



Heaton Moor United Church

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



Church Services

Due to current COVID restrictions there will be no services at the Church building.

Sunday 29th November – Private Prayer

The Church will be open for private prayer from 11:00 am until 12:00 pm

Sunday Reflection

Carol Jack & JoAnne Roy will be uploading a reflection to the Church Youtube channel

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

Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 29th November Circuit Service 3:00pm service

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

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Passcode: 974333

Wednesday 2nd December More Than a Good Read 10:00am

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

Meeting ID: 813 8467 6720 Passcode: 794265

Wednesday 2nd December Coffee and Prayer 11:00am

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

Meeting ID: 953 2754 1668 Passcode: 714757

Wednesday 2nd December Service of Loving Remembrance 6:00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87995666158?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 879 9566 6158 Passcode: 470579

Wednesday 2nd December Advent Bible Study

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

Meeting ID: 884 1595 3758 Passcode: 593070

Joining by telephone

Step 1)

Dial any of the following numbers. If one doesn't work try another and another until you are able to connect:

0330 088 5830

0131 460 1196

0203 481 5237

0203 481 5240

0208 080 6591

0208 080 6592

Step 2)

Follow the prompts you hear on the phone.

You may be prompted to enter 3 different things:

1 -- Meeting ID followed by hash #

2 -- Password followed by hash #

3 -- Participants ID -- You will not have one of these, don't worry, all you need to do is enter "Hash" #

You should then be entered into the service.

Dear Heaton Moor United Church,

Hope you are all doing well and are staying safe during these unprecedented times.

As the restrictions from a national lockdown will change to Tier 3 level in Greater Manchester, we are now allowed to have our Sunday worship services at our church building, following and complying all the risk assessments. The leadership team has agreed that we can reopen our church buildings for public worship starting from 6th December 2020, and kindly get in touch with our church office for bookings to join the services. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped in opening the church during the lockdown for individual prayers. Thanks to all the preachers who have provided the video reflections each Sunday, and I am sure everyone appreciated them. We really wish to continue those video reflections and will look for the possibilities to do it. Thanks to Carol Jack and JoAnne for providing the video reflections for this week. Thanks also to those who have done prayer walks on Sundays, where I heard people waving and smiling at many people on their walk. Our circuit zoom services will continue to be offered and I also thank all those people who are joining in those services as well.

We have a service of Loving Remembrance on Wednesday the 2nd of December at 6pm on Zoom, and you are welcome to join in this service. The details of the service also are enclosed. Starting the 2nd of December on every Wednesday at 7pm, we will meet for Advent study on Zoom, on the theme "Peace, Panic and Pandemic" and the Zoom details are enclosed, and I appreciate if you can join in those study sessions as well.

The circuit is organising a virtual pilgrimage to Bethlehem on the 10th of December at 7pm on Zoom, and you are welcome to join and support the cause of peace and justice in Palestine. The flyer is enclosed. The circuit is also organising 'carols in the car' event on the

19th of December and the details are enclosed, and you are welcome to join.

Thanks to Sharon who has worked hard in producing a Christmas pack with an Advent calendar and I encourage you all to work on it as each day is worked around an Advent word, and try to make this season meaningful. Thanks to JoAnne for her good work with the 'Jesus the Light' walking trail at the Heaton, which was greatly participated and appreciated. I also place on record the volunteers who are helping with 'Space at the Table' project, providing hot food for 'Dementia friends' group members every Wednesday.

This week I was at Stockport Mayor's Prayer Breakfast meeting online, and it was a good opportunity to pray for Stockport. We also had our first meeting of Church at the Margins task group of the circuit, discussing on how to engage in mission with the margins in our context today.

Let me wish you all a meaningful season of Advent and may God's love and grace go with each of you during these difficult and uncertain times.

