

Hidden Treasures



The Daily Prayer Handbook of the
Chester & Stoke-on-Trent
Methodist District

2023-2024

DAY 1

Chair of District: Revd Helen Kirk

This year's Presidential theme is 'Hidden Treasures' based upon the following verse from the prophet Isaiah:

'I give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel who summons you by name.'
(Isaiah 45: 3)

The word treasure conjures many images; from chests of gold on desert islands in need of discovery to memories of people that dwell deep within and are cherished. What is regarded as treasure may differ from person to person, community to community.

So, on the first day of each month, I invite you to contemplate what image treasure conjures for you.

Who or what do we treasure in our own lives, in our experience of faith, in the traditions and practices of our churches; in the communities in which we reside or work. Spend a moment recalling all that you treasure and give thanks to God.

What does it mean for us to be treasured by God? Remember that you are beloved, cherished, valued, trusted, worthy and at some point today step away from your business and Be Still in this knowledge.

If I am treasured by God then so too are others; so too are those people I struggle with, whose views I disagree with, who I find it difficult to understand. Remember one such person before God this day.

Isaiah reminds us that real treasure may not be easily found but is hidden from view. As you go about this day ask the questions: where is God in all I'm experiencing? How is God at work within this situation? Pray that your heart and mind might be open to realizing the Spirit of God in the known and the unknown.

Gracious God, who calls each of us beloved.

May we dwell this day in the knowledge of your cherishing,

glimpsing the gems that are present within those with whom we interact.

May we have voice to name that which we truly treasure and the courage to let go of that which has become tarnished or corroded.

May we be willing to share the story of our treasure and to be open to the stories of others.

For in Christ, we are offered 'the incomparable riches of God's grace' and this is the treasure we bear, Amen.

DAY 2

Superintendent

Revd J. Neil Stacey

Ministers

Revd Jo Brown

Deacon Tim Coleman

Revd Alison Crookes

Deacon Suzie Sale

Revd Susan Banks

(C of E)

Revd Mark Elder (Baptist)

Revd Ceri Gardner (URC)

Revd Lisa McInnes

(C of E)

Supernumeraries

Revd Helen Caine

Deacon John Clarke

Revd David Copley

Revd D. Graham Evans

Revd Ralph Fennell

Deacon David Gallimore

Deacon Lynda Gallimore

Revd Anne Gibson

Revd Claire Heald

Revd Roger Hutchings

Revd Christine Jones

Revd Peter Levitt

Revd Sue Levitt

Revd Dr Tim Macquiban

Revd Ian Rigby

Revd Colin Smith

Revd Paul Taylor

Revd Martin Wood

Lay Workers

Under 30s Worker:

Dean Lawson

Community & Family

Worker:

Nicola Brown

Administration:

Liz Barton

Heather Oulton

North Cheshire (11/1)

The North Cheshire Circuit is made up of more than 20 congregations (together with two in MHA homes) in many different places: around Delamere Forest, in Runcorn and Chester, and in villages both large and small.

Some congregations have closed recently; but new work is being developed as we review our mission.

Give thanks for:

- new opportunities in schools and with young people in Helsby and Frodsham;
- continuing commitment to helping Ukrainian refugees, and asylum seekers;
- faithful congregations reaching out into their local communities.

Please pray for:

- the development of creative mission through tree planting and other new uses of land in Mickle Trafford;
- the ministries of our lay workers in community outreach, pastoral work, and with young people;
- our fellowship together after some difficult experiences in the circuit.

*Loving God,
your steadfast love is so precious to us.*

*By your love we have been created;
by your love we are sustained;
and by your love we are led in the ways of
wisdom, truth and grace.*

*By your Holy Spirit, help us to keep on searching,
so that day by day we may delight in finding the
hidden treasure you offer to us in Jesus Christ
our Lord.*

Amen.

DAY 3

Superintendent

Revd Janet Aspey

Ministers

Deacon Shirley Hassall

Revd Allen Moyo

Revd Alma Fritchley (URC)

Revd Paul Withington (CofE)

Supernumeraries

Revd Pat A. Billsborrow

Revd Dr Andrew E. Pratt

Volunteer Lay

Pastor/Pastoral Worker

Kathryn Craig

Mid-Cheshire (11/4)

The circuit is at the very heart of Cheshire.

