

www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

Heaton Moor United Church



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



Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 28th June Circuit Service 3.00pm

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

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Wednesday 1st July Moor than a Good Read 10.00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82881695155?pwd=SWkrSTV0bTg2Wm9hN29vbm90dTIjdz09>

Meeting ID: 828 8169 5155 Password: 714757

Wednesday 1st July Coffee and Prayer 11.00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/95327541668?pwd=ekU2QWgzZjVKWTFBFTjZsb0tERVQrdz09>

Meeting ID: 953 2754 1668 Password: 794265

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.

Office Telephone number 07471 065729

Dear Heaton Moor United Church family,

Grace and peace to you all in the name of Jesus our friend and brother. Hope you are all doing well.

Our preparations for the opening of our church doors are on, and we shall keep you informed about it . We are also waiting for the national church guidance about opening the churches for worships in July. Kindly keep praying for us as a church in all our future endeavours.

It is with sadness we note the demise of Margaret Dawson today, who has been a lovely woman of faith, and we will miss her a lot at our church. Kindly uphold the family in your prayers please. The funeral will be held on Friday the 3rd of July 2020 at 4pm.

I was at Bridgehall Primary school in Adswold, Stockport with a local charity called FRESH (Food Ready Every School Holiday) as they were distributing fresh food to the local community. I have recognised that there will be great need for food during summer holidays for the children and the community over there, and as a church I think we should journey with their efforts as our faith commitment to address poverty and hunger. Thanks to Gary Evans who introduced me to this charity where he volunteers. We also had Stockport Interfaith meeting last week and if you are interested here is a link of our dreams and hopes for a post-pandemic world <https://youtu.be/TihrYJiBaOE>

Thanks to Graham and Sheryl for organising Super Sunday on zoom, which has been very interesting and I encourage if you can, to join this service. Thank you all for joining the online services on Sunday and at our coffee morning on Wednesday.

Herewith I am sending you the reflection for this Sunday along with some worship resources for your personal meditations. Cathy, our superintendent minister in her letter has mentioned about an open letter to the British Methodist Church and you can read it here at <http://methodistopenletter.wordpress.com> . There are two district events on this letter and if you are interested kindly join in to discuss about the future of the church. At the same time kindly uphold the Conference of Methodist Church that begins today till next week. The United Reformed Church has also produced some good resources for churches during this lockdown period and you are encouraged to access them here: <https://urc.org.uk/information-guides.html>.

Thank you for taking time to call your friends in another church. This week why don't you take time to call someone in your community to say hello and say a prayer for them. As I hear to the stories from people, I keep hearing stories of frustration, particularly from those that are lonely. I understand how hard it must be for them to cope with this reality in solitude. Can we also please remember them in prayer.

May the Spirit of God be with each of us during this week and grant us strength and peace.

With regards,

Raj

25th June 2020

Circuit Prayer

21st Jun 2020 11:00(30 mins)

Every Sunday morning at 11am — when we would all normally be in worship in church — we are encouraged to pray the following prayer. This way we stay connected in a very really and tangible way.

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 Davenport Methodist Church Dialstone Lane
Methodist Church

Edgeley Community Church Hazel Grove Methodist Church Heaton Mersey
Methodist Church

Heaton Moor United Church St. Johns Methodist Church Tiviot Dale Methodist
Church

Trinity Methodist Church Windlehurst Methodist Church

In this time of isolation and separation may we feel the unity of your spirit in the bonds of peace and love which connect us to one another. We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. We ask that this time of crisis might pass and that those who suffer might find comfort and strength within the knowledge of your grace, revealed through the kindness and compassion of the people of God. Eternal God, though the self-offering of your Son you have filled our lives with your presence. Help us in our sufferings and trials. Fill us with hope and strengthen us in our weakness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Methodist Conference

Methodist Conference is meeting online this year from **25 Jun – 02 Jul** more information online at:-

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-conference/conference-2020/>

You can follow livestream at:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-conference/conference-2020/conference-live-stream/>

On Friday 26th June at 11.30am

The names of each presbyter who has died in the last year will be read out , our dear friend Marjorie will be remembered during this reading of the names. You will be able to remember her alongside conference representatives and give thanks to God for the influence they have had on our own lives and on the lives of many others we cannot know about.

This will be streamed via the above link.



Margaret Dawson's Funeral will take place on
Friday 3rd July at 4.00pm

Can you please light a candle and say a prayer,
during this time to remember Margaret.