Thanking you,

With warm regards,

Raj

27th November 2020


MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITOR

Another week has passed by and we're now hurtling in the fast lane to Christmas. Over the coming weeks we will be posting and sharing lots of information via our website and social media channels so if you are online do give us a like/subscribe/ follow.

www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

 Heaton Moor United Church

 YouTube^{GB} Heaton Moor United Church

 heaton_moor_united_church

Christmas Packs have been sent from the office and hopefully you will have received them today or tomorrow. The pack contains a star which you will need if you are planning to join us for the Love and Remembrance Service on 2nd December. If you haven't received your pack please contact Sharon in the office.

My highlight of the week was on one of my walks around the Light Trail where I met a young boy who had just completed the trail with his Mum and younger sister. He was very proud of the fact that he had helped his little sister and he knew that the answer was, Be The Light. I asked him what he thought Be The Light meant and he turned very serious and said his Mum told him he wasn't allowed to eat candles!!



We had another fun Topsy Turvy Coffee Evening - I'm aiming to wear a hat each month that represents the months topic, can you guess what this months was?

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

JoAnne

community@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

07340 269 354



From 2nd December Greater Manchester will return to Tier 3 restrictions. Please continue to follow the guidelines and stay safe. As we return to tier 3 restriction the Church will re-open for services. Please use the following link to book in for Worship, if you have any problems please contact Sharon

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



We still have some masks to sell to raise funds for our School Pantry Project supporting Mersey Vale School. The masks have been made by Raj's friend Tabitha and are £4 each. If you would like to purchase please contact Sharon in the office.

THANK YOU

Deborah took 13 filled boxes for elderly homeless people to the organisers, Manchester Street Angels depot this week and they were very grateful.

STAMP COLLECTION

Please continue to collect your used stamps for The Leprosy Mission. Stamps can be dropped of at Church.



www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

There have been two new additions to the website a tab each for Charity and Christmas news. These tabs will be updated regularly and will contain all the links and information you need for upcoming events.

Lily has made these photo candles with the church window on to raise money for Ian's Christie fundraiser. They would make lovely Christmas gifts at £4 each with all profits going to the Christie. They can be delivered in Stockport or to church after 2nd Dec. For more information or to order please contact Sharon Shore on 0161 432 5411



Additional Advent Worship

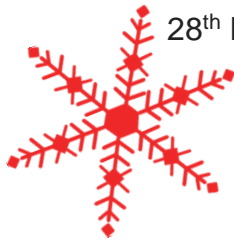
Rev. Dr Marion Tugwood is offering an additional worship on zoom this Sunday at 18:30.

The service will be held over zoom, meeting id 856 0435 8889 and passcode 245724

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85604358889?pwd=bkU4QVgrRicyZE1TbjBWTGU2Y013QT09>

ADVENT PARTNERSHIP EVENTS

with Greater Manchester South & Cheshire URC



Advent Retreat

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

Weariness & Wonder

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

Meeting ID: 862 4634 9125 Passcode: 024468

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86246349125?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

Advent Bible Study

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

Meeting ID: 893 0699 8422 Passcode: 935820

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89306998422?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

Messy Christmas Family & Children's Event

20th December at 15:00

Meeting ID: 870 8539 9030 Passcode: 599369

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87085399030?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

Scratch Carol Service

20th December at 18:30

Meeting ID: 862 4634 9125 Passcode: 024468

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86246349125?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

Christmas Eve Communion

24th December at 11:30

Meeting ID: 824 7647 3548 Passcode: 528678

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82476473548?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

Christmas Day Service

25th December at 9:00

Meeting ID: 871 5576 3393 Passcode: 751659

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87155763393?pwd=eFJHZXhsZnFON2I5bVJWYURVaG>

For venues and zoom links please contact Dave Fraser at

davefraser24@gmail.com



DATED EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

28th November Family Light Trail Closes

The family light trail is up and around Heaton Moor. If you would like a trail map please contact JoAnne.

