



Heaton Moor United Church

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



Church Services

Harvest Festival

Sunday 18th October 10.45 Heaton Moor United Church

Deborah S & Linda F

Duty 1 : Ian S Duty 2:

Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 18th 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 21th October Coffee and Prayer 11.00am

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

Meeting ID: 953 2754 1668

Passcode: 794265

Wednesday 21st October More than a Good Book 10.00am

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

Meeting ID: 868 8644 9976

Passcode: 714757

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.

Thank you very much for all those who are supporting with the worship on Sundays at our church building, which I sincerely appreciate. Thanks to the preachers, stewards, volunteers, musicians and those participating in the service. As all of us are aware, we as churches are given permission for worship only, with many restrictions including no singing, no worship books, no tea and coffee after the service, no fellowship etc. Thank you very much for all your co-operation thus far. May I take this opportunity to gently remind that as part of our guidance given by the church and the government we need to disperse once the worship is finished without engaging in conversations with our friends outside the church for a good practice and witness in the community. I appreciate your understanding in this regard.

I thank Deborah and Linda for leading our Harvest Sunday service this Sunday. I also would like to thank you all for your support with food to share with one of our local schools. I sincerely appreciate for all your commitment and support towards addressing holiday hunger in our own locality. We had our staff meeting this week and have discussed several programmes for our churches and will keep you informed about them, one of which has been discussing about holiday hunger issues during Christmas holidays.

I thank Paul Brewerton for leading the 'Good Read' on zoom next week on the 21st Oct, and you are all invited to join this group.

As Advent is approaching, we as a staff team are planning some programmes for this season during these uncertain times, and will keep you updated on this. I will be leading an Advent study group on Zoom on every Wednesday at 7pm starting from 2nd of December 2020. The theme I have chosen for this study is "Peace, Panic and Pandemic" and herewith I am attaching a brief detail of that proposed study. You are all invited to join in this study sessions. As a circuit also there has been some plans for Christmas, and we shall share with you soon the details of those events.

Herewith I am sending you the reflection for this Harvest Sunday for your kind perusal and a Harvest resource from Arthur Rank Centre.

Yesterday Jean James and myself were at a consultation on Asylum seekers and were encouraged to write to our MP in addressing the concerns of these people with compassion and justice. We are also encouraged to write to our MP about reset the debt campaign, and I appreciate your support in these initiatives.

Stay safe during these uncertain times. Wait on God and keep praying for one another.

May the blessing of our Triune God be with you all.

Have a blessed week.

Regards,

Raj

16th October 2020



Hi All,

I am back from my break; it was very relaxing. Tom is settling well at University and seems to be having a good time. It is very quiet in the house without him and the fridge appears to stay full longer!

Thank you, JoAnne, for doing the notice sheet, you did a brilliant job keeping everyone informed about all the things happening relating to the church. I am sure you all agree. JoAnne and I have discussed the notice sheet and are going to edit it together from now on. Please email either of us with information and we will put it in.

(the picture is one I took at Derwent reservoir on one of the walks I did on my break)

See you all soon ...Sharon

MESSAGE FROM THE NEW CO-EDITOR

That's right folks, no longer temporary editor I've been promoted! This week I've been involved in two national initiatives:

Challenge Poverty Week has been about showcasing the fantastic work that people and organisations are undertaking to tackle the issue of poverty, I've taken part in events with Church Action Against Poverty and seen projects showcased at both a local and national level.

Here at HMUC we have our final collection for our FRESH collection on Saturday and then we will be taking all items to Mersey Vale School next week. The school Food Pantry will be open for all school families to collect some food to help them through the school holidays. This project is more important than ever in these unprecedented times especially after I read these shocking statistics this week:

- 1) In 2018-2019 4.2 million children were living in poverty, that's 30% of children or 9 in a classroom of 30.
- 2) 72% of children growing up in poverty live in a household where at least one person works.

It is hoped that our FRESH initiative will continue throughout the year and become part of our regular Church activity.



As part of challenging poverty I ask you once again to take part in **Reset The Debt**. This campaign which has been launched by the Baptist Union, the Church of Scotland, Church Action on Poverty, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church aims to help the estimated 6 million people in the UK that have fallen behind on one or more household bill as a result of Covid-19.

19% - almost one in five – of households borrowed to buy food or other essentials in July.

Further information can be found at www.resetthedebt.uk - you can take action by quickly writing to our MP now by clicking this link <https://e-activist.com/page/68281/action/1>

This week has also been **National Prisons Week of Prayer** - a cause I am very passionate about. Prison Week raises awareness and generates prayer. It motivates volunteers to step forward and give their time and gifts, in prisons and in their own communities. It provides an annual focus and reasons for Christians to work together, building capacity and motivation to make a difference for people who are out of sight and often out of mind. Prisons week comes to an end on Sunday but if you have found the focused prayers each day something of interest I have included the Greater Manchester Community Chaplaincy monthly prayer letter with the notices this week.

I'd also like to mention the Angel Tree Project run by Prison Fellowship. Angel Tree gives parents in prison the opportunity to send a Christmas present to their children. Christmas is especially difficult for prisoners and their children. Angel Tree lessens the devastation experienced as a result of parental absence by not only helping families connect and build relationships, but by providing children with much-needed joy.

Prison Fellowship volunteers work with prison chaplains and local churches to buy, wrap and deliver the presents. As long as prisoners are allowed access to their children, they are given the opportunity to apply for a gift to be sent to them.

Each gift is dispatched as though it is from the parent in prison and is accompanied by a personal message written by the parent for their child to make the gift extra special. The parent is also given the option of including an age-appropriate Christian story book in their child's gift.

If you would like further information on the project on how you can be involved see <https://prisonfellowship.org.uk/our-work/angel-tree/> or speak with me.

Once again this newsletter contains lots of information and as always if you have any queries/comments or something you'd like included in a later edition please do not hesitate contact me.

JoAnne

community@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

07340 269 354

VERY HIGH
HIGH
MEDIUM


 HM Government



LOCAL COVID ALERT LEVEL

HIGH

At the time of writing this week's notices the decision had still not be made as to whether Greater Manchester would be put into Tier 3 lockdown measures. 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.