God of mercy,
From whom we come,
by whose grace we live,
in whose love we are held at last;
surround us with your presence
that in our grief and loss
we may find assurance and hope
in the One who died for us and rose again,
even your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Welcome: We are a little church, open for little people, with little acts of love

Reflecting on Matthew 10:40-42

With the lockdown easing out, churches now are preparing to open their buildings with much care and are taking all safety precautions doing risk assessments, the question that comes to the fore is who is welcome now to the church building? I have seen some notices outside the doors of the church that read, "This church is now open for private prayer." The immediate thought that followed was "for whom?" is it to the general public? is it to the church members? is it to the Christians in the neighbourhood? When enquired is it open to the general public, I heard that they are now open for their members, only at certain prescribed times and are not publicising it widely. With the infection still not under control and with the limitations of volunteers, I understand that the church buildings will not be open as widely as they were open previous to COVID. Such hesitancy in opening the church buildings as widely as they should have been, raises some theological questions about the being of our churches, and specifically about a theology of welcome today in and through our churches. In the context of post-lockdown, who are welcome to the church? The straight answer might be, "yes, all are welcome*" but in reality "are all really welcome?" In moving forward, my prayer and hope is to say, "Welcome, we are a little church, open for little people with little acts of love."

The gospel reading from Matthew 10:40-42 is part of Jesus' homily to his disciples as he sent them out on an outreach. In the whole of chapter 10, we see Jesus giving instructions, exhortations and some tips on their journey for the outreach. Towards the end, Jesus instructs them about welcome. Jesus explains four types of welcome to them. Firstly, those who welcome the disciples welcomes Jesus who sent them, and eventually welcome God who sent Jesus. Secondly, whoever welcomes a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. Thirdly, whoever welcomes a righteous person will receive such a reward. Fourthly, and more importantly, whoever gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple will not lose their reward. The first three welcomes, welcoming the disciple, welcoming the prophet and welcoming the righteous person are words of instruction to those disciples, but the final welcome offering a cup of cold water to one of these little ones is an invitation for action to the disciples on their journey. I want to call the first three welcomes as privileged welcome and distinguish that with the final one as prophetic welcome. I will now attempt to tabulate some of the characteristics of these two welcomes, for it then puts into perspective the kind of welcome we as churches can offer in this post-lockdown situation.

Categories	Privileged Welcome	Prophetic Welcome
People	A disciple, a prophet and a righteous person	Little ones – people who are vulnerable and on margins,
Provision	*Offering welcome *The Greek word used for welcome is 'dechomai', which is used for 'feast' also. Welcoming is most naturally followed by a feast.	Offering even a cup of cold water
Power	Powerful people	Powerless people
Profit	A reward follows – no guarantee that they will not lose their reward	Truly Jesus said, none of these will lose their reward

The above table provides us the distinction between the two kinds of welcome, which I think are relevant for our contexts today. Most of us as churches are comfortable in offering a privileged welcome, welcoming the powerful and the privileged into our folds and we take pride in doing that.

Welcome and offering hospitality is part and parcel of church's DNA. However, Jesus' invitation to action that whoever offers even a cup of cold water, leave about offering a feast to the most vulnerable and little ones in our society, as a prophetic welcome, is a challenge for us in our mission today. Welcoming the unwelcomed into our midst is prophetic, welcoming the excluded into our midst is prophetic, welcoming the outcasted into our midst is prophetic and welcoming the little ones of our society is prophetic. Jesus is inviting us to embark upon such a welcome, for Jesus himself was welcoming such little ones in his society unconditionally. Jesus by sharing about welcome to his disciples was in a way affirming that #littlivesmatter for him and for his mission on earth. As we now prepare to open the doors of our church buildings, we are called to offer welcome in a prophetic way, by receiving the little ones into our midst and affirm #littlivesmatter.

The relevance of this text for us as church is to be a place of welcome, in fact prophetic welcome announcing with our actions that we as churches are open for little people, for little people's lives matter a lot to us and to our faith.