29th November Additional Advent Worship 18:30

See page 2 for details

2nd December – More than a Good Read 10:00

Zoom details on header sheet

2nd December Loving Remembrance Service 18:00

Zoom details on header sheet – make sure you have your star and candle ready

2nd December - Bible Study Group 19:00

Peace, Panic and Pandemic : Advent Bible Study Group

Zoom details on header sheet

10th December - Virtual Trip to Bethlehem 19:00

Would you like to see what Bethlehem looks like today? To join this virtual tour you can purchase tickets from the website www.heatonmoorunited.church.org.uk

19th December – Carols in the car

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

24th December – Circuit Christingle Service 15:00

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

30thth December – Topsy Turvy Coffee Evening 19:00

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

Contact JoAnne if you'd like to attend





Prayers from Linda



Father God, every word in scripture points to the gift of hope that we have because of Jesus. The Christmas story wasn't the beginning of that message of hope because the old testament is full of glimpses of your plan to redeem your people and restore them into a relationship with you, but we are able to truly begin to see and understand just how great your love for us is when we read the story of Jesus' birth. Help us to see that you are with us. Nothing is too difficult, too messy, or too dirty for you. Jesus came to give us the gift of eternal life through the salvation that only you, our Heavenly Father, can give when we believe on your Son, we repent of our sins, and confess Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. That first Christmas, you gave us the gift of hope wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Thank you, Father, for your immeasurable gift.

In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Prayers for everyone

For the health workers looking after the seriously ill and sick, for the scientists working on a vaccination, for the researchers, for the media for working to communicate everything too us, for the supermarket workers, for the good news stories of recoveries and effective planning, for the singing from balconies in locked-down, for our communities, for the recognition that isolation doesn't need to mean loneliness, for the notes through letterboxes offering help and support., for the internet and telephones and technology that keeps us connected, for the awakened appreciation of what is truly important
Thanks be to God. 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.

Advent as a time for 'Anthropause': Waiting and celebrating God's play

Reflecting on Isaiah 64:1-9 for Pandemic Advent -1

We step into a new liturgical Christian calendar year from this Sunday as we begin the season of Advent, amidst lockdown and restrictions in place due to this pandemic. Perhaps, it will be right to call this season in 2020 as 'Pandemic Advent' and Christmas as 'Pandemic Christmas,' for the word 'pandemic' not only qualifies Advent and Christmas but also defines our times and context today in which we are called to reflect Advent and Christmas. Collins English dictionary has chosen 'lockdown' as the word of the year for 2020. On the other hand, the Oxford English dictionary (OED) has chosen not to name a word of the year, describing 2020 as the 'unprecedented year' and 'year that left us all speechless' and named too many names to sum up the events of 2020. These words include a wide range of words in various settings. The chosen words for 2020 include 'unmute,' 'mail-in,' 'coronavirus,' 'lockdown,' 'pandemic,' 'face-masks,' 'Black Lives Matter,' 'key workers,' 'workation' 'staycation,' 'remote,' 'social distancing,' 'systemic racism,' and 'anthropause.' It was reported that during this year the levels of media coverage for climate change has reduced due to the pandemic. But it was said that it resulted in the using of a new word, 'anthropause,' referring to "the global slowdown of travel and other human activity and the subsequent welcome consequences, such as decrease in light and noise pollution, and an increase in opportunities for wildlife to thrive."