This Sunday is our Harvest Festival. Please remember not to bring any gifts of food to the service. If you wish to contribute there are various ways:



- 1) Envelopes are available for both the local foodbanks and Christian Aid for you to place monetary gifts in. These can be found at the entrance to Church and when filled be place in the basket .at the entrance to the Worship area.
- 2) Post a cheque, made payable to Heaton Moor United Church, and address it to S. Heginbotham ensuring that "Harvest Gift is written on the back.
- 3) Make a monetary donation by BACS to the Co-op Bank
Sort code 08-92-99 Account 65561034 please mark the reference as Harvest Gift

4) If you prefer to make food donations then Saturday is the last collection day for FRESH in the car park at Church from 10:00 – 12:00.

5) Alternatively there are donation points for local foodbanks at most supermarkets.

All gifts both seen and unseen will be dedicated at the service on Sunday.

SHOEBOXES FOR ROMANIA **READY TO GO.**

LOVE in a box.

It's not just a shoebox. It tells a child someone, somewhere has done this for them. That someone care about them. It is so important.

Thank you.

Betty





On Wednesday we had our first 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.

It was lovely to see people as they came to collect their meals, the volunteers from The Dementia Café maintained social distancing whilst managing to engage with everybody in a fun and friendly way.



Peace, Panic and Pandemic: Advent Bible Study Group 2020

Starting Wednesday 2nd December, 9th December, 16th December, 23rd December

On Zoom

When the angels came down at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, their message was “Peace on earth and goodwill all human beings” (Luke 2:14). In the context of the global pandemic sweeping over the world today creating lots of panic, fear, anxiety and loss, what does this message of Christmas, the message of peace mean for us today? This message “peace on earth” offers a message of hope, particularly to cope with this pandemic by God in Jesus’ becoming a human being, for he is willing to collaborate and work with us in our context.

Over the period of these four weeks, we will explore the meaning and message of peace in the age of panic and pandemic by engaging in four Biblical passages.

Week one: The vision of peaceful kingdom – Isaiah 11

Week two: The vision of a just kingdom – Amos 8

Week three: The vision of an anti-empire kingdom – Kingdom of God

Week four: The vision of a kingdom of hope – Revelation 21

@rajpatta

Request for Help – if you can help please speak with JoAnne

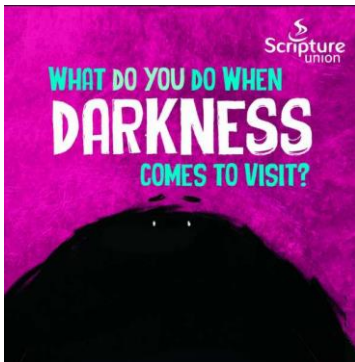


Stockport foodbank

8 October at 11:48 · 🌐



Do you have an old Iphone 5 or 6 at home that you are willing to donate to us at Stockport foodbank? We are looking to secure 10 Iphones for our telephone volunteers project. We don't need them with sim cards - we can obtain PAYG sims for them.



Over the weekend of the 30th October we will be taking part in The Heaton 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.



Did you know October 21st is National Apple Day?

There are 7000 varieties of apples worldwide with the UK producing 2500. Do you have a favourite variety – mine is the Pink Lady.

My favourite apple recipe is pumpkin and apple soup, perfect for the weather we're currently having.

Fruits in the Bible are rich with Bible Symbolism – they are used as peoples names, as names of places, as decorations, in Biblical Laws, in metaphors and similes, in blessing and curses, in Proverbs and literally in narratives.

Do you know how many times “apple” is referred to in the NRSV Edition?





DATED EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

17th October – 10:00 until 12:00 – FRESH Collection

Last FRESH Food Collection in the car park at Heaton Moor United Church

21st October – 10:00

Moor Than A Good Book – see reading material at end of notices

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86886449976?pwd=R3ZSeFQ4U1crMXRTNHBUakxGYldjQT09>

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.

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 text box on page 3 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



LAST CALL FOR DONATIONS THIS SATURDAY

Heaton Moor United Church & Heaton Mersey Methodist Church



Fresh is a community group of volunteers that would like to eliminate holiday hunger in school children. By providing food packages during school holidays to children on free school meals & families on low incomes.

HMUC & HMMC Churches



Working together
with FRESH to
support a local
school, support
their families.

We are planning to collect food over the next 5 weeks. This food is for children, so no spam !! Things like crisps, pasta, sauces, jam, peanut butter, cereal, cereal bars & anything else you think a young person would like to eat.

There will be a car boot to fill on the following Saturdays, each church is doing alternate weeks.

19 th Sept	10.30-12.00	HMUC
26 th Sept	10.30-12.00	HMMC
3 rd Oct	10.30-12.00	HMUC
10 th Oct	10.30-12.00	HMMC
17 th Oct	10.30-12.00	HMUC

Volunteers Welcome

Please contact Sharon if you
can help.

office@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk



NEXT WEEK'S GET ONLINE WEEK IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

It's Get Online Week 19th-25th October and we're encouraging Stockport residents to learn how to use the internet. Free virtual events will help people who aren't very confident using the internet to improve their digital skills and make the most of the internet. And if you don't have any way of getting online there are free-to-borrow devices and telephone support to help you get started.

The pandemic proved that being able to use the internet is an essential way of staying connected and getting on with everyday life. Being able to video call a loved one, work from home or shop online made all the difference to many. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case for everyone, which is why Get Online Week is more important than ever. If you felt left behind this year because you weren't sure how to use the internet, or you now need new skills for work, a virtual Get Online Week event can help.

Councillor Kate Butler, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focus and Engagement says: "If you're not online yet, or you're not very confident at using the internet, now's the time to get the support you need. In Get Online Week there's lots of extra free and friendly help to make the most of the internet. Whether you want to learn how to video call, shop safely online or search and apply for jobs, a virtual Get Online Week event can help."

A full list of virtual Get Online Week events in Stockport is available on our [Events calendar](#).

If you have no way to access the internet, the DigiKnow Device Library offers free to borrow tablets and laptops, many with free data packages. All come with help from Digital Champions to get online and stay safe online. If you'd like to borrow a device, please call the DigiKnow Helpline on 07537 127095.

Councillor Butler continues: "The DigiKnow Device Library was set up to help people who want to do things on the internet but don't know where to start. If you're not online yet, don't worry you're not alone, and it's easier than you think. Get Online Week is the perfect time to give the DigiKnow Helpline a call and take that first step".

