



The Methodist Church

United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

A Message from the Superintendent Minister

September 17th 2020

Dear Friends,

As I write we are entering the traditional season of our Harvest Festivals. A time when we particularly give thanks to God for all God's gifts. Traditionally we give thanks for the gifts of the harvests of the farm and the field, but in the city and the suburbs it can sometimes seem as if we are very far removed from these processes – even if we are thankful for the food as it reaches our tables. And in this time of global pandemic we are aware of the impact which the virus has had on the food and farming sector with disruption across the supply chain, concerns over farm labour shortages, enormous price volatility, delays in payments, farmers' health and the wellbeing of the farming workforce. So Harvest this year takes on a slightly different feel and we are reminded, perhaps more acutely than ever, that Harvests are not always as fruitful as we would like and an important part of this season is the recognition that God works in our lives through the things which falter and fail, as well as through the things which are successful.

Harvest is also an opportunity to reflect upon other sorts of God-given gifts which might be more immediate and tangible for us. Things such as our health and accommodation, our families and our relative security; recognising that among us there are some who do not have these things. What about education and transport and employment? Artistry, sport and recreation? These too are things which we work hard to access and to achieve and which sometimes bear fruit yet sometimes are a source of great frustration and sadness for us. We are mindful of the many places in the world which are suffering most acutely the impact of climate change and the associated unstable weather patterns causing fires and floods and untold loss of life and property. We join our prayers with those of our sisters and brothers around the world as we seek answers, may not feel as if we are receiving them, but trust in God nonetheless to bring us through and to use our hands to be a source of blessing to those whose lives have been struck by things too terrible for us to imagine.

In the new United Stockport Circuit we are beginning a process of discernment which we hope will lead to a greater and fuller understanding of the things which God is calling us to grow here in this part of Greater Manchester. What gifts are going unused, where do we need to be placing our energy, what sort of ministries do we need and how can we sustain them, who could we be working with in order to realise our vision? I cannot believe that I have already been here for a year – it seems like just yesterday that I was making the big move from London to the mysterious North! It has proved to be a wonderful move for me (and it's not so mysterious after all!) and I intend to use the time that we have together over the next few years to work with you to begin planting some seeds and continuing to tend to some others which have already been sown, so that we can be clear about the direction we are heading in, clear about our mission and clear about the things which need to happen in order to realise an ongoing harvest of love, justice, compassion, grace and hospitality. For these are the fruits of the Spirit which people in the world today are longing to taste.

In pursuit of this commitment to being an outward looking Circuit, it has been agreed to establish three Task Groups to support and enable our public engagement with issues of justice and peace. The Task Groups will have the following remits, (i) Communications, Social Media, and

Campaigns, (ii) becoming an ecologically and environmentally sustainable Circuit and (iii) being a church of the margins (e.g. work with the elderly/those living with dementia, those experiencing exclusion (e.g. homeless, refugees, LGBT+, BAME community) and work with children, younger people, and those of working age)

It is not intended to over prescribe what the task groups will do but rather to encourage a range of things including fun events, fund raising, worship, training, education, information sharing and campaigning. In order to make the task groups a success we need people to join them! If you are interested in being a part of one of the task groups, please come along to find out more on **Tuesday 29th September 7pm on Zoom**. We are especially interested to hear from people who have not been involved before in leadership in the church. You can join using the Zoom meeting ID: 889 4926 5421 and Passcode: 264866. Or just speak to me about it.

We may have to face some difficult choices as we move forward, and there may be some things which are beyond our control, but I have such deep faith that if we can work and pull together, less concerned about our own individual places in God's Kingdom and more focussed on revealing that Kingdom of grace to those who are searching for it, then we will see growth in the widest sense of the word and our Harvest will be plentiful!.

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

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.

As local lockdown restrictions have been lifted, perhaps people who have access to the internet could think of inviting those with no such access to their homes, to watch the service together, but socially distanced.

Sunday 20th and 27th September 3pm

Login details as usual as follows:

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

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Circuit Prayer

Even though some churches will be re-opening for worship, let's continue to say this prayer together when we can. This way we stay connected in a very really and tangible way. You can also read more about each church on the Circuit Website www.stockportcircuit.org.uk

God of Love and Life,

We pray to you this morning for the life the United Stockport Methodist Circuit, for our sisters and brothers who belong to:

(pausing briefly to reflect after each name)

Christ Church Methodist /URC

Dialstone Lane Methodist Church

Davenport Methodist Church

Edgeley Community Church

Hazel Grove Methodist Church

Heaton Mersey Methodist Church

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

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, through the self-offering of your Son you have filled our lives with your presence. Help us in our sufferings and trials. Fill us with hope and strengthen us in our weakness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