As we begin this season of 'Pandemic Advent,' I recognise the very meaning and a faith relevance of this word 'anthropause' which literally means "human interruption," where 'pause' is a verb. The text from Isaiah 64:1-9, we notice that the prophet called 'third Isaiah' was lamenting to God, confessing the trespasses and the iniquities of his community and seeking the intervention and interruption of God into their times. The community just returned back from the Babylonian exile through the aide of the Persian King, with the challenge of restoring their city, temple, faith and scriptures, in front of them. This post-exilic, post-colonial community as they returned to their own land, out of their desperation, helplessness, division and tiredness were interpreting their times as the period of God's absence. Through this poetic lament, the prophet calls for an 'anthropause,' a human interruption to such notions of periods of God's absence, for there can never be a phase, space and period in time and history which is devoid of God's presence. God is always present in every situation, waiting and wanting to work with people and community in restoring their hope, confidence and faith. The prophet in this text invokes 'anthropause' in at least two ways. Firstly, he upholds 'God's play', recognising God's being and God's activity, where God is at work with some awkward pauses. Secondly, the prophet explains 'anthropause' in seeking a confession about human, an offering made in the presence of God to wait on God, driving away all iniquities and self-righteousness. In other words, 'anthropause' is a time of waiting for humanity, especially during Advent, on the one hand where we celebrate God's play forward, and on the other hand where humanity's righteousness is taken backwards.

1. 'Anthropause' is a time, where God's play is celebrated:

This post-exilic community though came back to their ancestral land, free from the Babylonian captivity, their faith still remained under the rubric of colonisation, where they spelt hopelessness as a situation of God's forsakenness and even as God's absence. The prophet was calling for an 'anthropause' in their play and faith, and uplifting them to wait, recognise and celebrate God's play which has been at work. Human beings wanted to play the game, drawing their rules, and taking everything into their own control, without any fair play on the ground. The prophet begins to explain God's play by calling God as his playmate, inviting God to "tear open the heavens and come down," (1v) for when starts playing the mountains will quake, where the creation serves as a playfield. On God playing in the field, "the nations might tremble" for their unfair rules and play, "for God's name known to their adversaries," for God will play against the forces of injustice, inequality and hopelessness. "For no one has heard, no ear has perceived, and no eye has seen" such a player of the histories, the God, whose play is known through eternities, for God is a just player and a best player. God the just player, "meets those who gladly do right and those who remember God in God's ways." The height of this moment of 'anthropause' arrives, when the prophet affirms in God's play, that God is "our Father" and "our potter" (8v).

God is the father of the play that God plays, and also the father of the play that the humanity plays, which is a wake-up call for the community, for they assumed that they were whole and sole of their play at that point towards restoration. In other words, history is God's play where God the father of the play plays along with the creation as God's playmates. In that recognition, their faith is reinvigorated and

revived. When God plays with God's playmates, the creatures, God is at work, and God helps God's playmates in overcoming their sense of hopelessness and helplessness. God is also called as "our potter" who spends time in the dirt and dust designing diversified pots from the clay. This image of God, the potter, explains that God is at play designing wonderful and unique pots. Both these images of God as "our Father" and "our potter" contests all notions of God as someone away from all the pains and perils of life, and relocates God among people, knowing that God is at play working with them in their common jobs.

2. 'Anthropause' is a time, where humanity seeks confession:

In knowing that humanity along with the creation has been chosen as the playmates of and with God, the prophet in the text invoking an 'anthropause' confesses their pride, privilege and prestige explained in their self-seeking righteousness. The playmates, humanity has thought that God, the father of the play was hiding and therefore they have "sinned and transgressed" (5v). 'Anthropause' is a time to understand that lack of God-consciousness is sin and transgression, which implies being God-conscious is finding salvation in God the father of the play. The prophet calls for 'anthropause' from humanity where they collectively seek confession, where he laments, "we have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth" (6v). This post-exilic community not only de-recognised they were God's playmates, they were also proud of their own righteousness, thinking that their righteous deeds can save and bring solace and hope in their desperate situation. The word used for 'filthy cloth' is used for the cloth used during women's menstrual periods. In a patriarchal society where men considered any discharge of blood during menstrual periods as polluting for, they thought such blood would have made these Israelites ceremonially unclean. Without undermining or demeaning the normal physical cycles of women, this type of uncleanliness for the ritual seeking Israelites was the worst sort. To mention their acts of righteousness with such cloths is only to explain the depth of their uncleanliness, explaining that they are at a cul-de-sac in their journey of faith, and are now turning towards the righteousness of God.