1. Welcome the little people:

To be prophetic in our welcome, we are called to welcome and receive little people of our society today. As churches we have been engrossed with memberships and have always worked in keeping up the number. When there is a decline in the membership, we have always felt that the relevance of our church is being lost. The words of Jesus of "whoever gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones (42v), challenges and inspires us in our faith journey. The relevance of our churches can be felt when we as churches become spaces of welcome to 'one of these little ones,' the little ones of our society. If opening our church doors is not possible due to health and safety issues, we as a church should go to those little ones and affirm to be a space of welcome. Last week, I was at a local school which has been in a deprived area where fresh food is being distributed to the parents of the children in that community. I had to see that poverty is a reality right in my town in UK, and had to think what is the relevance of my faith in Jesus Christ in such a context. When there are many children that are living in poverty, is Jesus not telling us "whoever gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones" and challenging us as churches to offer welcome and hospitality as part of Christian faith commitment.

2. Welcome with little acts:

One of my childhood favourite quotes was, "to be faithful in little things is a big thing," for I have pencilled it on all my books. I understand how important is to be faithful in little things, for that is a big thing. Jesus spoke to his disciples by saying, 'whoever gives a cup of cold water,' a little thing to these little people that is welcome. In the context of early Palestine, people lived under a scorching sun, and offering a cup of cold water was a big thing to quench the thirst. I recognise here Jesus' emphasis on little acts, which matter a lot. During this lock we have witnessed simple acts of kindness on our streets like helping our neighbours with their shopping, bringing their prescriptions, sharing food etc. It has been great to see so much of kindness among communities. In seeking our relevance as a church, I think it is important to nurture such little acts of kindness, for little acts put together can make a big ocean of kindness. In the context of child poverty again, little acts like collecting fresh food for children during school holidays, talking to one another the reasons for child poverty, writing letters to our MP about issues around poverty etc. all matter for us as a welcoming church.

3. Welcome as a little flock:

Jesus was talking to these words to the 12 disciples, a little flock, who were not a mega church. Church is about little faithful flocks, where we support one another and care for one another. In the culture of quantifying everything in terms of numbers, we undermine the value and importance of little flocks. If we are really serious about being relevant as a church, we are called as little flocks to accept the invitation of Jesus to welcome the little ones in our community by offering a cup of cold water, may be in our context a hot cup of tea/coffee to start our welcome. I really wish there are some church notices outside the doors of our churches when we open that read, "we as a little church are open to the little

people with little acts of love for you here.” Welcome and hospitality is not dependent on the size of our church or with the membership of the church. I am reminded of Archbishop William Templeton’s words that “the Church is the only institution that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not yet its members.” As little flocks if we as churches can be there for our community, particularly for those on the margins offering welcome and hospitality, we as churches find relevance today. Otherwise our church doors might be open but we will be remained closed with irrelevancy.

'Little flocks' represented the minority people in contrast to majority, for Jesus said elsewhere that, 'wherever two or three are gathered there he is present' for God in Christ locates among the littleness. Littleness theologically is further understood that Jesus became a human and took on the form of a slave, the powerless, for the sake of the slaves to pitch his tent among them so that he is willing to struggle along with such communities ensuring liberation and freedom. Littleness of little flocks is further understood by his engagements with the outcastes, women and poor of his times. God in Jesus is born as a little baby in the little town of Bethlehem, God in Jesus has become a child refugee as he fled into Egypt and God in Jesus resided, identified and was crucified in all his vulnerability. Jesus therefore had to categorically say that unless a person becomes a little child, he or she is not eligible to enter the Kingdom of God. When his disciples were arguing among themselves who is the greatest, Jesus picked up a little child as a greatest, for he acknowledged that in the littleness exists God and god like-ness.

May God grant us strength as we begin to open the doors of our churches as little flocks to be sensitive in our welcome to those little people offering little acts of love. During lockdown the notice that caught my attention was “This building is closed, but Church is open.” That spoke about our church as people offering love to the community. Post-lockdown, my prayer is, “Our building is open and our little church is wide open with little acts of love.” May God the Spirit help us in being and becoming a prophetic welcoming community, offering love particularly to those on margins around us.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta
25th June 2020



