



The Methodist Church

United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

A Message from the Superintendent Minister

October 1st 2020

Dear Friends,

In my last letter I wrote about the commitment we have made in the new United Stockport Circuit to being an outward looking Circuit, and about our desire to engage openly as Christians with issues of justice and peace. The task groups we are establishing to oversee this agenda are beginning their work (although it's not too late to get involved in these) in the areas of communications, social media, and campaigns, becoming an ecologically and environmentally sustainable circuit and being a church of the margins. The work of these groups will be about how we generate actions and mission opportunities within our circuit, but also about how, as a church in this place and time, we speak into things which are happening in the wider world.

I want in this letter to draw attention to a few things within our Circuit which we are already supporting - these are not 'church' based things as such, but our involvement with them, and support of them remind us that as Christians we do not have a monopoly on goodness and that often it is in the wider world that we see God's love and justice being most fully revealed.

October is traditionally recognised as Black History Month, and One World Week also takes place this year from the 18th-25th October. One World Week has the aim of sharing understanding about some of the global issues that affect us all and to recognise that we can all make a difference - this year the theme for One World Week is 'It's Our **World** – Let's make it better'. Black History Month recognises the often ignored contributions which black people have made throughout history within the worlds of science and politics, education and the arts, sport and community building; it reminds us to celebrate stories which have perhaps hitherto gone untold and been absent from our overview of the events which have shaped society. ***Our Sunday afternoon 3pm Zoom service this week (Sunday 4th October) will be a special celebration of Black History Month and we will be joined by friends from other parts of the country in what I hope will be a really wonderful gathering. We will be privileged to welcome as our preacher Revd. Dr. Inderjit Bhogal, a former President of the Methodist Church.***

Locally, many churches are supporting Foodbanks and the Stockport town centre based project Wellspring, which is a resource centre for those who are homeless and disadvantaged in some way. Many of our Harvest food collections are, I know, being sent to Wellspring. This year, due to Covid-19 Wellspring are asking only for specific food items – you can find the list here if you have not already donated or held your Harvest Festival. <https://thewellspring.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/harvest-wish-list.pdf>

As a Circuit we are also beginning to support the organisation 'Fresh'. **FRESH** is a relatively new community group of volunteers who formed in early 2020 to help alleviate hunger during school holidays experienced by many of the children at local primary schools in Stockport. Watch this space as some of our churches seek to connect with local schools, working in partnership with Fresh to ensure that food parcels are available for families during school holidays. If you are in touch with a local primary school and would like to connect your church, through Fresh, with them then please speak to one of the ministers.

In the midst of all this, the circuit leadership team are continuing to consider how we can best develop a town centre ministry in the centre of Stockport, working from the Tiviot Dale Church. Incidentally, that church is currently being offered to the Department of Health as a Covid-19 testing centre – we very much see this as being part of our civic responsibility at this difficult time, but also a great opportunity to develop links with the council and the town centre community. Top of the list of ideas at the moment is that of a town centre chaplaincy in which the church can have a presence alongside and within all that is happening in the town centre – rather than expecting people to come to us, we go out and about to see what connections we can make and what support we can offer – taking the love and grace of Christ into the marketplace!

There is a common thread to all these things of course which is to do with the longing for justice, community, and human well-being locally and globally. Whether it is to do with poverty and hunger, social isolation, prejudice, or the possibility of global extinction there still seems to be a human need to speak out, to campaign, to raise money and awareness, to educate and to help. Even prayer can be seen as a ‘subversive activity’ with its emphasis on trusting that things can always change for the better.

As followers of Jesus Christ, who himself was an agitator for political, social and religious change, these things are at the heart of our tradition and central to our faith. Never let anyone tell you that religion and politics don’t mix. Rather they are opposite sides of the same coin. Wherever we stand in the critical debates of our day we have a compass of faith which can guide us and help us in our thinking and discernment. A compass which points us constantly in a direction of self-sacrifice and community and towards questions which are not centred on ‘what is best for me?’ but which ask ‘what will lead to the sort of world which Jesus was talking about when he said that the Kingdom of God is near?’

Each one of us brings something valuable into the service of God’s Kingdom, each one of us is able to bring about small miracles, even if we feel that we have nothing to offer. Each one of us, with our words, our actions, our donations, our prayers, our protests and our votes can help to stem the tides of hatred, intolerance and individualism which have swept across the country in the last few years. I pray that October may be a fulfilling month for us all as we follow Christ’s call to meet him in one another - strangers and friends – and that we can be aware of the stream of unconditional love and grace which flows from the heart of God into the life of the world.

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.

Sunday 4th and 11th October 3pm

Login details as usual as follows:

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

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Circuit Prayer

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

God of Love and Life,

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

(pausing briefly to reflect after each name)

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

We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. We ask that this time of crisis might pass and that those who suffer might find comfort and strength within the knowledge of your grace, revealed through the kindness and compassion of the people of God. Eternal God, 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.