In that moment of 'anthropause,' the prophet continues his collective confession by saying, "we all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (6v). The self-righteousness will not save them, for they will be carried away by wind and will fade like a leaf, but in the righteousness of God the community now realises that they can flourish and stand up against all odds of life. In that moment of 'anthropause,' a time of confession, the prophet ends with a prayer, where pleads, "do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity for ever. Now consider, we are all your people" (9v). 'Anthropause' is a time where in that interruption from the norm and status quo, the community on their return to their land have recognised that they as humanity are 'God's people,' 'God's playmates' and 'God's co-workers.'

The relevance of this text for this Pandemic Advent 1 is at least three-fold. In the context of pandemic, lockdown and restrictions, with the news about the vaccine is now on the horizon, the first learning from this text is to recognise that Advent is a time for an 'anthropause,' where we are called to slow down from the busyness of our life, interrupt from the norms of our society, and uphold to that fact that God has always been at play, for God invites us as God's playmates to join with God in collectively overcoming this phase of life filled with hopelessness and helplessness. Self-righteousness is very unchristian and pulls us down, for we are called to recognise they are 'filthy cloths' in the presence of God, for they cannot save us. It is purely waiting on and willing to be led by God's grace that this 'anthropause' is directed towards. Secondly, Advent is a time to celebrate God's play, for God in Christ is at play in this field of creation. In his book *The God who plays: A Playful approach to Theology and Spirituality*, Brian Edgar writes, "the central idea around which everything that follows revolves is the notion that play is the essential and ultimate form of relationship with God. A playful attitude, I suggest, lies at the very heart of all spirituality and is critical for the whole of life." Christ is God at play, and it is important to recognise this element of play as part of our theology and spirituality, and kindly don't discount play as childish and unspiritual. God's play interrupts the flow of games this world engages with, for in God's play fairness, justice, peace, equality and love are the only rules and guidelines. Anyone who subscribes to such a play are welcome to join with Jesus in playing the play of Kingdom of God. Advent is a preparation towards that play, giving us time for warm up, know the rules and get into the field to play along with Jesus. Thirdly, Advent reaffirms the worth of 'anthropause' to this our creation, where we are called to interrupt from polluting this creation and ecology that God has created with our selfish acts of greed and accumulation. It was reported that as bustling metropolises have calmed down due to the 'anthropause' in the first lockdowns during this pandemic, it improved the air and water

quality, as well as reduced wildlife disturbance. These ecological benefits should not be limited for a short-term, rather we need to consciously allow 'anthropause' to happen in our lives, and contribute towards greening our planet, and striving towards sustainability, addressing climate emergencies. Our commitment to our earth is directly proportionate to our faith in Jesus Christ, where the deeper our faith in Jesus Christ, the stronger our commitment for a green planet.

In conclusion, Advent calls for a time of 'anthropause,' waiting and celebrating God's play at work towards peace and justice, transforming our planet to be a better and greener place to live. "The shortest definition of religion: Interruption" wrote Johanne Baptist Metz, a Catholic theologian from Germany who was articulating his theology after 'Auschwitz', where he was challenging that Christian faith cannot be slipped into uncritical weaving into the culture of the powerful and dominant society. By its very nature, for Metz, Christian faith disrupts the histories of conqueror and vanquished and interrupts the ideologies of the powerful and the powerlessness of the victims. To that end, may this season of Pandemic Advent help us to pause and wait on God so that we can be God's instruments in interrupting the norms and status quo of this world, and join with God as playmates in transforming this our planet into green planet. 'Anthropause' is not only one of the words to define this year 2020, but also serves as word that finds its meaning and significance in the Christian faith lexicon, especially during this season of Advent. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta
27th November 2020



The Methodist Church

United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

A Message from the Superintendent Minister

November 24th 2020



ADVENT GREETINGS!

