement from Chris Whitty on Wednesday, and depending upon your own personal circumstances and your plans for Christmas you may be worried about staying afterwards. Rest assured we will be following all guidelines with good ventilation and plenty of space between people, however if you no longer wish to stay then we would still love you to take some shepherds pie home with you.

On a slightly different note, did you know the saying "What the Dickens?" is actually nothing to do with Charles Dickens as it was used as early as the sixteenth century and Shakespeare used it in his play The Merry Wives of Windsor.



UNITED STOCKPORT CIRCUIT'S  
ADVENT COURSE 2021

**SILENT NIGHT?  
IN SEARCH OF  
A SPIRITUALITY  
OF SILENCE**

On Zoom, Every Thursday at 7pm  
25th Nov - 23rd Dec 2021

[www.stockportcircuit.org.uk](http://www.stockportcircuit.org.uk)  
Zoom link is available on the calendar of the website

## Carols in the Car 18th December at Hazel Grove Park & Ride 4pm & 6pm

This was such a successful event last year that we have decided to put it on again this year! You won't be disappointed. All proceeds go to Wellspring so you are supporting a good cause as well.

Tickets are £6 each and can be purchased visiting [www.carolsinthecar.co.uk](http://www.carolsinthecar.co.uk)

NOTE: You can just arrive without booking online but you might be turned away if the event is sold out.

*Last year, some people had issues accessing their online tickets and didn't come. Please come! We have a list of everyone who purchased tickets online and you will be admitted even if you can't find your online ticket.*

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NOTICES - there will be a notice-sheet next week although it will be sent a day early on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December. There will be no notices on the 31<sup>st</sup> December.

Notices will return on a weekly basis from 7<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Currently we hand-deliver notices to those who do not have email and are unable to collect a paper copy from the office. If your circumstances change, perhaps you are now shielding due to COVID and are not able to collect your paper copy please contact the office or JoAnne (07340269354) and we will arrange for one to be delivered.

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God for whom we watch and wait,  
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son:  
give us courage to speak the truth,  
to hunger for justice,  
and to suffer for the cause of right,  
with Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## **If not an inn, then a manger...**

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Reflection for Christmas 2021

I was recently listening to the radio where the host was asking the listeners what was their favourite role in the nativity play that they have enacted at their school. Overwhelmingly many people who responded shared that their role as donkeys or oxen at the manger were their favourite roles. Last year there was a survey in the UK on how your kid's nativity play role shows what they will earn in the future, and interestingly those who played the role of the oxen are likely to have earned more than the rest of the roles. I am sure each of you will remember the role that you have played at your school's nativity. The story of Christmas is centred around the manger, and specially at the baby Jesus in the manger.

Allow me to reflect on Luke 2: 7 for Christmas this year. It is recorded as "And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."

Because there was no place in the inn, the first ever Christmas, the birth of baby Jesus did not stop. Mother Mary found an alternative and laid the baby in the manger. If not an inn, a manger is the place for the child to be laid, and that is the Christmas message for this year. The last two years 2020-2021, have been pandemic years, perhaps the toughest years in the recent past, where life came to a standstill. Airports were closed, schools were closed, businesses were closed, places of worship were closed, and despite all the closures, the hope in the Christian faith is that God in Jesus has been working with the communities and the creation in overcoming this phase of the pandemic. If there was no place in the inn, God in Jesus did not stop failing to come into this world. God through Mary found a place in the manger to lay the baby Jesus. Christmas is a story of hope, for God in Jesus is unstoppable in God's reaching out to the world, for God has always been with us, both in season and off season. In the context of the pandemic, vaccines and vaccinations came as signs of hope, only to recognise that God in Jesus has been with us, helping us to overcome situations of hopelessness and despair.

The child laying in a manger, then served as a sign of hope for the angels to share about the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. The mention of a manger, at least three times in Luke in the story of Jesus' birth affirms to be a site of wonder, a site where God pitches God's tent to be a site of solidarity with the people on the margins, and a site of creativity informing the world that God is present even in such unknown, unthinkable and unexpected sites.

The story of the birth of Jesus is a celebration of God choosing to find alternatives in offering hope. If not an inn, then a manger, if not in a closed building, then on the street, if not in the sacred, then in the secular, if not in a religious place, then in a public sphere, if not in the faith communities, then in the neighbours on our street, if not in the rituals, then in the serving the needy, if not in the tradition, then in the reimagination, if not in the known, then in the unknown, if not in the expected, then in the unexpected and if not in the usual, then in the unusual, in all of this God in Jesus is offering hope, peace and love to our entire creation.

The calling for us is to envision Christmas as a living event, inviting us to recognise the birth of a baby Jesus in our localities and in our times, for Jesus is being born in the margins of our

societies, and we are called with Jesus to pitch our tents with the margins, and strive towards transforming our societies offering peace, love and hope to this our world today. For me, Christmas is not the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ, which we as Christians commemorate year after year, but Christmas is an opportunity to recognise that Jesus Christ is being born every day into our contexts offering hope, peace, joy and love to us, making the birth of Jesus relevant for our times. Christmas is not just a past thing, but is an event in the present where God in Jesus is taking birth in situations of poverty, exploitation and marginalisation of our times today. The story of Christmas is very radical that it unsettles the very idea of God who reigns from the realms of transcendence, but who came down to pitch God's tent among the creation, being born as a baby, born as a poor baby, born in a manger as there is no place in the inn.

No matter which role we played at the nativity, be it a donkey, an ox, an angel, the shepherds, the magi, Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus, we are all loved equally by God, and we are called to share that love with others. May the hope, love, peace and joy of Jesus be with us all during this pandemic Christmas, inviting us to commit towards a free vaccination of all people in all places of the world.