The Methodist Church

United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

A Message from the Superintendent Minister

June 24th 2020

Dear Friends,

As the lockdown restrictions are eased, many of you will be taking the opportunity to visit or stay with long missed family and friends. I hope these are special, treasured moments. Some of you, quite understandably, will be feeling reluctant to venture out quite yet. Whatever you are feeling at this time, please stay safe and continue to care and look after yourselves and each other. As I write, Boris has just announced that from 4th July churches can re-open for public worship. This does not mean however that on 5th July our churches will be open for a Sunday Service as usual! We need to await the guidance which will come in the next few days from the national church which will tell us what the specific restrictions are around our opening – you will have heard that communal singing will not be allowed (a particularly tough one for Methodists!) but as yet we do not know restrictions on numbers or which particular interpretation of social distancing will be used. All our churches will need to do risk assessments and we already know that many of our stewards and members will not be wanting to rush back to church, choosing instead to focus on their personal health and safety and that of their loved ones. This is to be expected and so I do not anticipate that it will be ‘business as usual’ for some time yet. In fact, will it ever be ‘business as usual’ and indeed is this what we should be hoping for? I have already written about the need for us to think about church differently and try to use this post-Covid time to ensure that we do not just slip back into old habits. Someone wrote this week, why, if churches were failing and struggling before Covid -19 would we WANT to go back to that normal? Not that all our churches were necessarily failing and struggling, but there has for a long time been a certain malaise, a longing for things to be different and revitalised. So why not take this opportunity to explore what that might look like in our own circuit? To ask ourselves what we have learned from the last 12 weeks of being church without being able to use our buildings, and how this learning might shape the church in coming weeks, months and years?

To that end, on Thursday 18th June, we held a mid-week conversation on Zoom, grounded in prayer, with the theme of ‘Re-imagining Church.’ Thanks to all who attended, which was around 60 people from churches across the circuit. We explored the questions:

- What have we learned from the Covid-19 pandemic about being Church?
 - What can we happily do without?
 - What have we realised is really important?
 - What lessons are to be learned?
- What do we see as the mission of our church in the coming months and years? What might God be asking of us at this time?
- What part could our church play in reshaping society – locally, nationally and internationally?

For those of you who attended, and for those who didn't, what follows is a summary of some of the key themes, including some quotes from those who were asked to give opening statements about their vision for a re-imagined church. I hope these ideas will stimulate your own thinking. As Raj, Lindsay and I, along with the wider Circuit Leadership Team continue to think about the future, the richness of people's contributions will really help us. I am keen that we offer clear and visible leadership in these confusing and hopeful weeks. At the same time we know that we are accountable, not only to God of course, but also to you all, and what you think matters. The conversations and ideas seem to me to be grouped into 4 major themes, although inevitably some of them overlap:

- Church as a place of gathering, worship and fellowship
- Church as a part of the community
- Church as a Prophetic People
- Church as Circuit

Church as a place of gathering, worship and fellowship

One of those I had asked to offer some introductory thought was Beverley Wheeler, a local preacher on trial and member at Heaton Mersey. Beverley is one of the founding members of Regenerate, a group for 'youngish' Christians which meets once a month. Beverley said this:

"Regenerate grew out of a need to spend time together where we weren't planning something, washing up, moving chairs, sorting out Easter, Harvest, Christmas or whatever it may be. This time of fellowship provides a time for us to be normal people who happen to follow Christ, we talk about our lives, our work, our families, and pastimes, and we share in these things as friends of each other and friends of Jesus. In my reimagining of church – there is more of this, more fellowship, time to exist in the presence of God and other believers. There is less concern about church talk, there is more inclusive language because ultimately this is about a loving relationship between every one of us and God. There is less conformity, there is more excitement and joy at being in the presence of other Christians and the place where we have called God to join us. In my reimagining of church it would be more relaxed more fluid, we could break some of the rules, spend a bit less time ticking off the boxes and more time experiencing the presence of God. We are there to worship God, our audience is God, how much does God care about the checklist of worship? That's one to think about. Fellowship, inclusive language, relaxed environments and maybe even breaking some rules, that doesn't sound far off what was going on two thousand years when Jesus first called us to be his followers. "

Beverley's emphasis on the importance of church as a community of fellowship and gathering was reflected comments from others:

"I am missing the fellowship with others more than going to the church building for private prayer."

In her introductory comments, Annette Sharpe, a Deacon at Romiley and therefore from September a minister in our Circuit said, " We have for a long time paid lip service to the phrase that 'the Church is the people, not the building', and yet, any suggestion to re-order or diversify the use of the worship space has often been met with indignation and yes, even horror. Perhaps we can more readily recognise that it is not the space or the furnishings that make a place 'Holy' or 'Sacred', but what happens within it." Annette

imagines, “ a Church that has an emphasis on learning, deepening spirituality and small group worship, encouraging more intimate engagement with God, each other and the needs of the world, thus allowing whole Church gatherings to be times of celebration. ”

I have already mentioned that it is the intention to continue with our Sunday afternoon Zoom services into the foreseeable future, even after some worship has resumed in our church buildings, and there was a strong emphasis on the need to continue to develop our skills in this area, perhaps branching out into live streamed services and widening our exposure on social media to connect with a wider range of people. From September we hope that the Circuit will have a specific task group working in the area of Communications and Social Media so hopefully we can really hone our expertise in this area to be able to offer high quality virtual events. But don't worry if this is not your thing! We will remain committed to staying in touch with those who prefer more traditional methods of communication and there was a recognition of the need for old and young to have local and 'live' events – we are after all, people who thrive on relationships with others.