Dear Friends,

Greetings to all of you at the start of the season of Advent, which begins on Sunday 29th November. Advent, of course, marks the run up to Christmas. It is a time often associated with waiting and longing, and with mixed feelings, but perhaps never more so than this year. As I write we are hopeful that some of the Covid-19 restrictions will be relaxed, allowing us to once again worship in church and to have some opportunity to spend time in the physical presence of our loved ones. It is a time when we are supposed to feel excited and happy and full of anticipation, Christmas preparations, parties, special food, family gatherings, New Year resolutions and so on. But of course it is often also a time of deep sadness – poverty, loneliness, unemployment and bereavement become all the harder to bear in the face of the great seasonal marketing machine, and all the more so this year, when all the emotions associated with these realities are exacerbated and heightened, and we are aware that even the simplest moments of familiarity and joy will not be quite the same as usual.

As we enter Advent we contemplate the hope of Christ coming into the world. There are various traditions associated with the season, and you may well have your own, but for me, this time of year is marked by the presence in church of the Advent Wreath. Hopefully our churches will be able to be open over the season and I am sure that each church will be adorned in the usual traditional way, but if you are unable to get to church why not think of making an Advent ring in your own home? All you need are four red or purple candles, a white one, and some evergreen collected locally. No need for a special candle holder, just arrange the four candles in a square, on a table or sideboard surface, place a white candle in the middle and lay some greenery around. Even one candle will do if you can't get hold of 5 – just light it little by little, allowing it to burn down everyday, or every Sunday, and use it to reflect upon the coming of Christ into the world and what that means to you, as the day draws nearer and nearer. However much the Advent wreath is part of our long-standing Christian tradition, the actual origins are uncertain. There is evidence of pre-Christian peoples in Europe using wreaths with lit candles during the cold and dark December days as a sign of hope in the future, looking towards the warm and extended-sunlight days of Spring. By the Middle Ages, the Christians had adapted this tradition and were using wreaths as part of their spiritual preparation for

Christmas, the light of the candle representing Christ who came to radiate the truth and love of God. The symbolism of the Advent wreath is beautiful. The wreath includes various evergreens, signifying continuous life. The four purple candles represent the four weeks of Advent, purple in particular symbolizing the prayer, penance, and good works undertaken at this time. The progressive lighting of the candles week by week symbolizes the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord's coming into the world. The single white Christ Candle is lit only on Christmas Day and the Sunday following Christmas to celebrate his birth.

In Advent, as we look towards the coming of the Christ child, we recognise that sometimes we have to wait for the things which make for peace and justice. The coming of Christ into the world however reminds us that WE are the peace and justice makers and that God never acts without making us a part of the action. Making our own advent wreath at home can be a powerful reminder and symbol of this. As we light the candles, week by week, we can commit ourselves to God's service and to living the life of Christ who came, not to be served, but to serve.

All of the ministers will be offering times during Advent for regular, seasonal reflection. Details can be found on the circuit website www.stockportcircuit.org.uk or call your minister. Most of these sessions will be on Zoom so if the timing of your own church Advent course doesn't work for you, do think about dropping into another one. You will be most welcome!! And please also check out the website, read the notices below carefully, or look at your local church newsletter for details of the other interesting activities which are planned in the Circuit in the run up to Christmas.

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

In this time of isolation and separation may we feel the unity of God's spirit in the bonds of peace and love which connect us to one another.