Throughout the pandemic Stockport Council has been finding ways to continue providing services that reach and support vulnerable people in greatest need. The DigiKnow Device Library and Helpline are two new initiatives introduced by Stockport's 'DigiKnow' Alliance, a network of partners from all sectors who are helping more people in Stockport become confident, independent users of the internet. This Alliance, established by the council in April 2018, has already helped almost 9,000 residents to get online and improve their digital skills.

Editors Notes

- Get Online Week is organised by Good Things Foundation and runs from 19th - 24th October 2020: <https://uk.getonlineweek.com/> It is the UK's biggest digital inclusion campaign, mobilising grassroots organisations to reach more people with digital skills support and raising the profile of digital exclusion as an issue of national importance.
- In April 2018 Stockport Council established a Digital Inclusion Alliance to help digitally excluded residents to gain digital skills and confidence. This is an alliance of partners from all sectors who bring different expertise and resources to help shape, support and promote the 'DigiKnow' movement in Stockport. 8425 people were supported during the initial two years of the programme and 35 organisations were recruited into the DigiKnow Network of delivery partners. Further information available at: <https://www.digitalstockport.info/digital-inclusion-in-stockport/>
- The DigiKnow approach is to deliver digital skills support through established and trusted community groups and organisations who already provide social support. This way there is more chance of helping these hard to reach groups. Community groups offering digital skills support can be found on the [Stockport Local online directory](#) or call the DigiKnow Helpline 07537 127095.
- During Covid-19, with face-to-face sessions no longer possible, community groups had to find [new ways to reach learners](#). Starting Point set up a DigiKnow Helpline open to individuals and voluntary sector organisations who need help in reaching their clients remotely. [Digital Champions](#) were trained to provide telephone and video support to help residents both individually and via Zoom group sessions.
- While libraries and places with public Wi-Fi were closed, many residents lost access to the internet, so the Alliance provided devices and data to hundreds of Stockport residents, through a [combination of projects](#) supported by the Department for Education, the DevicesDotNow scheme, 02 and [Stockport Council funds](#). This culminated with Stockport Local Fund awarding almost £10,000 to Starting Point to set up the [digital device library](#).
- The standard loan period is one month but renewals are possible. The devices are completely clean of any previous data when loaned to residents and when they're returned, all data is erased, and the device is reset and cleaned. To refer someone in need of a device please use the [referral form](#) or residents can call the Helpline themselves on 07537 127095.
- [Starting Point Community Learning Partnership](#) are the community lead for Stockport's 'DigiKnow' alliance

More than the Good Book

(Wed.21st October : 10am)

2: How can I sing the Lord's Song?

*As we are gathered, Jesus is here;
One with each other, Jesus is here;
Joined by the spirit, built up in love,
Part of the body, the church of God.
As we are gathered, Jesus is here;
one with each other, Jesus is here*

Give to me,Lord,a thankful heart
and a discerning mind;
give,as I play the Christian's part,
the strength to finish what I start
and act on what I find.

When,in the rush of days,my will
is habit-bound and slow,
help me to keep in vision still
what love and power and peace can fill
a life that trusts in you.

By your divine and urgent claim,
and by your human face,
kindle our sinking hearts to flame,
and as you teach the world your name
let it become your place.

Jesus,with all your Church I long
to see your kingdom come:
show me your way of righting wrong
and turning sorrow into song
until you bring me home.

Thomas Caryl Micklem(1925-2003)

Bear One Another's Burdens

My friends,if anyone is detected in a transgression,you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.

Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens,and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

For if those who are nothing think they are something,they deceive themselves.

All must test their own work;then that work, rather than their neighbor's work,will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.

Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher. Do not be deceived;God is not mocked,for you reap whatever you sow.

If you sow to your own flesh,you will reap corruption from the flesh;but if you sow to the Spirit,you will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

**So let us not grow weary
in doing what is right,for we will reap at
harvest time,if we do not give up.
Then ,whenever we have an opportunity,
let us work for the good of all,
and especially for those of the family of faith.**

May God's blessing surround you each day,

As you trust him and walk in his way.

May his presence within

Guard and keep you from sin,

Go in peace, go in joy, go in love



Prayers from Linda



Father God, Lord of all.

We ask prayers for our church family at Heaton Moor United Church and Heaton Messy Methodist Church, for their generosity of food donations for Mersey Vale School, to help your families with food over the holiday time. We pray for FRESH a community group of volunteers who help with many school's families over the holidays. We pray for the head teacher and all the staff at Messy Vale School for their willingness to get involved. **God said go feed our children.** So next week Lord be with the organizers and the helpers as we get involved. We pray for the families who will come to take the food, give them a new hope that we live in a world where your Love is

shining through your people. Almighty Lord God, give us true faith, and make our faith grow in us day by day. Also give us hope and love, so that we may serve our neighbours according to your will; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, one God, now and forever. Amen.

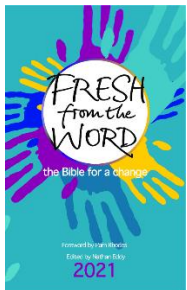
Prayers for Families

Lord, I want to thank you for our families in the Heaton's. For the talents and good things that you have given each of us. Please keep us united, as our bond gets strong as the days pass. Please guide them, protect them and equip them to do your will each and every day. Thank You for all that you are, and all that you have given us. 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

Their past may be full of chaos, uncertainty and crime....but their future can be full of hope. It can be a long journey, with many ups and downs, but ultimately it is hope that allows us to keep going, keep praying and keep on believing that someone's past does not define their future, and when hope and love are there, it can be a God filled future.

One of my favourite films is The Shawshank Redemption. A quote from the film is

"Hope is a good thing, may be best of things and no good thing ever dies"

The story of that film is all about hope, and one that links in with our ministry as a charity to support those who are ex-offenders make a fresh start. Hope can be what sustains us and our ministry together as Greater Manchester Community Chaplaincy.

So, my prayer for all of us is that we would have a fresh sense of the hope of the gospel that we have in Jesus Christ, and that this hope would fuel and encourage us in our prayers, ministry and volunteering together for the glory and hope of the gospel in this time.

Stay safe and well.