It covers the towns of Northwich and Winsford and a number of villages. Agriculture is still important in the area as is light industry & distribution. The area is growing because of the excellent transport links to Manchester, Liverpool, and Chester to which many people commute. The circuit comprises of 14 churches in rural, suburban and urban settings including an Anglican/Methodist LEP and a Methodist/URC LEP. Following a circuit review we are working out what it means to be salt and light in the areas in an around Norwich and Winsford as we explore missional work in our two town centres.

Give thanks for:

- each church in the circuit as they seek to show God's love in their communities;
- faith and vision shown to engage with mission and social justice in our towns and to explore the possible repurposing of Weaver for other church/community purposes.

Please pray for:

- the churches of the circuit as we welcome the District Team to help us engage with ministry and mission;
- the developing work taking place at the Northwich Methodist Outreach Centre (a project in a former church in the town centre) and in the centre of Winsford as we work with others to be a church working alongside those on the margins;
- fresh vision as we explore new ways of working at Weaver.

Creator God, we give you thanks and praise for all that you have made.

Creator God, we give you thanks and praise for all that you have made.

We marvel at your creativity and ask that you would enable us, your people, to use the creativity and vision that you have given to us so that we might enable other to discover their God given gifts that they and those around them might flourish. Amen.

DAY 4

Superintendent

Revd Yvonne Pearson

Ministers

Revd Nic Langton-Miller

Revd Yanyan Case

Supernumeraries

Revd Dr Keith Davies

Revd Margaret Eaton

Deacon Deborah Harkness

Revd Andrew Lindley

Revd Dr Philip Lockett

Revd Pat Percival

Lay Workers

Margaret Quine

Becky Taylor

Julia Tomes

Dane & Trent (11/5) (1)

Dane & Trent Circuit is made up of 16 churches from Biddulph & Biddulph Moor, Mow Cop to Cloud, the three churches of Congleton and travelling north, we find the Holmes Chapel section with Lower Withington in sight of Jodrell Bank and the telescope. But at the heart of all these Churches are the people of God, his disciples today looking to follow Christ in building Kingdom where they are among God's people in community.

In our endeavours to do this, and do things differently we have a new lay employee Lynn Tindale working over in Biddulph as a Social Inclusion and Bereavement Worker. We are hoping that we will be successful in employing someone to work in Congleton, based at Trinity to work as a Community Engagement Worker, and over in Holmes Chapel an Adult Development Lay Leader to work with the 25s to 40s.

To enhance our staff team further we are delighted to welcome Revd Yanyan Case to our team with her gifts and graces.

We are located within some beautiful areas but it is the people lay and ordained that make the Dane & Trent Circuit what it is and we rejoice in that.

We continue to be encouraged to see new people bringing their gifts to shape God's church here in the Dane & Trent Circuit.

We look for ways of holding on to what is foundational to our faith whilst looking where God is leading us into new ventures and directions.

We are still going through challenging times but they are times where we can find it exciting to be Church as we watch, wait and wonder how God will shape us for the future.

DAY 5

Dane & Trent (11/5) (2)

Give thanks for:

- Revd Yanyan Case;
- the Circuit intentionally seeking God's guidance to enable us to see where and how we need to change;
- the Circuit focus to address issues of the Climate Emergency and to reduce emissions in line with the zero target by 2030;
- the prayerful encouragers in the Circuit;
- the faithful who support the work in the Circuit through prayer.

Please pray:

- for the shape of the Dane & Trent Circuit to fit God's intention for our future;
- for the vision and courage to face the changes God is seeking us to make over the next year;
- for the church to be intentionally inclusive of all Gods people;
- that we might discern the gifts of your people and encourage them to grow.

Lord, in your rich and diverse world where your body is made up of many parts, help us to recognise the need for all parts to work together with you as our head.

May we worship you in spirit and in truth loving our neighbour as you love you. Help us to listen to the still small voices of wisdom and build each other up in love. May your spirit lead us and inspire us to do your will.

