

Dear Friends,

A wise person once told leaders to make sure that the main thing is kept as the main thing. You won't be surprised to hear me use the word again that has featured in almost every letter of mine for months - Mission. It's the main thing! And let's get one thing clear - renting out rooms to pay the assessment is not mission. Deliberately fostering a good relationship with room hirers in order to listen to them for the voice of God speaking through them, and sharing your faith with them might be.

The key to mission it strikes me, is what God is doing through us, not what we do. To be a Methodist is to have a calling from God, to know the good news of the gospel and to respond. Our covenant prayer is a prayer of yielding, of giving up ourselves to God. Prayer is about knowing who God is and letting God, as one of my favourite worship songs says "have my way among you".

Mission therefore is only ever living out our story - sharing the experience of what God is doing, witnessing to the love we are experiencing, and listening again for what God is doing next. Mission involves our life as disciples, and faithfulness to God. That's the life Jesus lived and calls us to follow. Letting God be God and do what God does in and through us.

Lent is book-ended with Jesus wrestling with his calling. The story of him in the desert facing temptation is the time he wrestled with his identity and his purpose. His calling was service not power or popularity. His bread was to do as God called, not feast on fine food. He knew popularity, and he tasted power, but he knew he had come to bring the Love of God into the world, and call others to follow him in that task. He knew his father in heaven, and trusted that God's mission and purposes would be fulfilled through him as he emerged from the desert to be baptised and to preach, teach, heal, and declare the good news of the Kingdom of God.

At the other end of lent, is Jesus in the garden, wrestling again with the 'cup of suffering' which was to prove God's will for him. Accepting that his death was inevitable, and would ultimately communicate the love of his Father in heaven had become the pinnacle of his purpose. God's mission was being fulfilled through what Jesus said, what he did, and who he was, as well as his death, and resurrection.

This pandemic has been, and yet still can be, if we let it, a defining moment for us in discovering afresh what God's mission through us is. To 'go back to normal', where that normal is a gentle and steady decline is a missed opportunity.

It's been encouraging to host the first few webinars 'Mission in Love Unites Us'. It's good to see faces from all around the circuit together on one screen, and think together through what Mission means for us. Listening anew for God's call, learning together what that means, sharing our faith. For some churches that is a jolt to look afresh at who we are and what we're here for. For some churches it means looking to neighbours and thinking very much outside of our comfort zones about what being a class of another church, or joining with a neighbouring church in order to be viable might mean. For some it means a sad but inevitable recognition that the time has come to celebrate 'mission complete here'.

As the Circuit Leadership team and I try and lead us through these difficult times, the one thing I long for is to come and meet you! To sit down and talk with you, listen and pray with

you, worship with you, and fulfil that proper Methodist activity - fellowship. It's uncomfortable to be writing this letter that will come by e-mail, may get forwarded, printed, distributed, and possibly unread and ignored. I know we are fed up of the pandemic, cross about the assessment, and determined to get going again as soon as we can. Our feelings at this time show that we are in a time of transition. Which is why I am asking the important questions of the moment - Who are we? What are we here for? Where is God in our midst at this time?

One of my favourite christian words is 'transformation'. It best describes what God is doing with us. We sing it with great gusto "changed from glory into glory", and we pray it weekly or daily maybe "your Kingdom come, your will be done". It means nothing is finished, everything is begun, and God is active in our lives. Transformation happens when opportunity allows, and we are living through one of those great opportunities. Last July, when I wrote to Churches considering re-opening buildings after lockdown, the Circuit Leadership Team asked you to consider a Bible story that was relevant as we thought about why to open buildings again. There are so many to choose from - Noah in the Ark, Moses in the wilderness, rebuilding the temple after Exile, Ruth leaving her home Moab behind in order to enter the faith of her mother in law, Jesus in the desert, or the garden, and Saul struck by blindness waiting in Jerusalem for the church leaders to meet him after his experience on the road to Damascus. The story of our faith is full of people being transformed by God whose mission is always outwards from himself into human hearts and human communities.

Transformation is what happened to John Wesley, it's what the Prim's witnessed God doing around so many of our farmhouse tables and in our chapels and Sunday schools, it's what God did in the tomb, and the Holy Spirit does at Pentecost.