- **When we feel lonely let us know that in Christ we are never alone.**
- **When we feel isolated may we be reminded that within the worldwide Body of Christ we are always connected.**
- **When we need a hug help us to feel the warmth of God's embrace**
- **When we are compelled to keep our distance, may we be drawn close to each other within the Spirit of Companionship that flows from God and which moves through and between each one of us.**

With love and blessings,

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 29th November (Advent Sunday) and Sunday 6th December

Login details as usual as follows:

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

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Circuit Prayer

While we are once again unable to worship in our churches, let's continue to say this prayer together when we can, at 11am on a Sunday morning. This way we stay connected in a very really and tangible way. You can also read more about each church on the Circuit Website www.stockportcircuit.org.uk

God of Love and Life, we pray to you this morning for the life the United Stockport Methodist Circuit, for our sisters and brothers who belong to:

(pausing briefly to reflect after each name)

Christ Church Methodist /URC , Dialstone Lane Methodist Church , Davenport Methodist Church , Edgeley Community Church , Hazel Grove Methodist Church, Heaton Mersey Methodist , Heaton Moor United Church, Jubilee Methodist Church, (Marple Bridge), Marple Methodist Church, The Ridge Methodist Church, (Marple), Romiley Methodist Church, St. Johns Methodist Church, (Cheadle Heath), Tiviot Dale Methodist Church (centre of Stockport), Trinity Methodist Church, (Bramhall Lane) , Windlehurst Methodist Church (High Lane) , Woodley Methodist Church

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

Circuit Christingle Service 24th December 3pm

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

Food for Schools and Traidcraft Shopping

For details of how to support Davenport Methodist Church in their collection of food for Adswold Primary School, or to buy Traidcraft products for Christmas, please look at the Circuit Website www.stockportcircuit.org.uk or call your minister for details.

Virtual Trip to Bethlehem 10th December 7pm

Rev. Raj Patta has organised a 'virtual tour of Bethlehem' to help us see and understand this sacred place as it is today. Tickets can be brought by skiddle : <http://skiddle.com/e/14013861>



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

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

Carols in the Car @ Hazel Grove Park and Ride

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

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

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

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

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



Sunday 29th November 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

Loving, faithful God,
As your people of old waited and watched for
your coming in Jesus,
So we wait and watch for your coming today.
As we come before you now, waiting and
watching,
Fill us with your light and love.
*(If you have an Advent wreath at home, you
may wish to light one candle)*

Hymn: STF 177

Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen
to it here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBw0JMdh57k>

Lo, he comes with clouds descending,
once for favoured sinners slain;
thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia!
God appears on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold him
robed in glorious majesty;
we who set at nought and sold him,
pierced and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing,
shall the true Messiah see.

Those dear tokens of his passion
still his dazzling body bears;
cause of endless exultation
to his ransomed worshippers:
with what rapture
gaze we on those glorious scars.

Sing, amen, let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory,
claim the kingdom for thine own:
come, Lord Jesus!
Everlasting God, come down!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Let us pray together

Loving, faithful God,
We praise you for your faithfulness to your
people down the ages.
They hoped and were not disappointed;
In Jesus they saw you come as one of us,
sharing our life so we might share yours.
We have known your coming in our lives,
Whether in blazes of glory,
or quiet moments of knowing we are loved;
and in the power of your Spirit.
We know you will come again in glory,
In light and power that we cannot imagine,
That one day all heaven and earth will praise
you.

We come to you too, sorry for the times
When we have been too impatient to wait,
When we have lost heart.
God who comes to us in love,
We know that you forgive all who turn to you.
Forgive us, renew our hope, turn our eyes
back to you,
So that we may see your coming in our world
And share your joy with others. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament

Isaiah 64: 1-9

Today's Gospel Reading: Mark 13: 24-37

Time to Reflect

“Oh, that you would rend the heavens and
come down!” So says Isaiah in our Old
Testament reading. I wonder how many of us,
with what 2020 has thrown at us, would want
to say something similar to God, perhaps
putting it as “Come on God, get this sorted!”

Coronavirus has gone on quite long enough now, many of us are weary, down, fed up.