Bless all who you call and who offer their lives in Your service.

In the name of Christ, Amen.

DAY 6

The Ecumenical Landscape: Cheshire

Ministry: Revd Robin Fox

The ecumenical scene in Cheshire is slowly emerging from its Covid hibernation, but things cannot be described as normal yet.

In-person meetings have finally resumed, and events are starting to be held again, though it was disappointing that the week of prayer for Christian Unity service in January attracted only a poor turnout.

However, the work goes on, and the AGM will soon be held.

There are changes afoot from September, and we pray that God will lead us through these.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, you prayed that your disciples might be one as you and the Father are one.

We pray for our unity - that even if there are areas where we disagree, we may see that in you we have far more in common than the things which would seek to divide us.

We pray with you that we might be one. Help us work for peace, reconciliation and unity, and may the world know that we are Christians by our love.

This we pray in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, Amen.

DAY 7

The Ecumenical Landscape: Staffordshire

Ministry: Revd Margaret Eaton

During this year the County Ecumenical Mission officer, Robert Mountford, has continued to work extremely hard alongside the various ecumenical partnerships to make more links with community agencies in our area. He covers part of the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District, part of the Nottingham and Derby District and part of the Birmingham District as well as the southern part of our District.

We give thanks and pray for Robert as he continues to lead us in looking at the work we are able to do together, especially making links with Christian Fellowships who are not part of the longer established denominations, so that together we can share the Good News of Jesus Christ in our localities, and learn from the experiences and different ways of working we find in more independent fellowships.

Give thanks for:

- the work of the chaplains in our area;
- the work of the chaplaincy team at Keele University as they walk alongside the students in times of difficulty and encourage the students to come closer to God and be able to share their faith with others. May all students know that the chaplains are there for them wherever their relationship with God;
- the work of chaplains at University Hospital of North Staffordshire as they minister at times of great need to all patients, relatives, and staff, making a difference at the darkest of times;
- the chaplains in the more rural areas who attend the agricultural meetings.

Please pray for:

- links with community groups, that together we may be people seeking to bring help for those in hardship and need;
- those who are working for debt justice to help those who have been exploited in diverse ways when already in financial difficulties;
- the continuing work of those who serve in running the foodbanks, and for those caring for the homeless and the work of the No.11 project;
- a wider vision to discover ways to welcome and meet some of the basic needs of those who have come into our area from Ukraine and other war-torn countries. May we seek justice and peace for all who suffer abuse in any way. May our churches be places of hope for all in despair.

Loving Lord, remind us that we are all your family. Help us to stay close to you, and to learn from you, so that we will never let others down through a lack of care. Lord help us to seek out people who have hidden gifts which are needed to enhance the work already happening, so that more people may be reached in new ways and come to know the love of God at work in this area. Lord help us to love one another as you love us, so that all may know a life of peace and joy. Amen.

DAY 8

Cheshire South (11/8) (1)



Superintendent

Revd Rob Hilton

Ministers

Revd Donna-Marie

Broadbent-Kelly

Revd Sarah Butcher

Revd Robin Fox

Deacon Jill Henderson

Revd Carolyn Lawrance

Revd Simon Sutcliffe

(Connexional Team)

Revd David Willis

(District Mission Enabler)

Supernumeraries

Revd Jenny Arthurs

Revd Christopher Denney

Revd Ian Duffy

Revd Andrew Gunstone

Revd Jennie Henshall

Revd Eric Kirkman (URC)

Revd Margaret Lockwood

Revd Charlotte Lorimer

Revd Malcolm Lorimer

Revd Will Morrey

Revd James Needham

Revd Michael Parrott

Revd Dr Graham Patrick

Revd Edna Perry

Revd J. Stuart Rhodes

Revd Gordon Ryder

Revd Helen J Stubbs

Revd Neal Street

Revd David Westhead

The Circuit continues to develop into three new Mission Hubs. Each new Hub has embarked on a process of discernment to identify areas of new and existing mission and prayer to promote more interconnected church relationships, faith and worship. Three Steering Groups are now in place to look at the development of new Lay Roles within the Hubs that meet the needs of the Circuit Mission and Vision. This continues to be a bold and brave initiative seeking to change our story from decline to Mission. Please pray for us!

