



# The Methodist Church

## United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

A Message from the Superintendent Minister

October 14<sup>th</sup> 2020

Dear Friends,

Some of you will be aware of the Methodist Church's new Strategy for Evangelism and Growth, called 'God For All'. The Strategy names concrete steps towards "*our commitment to be a growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking, inclusive church of Gospel people who speak of, listen for, and live out the goodness of God – so that new people become disciples of Jesus Christ and committed Methodists experience a deepening of faith.*"

Whilst not explicit within that overall vision, the God for All strategy has an element within it which particularly resonates with us in the United Stockport Circuit, particularly in terms of some of the things which I was talking about in my last letter. God for All has a strand within it which talks specifically about being a "Church at and from the Margins", and stemming from this it outlines several different aims:

- Starting a movement of new Christian communities led by those at the margins.
- Work alongside people experiencing poverty to deepen community engagement.
- Build on the biblical connection between evangelism and social justice.

Not only does this resonate with our own Circuit Task Group which we have called '**Being a church of the margins**', it also picks up on some work which one of our circuit ministers Raj Patta is seeking to develop at the moment. Raj writes,

*"Over the last six months, the Spirit of God has been pushing me to do church differently, outside the box, and to be with people in the public sphere, sharing the love of Christ. In response to that push, last week on Sunday from 11 am to 12.30pm, I and a friend of mine went into Stockport town centre, walking around the market place trying to engage in a conversation with people on the streets. As we walked by we had coffee with three people who have been homeless and gave a listening ear to their plights, we bumped into a group of artists who were sitting on the streets drawing the sketches of the market place and had some interesting conversation on their understanding of beauty on the streets, had a chat with folks at Wellspring charity and gave some food cans as the need for home has increased enormously. We then said a prayer and departed from there. It was church for me, "church in the marketplace," (CIMP) where I heard people's stories, spoke to people about God's love, and came back home challenged. I have recognised that there are many people who are looking for a conversation, and as a church I think we need to hear their stories. One of the persons with whom I had coffee asked me, "Vicar, what are you doing here on the streets of the town centre? Don't you have a church service?" I had to reply that, "this way of being with people and listening to their stories of life is the church I am doing this Sunday." I personally was moved by this Sunday experience in the marketplace and foresee this way of doing church has a relevance in our moving forward as a church. I have talked about this experience to several people whom I have met during the week, and I gathered that there is an interest in doing church this way."*

Key to all of this for us is the importance of Listening. We do not, as the established church, take ourselves to the margins and offer what we have to those we find there, somehow 'importing' church. This is an outdated colonial style of working which doesn't take seriously the depth and authenticity of experience, faith and struggle with which many people live. The 'margins' might be geographical, but they might also be social or economic or psychological or spiritual. Wherever society places people into situations of hopelessness, exclusion, voicelessness, isolation, poverty – these are the places where people cease to be able to fulfil their potential as human beings, as the people God created them to be. For God, no-one is ever on the margins. If that is where people find themselves then it is those at the centre of things who have placed them there, and we are all diminished by that. The journey away from the margins and back into the heart of society and into a recognition that we have always been in the heart of God, is a journey we all take together. None of us can remain unchanged by it. Quite how this will play out for us in the United Stockport Circuit is yet to be seen, but there are two things you might like to do right now.

- On Sunday the 25th of October at 1pm, Raj and myself and any others who care to join us are planning to be this 'Church in the Market Place' and any of you interested in joining us, to walk around the town centre and listen to those we meet, please let us know, or meet us outside Tiviot Dale Methodist Church just before 1pm.
- We shared a wonderful celebration of Black History Month in our Zoom service on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October, this was organised in partnership with the Ebony and Ivory Community Organisation in Stockport (EAICO). EAICO have just launched a black history project, exploring Stockport's African and Caribbean heritage and detailing the untold stories of African and Caribbean people in Stockport. The exhibition features at least one member of the United Stockport Circuit! Do take a look at this fascinating and important exhibition online at [www.blackhistoryinstockport.com](http://www.blackhistoryinstockport.com)

And please remember as always, especially as we face further restrictions and 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 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> 3pm**

Login details as usual as follows:

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

**Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333**

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### 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](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 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.**

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