Isaiah and his people longed to see the coming of God, but were also scared. They feared that the trauma of exile had happened through their own fault- what would God do to them? They go backwards and forwards between hope and fear. In our Gospel reading, we again get a mixed message. "The Son of Man" will return in glory, His followers will share in that glory...but not before some very difficult times. Mark's readers are also warned to be ready, not to be "caught out" by the coming of the "Son of Man".

I wonder if today, we also feel a mixture of hope and fear. We want an end to the virus, and the pain, deprivation, sadness and loss it's brought. We long for a better world, a safer and more peaceful world, for Creation to be healed and restored. Yet we know that living in the way that will build such a world- in God's way- could be costly. It might mean, for instance, living more simply, or reaching out in love to those whom we don't like, or don't like us. We may also struggle to see where God is at work in our world, or in difficult things that are happening to us personally.

Both Isaiah and Mark, in their different ways, say "Wait- and see." "Wait and see signs of God's coming, at the end but also every day. Be ready for signs of the Kingdom, for God's promptings to work for that Kingdom. Know that you are loved, and show that love to others". This Advent, may we, through whatever we are facing, wait in hope and love. Amen.

Take a time to sit quietly

**GOD
IS WITH
US**

During this season the Methodist Church is proclaiming "God is with us". God is with us is more than a statement. It's a reminder that God is always with us. We are encouraged to share our story (and other people's stories) of walking with

God in this extraordinary year. How might you share how God has been with you this week?

Find out more here
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/christmas/>

A time of prayer

Loving God, who comes in Jesus,
We bring to you all who wait for you,
in hope and faith, or in fear and despair.

We pray for all who wait for peace, for justice, for their voices to be heard.

We pray for all who live in fear, of war, violence, abuse or bullying.

We pray that our Churches may wait on your guidance, so we may serve you faithfully.

We pray for all who wait for test results, news about their jobs, news of loved ones, or for the coming of a child.

We pray for all who are ill, all who are close to death, and all who watch and wait with them.

May we watch and wait with them, be people of peace and justice, and bring hope, comfort and healing, light in the darkness.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to STF 173 Into the darkness of this world

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsjHf-IX8qo>

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

Into the darkness of this world,
into the shadows of the night;
into this loveless place you came,
lightened our burdens, eased our pain,
and made these hearts your home.
Into the darkness once again --
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

*Come with your love
to make us whole,
come with your light to lead us on,
driving the darkness far from our souls:
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Into the longing of our souls,
into these heavy hearts of stone,
shine on us now your piercing light,
order our lives and souls aright,
by grace and love unknown,
until in you our hearts unite –
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

*Come with your love
to make us whole,
come with your light to lead us on,
driving the darkness far from our
souls:
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

O Holy Child, Emmanuel,
hope of the ages, God with us,
visit again this broken place,
till all the earth declares your praise
and your great mercies own.
Now let your love be born in us,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.

*Come in your glory,
take your place,
Jesus, the Name above all names,
we long to see you face to face,
O come, Lord Jesus, come.*

Maggi Dawn (b. 1959)

A prayer of blessing

God of hope, the Dawn from on high, break
upon us, and fill us with light and hope. Send
us out to be light and hope wherever we are.
Amen.

Original Materials by Judith Lincoln
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Local Churches please insert number here

Isaiah 64: 1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come
down,
so that the mountains would quake at your
presence—
as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries so
that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome deeds that we did not
expect,

you came down, the mountains quaked at your
presence.
From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our
iniquity.
Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter,
we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord,
and do not remember iniquity for ever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

Mark 13: 24-37

‘But in those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in
clouds” with great power and glory. Then he will
send out the angels, and gather his elect from the
four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends
of heaven.

‘From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its
branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves,
you know that summer is near. So also, when you
see these things taking place, you know that he is
near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this
generation will not pass away until all these things
have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass
away, but my words will not pass away.

‘But about that day or hour no one knows, neither
the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the
Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know
when the time will come. It is like a man going on a
journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves
in charge, each with his work, and commands the
doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep

awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.’