Gavin

Chair of Trustees, GMCC

Praise points:

There have been many opportunities to witness to prisoners who don't normally attend chapel in Buckley Hall

Contact us at: GMCC Methodist Central Buildings Oldham Street M1 1JQ

Telephone: 0161 236 2462 Email: chaplain@gmcconline.org

Please make cheques payable to: **GM Prison Prayer**

and state if you would like to **Gift Aid it**

Check out our Facebook Page or www.gmccsupport.org

**HMP MANCHESTER; HMP FOREST BANK; HMP BUCKLEY HALL;
HMP & YOI STYAL; HMP YOI THORN CROSS & HMP HINDLEY**

GREATER MANCHESTER COMMUNITY CHAPLAINCY

PRISON PRAYER LETTER OCTOBER 2020

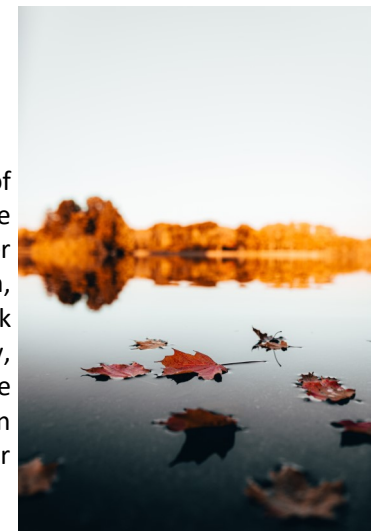
"Take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." - Hebrews 6:18-19 (NIV)

What do we have to cling to as we face all the challenges that Covid-19 throws at us?

I've asked myself this question many times over the last 6 months. It's important for us to reflect on all that really matters to us when we face difficult circumstances, which I'm sure many of us have done in recent times.

I believe one of the key values and fundamental aspects of the gospel is hope. In Mark 4:35-41, when Jesus was asleep in the boat, and the disciples woke him up due to the storm, Jesus was able to respond in a peaceful way - Why? - He had hope. Hope that his Father would look after him and the disciples in the middle of the storm, hope that he had authority to calm the waves and ensure the boat was safe. Jesus had hope because the gospel he lived and preached is one that is full of hope.

It is the same today. We offer a message of hope in the gospel when all around us have seemingly lost hope. I know many of our prayer supporters have also visited people in prison, prayed for them and written to them. Thank you to all who do that so faithfully and regularly, Why do we do this? I believe it is because we have a hope that someone who is currently in prison will come out of prison, and that their identity is not ultimately defined by that.



OCTOBER 2020

- 1 For those doing Emmaus Bible school booklets in-cell at Buckley Hall, that they will gain knowledge and understanding as they study the word of God
- 2 S and 17 other men who signed up for the Living with Loss course which is still on hold, that they will have hope for the future, even in their mourning
- 3 D whose father has just died, that he will have comfort from those around him as he grieves
- 4 N is really finding the lack of visiting by family members difficult and is very isolated, pray that he is encouraged to go on
- 5 For the clients at GMCC as we open up services in a new way, that they are happy to adapt to all of the changes
- 6 Please pray for DB and M who have both gone out to Christian supported housing that they will get the support they need and that they will grow strong in God
- 7 J & C whose Granddad died recently. They requested a memorial service and seemed ready to receive the comfort God's word affords, pray that they are comforted and receptive to the Gospel
- 8 That the message in Prisons workers are able to head back into the prisons asap to assist chaplaincy and connect with the men and women
- 9 For GMCC staff and volunteers as they enforce new & changing rules in line with government guidance, that this will be done in joy and love rather than with fear
- 10 P who is desperate to move out of the jail and is feeling very frustrated, that he has peace in the waiting
- 11 For new courses that will be starting soon, Living with Loss, Bible studies and Alpha, that the men who attend will be filled with hope
- 12 S whose father is terminally ill, that he receives the support and comfort that he needs
- 13 D is looking forward to his imminent release, may his optimism be justified
- 14 K, C and S who are young men with severe mental health issues and are waiting to move to a hospital, that they are given the treatment they need quickly
- 15 All the men who have not seen their families, especially their children for 6 months, that they are encouraged and uplifted during these difficult times
- 16 J who is feeling trapped in the system and does not have a release date, that he has hope and is given some clarity

OCTOBER 2020

- 17 D who is struggling to come to terms with a long sentence, that he receives the support he needs and begins to hope
- 18 L is really struggling with his substance misuse. Please pray for resilience and perseverance
- 19 A whose gran is terminally ill, that he gets the support and comfort that he needs during this time
- 20 Please pray for DE who says he is feeling something is missing in his life and is thinking about faith, that he is receptive and open to the Gospel
- 21 For wisdom for governors as restrictions are slowly lifted
- 22 For those who receive prayer sheets in place of Sunday worship to find them of value
- 23 Prayers for chapel groups to be permitted quickly, please. Many prisoners are feeling the lack of them, pray that the prisoners are resilient in these tough times
- 24 Please pray for our visits Team as Social Visiting is re-introduced with suitable safeguards. May it happen safely
- 25 Please pray for continued financial provision for GMCC, may the Lord continue to be faithful to us in this difficult season
- 26 For families who have missed visiting their loved ones, that the families of prisoners are strong in this difficult time and that communication is still possible
- 27 B often uses violence rather than thinking to try and solve his problems pray that he might stop and think.
- 28 Pray for S, a new GMCC client who has recently started engaging with churches and has been given a Bible, may he grow
- 29 For K, M, C & C as they continue to grow in grace in these difficult times
- 30 C and R who are very vulnerable men who have just come into custody, pray that they are protected and cared for within the prison system
- 31 J who is out in September and very much does not want to come back to prison, pray that he makes the right choices and has the correct support when he is released

VERY HIGH

HIGH

MEDIUM



HM Government



LOCAL COVID ALERT LEVEL

HIGH**Social Contact**

1 household / bubble indoors. Rule of six outdoors.

Weddings and Funerals

Up to 15 guests for weddings and up to 30 guests for funerals. 15 for receptions, wakes and related ceremonies.

Overnight Stays

Overnight stays permitted subject to social contact rules.

Working from home guidance

Work from home where possible.

Shopping and Retail

Open.

Leisure and gyms

Open.

Hospitality

Open with some restrictions including 10pm closing time and table-service only.

Entertainment and tourist attractions

Open, except nightclubs and adult entertainment.

Education

Schools, FE colleges open. Universities must reflect wider restrictions.

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 into Local COVID Alert Level Very High areas where possible.