The Cheshire South Circuit contains the differing towns of Alsager, Audlem, Crewe, Nantwich, Sandbach, and Whitchurch and many rural villages and settlements including one chapel just inside Wales. Our circuit's housing estates, tranquil suburbs, and many fields and farms are dissected by footpaths, canals, railways - both existing and closed - providing much leisure activity, and roads both fast and slow. There are deprived areas and wealthy communities, asylum seekers, refugees and established local families.

Give thanks for:

- various acts of worship we have shared together;
- renewed enthusiasm for mission within the circuit;
- mission areas that are thriving across the circuit, including the Audlem Acorns Toddler group, Messy Churches in Rope Green and Coppenhall, Ettiley Heath Forest Church, Food Pantry in Sandbach, and the Food Hub in Alsager and many more;
- the skill and dedication of our circuit lay workers, lay leaders and circuit stewards;
- the appointment of Jane Parker-Aiken as she starts as lay pastor in the Crewe area;
- the appointment of Marie Lumb as she starts as Lay Worker at Crewe by Farndon;
- the appointment and work of Dot Milner as Circuit Administrator;
- the offer of pastoral support from Revd Helen Stubbs in the circuit;
- the ministry of Revd Jeremy Tresise, taking up his new appointment in the Sankey Valley Circuit.

DAY 9

Lay Workers

Kathryn Davies
Marie Lumb
Elizabeth Morris
Jonathan Newbould
Jane Parker-Aiken
Stephen Parker-Aiken
Andy Townsend

Lay Worker Coordinator

Heather Staniland

Administrators

Dot Milner
Jo Reeves

Local Preachers' Secretary

Dr Malcom Crook

Circuit Safeguarding

David Maidment

Lay Leaders

Jayne Bunn
Jean Ellershaw
Roger Millns
Alan Pimlott
Michael Wright

Circuit Stewards

Issy Brislen
Ellen Cieka
Gary Cliff (Finance)
Geoff Dickinson
Pat Maidment

Circuit Vision Prayer

*Help us Lord,
to see what you see when
you look at our circuit;
imprint this vision deep
within us, where it can take
root, grow and deepen,
and inspire all we do
and how we do it,
in your name, Amen.*

Cheshire South (11/8) (2)

Give thanks for:

- the ministries of supernumeraries Revds Ian Duffy and Jim Needham as they conclude the pastoral responsibilities they have been recently holding;
- the successful completion of the probation of Revd Sarah Butcher;

Please pray for:

- the churches as they continue to be enthusiastic about sharing God's love with the communities in which they are based;
- the continued thriving of areas of growth, and for new opportunities emerging;
- wisdom and discernment as we shape the mission work of the Mission Hubs;
- the work of the circuit leadership team as it makes strategic decisions based on the missional priorities of the circuit;
- the five members of CLT who are part of the Connexional Transformational Leadership Learning Community;
- Revd Carolyn Lawrance and her ministry as she joins our circuit;
- Revds Robin Fox and Donna Broadbent-Kelly as they prepare for their sabbaticals in the summer;
- the development of growing links with Whitchurch Primary School;
- the work that is coming as a result of closer ecumenical ties, particularly in Crewe, Whitchurch and Sandbach;
- the exciting development of worship and mission at The Haven (Methodist Community Café).

Eternal God,

You remind us in your word that there are treasures which are hidden in jars of clay.

When we are tempted to doubt, remind us that you have chosen us.

When we are tempted to despair, remind us of the gifts you have given us.

When we are tempted to question, help us to trust. And as we put our faith and trust in you, reveal the treasures you have given us in Christ.

