

**Pastoral Letter, August 12<sup>th</sup>**

*As I write*, it is a blistering hot evening and I have just spent the last hour and a half typing one-handed as I hold my telephone receiver in the other. I am waiting to report some anti-social behaviour currently occurring in one of my Churches to the police. I have completed one piece of work – a Midweek Service for later in the week, and since I am still being played the recorded message, I will continue with this. Such is the life of a Minister!!

I find myself idly wondering what would Jesus have done? The kids I am to report are playing football and it is late. Well it was late 90 minutes ago, it's almost 11.00 pm now and I'm about to give up. The kids shouldn't be out – we're in a partial lockdown. They shouldn't be in the Church grounds at all, never mind at this time of night. They're often there in the afternoon and making annoying noises then, too.

At this time of night, Jesus might well have found himself willing to go and tell them they shouldn't be annoying folk. In the afternoon, I have a sneaking sort of an idea he might have joined them for a bit. Obviously not causing any damage!

I think I will have to hope that they have gone home for the night now, and have a look tomorrow. And before you ask, yes, we do have the gate shut, the fences fixed, a bolt on the gate and Private Property signs up! Or perhaps I should look heavenward for rain.

But there is a serious point in here. When this has happened before with other youngsters, as long as they weren't getting up to real trouble, I have always thought that if the Church can't welcome them inasmuch as is possible, they will remember that for the rest of their lives. Give them a bit of leeway and a smile and a listening ear, and they will remember that long after we think they've forgotten and we certainly have. When they're feeling lost, sad or alone or that the world is against them, they might just turn to that Jesus bloke we were telling them about that summer when they were out playing football.

We get used to our little ways in Church. We keep it nice, clean and tidy. And that is right and proper, But what did Jesus spend his time doing? We don't hear a great deal of him in the synagogue or Temple – we do hear of him there, but mostly we hear of him being outside in the street, with people, with families, with crowds, individuals young and older. I can imagine him playing marbles, skipping, boules or frisbee. But mostly I can see him talking to people, discussing things with them, and listening to what they had to say – what was on their mind.

Perhaps this pandemic has a lesson for us. Maybe we should be less set in our ways, and more prepared to be open to people, less structured and formulaic in our worship and more willing to talk about our faith and what is so good about it to people

who might want to know. (At least, when we're allowed to do such things again!). When we are able to re-open, *and* welcome in others freely, what about trying something different?

- Maybe your Church has a garden, large car park or field and you could welcome people in with a breakfast, coffee and cake or a simple afternoon tea? Instead of a 5 hymn sandwich let people talk to us about the things that bother them and we can talk about how God helps us when things are tough and would love to help them too.
- Maybe your Church has a large room or hall, and you could invite people in for games (and a coffee etc. – I do love coffee!) and talk with them and listen to them as you play.
- Maybe you could set up a community garden in front of your church for people to join in with. Maybe you could give away some plants – you might receive some, too!

I'm sure you can come up with loads of different ideas. But think about doing these, sometimes, *instead of* the Sunday Morning service, which are obviously important, and 'power' us for the rest of the week, but a crucial part of our faith-life is about people. In the song *Have you heard God's voice*, each chorus ends with the line *Will you trust in One who entrusts to you the disciples of tomorrow*; and in the song *Father, I place into your hands* there are the lines *Father, I want to love the ones that You will draw to You*. We sing these songs quite happily – they have such pretty tunes. But the prettiness of the tunes belies the challenge of the words. We sing them happily enough, but how are we going to carry out what we have sung?

We have been told several times that so much of our current problems are caused, in part at least, by our actions, including this pandemic. For several years now I have been clicking on various websites, and here is a list of them. Give them a try! The Anthropologist, Margaret Mead once said; "Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For indeed, that's all who ever have." To give you an idea, Ecosia has recently celebrated planting 100,000,000 trees in a variety of places where they are needed, You can look them up on Youtube.

**Everyclick** or **Give as you Live** (they are linked): each search raises a bit of money and purchases made through the website by companies who donate (they have a little icon and a line saying how much they donate) and they raise variable amounts of money. Some give 4%, some 0.25%. Over the years I have raised over £543. The default charity is Christian Aid, but any registered charity can be supported, and I support a Methodist Charity, All We Can.