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

Pledge to build peace bridges with those on the edge: Harvest in a world of hunger

Reflecting on Leviticus 23:22

The recent announcement of the 2020 Nobel Peace prize to the World Food Programme (WFP), one of the largest global humanitarian organisations, that has been addressing hunger and promoting food security is a wakeup call to the world to recognise the grave reality of the global food crisis today, where millions of people today suffer from or face the threat of hunger. The Norwegian Nobel Committee (NNC) announced that the WFP was given this peace prize, “for its push for international solidarity and for multilateral cooperation, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.” In 2019, the WFP provided assistance to close to 100 million people in 88 countries who are victims of acute food insecurity and hunger. Especially in the face of the global pandemic this year, the WFP has demonstrated an impressive ability to intensify its efforts to address hunger, starvation, violence and conflict. WFP has stated, “Until the day we have a medical vaccine, food is the best vaccine against chaos.” In awarding this peace prize to WFP, the NNC has also exposed the intrinsic link between hunger and armed conflict and explained this link as “a vicious circle.” It further said, “war and conflict can cause food insecurity and hunger, just as hunger and food insecurity can cause latent conflicts to flare up and trigger the use of violence. We will never achieve the goal of zero hunger unless we also put an end to war and armed conflict.”

When the world this year is taken over by the Covid global pandemic, among 318 nominations for this year’s Nobel Peace Prize in 2020, WFP receiving this award under the category of peace has some theological significance that needs to be discussed. Before we do that, we need to set this conversation into perspective, and therefore firstly, we need to recognise that hunger is the deeper translation of conflict, and WFP, as an organisation striving to address such a conflict receives a global peace award, testifies to it. Secondly, it is time to acknowledge that ‘hunger triggers violence, and violence leads to hunger.’ Thirdly, it is food that has the strength to fight against the present chaos.

So, when we have now recognised hunger as the deeper translation of conflict, we now need to unpack hunger in numbers in our given context today. It is reported by the UN that 690 million people in the world are undernourished, which is about 8.9% of the world population in 2019. In the UK it is reported that 8.4 million people are struggling to afford to eat. 4.7 million of these people live in severely food insecure homes. This means that their food intake is greatly reduced and children regularly experience physical sensations of hunger, explains Fairshare, an organisation in UK fighting hunger and tackling food waste. Children from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic group communities in UK are more likely to be in poverty, which is about 46% compared to 26% of the rest of the communities. India is one of the world’s largest food producers, yet ironically, the country is also home to the largest population of hungry people and one-third of the world’s malnourished children. At another level, it is also reported that hunger could kill more people than the COVID pandemic in 2020, pushing another 132 million people into hunger than projected for 2020. Not to forget the number of children going hungry during holidays in UK has been on a phenomenal

rise. Covid also has exposed that today we live in a world filled with inequalities, including who gets food and who are not able to get food.

What does all these numbers explain to us? It explains that hunger is a reality in our localities, and it raises an alarm to know that there are many people who are going hungry every day in our known vicinities. This is only bird's eye view of about the world of hunger every day in 2020.

As I am preparing for a harvest Sunday service, I have been thinking what is the significance of such a Sunday when there is so much hunger for food in the world today? Are we celebrating harvest, just because we have always celebrated it in the month of October in UK, and in February in India, since it is part of a Christian calendar? What is the message of harvest for my children living in an urban context? Amidst these questions, I read this verse as a message for us this harvest.

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the Lord your God.” Leviticus 23:22

This Levitical law reminds the community of this text to know that God is a God who provides food for all, with a special provision to those people who are poor, migrants, foreigners living in your locality. I want to bring in to your attention three things from this given verse. Firstly, this verse emphasises a **preference to the people on the edges** – the poor and the foreigner residing among you. Reading it in our context, it is those people who are on the margins of our society today, people who are as asylum seekers, people who are as refugees, people who are as migrants, people who are on food vouchers, people who have lost the jobs, people who cannot afford to eat a proper meal a day, that needs to be given a preferential option. For among such people and communities, God comes alive, for God is working with them in addressing hunger.

Secondly, this verse is a call to **build peace bridges with a definite provision**. Harvest is a call not to accumulate food all for one-self, or reap the entire fruits of the field for one-self. The law reminds them not to do certain thing, which is not to reap to the very edges of a given field or gather the gleanings of the entire harvest. The law is to leave certain parts and portions of the harvest for the people on the edges, which is an act of building bridges of peace. If hunger is a deep translation of conflict, the poor, the stranger, the migrant, the refugee when they don't own a land, harvest should remind us that we are called to build bridges by sharing our fruits, harvest, gifts and care with those on the edges and address this conflict called hunger. These people of the edges are more likely to go on hunger as they can't afford a harvest, but as a faith community, we need ensure to be a local food programme providing food for them. Building bridges of peace is God in Jesus' activity, and the divine invites us to join with Jesus in building peace bridges with those on the edges.

Thirdly, this verse is a call **seeking a pledge to practice just compassion** towards the poor and the hungry and proclaim food as a faith issue. This verse is a Levitical law, that demanded a pledge, a commitment from that wandering community, to see to it that this law is put into practice in its fullest sense. Harvest demands a preference, a provision and a practice of sharing food with the poor and hungry. The pledge is not limited to one crop or a certain crop in the year, but to every harvest of every fruit in

the field. Harvest calls for a just compassion. The one who works hard on the field can ask, since I have been working hard, I need to enjoy all the fruit of the harvest. But this verse counters such arrogance of selfishness and calls for a compassion based on justice, with a preferential option to the least and the last in the society. Harvest should challenge us to ensure that there should be food for all. Food serves as an important factor in community building, and harvest demands an unequivocal pledge and commitment in addressing hunger and food insecurity.

For us as churches harvest today is about sharing food, providing food and striving towards tackling hunger and inequalities in our society. In the context of climate change, this harvest invites us as a church to pledge to care for our planet overcoming all those 'dominion' narratives against the creation. As churches we are called to be with our local communities in challenging poverty and in demanding our governments to accountability to ensure welfare of all people and not just the few. In my reimagining church today, I envision churches to be hubs of serving food for all, addressing poverty, tackling hunger, sharing our resources. So as a person of faith living in an urban context, harvest is a time to reflect on the creation, is a time for sharing and caring those that are poor and hungry and is a time to pledge to work towards addressing climate change in saving our planet.