May these treasures help us bring the riches of your grace to the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 10

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

EDI Officer: Revd Julie Hassall

The encouragement to become a truly Inclusive Church in a Methodist context continues to ask many questions of us, as churches, as circuits and as a Methodist Connexion. The Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) continues to bring to our consciousness a breadth of considerations for us to wrestle with as we seek to celebrate diversity, and to challenge the injustices within the Methodist Church and wider society. We give thanks that there are those with the Methodist Church who go on committing their time and energy to thinking through what the love of God looks like in the context of how we treat others and encouraging us all to do likewise. In many different contexts and spaces, the issues for us to think through might be summed up by the question of *'who might we be excluding in our current ways of doing mission and ministry?'*

At our Spring 2023 Synod Revd Dr Jill Marsh urged us to put matters of equality, diversity and inclusion on all our church council agendas. For many of us that might seem like a big ask – but it is important, even in small ways to remember that we are called to be a truly inclusive church. It might be something as simple as asking the question about how inclusive a particular activity is, and what we could do to make it more inclusive – this discussion doesn't need to take up a whole agenda. Try it with a discussion about your toddler group, warm space, community café. It will surprise you what thoughts and ideas you have.

In addition, if there are things which are happening in circuits around the District, turning the focus onto matters of EDI then do let me know and we will share those good news stories on the District website.

You will find a wide range of resources on the Methodist Church Website which help in following through the various strands of 'Inclusive Church' – follow this link for more information - [The Inclusive Methodist Church](#)

As part of our commitment to EDI, there is now mandatory training for some people in specific leadership roles within the Methodist Church – we will during this year be talking with individual circuits about how best to complete this important training.

And we are to be blessed with the presence of **Deacon Eunice Attwood** at a District 'Church on the Margins' event on **25 November 2023**. More information will follow, but please put the date in your diary!

God of love, we give thanks for:

- those who fire our imaginations to uncovering the hidden and beautiful treasure of equality and inclusion for all
- All who have the courage to re-examine old ways of working in a spirit of openness to learning.

Continued...

And we pray for:

- the rich diversity of people within the Methodist Church to be recognised as a cause for thanksgiving, celebration, and praise;
- the eradication of all discrimination and coercive control within the Methodist Church, and for all people to be treated justly and with dignity across the breadth of the Methodist Church.

God of life-changing grace, grant us the courage and the wisdom to set down our deeply planted ideas about others, and what they might need or desire, that day by day we might together grow into the people you called us to be – open hearted, vulnerable, generous and gracious followers of Christ. Help us to hear, bear, and cherish one another's stories – so that we share a common prayer for the flourishing of all humankind. For we pray in and through the name of Jesus. Amen. Revd Julie Hassall – julie.hassall@methodist.org.uk - 01538 751907

DAY 11 Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism

Harold Wilson famously remarked in 1964 that 'socialism owed more to Methodism than to Marx'. More than thirty years earlier in 1932, the Methodist Church of Great Britain was created through the union of various Methodist movements – one being Primitive Methodism – its story uniquely told by Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum.



Wilson's remark recognized the enormous contribution to social justice for the labouring classes and the marginalized that the Primitive Methodists (Prims) and others made: there was more to the Prims than their vibrant, informal worship and prayer. Their hidden treasure, their 'calling out for insight and the raising of their voices for understanding' (after Proverbs 2:3) was their deep commitment to education, community, peaceful protest, and compassion to the vulnerable and unvalued by society. Noble aims that to this day need championing. As such, we have taken our theme for this year as 'The Politics of Faith' and are creating and developing new exhibitions, programmes and partnerships to unearth the stories of the Prims' radical love for their fellow humans.

Continued...

We give thanks for:

- the increase in visitors who come to engage with the Primitive Methodist stories for research, learning, faith, and curiosity.
- our developing partnerships with local schools – both mainstream and specialist, and their openness to access Prim and social history to improve wellbeing, get creative, and challenge injustice.
- Hassall Road Book Emporium that continues to support the project.

Please pray for:

- Our volunteers -that their passion and commitment can continue, for renewed energy and for more volunteers to join the team.
- The 'Root & Branch' travelling exhibition – a partnership between Englesea Brook and the National Probation Service: that the hidden stories of the connections between the Prim and other denominations in the genesis of the Service will inspire people to act justly and to love their neighbour.
- Family activities, Quiet Days, our Peace Garden Project, heritage talks and services will be a blessing to the church, community and those from far and near.

Unbounded God, who is without boundaries in space and time: release in us, your storytellers, greater insight and understanding. May your Spirit energise and envision us to take from the past the experiences, events and personalities who can speak into our lives today to enrich and encourage us as we seek to be a peaceful, compassionate people, welcoming all.