I use this website for purchases and to get to the next, which is:

**Ecosia**. This one plants trees, and so far has planted well over 103 million!!

The Websites I click on are:

- **Plant trees Land Care Niagara** (go down to the bottom of the home page)

- **Naturavet.se** (click on the brown 'wooden' button – I click until the number increases by .10 or more.
- **Click for the earth, brother earth** (offers a choice of projects to choose from
- **Ecology fund.com** (3 buttons to click – if you register, they donate 500 sq ft of rainforest)
- **Cannecy click to plant oaks**
- **Free the ocean** – answer 1 questions (doesn't matter if you answer correctly or not) and that removes 1 piece of plastic from the ocean. You can register to see your total, and there is an overall totaliser.
- **Click to donate** offers over 70 charities, some are already in the list. I click on the Polish Hunger Site, Donate Bread, Clean your Country, Forest Watch and the Help Palestines, refugees, children, women and for poverty.
- **Click to donate – clicks 4 charities** (go down the centre of the page and you'll find **Shop for your Cause bonus click Click to Donate**– I click on 17 of them.  
and
- **Greatergood.com** – 10 projects to click on

It sounds a lot, but it doesn't take long.

There is one more, which is **Beta freerice**, which donates grains of rice to the World Food Bank for every question correctly answered. This is a new site (was formerly Give Rice for Free) and can be a little erratic.

See how many little actions you can take that add up into big changes! And ... Enjoy!!!

Next week Cathy and Raj are back and I am off, so, enjoy the rest of August!

God Bless You!

Lindsay

PS For those of you who are interested, I never did get through to the police – I gave up at 11.30 pm, I guess that the kids would have been long gone by then anyway!

## **NOTICES**

### **Worship**

***Forthcoming weekly circuit services on Zoom are: Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August and 23<sup>rd</sup> August 3pm***

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=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkv2R4dmV1QT09>

**1QT09 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. This week I have added some specific information and prayer points for each of the churches. You can also read more about each church on the Circuit Website [www.stockportcircuit.org.uk](http://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 e[ach name)*

**Christ Church Methodist /URC** *[A URC/Methodist LEP in a URC building. Please pray for the small congregation who are divided into a mature congregation who have worshipped and supported the church very faithfully for many years and younger folk and children who form Sunday Fun and meet downstairs. Many members of the church belong to the Green Group, a drama group whose performances go a long way to support the church]*

**Dialstone Lane Methodist Church** *[Please pray for the church's ongoing commitment to promoting a Good Society through its connections with local politicians. Also pray for the church coming out of lockdown, having lost several long-standing members and friends over the last few months, and for the church's pastoral worker Gill who has been so busy keeping everyone in touch with each other.]*

**Davenport Methodist Church** *[A smaller church with a medium congregation including 1 family. Please pray for them as they have a lot of ideas to reach out into the community, including local schools and as they seek to embrace different styles of worship. This congregation also has strong links with the Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rainbows.]*

**Edgeley Community Church** *[A URC/Methodist LEP in a Methodist building. Please pray for their Church Development Worker who co-ordinates many activities including Messy Church, Baby and Toddler Group and Make it, Bake it, and goes out into Care Homes and Schools. The congregation is of mixed age, including 1 family with small children. This congregation has links with the Brownies.]*

**Hazel Grove Methodist Church** *[please pray for the uniformed organisations closely associated with the church, for their leaders who are trying to keep things going with the young people online during lockdown. Give thanks for a committed team of people who have worked hard to keep in touch with people during lockdown.]*

**Heaton Mersey Methodist Church** *[please pray for the family church at ten, for Sunday club, for Who let the Dad's out group, for the schools work, for their commitments to cafe worship n different styles of worship, for Lite church, for the mission engagements of the church.]*

**Heaton Moor United Church** *[please pray for the Dementia drop in, for the Super Sunday and cafe worships, for messy church group, for the community outreach, their engagements for social justice, for women's fellowship and men's fellowship .]*

**St. Johns Methodist Church, Cheadle Heath** [*please pray for the future of the church and for the directions we'll take as there are issues with the building here. For all the members of the congregation and for their ongoing fellowship.*]

**Tiviot Dale Methodist Church, centre of Stockport** [*Please pray for the newly formed Tiviot Dale management group who are helping the circuit to think through how we might develop new mission and ministry in the centre of Stockport, and for Revd Caroline Ryder who has been working with the church over the last few months and is now moving on to a new appointment in Bradford*].

**Trinity Methodist Church, Bramhall Lane** [*This is a large church building with a large car park and gardens, a Guide building in the grounds and a successful cricket club, the grounds of which are owned by the church. Please pray for the Sunday Club, even though very few children come now. The congregation is generally quite traditional in its worship style but does have links with the Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers and they have different styles of worship on Parade Sundays.*]

**Windlehurst Methodist Church, High Lane** [*Please pray for all the members of Active, the church's flagship project working to promote health and well-being and friendship, who are longing to return to their weekly meeting*]

**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 selfoffering 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**

#### **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!***