Allow me to conclude this reflection by sharing the "Ten Commandments of Food" produced by the World Council of Churches, for us as a food for thought and action this harvest time:

1. You shall give thanks for the food you eat.
2. You shall provide food for those who have no food.
3. You shall eat mindfully and in moderation.
4. You shall be grateful to those who grow and prepare food for your table.
5. You shall not waste food.
6. You shall reduce the ecological footprint of food production and supply.
7. You shall protect the biodiversity of the sources of food.
8. You shall support fair wages for farmers' efforts.
9. You shall strive for all people to have access to affordable and nutritious food.
10. You shall rejoice and share the sacred gift of food with all.

May the God of harvest, who is always generous in compassion be with us in our pledge to build peace bridges with people on the edges and work with us in our efforts to tackle hunger and address poverty in our times today.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta
15th October 2020

Harvest 2020

THANK
YOU

TO OUR FARMERS!



Arthur Rank
Centre
CONFIDENT RURAL CHRISTIANS

Harvest 2020

THANK YOU

TO OUR FARMERS!



This year, many people have become aware – some for the first time – of the vital role UK farms play in feeding our nation, while the food shortages we experienced in the early days of the COVID-19 lockdown reminded us how fragile the supply chain can be. Unable to go out, many people have been cooking and baking more than in the past, and some are growing fruit and vegetables at home for the first time. All of this has resulted

in a more conscious appreciation of the food we eat and where it has come from.

As churches and communities across the UK prepare to celebrate harvest festivals, let's embrace this opportunity to thank the farmers across the UK who grow our food for us.

This has been a difficult year for many in the farming community which is negotiating a 'triple threat' of challenges. The weather is, once again, proving to be problematic for many farmers; autumn and winter flooding meant some crops sown in the autumn were washed away, and the planting of spring crops was delayed. This was followed by a very dry spring which is having lasting effects: crops have been slower to grow, and some farmers are already having to feed their animals as there is insufficient grazing available.

The shape of new agricultural policy and trade deals is beginning to emerge as Britain renegotiates many of its international relationships following its exit from the European Union, but there will be a significant lack of clarity around the details of this for some time to come.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant challenges for the farming community. As we know, the process of harvesting many of our crops is hugely reliant on migrant labour, with people coming to the UK for a season, living and working on local farms before returning home. Much of this travel has been curtailed by restrictions in response to COVID-19. Other farms have sought to increase their income by diversifying into farm shops, holiday lets and other activities; again, COVID-19 restrictions have made much of this activity impossible over the last few months.

This year, perhaps more than ever, the farming community in the UK needs our support! The material that follows includes some very practical ways in which we can demonstrate how much we value it, both through the ways in which we engage directly with farms and farmers across the UK, and in the choices we make as we shop.

Visit the Harvest 2020: Thank you to our farmers! pages on our website for more ideas and resources:

arthurrankcentre.org.uk/harvest2020.

What does the Bible say about harvest?

Creation, land, agriculture and farming are themes which run through the whole of the Bible. We have chosen three short passages that reveal different aspects of the way the writers of the Bible explored and understood the relationship between God and his creation.

Revd Elizabeth Clark, National Rural Officer for the Methodist and United Reformed Churches, has offered some brief reflections on each passage, and as you plan your harvest celebrations, you may want to use these passages and reflections as the basis for a short talk at a service or harvest supper.

Or you could use the passages and the accompanying questions in small groups, giving your whole church community the opportunity to reflect together on what the Bible has to say about harvest.

John 2:1-11: The 'staggering generosity' of God

The wedding at Cana may not be the most obvious 'harvest' passage, but it is a compelling picture of the staggering generosity of God's provision. As a wedding host faces the humiliation of running out of wine, Jesus intervenes; the resulting wine is of the highest quality and there's plenty of it, the equivalent of nine hundred bottles for a party that was already part way through!

Think of some of the abundance of nature many of us have experienced in a new way because of COVID-19 lockdown: birdsong, a profusion of wildflowers, butterflies and insects. The sheer glory of creation is all around us, but God the Creator calls us to work with him. At Cana, Jesus performed the miracle but he chose to work with others; the servants had to move the jars and fill them, then take the wine to the steward to taste. These apparently small acts were vital.

In the same way, farmers work with God in his creation to produce our food. While not all farmers would use this language, many talk of being 'stewards of the land', wanting to pass it on in a better condition than they found it.





Jesus chose to depend on the work of others, something we do all the time; every time we eat we depend on the farmers who produce our food. Farmers themselves work with many others to grow the food and get it to our tables. We all need to eat and so we are all dependent on this vast network of people to feed us.

But ultimately, of course, we are all dependant on the bounty of a Creator God.

As we come to understand that we are working with God's good gifts our task is imbued with a certain holiness. The things of the earth are important to God, so we should treat them and each other with respect.

- How has your view of food changed in the last months?
- Who would you like to thank today for the food that you've eaten?

Psalm 104:1-15

This psalm reminds us of the Creator God on whom we all depend. It is a call to praise and worship God for all that he has done.

- What do you have to praise God for?
- Have you experienced creation differently in the last few months?

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

This passage reminds us that all food is a gift from God. The offering of the first fruits also reminds the people of Israel of their history and all that God has done for them. As a response they are instructed to make sure that everyone gets a share, including the widow, the orphan and the stranger.

Farmers today are often very aware of the history of their farm and see themselves in a line of fellow stewards wanting to leave the land better than they found it.

- How has your perspective on food and creation changed this year?



THANK YOU to our farmers!



This year, we want to encourage churches to use their harvest festival celebrations as an opportunity to thank farmers for all they do for us.

As the effects of COVID-19 continue to unfold, it's impossible to predict the circumstances under which we will be celebrating our harvest festivals this year. Therefore, we've suggested ways in which you and your church community could celebrate either in individual households or as a gathered church.



Celebrating harvest at home

- Have a special meal and include any produce you have grown yourself. Give thanks to God for the food he has given, and for the farmers who have grown it; we've written a special harvest grace which you can find alongside other prayers at the end of this material.
- Take some time to look at your buying habits and consider buying local, British and Fairtrade where you can. We realise that the economic impact of COVID-19 might make this difficult, so prioritise making the right choices for you and your family.
- Download and print out our special 'Thank you to our farmers!' poster and put it in your window (arthurrankcentre.org.uk/harvest2020).