Open us, and all who come to us either physically or virtually, those who engage with the Prim story through the many different mediums, and those to whom we reach out, your boundless and boundary-less love for justice, equality and above all peace, Amen.

DAY 12

Local Preachers and Leaders of Worship

Local Preachers 'Secretary and Tutors 'Coordinator: (vacancy)
Leaders of Worship and Preachers 'Trust Convenor: (vacancy)
(page prepared by Dr Geoff Dickinson)

Local Preachers and Worship Leaders serve the Methodist Church and are an intrinsic part of the life and witness of the Church. They are responsible for the leading of services in most of the District's churches each Sunday, willingly responding to the message inspired by God.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." *Is 52 v7 (NIV)*

Give thanks for:

- the people who are responding to God's call to share the Gospel within the challenges of change in our church-life;
- the people who assist with the training and development of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders as tutors and mentors;
- those who have completed their training and are now stepping out in their calling;
- those who have been leading for many years, for their commitment and dedication;
- the Christian witness within our churches and wider communities by preachers and worship leaders.

Please pray for:

- those who actively and faithfully lead worship on a regular basis in their Churches and Circuits;
- those who are now retired, that they may encourage those who follow;
- wisdom and discernment in the preparation and delivery of the Gospel message by all preachers responding to the promptings of God's Spirit;
- the people of God and for the churches, that they may be built up in love for service and mission;
- those who are exploring a vocation to lead worship and to preach, that guided by the Spirit, may they respond with confidence and faith.

Lord, as our preachers and leaders of worship prepare for worship week by week, help them to find hidden treasure in their studies that will help their congregations to respond to the challenge of being Church today and into the future. Amen.

DAY 13 Saltbox



Chief Executive: Lloyd Cooke

A charity with Christian values supporting faith groups, older people, those at risk of homelessness and those in debt. Saltbox is synonymous across Stoke-on-Trent and beyond for promoting united Christian mission and unity initiatives such as City Celebrations and the annual Civic Prayer Breakfast (which attracted over 300 people in 2023). Additionally, Saltbox also provides community-based services for vulnerable and marginalised members of society. As we reach out to those in need our heart is to help to give practical help and support recognising that God wants to bless all people.

Our three caring services are:

- CareLink – helps lonely and isolated older people to socialise and maintain healthy independence in their own homes;
- Restart – offers support, housing and spiritual development to homeless people and, specifically, ex-offenders;
- Money Matters – helps Foodbank clients on low incomes with advice and debt management.

We work hard to nurture potential partnership opportunities with statutory, voluntary and community organisations to help bring about community cohesion and transformation. Our Christian faith is paramount in everything we do and is the foundation that Saltbox is built on. On a continued basis, we work with churches and faith groups to promote UNITY, PRAYER and MISSION across the region.

Please pray for:

God's blessing on the work of Saltbox, and specifically for:

- Saltbox's advice and support of churches and Christian ministries;
- Saltbox's role as a bridge with various local secular agencies, media outlets and the wider voluntary sector;
- Saltbox's various caring services including Restart (housing and supporting ex-offenders), CareLink (telephone befriending for lonely, older people), Money Matters (debt advice alongside Stoke Foodbank);
- Saltbox's Chief Executive, Lloyd Cooke, the Senior Management Team and Trustee Board as they all seek to grow the Saltbox vision;
- Increased favour on Saltbox's partnership working
- Increased funding as the work grows.

Give thanks for:

- the newly refurbished Saltbox's headquarter building in Bemersley House, Hanley.

Lord of all, we thank You that You empower us to care for all people and especially those facing many and varied needs. Bless us to work in unity with brothers and sisters in other denominations. Bless all that we do in Your name, and bring to us those who need to find us, and also those who have a heart for reaching out with us and extending our vision. Amen.