Within all these thoughts there is a sense that while individual, local church buildings are important as meeting places, perhaps they are not the be all and end all. We need to meet face to face, connect, relate, communicate, but there may be a whole range of ways in which we can do these things. As the Superintendent of the Circuit I am conscious of the tremendous burden which managing buildings can place on local trustees. The maintenance of the premises becomes the end in itself, rather than the means to the end, which is the glory of God expressed through loving God and loving our neighbours as ourselves. It is tough for us, but we will need to be facing questions very soon about whether or not we need all our church buildings. Is it just possible that by leaving some of our buildings behind we could generate resources that would allow us to be a much more effective and caring church community – investing, for example, in people who can offer more regular and visible pastoral care to those who are housebound, building relationships and helping people to gather more freely in different ways and in different places? If this might be true then perhaps we need to be paying attention to this as an idea. If, as I have said before, Covid -19 has taught us that we can be church without using our buildings, then perhaps God is asking us to take this seriously as we move into the future.

Church as a part of the community

We were reminded of a quote by the ex-Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, who said, “Mission is finding out what God is doing and joining in.”

In her introductory comments, Liz, who is a Circuit Steward and member of the United Reformed Church at Edgeley Community Church asked us to think about the question, “*Where is God at work in our communities? And by community, I mean not just where we live, but where our church is, if that's a different place, our school community, our workplace community, our once-a-year festival community and so on. We should identify where, in the communities we're involved in, can we offer ourselves and in so doing, seeking out making disciples. In going forward we must start from where we are now and not go back to what we used to be.*”

Raj encouraged us to think about the idea of appointing a journalist in the community to collect stories to help us understand how God is at work in the world, to see what Jesus might be doing, and how can we

contribute, with compassion at the heart of it. We can start by sharing our own stories with each other as disciples, and as church families.

I loved this contribution from someone, *"Rainbows and conversations in the street are church!"*

All this demands of us a shift in our traditional thinking – no longer is church about getting people to come to us so that we can tell them what they are missing and what they should be thinking. Rather church becomes about listening and looking and allowing ourselves to be shaped both by our Christian faith and convictions, but also by our experiences and by what is happening in the world, which is after all, God's world.

Church as a Prophetic People

Related to the place of the Church in the Community is the sense in which we are called to be a Prophetic people. And remember, prophecy is not about predicting the future, it is about reading the present, interpreting and commenting upon the things which are happening in the world, and where we see God's reign of love and peace being undermined or destroyed. Another contribution reminded us that it is the role of the Christian to *"disturb the status quo, to speak for those who suffer in our society, seeking justice for those in need and those suffering discrimination. How impressive it would be to have a Church which gave a big lead in this matter! How much more powerful the words of individual preachers could be if they could be delivered against the background of the people knowing that they reflected what the Church firmly stands for!"*

Raj challenged us to think about whether we could move from the traditional 5 hymn sandwich to 5 course meal, where inclusion is the starter, love, justice and community are the main course and faith and hope the pudding! Well that sounds delicious to me!

When the new united Stockport Circuit is created in September, welcoming friends from the present Romiley Circuit, we are intending to have a focus on our Public Witness as Methodists, forming task groups to focus on work with those who are marginalised (for example refugees, those living with dementia, children and young people, those living in poverty) and helping us to think about what it might mean to be an ecological and sustainable church.

Church as Circuit

Much was said in the Re-imagining Church evening about how the recent situation has brought more people across the circuit together. Methodist Standing Orders talk about how the Circuit is 'the primary unit for mission' and whilst we value our local church communities it is likely that as a Circuit we can be more effective and better resourced, especially in terms of how we approach some of the work mentioned in the previous section. And don't forget, Circuit expertise, resources and finances may also be able to help to support activities in local congregations where that is necessary. It is easy to think of the Circuit - in particular the paying of the quarterly assessment - as a drain on the local church; I hope we can come to a point where we see the Circuit as a crucial part of who we are, and a source of encouragement, support and action. I love the fact then when we will be able to gather again, there will be faces which have become familiar from our Zoom services – we will find we recognise people from other churches even though we have never met them in person!