Gathering together as a church community

- Have a shared meal, aiming to sourcing your ingredients as locally as possible; why not see if members of your church community have homegrown produce to contribute? We've written a special harvest grace which you can find alongside other prayers at the end of this material.
- Commit to prioritising local, British and Fairtrade produce at all church gatherings wherever possible.
- Download and print our 'Thank you to our farmers!' poster and display it in a church window or on your noticeboard (arthurrankcentre.org.uk/harvest2020).

PRAYERS

Creator God,
the whole earth proclaims your glory.
Field and forest, farm and garden all sing your
praise!

As we gaze at the world around us
we see your handiwork;
your fingerprint is everywhere.
This is your world; help us to enjoy it gently.
In Jesus' name. Amen

Loving God,
we give thanks for those who produce our food:
for farmers and fishermen, factory and shop workers.
We pray for those for whom this has been a difficult year:
farmers who have battled the weather to grow food,
delivery drivers and shop workers who kept working
despite the pandemic.
Help us to value and support each other.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

A HARVEST GRACE

Creator God,
thank you for this food.
Bless those who have produced and prepared it.
Help us to enjoy it and learn to share it.
In Jesus' name. Amen.



Useful resources

Back British Farming (countrysideonline.co.uk/back-british-farming)
Fairtrade Foundation (fairtrade.org.uk)



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The Methodist Church

United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

A Message from the Superintendent Minister

October 14th 2020

Dear Friends,

Some of you will be aware of the Methodist Church's new Strategy for Evangelism and Growth, called 'God For All'. The Strategy names concrete steps towards *"our commitment to be a growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking, inclusive church of Gospel people who speak of, listen for, and live out the goodness of God – so that new people become disciples of Jesus Christ and committed Methodists experience a deepening of faith."*

Whilst not explicit within that overall vision, the God for All strategy has an element within it which particularly resonates with us in the United Stockport Circuit, particularly in terms of some of the things which I was talking about in my last letter. God for All has a strand within it which talks specifically about being a "Church at and from the Margins", and stemming from this it outlines several different aims:

- Starting a movement of new Christian communities led by those at the margins.
- Work alongside people experiencing poverty to deepen community engagement.
- Build on the biblical connection between evangelism and social justice.

Not only does this resonate with our own Circuit Task Group which we have called **'Being a church of the margins'**, it also picks up on some work which one of our circuit ministers Raj Patta is seeking to develop at the moment. Raj writes,

"Over the last six months, the Spirit of God has been pushing me to do church differently, outside the box, and to be with people in the public sphere, sharing the love of Christ. In response to that push, last week on Sunday from 11 am to 12.30pm, I and a friend of mine went into Stockport town centre, walking around the market place trying to engage in a conversation with people on the streets. As we walked by we had coffee with three people who have been homeless and gave a listening ear to their plights, we bumped into a group of artists who were sitting on the streets drawing the sketches of the market place and had some interesting conversation on their understanding of beauty on the streets, had a chat with folks at Wellspring charity and gave some food cans as the need for home has increased enormously. We then said a prayer and departed from there. It was church for me, "church in the marketplace," (CIMP) where I heard people's stories, spoke to people about God's love, and came back home challenged. I have recognised that there are many people who are looking for a conversation, and as a church I think we need to hear their stories. One of the persons with whom I had coffee asked me, "Vicar, what are you doing here on the streets of the town centre? Don't you have a church service?" I had to reply that, "this way of being with people and listening to their stories of life is the church I am doing this Sunday." I personally was moved by this Sunday experience in the marketplace and foresee this way of doing church has a relevance in our moving forward as a church. I have talked about this experience to several people whom I have met during the week, and I gathered that there is an interest in doing church this way."

Key to all of this for us is the importance of Listening. We do not, as the established church, take ourselves to the margins and offer what we have to those we find there, somehow 'importing' church. This is an outdated colonial style of working which doesn't take seriously the depth and authenticity of experience, faith and struggle with which many people live. The 'margins' might be geographical, but they might also be social or economic or psychological or spiritual. Wherever society places people into situations of hopelessness, exclusion, voicelessness, isolation, poverty – these are the places where people cease to be able to fulfil their potential as human beings, as the people God created them to be. For God, no-one is ever on the margins. If that is where people find themselves then it is those at the centre of things who have placed them there, and we are all diminished by that. The journey away from the margins and back into the heart of society and into a recognition that we have always been in the heart of God, is a journey we all take together. None of us can remain unchanged by it. Quite how this will play out for us in the United Stockport Circuit is yet to be seen, but there are two things you might like to do right now.

- On Sunday the 25th of October at 1pm, Raj and myself and any others who care to join us are planning to be this 'Church in the Market Place' and any of you interested in joining us, to walk around the town centre and listen to those we meet, please let us know, or meet us outside Tiviot Dale Methodist Church just before 1pm.
- We shared a wonderful celebration of Black History Month in our Zoom service on Sunday 4th October, this was organised in partnership with the Ebony and Ivory Community Organisation in Stockport (EAICO). EAICO have just launched a black history project, exploring Stockport's African and Caribbean heritage and detailing the untold stories of African and Caribbean people in Stockport. The exhibition features at least one member of the United Stockport Circuit! Do take a look at this fascinating and important exhibition online at www.blackhistoryinstockport.com

And please remember as always, especially as we face further restrictions and 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,

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.

Sunday 18th and 25th 3pm

Login details as usual as follows:

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

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Circuit Prayer

Even though some churches will be re-opening for worship, let's continue to say this prayer together when we can. This way we stay connected in a very really and tangible way. You 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, through 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.

Sunday 18th 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.

Opening Prayer

To You we rise, in You we rest
We stay at home, we go on quest,
Still You are our abode (from H and P 39, v5
alt.)

Hymn: 608 All Praise to our redeeming Lord
who joins us by His grace
(for an organ version see:
<https://youtu.be/VQQwzluyBaw>)

All praise to our redeeming Lord,
who joins us by his grace,
and bids us, each to each restored,
together seek his face.

He bids us build each other up;
and, gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope
we hand in hand go on.

The gift which he on one bestows,
we all delight to prove;
the grace through every vessel flows,
in purest streams of love.

E'en now we think and speak the same,
and cordially agree;
concentred all, through Jesu's name,
in perfect harmony.

We all partake the joy of one,
the common peace we feel,
a peace to sensual minds unknown,
a joy unspeakable.

And if our fellowship below
in Jesus be so sweet,
what heights of rapture shall we know

when round his throne we meet!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Prayer of Approach

Heart-stirring God,
You know each of us by name
and day by day we discover your favour
afresh.
Your love is new every morning.
Your Presence remains with us,
whether we are called to travel or need to
stay put.
You are our rest-giver and the source of our
peace.