DAY 14

Market Drayton (11/14)

Superintendent

Revd Mark Lawrence

Supernumerary

Revd Paul Clapham

Youth Worker

Kevin Lee

Market Drayton is a unique town quite isolated in many respects due to its location and poor public transport links. Its main employer is Mullers with approx. 6,000 employees. The Methodist Church is a lively, community focussed Christian family with a lively children and youth work headed by our amazing Kev. We are in the process of planting a fresh expression of church in the Fairfields estate with monthly men's gatherings, community BBQs and another visit from the Extreme Tour team in September, which was a real blessing and well received by the residents last year. Revd Mark continues to visit the regional livestock market most weeks to serve the farming community. The Circuit also includes Ashley Methodist Church with its community links through the ecumenical Open The Book (OTB) team in the local churches and occasional family days accompanied (sometimes) by our Big Blue Bus. The Hinstock (Encounter) Church goes from strength to strength working alongside the warm-hearted Anglicans in the village. There are many opportunities for outreach, service and evangelism and we thank God for all He is doing amongst and through us. The Circuit looks seeks to bring a much glory to God as we can.

Give thanks for:

- the growing work with our 20 to 30 year olds at MDMC;
- the chaplaincy work with the local ATC, St. Johns and Livestock Market; The continuing work with the OTB team;
- the growing ministry of the MDMC Songs of Praise connecting with people in the community are formally unreached;
- the blessings of the Loggerheads Alpha Course held in the local fire station;
- the on-going work with Christians Against Poverty in MD and surrounding areas;
- the Big Blue Bus and its witness;
- the continuing ministry of Kev and the team working with children and young people through the schools and youth clubs;
- the different outreach events that have allowed us to share the Gospel and have given enthusiasm to the church;
- growing connections at Hinstock and on the Fairfields Estate;

Continued...

- God's goodness, faithfulness and provision to fulfil His calling to share the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Please pray for:

- more labourers and for God to raise up people with the right gifts to reach as many as possible with the Gospel;
- the replant at Hinstock that it would be effective in reaching the local people and for the proposed chapel upgrade;
- the ministry to redevelop in the Fairfields estate outreach and the ministry to care for people who have experienced baby-loss as part of that important work;
- the Big Blue Bus ministry – for more opportunities to use this amazing resource and for the funds to keep it on the road;
- the CAP Debt Centre to connect with the many who need help within our communities;
- the Holy Spirit to be allowed greater freedom to bring healing and wholeness in the lives of the churches and individuals;
- labourers to be raised up to fulfil the calling we have to reach the lost;
- the Circuit to continue its loving, community outreach and pastoral-care ministry to the lonely and hurting that they might come to know the freedom that comes through alone;
- Revd Mark and all the church leaders to faithfully lead God's people and make more disciples of Jesus;
- a new MDMC treasurer;
- the September outreach with the Extreme Tour on the Fairfields Estate and with the town skateboard community;
- links with the schools to be strengthened to enable us to show the love of Jesus to the students of all ages;
- the on-going ministry at the Livestock Market and the farming community through the chaplaincy work and the forthcoming opportunities at the Christmas Market for a carol service;
- the new Christians to become committed disciples and members of the local churches.

Christ "May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word." (1 Thess. 2:16-17 NIV)

Heavenly Father, enable us to be faithful to your Holy Word and Your call to preach the Gospel in an ever-challenging environment. Thank you for those we seek to serve and for the opportunities we have to demonstrate Your love both in words and action. May the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit continue to make us more like Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

DAY 15

Superintendent

Revd Jenny Dyer

Ministers

Revd Joe Adams

Revd Paul Parker

Revd Pam Roberts

Lay Workers

Lay Pastor:

Paul Owen

Children and Families

Worker:

Nick Jeffries

Administrator:

Francesca Gravano

Potteries Mission (11/15) (1)

The Potteries Mission Circuit is one of two circuits in Stoke-on-Trent (alongside the Stoke-on-Trent Mission Circuit). It comprises sixteen churches, most in the 'six towns' but some slightly beyond the boundaries of Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire Moorlands. Some of our churches either run or are linked with significant social work projects, as will appear below. From September 2023, we will have a new staff team, as we are joined by Revd Joe Adams.