Allow me to conclude with a drawing of my 12-year-old son Jaiho Patta, which he has drawn last year during the thick of a lockdown on the story of Christmas. In this drawing Jaiho reflects the nativity scene, 'Jesus born in lockdown,' bringing in the relevance of Christmas today.



Wishing you all a meaningful Christmas and an inspiring New Year 2022.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta

## Worship at Home - Sunday 19 December 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people across the Methodist Connexion are sharing this act of worship with you.

### Opening Prayer

“Come thou long expected Jesus.”

Come to us Lord, where we are, however we are feeling, whatever is going on in our lives.

As you come to us, Lord Jesus, help us to reach out to you and to receive from you. Amen.

### Hymn: StF 169 Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mV133j--eT8>

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free,  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,  
born a child and yet a king,  
born to reign in us for ever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit  
raise us to thy glorious throne.

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

### Let us pray together

As Mary sang, may our souls glorify you, oh Lord; may our spirits rejoice in you.

We celebrate all the great things you have done throughout time but we also remember the simple things that you do for each of us personally.

We thank you for the friends who encourage us, the unexpected phone call, the beauty of the natural world.

We thank you that you reach out to us whatever we might be doing and however we might be feeling. You stand watching, waiting, ready to intervene at just the right time and in just the right way.

We thank you, Mighty God, for all you have done for us and continue to do for us. Amen.

### Today's Reading from the Old Testament: Micah 5 vv 2-5a

### Today's Gospel Reading: Luke 1 vv 39-55

### Time to Reflect

I have sometimes had to pick strangers up from the station to take them to various events. I arrive early and wait a little nervously, wondering whether I will spot them easily or miss them entirely. Then, there is the question about what they will be like on the journey – will they be sociable and chatty, silent and hard work, grumpy after a difficult journey? Would they live up to expectations?

The Jews had been waiting for centuries for God's saviour. Some like Anna and Simeon were alert, ready and waiting, but others must have thought that it would never happen. Many were looking in the wrong



places. They would also have wondered what that Saviour would be like and, again, many had come up with wrong ideas. Where do we look out for Jesus? What do we expect of him? Do we prepare ourselves for him?

Micah had warned that the Saviour would come from insignificant Bethlehem but still most missed God's blessing.

We might go through dark times and wonder where God's blessings for us are. We might be desperate for God to show himself to us but, still, we might miss what he has for us because we don't recognise the source. On the other hand, like Elizabeth, we might not think ourselves worthy of God's blessing.

A year ago, I went through a very hard time and could see no sign of God's blessings. I would have screamed at someone who suggested that God had blessings for me. However, I eventually saw odd chinks of light.

The Jews were waiting for a blessing from God. Some hung in there patiently; others gave up. God has blessings for us too. For some of us, they might be a while coming. They might come from unexpected sources and we need to look out for them. However, sooner or later, they will come.

Take a time to sit quietly. If things are good for you at the moment then thank God. If things are hard, you might want to shout out and cry to God. He will listen.

### **A time of prayer**

Spend a moment thinking about the season. Perhaps this is a joyful time for you but, perhaps, it brings up hard memories and other challenges. As you reflect on these things, offer them to God.

Lord, we recall how Elizabeth and Mary supported one another. We thank you for the support that we have received from other people and pray that we might see opportunities to help and support others. Then, for those things that we can't do, we place those people and situations into your caring hands.

Lord, we recall how you came to a forgotten backwater and bring to mind those in our society who are forgotten or marginalized. We pray that governments and individuals will be alert to those needs and will take action. Help us not to turn blind eyes on those in need.

Lord, we recall that Mary recognized how you were blessing her even though things would not have been easy. We reach out to receive your blessings for ourselves but also remember those who are not in a place to do that for themselves. Send your blessings Lord.

Amen

### **The Lord's Prayer** *Our Father .....*

**Hymn: Listen to StF 330 Joy to the World**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZhgbp97y7Q>

**or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind**

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!  
Let all their songs employ;  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

*Isaac Watts (1674-1748)*

## A prayer of blessing

The Lord will stand and feed his flock and they will live secure in his strength; for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth and he shall be the one of peace. (based on Micah 5 vv 4-5)

May we receive all that God has for us and go forth in his peace.

Original Materials by Alan Darlington, local preacher in the Sherwood Forest Circuit

All Hymns reproduced under CCLI 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCLI No here

We are grateful to all the Ministers and Local Preachers from around the Connexion who have contributed to Worship at Home. This resource is administrated by Ministries: Vocations and Worship in the Connexional Team.

### Micah 5 vv 2-5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,  
from ancient days.  
<sup>3</sup>Therefore he shall give them up until the  
time  
when she who is in labour has brought forth;  
then the rest of his kindred shall return  
to the people of Israel.  
<sup>4</sup>And he shall stand and feed his flock in the  
strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his  
God.  
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be  
great  
to the ends of the earth;  
<sup>5</sup>and he shall be the one of peace.

### Luke 1 vv 39-55

<sup>39</sup>In those days Mary set out and went with  
haste to a Judean town in the hill  
country, <sup>40</sup>where she entered the house of  
Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When  
Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child  
leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled  
with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup>and exclaimed with a

loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and  
blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup>And why  
has this happened to me, that the mother of  
my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup>For as soon as I  
heard the sound of your greeting, the child in  
my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup>And blessed is she  
who believed that there would be<sup>[e]</sup> a  
fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the  
Lord."

<sup>46</sup>And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
<sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
<sup>48</sup>for he has looked with favour on the  
lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call  
me blessed;

<sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things  
for me,

and holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup>His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts  
of their hearts.

<sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from  
their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;

<sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,

<sup>55</sup>according to the promise he made to our  
ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants  
forever."