We marvel that you choose to be gracious to
us.
We are touched and humbled by the mercy
You extend.
We ask You to stir our hearts and teach us
Your ways so that we who belong to You may
know more of You.
Show us Your glory.
Open our eyes to it, stretching in beauty over
the face of the earth,
shining in the face of Christ Jesus and smiling
in the faces of every life lighted by Your Spirit,
so that we and all Your people may give You
glory and worship You in Spirit and in Truth.

Amen (prayer inspired by Exodus 33 vv. 12-
23)

Prayer of Confession

(You can begin this prayer with your hands
held shut)

Giving and forgiving God, You are rich in
mercy and generous to all.

Help us to see clearly the priorities, prejudices and anxieties in our lives.

Help us to face honestly the injustice, greed and exploitation of the society in which we live.

Forgive us when our concerns have been limited and we have behaved as if our lives and resources were ours to use as we wished. Forgive us when we have failed to let Your big-heartedness open our hearts and hands. (Open your hands)

Merciful God, give us the grace and courage to open our hearts and hands.

Shape our lives and use us for we belong to You.

Amen

Assurance of Forgiveness

Receive the riches of God's mercy and grace. Know beyond any doubt that You are loved and forgiven in Jesus

Today's Reading from the Old Testament

Exodus 33 vv. 12-23

Today's Epistle Reading

I Thessalonians 1 vv. 1-10

Today's Gospel Reading

Matthew 22 vv. 15-22

Time to Reflect

There have been times in the past months, in those moments between sleeping and waking, where I have 'come to' and then remembered 'yes, we are still here, in the middle of the pandemic'. Like everyone who thought they had 'a settled life', I find myself continually adjusting to new levels of uncertainty, and expectations which have changed so much. Often all we can know is that another day starts and we are still 'here, in the middle' and we do not know how or when this 'new normal' will end.

This is a strangely interim life, fluid and marked by waiting, stuck in what is

sometimes described as the 'messy middle'. It may have been like too for the early Christians Paul wrote to at Thessalonica. His letter offers testimony to the extraordinary dynamism of early Christianity. Probably written within twenty years of the Crucifixion it presents a recognisable picture of established church life. But these Christians are keenly conscious that they are living 'in the middle' between God's great act of rescue and their eternal hope. In the midst of persecution and bereavement they may well have felt stretched and disorientated. The Gospel passage gives us the feeling of 'coming in in the middle', as if we had walked into a room in the middle of a conversation or turned on a television or radio in the middle of a drama. Whether it was right to pay taxes to the Romans was a long-running debate on which many took entrenched positions. It is a clever and dangerous 'trick question' because a direct answer lays Jesus open to charges of collaboration or revolution.

Matthew shows us Jesus taking and holding the coin, perhaps turning it over in His hand, studying the image of the Emperor, reading the imperial titles with their grandiose claims. In the hands of Jesus, a new perspective emerges and tense political and ethical question is seen in a new light. The principle is the priority of God, the need to render God what is due. The question of 'what is owed' to Caesar is addressed to the questioners. What new perspectives on entrenched issues and problems might Jesus open for us when we turn them over and put them in His hands?

To those Thessalonians picking their way through the 'messy middle', Paul's words were surely hugely encouraging. He shares how he thanks God for them in his prayers. He observes how their genuine faith and change of priorities was apparent to him and all the churches. When we think about how we support each other as Christians, we often focus on giving kindly advice or practical help. Paul shows us that one of the most affirming and valuable things we can do is to point out

signs of God's presence in their lives. Paul is like a field officer, actively searching for and affirming signs that the Spirit is at work in these new churches. Moses told God that he didn't want to go on another step, didn't want to budge, unless assured of continuing God's presence (Exodus 33 vv. 15-16). With joy Paul discovers such signs of God's Presence bringing renewal and change in the lives of his fellow Christians and it brings him to his knees in thankful joy. May God open our eyes and hearts so we like Paul can start our own scavenger hunt for signs of God's presence and offer words of encouragement and affirmation, and prayers of thanks.

Take a time to sit quietly

Think of Jesus giving attention to a tricky situation where you do not know how to speak or act for the best. Pray that as you put this into Jesus's hands you will receive a renewed perspective.

In the 'messy middle' what would it mean to embark on a scavenger hunt for signs of God's Presence? Give thanks for someone in whose life you see God at work. Is there a way you could encourage them by letting them know?

A time of prayer

Patient God

Help us to remember that we can't find the words, You listen to our hearts and Your Spirit pleads for us in sighs too deep to be spoken.

Lover of Justice, we hold before You the peoples of the world. Establish equity and grant wisdom.

Strong God, we hold before You the church through the world and our own churches. Strengthen hearts and renew vision.

Merciful one, we hold before You those we know in need. Reach out with healing and restoration, encircle in comfort and care.

Listening God, refresh our sense of Your Presence and strengthen and guide us day by

day, until with all Your beloved people we see You face to face in Your Kingdom.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to StF 615 Let Love be real

<https://youtu.be/SkBAXZw5NxU> (Matt Beckingham) **or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind**

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 God our Father inspire and strengthen us
in our work of faith

May Christ Jesus our brother motivate and
sustain us in our labour of love

May the Spirit our helper establish and build
in us a steadfast hope.

That our living may be a reason for
thanksgiving and bring Glory to God.

Amen.

Original Materials by [Miriam Stevenson](#)

All

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Exodus 33: 12-23

Moses' Intercession

Moses said to the LORD, 'See, you have said to me, "Bring up this people"; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, "I know you by name, and you have also found favour in my sight." Now if I have found favour in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favour in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.' He said, 'My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.' And he said to him, 'If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favour in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth.'

The LORD said to Moses, 'I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favour in my sight, and I know you by name.' Moses said, 'Show me your glory, I pray.' And he said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, "The LORD"; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But', he said, 'you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.' And the LORD continued, 'See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.'

1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians in God the
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
Grace to you and peace.

The Thessalonians' Faith and Example

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place where your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

Matthew 22:15-22

The Question about Paying Taxes

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' But Jesus, aware of their malice, said,

‘Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.’ And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, ‘Whose head is this, and whose title?’ They answered, ‘The emperor’s.’ Then he said to them, ‘Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.