NOW is the time for our transformation too, as we faithfully respond to our calling and seek God's direction to be shaped by Him for His purposes in 2021 in our part of the world.

The main thing is God's Mission. Through us. The Circuit meeting approved that earlier this month in the Mission in Love Unites Us report. If you don't know what I'm talking about find out who is on the circuit meeting in your church and ask them for a copy! Then book yourselves and your church friends on the webinar.

As we celebrate Easter and the 'main thing' of Jesus' life, some of the churches in the circuit will open their doors and worship together in person, albeit following social distancing and the other regulations and guidelines. As we approach Pentecost more of our churches will be looking towards the plan, opening their doors, and wondering what the end of the Prime Minister's road map will look like if all restrictions indeed end in June. This is not the time to 'go back to normal', this is the time for transformation, growth, and change.

This is God's time for God's purposes, God's Mission. I believe this is the time God is saying to us "Let me have my way among you".

Have a blessed Easter, a safe reopening, and a Mission shaped future.

God bless,

Your Superintendent Minister and friend,

Rob Hilton.

The Next Mission in Love Unites us Webinar is April 21st at 7pm by Zoom. Contact Daniel, the Circuit Administrator, to book a place and get the Zoom log in details.

[1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com](mailto:1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com) or tel: 07598580541.

When we can, we will come and deliver the presentation at your church if you want us to.



Rev`d Helen Kirk and Heather Staniland are doing a sponsored event for All We Can and in particular for their appeal for essential hygiene facilities/equipment in the current coronavirus pandemic,. Full details and the opportunity to give can be found at: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hh21>

## **Cheshire South Methodist Circuit - Circuit Stewards (Voluntary posts)**

### ***Recruiting New Circuit Stewards***

A Circuit Steward is responsible, with the Ministers and other Circuit Stewards, for the spiritual and material wellbeing of the Circuit.

This is a challenging time - the CLT are a united and collaborative team.

There are exciting opportunities to plan for the future Vision of the Circuit.

Your gifts, wisdom and experience as a Circuit Steward can be used to serve and make a difference. This is a voluntary post that may require up to a day a week of your time, varied throughout the year. The CLT have an application and appointment process.

Primary qualification - an active Christian and Member of the Methodist Church

Some of the duties and responsibilities of a Circuit Steward include:

- A seat on the Circuit meeting, the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) and other Circuit sub groups as appropriate and according to your interests and gifting
- Planning and helping to lead the strategic direction and Vision of the Circuit
- Together with the CLT arrange for the collection of the assessment from each church
- Lead the process of review and invitation of minister's appointments and preparing the welcome to new ministers and their families when they move to the Circuit.
- Sensitive to the needs of the ministers and their families
- Maintaining and keeping an awareness of the mission and activities of all the churches in the Circuit

**Expressions of interest are required to the Circuit Administrator**  
[1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com](mailto:1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com) by 15<sup>th</sup> April.

## **Cheshire South Circuit**

**invites you to a webinar to introduce their vision for  
implementing a Faithful and Fruitful Future.**

This PowerPoint presentation is led by our superintendent **Rev Rob Hilton and other members of the Circuit** and aims to

- Consider where people and churches feel they are as we look to coming out of lockdown.
- Share some case studies of churches that have created new opportunities for mission
- Introduce a process to guide us through this time of transition
- Offer resources and help

Everyone who wants to be part of the future of Methodism in the Cheshire South Circuit is invited to attend. Please contact **Daniel, the Circuit administrator**, for the zoom link on **[1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com](mailto:1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com) or 07598 580541.**

### **Dates:**

The presentation lasts for 90 minutes and the next sessions on zoom are:

**Wednesday 21st April at 7pm**

More dates will be arranged over the coming months and the presentation will be repeated at face to face meetings over the summer when restrictions have been lifted.

We hope to see you soon.

## **A Mission in Love Unites Us**

*Please forward information to be put into the next Circuit Newsletter to Daniel Keen, [1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com](mailto:1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com) or phone **07598 580541** by Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April – Thank you*