



# The Methodist Church

## United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

**A Message from the Superintendent Minister**

**November 11th 2020**

Dear Friends,

As I write, we are still awaiting the definitive outcome of the US Presidential election. Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have been introduced as the President and Vice-President elect, they have been declared the winners by most media outlets and they have given speeches to that effect. Yet the current incumbent, one Donald Trump, has so far refused to concede, insisting without any evidence that he is the true winner and that there have been improprieties in the voting system leading to his rightful victory being taken from him illegally. In whatever way this plays out, it seems certain that come January, Donald and Melania will have to pack their bags and leave, or be forcibly removed from the White House. It is unthinkable that someone could be so narcissistic as to not realise just how foolish all this makes him look; to not realise that his actions undermine to the very core his (misguided!) self - understanding as a strong, fair, powerful and compassionate human being; to not realise that to concede with grace and offer an authentic and respectful handover is the very basic expectation of someone in his office.

Grace does not seem to be in Donald Trump's vocabulary, certainly not in his mindset and definitely not in his actions. Yet it is something which is at the heart of the Christian faith which he claims to follow. There are of course many different definitions of the word *grace*. In Hebrew, it literally means 'favour' - to bend or stoop in kindness to another. We often use it to refer to movement which is flowing and elegant, or to describe the act of someone honouring us with their presence. We talk about 'saying the Grace' as a little prayer or blessing before sharing a meal, or at the end of an act of worship to acknowledge that God is with us.

But when life is hard, Grace is about the unconditionality of God's love. It is about God's offer of life and peace and freedom, not because we have done anything to earn or deserve it, and not because we are asked to offer anything in return. Simply because that's the way God is. It's the ultimate example of that parental response to the child saying, "Why?" Well, simply "because." Saint Augustine of Hippo said that "grace is given not because we have done good works, but in order that we may be able to do them." In that sense, grace becomes both a gift, a lesson, and a way to live.

One of my most hated expressions is that which we use when looking on at someone else's misfortune. We say, "there but for the grace of God go I". We use that idiom all the time, yet while we want to thank God when we are spared a trial, do we really want to suggest that God has at the same time, withheld his grace from the poor person whose shoes we are glad not to be in?! Such an expression goes against the very grain of grace – which is that it is there always, and for everyone. Neither our own, nor others' misfortune is caused or allowed by God. The idea that God is one who chooses to take life or spare it, to cause pain or prevent it, does not sit well with the idea of an all loving God. Rather I like to think that God is one who pours grace onto us, even in

the lowest and most wretched of times, giving us the chance to live and grow and find fullness of life. And just as God pours out that grace on us, so we too, in our beautiful movements and kind words, in our very presence, can offer grace to others; grace which manifests itself in a non-judgemental outlook, in humility, in the capacity to forgive and to be kind, in the recognition that sometimes all that is possible and necessary is to be alongside someone else in their distress, either in person, or in prayerful solidarity. As Charles Wesley wrote:

*Lord, in the strength of grace,  
With a glad heart and true,  
Myself, my residue of days,  
I consecrate to you.* (Singing The Faith 448)

Ultimately, Grace is the selfless expression of our basic human need for others; to be able to give and receive without conditions – love, care, wisdom, compassion, companionship. We need these things to live and as Christians we believe they flow from God and through our lives, centred upon the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. As we continue through this second lockdown may the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you and with the world.

And please remember as always, especially as we and others 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 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> November 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

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](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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### Food for Schools and Traidcraft Shopping

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