It was suggested that social action projects across the circuit could bring people together as well as circuit services – and we are already planning to begin a monthly Circuit Service once we are allowed to. The possibilities for Campaigning and offering strategic support to local charities were felt to be exciting, in particular, the way in which an enlarged circuit will give us a stronger identity and thereby enable us to develop strategies to exert influence amongst opinion formers and political leaders within Stockport and beyond - Councillors/MPs/government officers etc.

So, there we have it! We intend to hold a second Re-imagining Church Event in the near future as we try to put some flesh on these bones – so please do think about coming along to that when it happens. I feel hopeful for the future and am grateful to be working with such a committed Circuit of people who are open to listening to what God might be asking of us at this time.

And please remember as always:

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

Forthcoming services are:

Sunday 28th June 3pm and Sunday 5th July 3pm

Thursday 9th July 7pm 'Agape and Songs of Praise'

Another opportunity to share, eat and drink together in an act of spiritual communion. Please have your own bread or Agape Cake (recipe in letter dated April 27th) and a drink to hand. We will be listening to personal testimony again, but this time through people's favourite hymns. If you have a favourite hymn you would like us to include, and you would be willing to speak briefly during the service about why the hymn is important to you— please email me cathy.bird@methodist.org.uk by Monday 6th July 5pm and let me know. We will then select some of the hymns and let you know if yours has been chosen.

You can join all the above services via Zoom with a video link and see and hear everything and everyone else who is participating, or you can join just with audio, *or you can telephone in.*

Login details for *all forthcoming services* are as follows:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkw2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Circuit Prayer

In addition, every **Sunday morning at 11am** – when we would all normally be in worship in church – we are encouraged to pray the following prayer. This way we stay connected in a very really and tangible way.

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 Davenport Methodist Church Dialstone Lane Methodist Church

Edgeley Community Church Hazel Grove Methodist Church Heaton Mersey Methodist Church

Heaton Moor United Church St. Johns Methodist Church Tiviot Dale Methodist Church

Trinity Methodist Church Windlehurst Methodist Church

In this time of isolation and separation may we feel the unity of your spirit in the bonds of peace and love which connect us to one another. We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. We ask that this time of crisis might pass and that those who suffer might find comfort and strength within the knowledge of your grace, revealed through the kindness and compassion of the people of God. Eternal God, though the self-offering of your Son you have filled our lives with your presence. Help us in our sufferings and trials. Fill us with hope and strengthen us in our weakness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Moving into the Future

- [Open Letter to the British Methodist Church](#)

Over 500 Methodists have signed 'An Open Letter to the British Methodist Church' which urges the Methodist Church nationally to take seriously the opportunities for change offered by the Covid-19 crisis, in particular how we can be a church more focussed around God's call to be a people who pursue . . . Cathy was one of the instigators and writers of the letter. Please have a read and if you want to, sign the letter.

You can read it here at <http://methodistopenletter.wordpress.com> or email Rev. Cathy for a copy.

There will be two opportunities on Zoom to discuss the potential impact of the letter within our own Manchester and Stockport District with the Chair of District Revd Andrew Lunn on

Monday 6th July: 19:30-21:00 or Thursday 9th July: 14:30-16:00

Joining details are as follows:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87322030328> Meeting ID: 873 2203 0328

- A Monthly Circuit Service

Before Covid-19 and the lock down hit, the Circuit Leadership Team had begun to talk about the possibility of starting a monthly Circuit Service at Tiviot Dale. Over the last few weeks, this idea has gained strength as we have enjoyed worshipping together as a Circuit on Zoom. Obviously, we cannot yet plan to hold this service, and it may be some time before we can. No decision has been taken about when the service will be – it could be a Sunday evening or a weekday evening for example – or about what sort of service it will be, but we hope it will be something a bit different and we to want to be prepared. ***If you would be interested in being part of a group to help organise a monthly circuit service, and/or if you have musical ability and would like to be part of a circuit worship band, then please let Revd Cathy Bird know so that as soon as we can gather again, we have something in place!***

Sunday 28th June 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

Lord calm my thoughts as I come into your presence to worship you. Open my heart to welcome you in and to receive the blessing of Jesus' love, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymn: Open the eyes of my heart Lord (STF 451)

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=do_wLviNO4M

*Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,
Open the eyes of my heart;
I want to see you, I want to see you.
Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,
Open the eyes of my heart;
I want to see you, I want to see you.*

To see you high and lifted up,
Shining in the light of your glory.
Pour out your power and love;
As we sing holy, holy, holy.

