

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! No one is quite sure why Methodism begins its year in September, but we do. It echos the start of the school, college, and university year, and saves us from auditing accounts and filling in schedules over Christmas!

Welcome to the Rev Robin Fox our new minister living in Audlem, and with pastoral charge of the Audlem and Nantwich Mission Areas and their churches. We welcome you into the circuit Robin at a time we know is strange - moving house and coming to a new appointment is always demanding, and a church welcoming a minister and getting to know them, is, again, demanding. During these times of very limited social interaction, we surround you with our prayers Robin and hope and pray God will show you and your churches why you are here at this time.

A new year gives us a chance to look backwards, review, and look forwards and plan. Some of us are engaging in re-opening church buildings, others are realising that the church has grown and changed more without a building, so are reluctant to return to it. As we review we may be trying to 'get back to where we were before lockdown', others are starting afresh. I would recommend the latter! I make no apology for asking the question over and over again 'Why are you thinking of reopening the building?' I do so not because I think we shouldn't but because I think the Church is often negligent over who we are called to be and what we are here for. This is a rare opportunity for us to really engage with God over our calling.

I have always believed in change, from the point of view that development is an essential part of growth, and evolution is a wonderful way of development. Some of my favourite words are 'becoming', 'unfolding' and 'transformation'. They are gospel words that communicate to us something of who God is, and what he is up to.

I love those stories of Jesus sat with his friends at the end of a day. They would talk about what they had seen him do, and how others had responded. They would ask him what he meant by his parables, and, sometimes plot amongst themselves over what they thought best to do, or argue with each other over who was more important. Easy to recognise our church in those gatherings!

What I like about those gatherings with Jesus at the end of the day is that they were radical - in many ways like a rabbi of his times, Jesus had gathered around himself 12 disciples to listen, watch, and learn from him. He went over the law and the prophets and brought out how he understood them so that what they were learning was in some ways familiar, but in other ways brand new. Around the edges of that core of 12 were others who tagged along, women who were welcome and became a part of a man's world. From these humble beginnings, faith developed and the embryonic church was growing. It was born at pentecost when the Holy Spirit gave life that empowered the group and drove it on.

That very early church, which I take as a blue print, or model for our own, was marked by two things: firstly people who knew Jesus and whose lives had been completely turned upside down by him, for they knew that through their relationship with Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, they were God's people. Secondly, they were a missionary people,

they looked after each other yes, but their primary sense of identity was that they had a message and an experience to share with the world. A wise minister has said ‘it was never the case that the Church of God had a mission, but that the God of mission had got a church’.

Today we are that Church that a God of mission has got. As we return to our buildings, or decide not to, either way, let us be those people who God has got for mission. Reopening for worship will be a witness, but people won’t come unless we invite them, make it worth their while, and listen to them when they come. Letting out rooms again might help towards the finances, but it’s not mission unless we truly engage with people. A building is only ever a tool for mission. A house is not a home until the people who live in it make it their base for going out, inviting others into, retreating into for safety and security, and going out from because life is out there to be lived. Please make sure you do not make the reopening of a building the end of your missionary thinking, it is but only one step along the way.

Review, learn, change, move forwards, reopen buildings, think again, grow, change and live!

...beneath your shadow we abide,  
the cloud of your protecting love;  
our strength, your grace; our rule, your word:  
our end, the glory of the Lord.  
With every good wish,

Your Superintendent Minister and friend,

God bless,  
Rob

(Superintendent Minister, Rev Rob Hilton)

### **Passing of Joe Ware**

Joe Ware passed away on Sept.11th, after a long illness. He was for many years a dedicated and much-respected Local Preacher in the former Nantwich Circuit, and for some time the Administrator for the Crewe Circuit. Please hold Vera and their family in your prayers, especially as his funeral takes place on Saturday 26th at 1pm.

### **Change of Contact Details**

Please note that the phone number for Daniel Keen, Circuit Administrator, has changed. If you need to contact him please use the new number: 07598 580541. The email address remains the same. Please note the phone is only switched on and answered during working hours which are usually mornings Monday-Friday. If not answered please leave a message and your call will be returned at the next available opportunity.

## Unity Methodist Church (UMC) has been born

The church council of Unity Methodist Church and its minister, Rev. Jeremy Tresise have the pleasure of announcing that on September 1<sup>st</sup> Sandbach's newest church came into being.

Unity Methodist Church arises from the merger of 3 existing Churches, Sandbach Methodist Church (Wesley Avenue), Sandbach Heath Methodist Church and Wheelock Methodist Church.

Unity Methodist Church will work towards its new mission by:

- Enabling faith exploration for those who are not attracted to traditional forms of church, by offering contemporary all-age worship and courses exploring faith, like the Alpha course
- A more targeted approach to our work alongside children and young families – building on the good relationships we already have with many young families
- Working in partnership with others to provide care for the socially isolated and to engage more effectively with them

Our 3 existing sites will continue to be used for a variety of purposes with plans to: develop the Wheelock site as a hub for children and family work – named **New Horizons@UMC**; develop the Sandbach Heath site as a community space for both faith and community activities – named **The Welcome@UMC**; and the Sandbach church building will continue to host the weekly traditional act of worship (when Covid-19 permits!) – named **Wesley@UMC** and the **Wesley Centre** will continue to host the Sandbach foodbank, Lifeline Debt Advice and the various faith and community group activities

## Look out for our new website and updated Facebook pages

### Worship Currently Available

There are lots of different ways of accessing worship at the moment even though our buildings remain closed. These are detailed below and an up to date list is available from the circuit website, along with any links needed for the below.

*Alsager* – Weekly service available via YouTube and weekly written message.

*Bromhall and Sand* – Zoom Service every Sunday at 10:30am.

Meeting ID – 849 0734 8014

Password - 074905

*Nantwich* – Weekly newsletter and service sheet available via email and website.

*Rope Green* — Phone conference worship 4 times a week:

9.45am and 6pm every Sunday (6pm repeat of morning)

Telephone 0330 336 0036

9.45am PIN 134879 6pm PIN 117868

Night Prayers every Tuesday and Thursday evening at 8.30pm (15-20 mins)

Telephone 0330 336 0036

PIN 117868

*Sandbach* – 30 minute service available on Soundcloud as well as fortnightly services on a Sunday morning via Zoom.

Further details and the relevant links for all the above are available at: [www.cheshiresouth.org.uk](http://www.cheshiresouth.org.uk)

## Fundraising

The Circuit website has been updated to include a Fundraising page. This contains links to All We Can, MHA and Action For Children to enable you to donate to these charities during this time. If you wish to give all you have to do is visit the fundraising page and click on the link next to the charity you wish to donate to, JustGiving take care of the rest. At this time of year we would normally be holding collections for these charities which we are not now able to do so please consider making a donation to help those in need both in this country and further afield. Charities are one of the worst hit sectors in the pandemic as they have received no government help. You can donate anonymously or leave your details.

Please also keep giving your collection to your church. Each church has its own different systems in place so please contact your church representative to find out how. Even putting aside your collection each week so that you can give it when the church reopens will make a big difference. Even though church buildings are closed the church still has a large amount of costs.

Our Website has been cleared of all Calendar events for the time being: however posters are being added if they contain helpful information about available assistance in the current situation.

Daniel Keen  
Circuit Administrator

### **New Posters on the Website:**

<http://www.cheshiresouth.org.uk/>

*CLICK ON PUBLICATIONS –*

***No new posters***

*Please forward information to be put into the next Circuit Newsletter to  
1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com or phone 07598 580541 by Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup>  
October – Thank you*