Refrain

To see you.....

Holy, holy, holy,
Holy, holy, holy,
Holy, holy, holy,
I want to see you.

Let us pray together

Creator God, I praise you for the beauty of the world that you have made, for richness of

texture, colour and form in nature, and for the caring communities around me. Forgive me when I fail to be thankful for the good things in my life.

God is full of grace and mercy; I receive his forgiveness and his love. Amen.

Today's Gospel Reading: Matthew 10.40-42

Time to Reflect

Have you ever been sent out to knock on a stranger's door with a message or a request? If so, did you wonder what sort of a welcome you might, or might not, receive? The disciples were about to take the good news of Jesus' love into the wider world. In these verses Jesus reminded the disciples that as his followers, they were representing him and the one who sent him, his Father, God. For those who received and accepted them, it would be as if they were welcoming Jesus himself into their homes.

The concept of welcome and hospitality in the Middle East is of high importance. Visitors are treated as honoured guests and food and drink is generously shared. That generosity can be a humbling experience. On a fact finding visit to Jordan in 2015, I was welcomed into a damp and shabby basement by Nahla, a young Syrian refugee mother of six. There was very little in the way of furniture or equipment and nothing of comfort in this makeshift home. The older children were out in the streets scavenging for whatever scraps they might make use of or sell. Yet Nahla insisted I have some tea with her. Not wanting to take from her meagre

supplies, I refused politely, but Nahla was offended by this. It was deeply embedded in her culture and tradition to offer hospitality to guests. Poor though she was, she wanted to share what little she had with her guest.

Generosity and welcome may come from the most unexpected sources, often from the poorest who understand what it is to have nothing.

I did not find knocking on doors for a house collection for Action for Children easy. It was even more challenging to find that those who lived in larger houses gave far less, or even nothing, than those who lived in more crowded or less affluent conditions.

Jesus gave an example of how people should show unselfish generosity to others through the giving of a cup of cold water to “little ones”, arguably not just children but the adult poor or marginalised too. (see Matthew 18.6).

Not everyone welcomes Jesus’ offer of love and salvation. Some may reject us and our gospel message. For those who choose to welcome Jesus into their lives, there is an amazing reward in heaven, eternal life and peace with Jesus Christ.

Like the disciples, our lives should reflect God’s generous love to others. How will you receive the one who knocks on your door?

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Let us pray for the church, for the world and for ourselves.

Loving God,
We pray for your guidance and wisdom as your church finds new ways of reaching out into the world with the good news of your generous love and forgiveness. Gift leaders with the innovation and inspiration that comes from your Holy Spirit so that your church may be more effective witnesses of your saving grace.

Lord Jesus, as the world continues to suffer the

effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, we pray for compassion and fairness in sharing practical resources and medical expertise so that there might be healing and wholeness for all.

We pray that all those who have influence over the lives of others, might make decisions based on kindness and for the common good. We pray Holy Spirit that you infuse with love the hearts of those who use war as a weapon of power. Hear our prayers for an end to all conflict, and for recognition and support to be given to refugees and displaced people around the world.

Compassionate Christ, we pray for comfort and strength for those who are still isolated, for parents and children, for the elderly and those suffering long term illness. Lord, lift anxiety from those who are worried about the future, their jobs, businesses and their financial situation. May they know that they are not alone, that Jesus is always with them.

Holy Spirit we pray for ourselves, for our plans that have been changed, for the people we have lost and miss still, for our hopes and dreams for the future. Strengthen our faith, deepen our commitment to your ways and help us to better serve God and to see Jesus in everyone we meet.

Thank you Lord that you that your love never fails.

The Lord’s Prayer *Our Father*

Hymn: Listen to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjOLDaSfiHQ> or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

A prayer of blessing

Receive these words into your heart.

Jesus opens his arms to welcome and accept you, whoever you are and whatever your circumstances. Open your heart and your hands to receive him now, and the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you

and those whom you love, now and always.
Amen.

Original Materials by Claire Hargreaves

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Matthew 10.40-42

'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.'