Give thanks for:

- the District Team comprising supernumeraries and District officers providing greater attention at Longton Central Hall and Fegg Hayes than the circuit staff can provide;
- the Fijian congregation meeting at Broadway church in Meir;
- exciting children and youth work at Blythe Bridge, run jointly with the Church of England;
- the work in the north of the circuit of our Children and Families Worker Nick Jeffries, working with volunteers to provide Messy Church, Lego Church, a family play session called Ignite, and Open-the-Book;
- the community centres we run or are in partnership with: particularly the West End Centre and Café in Stoke and the Hub@ST6 at Fegg Hayes.
- the ministry of the Stoke-on-Trent Churches Community Night Shelter offering meals and support to people who are homeless;
- the foodbank outlets we provide, particularly at Tunstall and Temple Street offering meals and support to people who are homeless;
- the foodbank outlets we provide, particularly at Tunstall and Temple Street.

Please pray for:

- the members of former churches that have closed, as they seek to find new ways to continue their worship and discipleship;
- Local Preachers and Worship Leaders just finishing or just starting training;
- the huge challenge that the building at Longton Central Hall represents, and the possibility of partnering with a housing association to rebuild the back of the building as social housing apartments;
- finding a way forward for the Sandy Lane community centre in Brown Edge;
- moves to extend the Open-the-Book outreach to other schools, in partnership with Anglicans;
- the development of our newly-formed ecumenical board game café group in Hanley.

The servants drew out from the first stone jar some of the water that had been turned to wine, and offered it to the steward of the banquet.

Now, the steward was a man who knew about wine, and how to taste it. He lifted the goblet, and sniffed and sipped the wine appreciatively. “My goodness,” he said. “This is a most pleasant, playful wine. There are hints in the bouquet of...yes...joy, celebration. A most charismatic little wine.” The servants drew wine from the second jar. “Ah, a very interesting wine,” said the steward. “Mature, well-aged. I would say that there are hints in here of...wisdom, discernment, discretion.”

And so the wine-tasting continued through the third, fourth, fifth and sixth wines:

“...a wine for connoisseurs. Perhaps a little dry for most tastes, but intelligent, stimulating, mind-stretching...”

“...a warm-hearted and good-humoured bouquet, and a flavour that says ‘Welcome, friend and stranger’...” unobtrusive wine. You might say it has humility, quietly adding value to the flavours on the table...”

“...a wine with a freshness that will excite, and hints of fruit and spice and the sunshine of faraway places. This will bring inspiration to the most jaded palate...”

The steward sought out the bridegroom. “Sir,” he said, “the wines you served early on in the banquet were certainly fit for a wedding. But, my goodness, these wines that you have kept until last are fit for a King!”

DAY 17

Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB)

Methodist Women in Britain is an organization within the Methodist Church, led by volunteers and funded by donations. It is open to women of any age who wish to learn and worship together, exploring fairness and justice, both in this country and around the world. Methodist Women in Britain's main decision-making body is the Forum which meets twice yearly in London, and every District sends a representative.

Give thanks for:

- the work being done in local churches to be women together;
- the fun, fellowship and learning when we meet;
- the increasing knowledge of Christian women throughout the world through the Easter Offering Service;
- the friendships made at MWiB events and meetings, open to all.

MWIB works for global social justice, **please pray for:**

- those who are living through war, terror and violence;
- those who are in need, having little money or people to help in difficult times;
- those who have few resources to provide for their families;
- those who can see no future for their families.

Loving God,

We thank you for all that you have provided for us. We know that we are lucky to live in a country where most families have homes and loved ones around them. We know that there are many people around the world who live with violence and war, often in poverty. We ask that you will continue to open our eyes to the suffering in the world so that we can try to make a difference.

Amen.

DAY 18

Superintendent

Revd Kathryn Stephens

Ministry

The Village:

Revd Ruth Jeffries

Potters: Pastor Alison Price

Oasis: c/o Revd Kathryn Stephens

Whitehill: Pastor Glynis

Cooper

Packmoor & Mount

Pleasant: Pastor Lynn

Tindale

Wesley Hall & The Gateway:

Pastor Brian Tattersall

Swanbank: Revd Ruth

Jeffries and Revd Kathryn

Stephens

Supernumeraries

Revd Peter Hancock

Revd Stephen Hatcher

Revd John Hibberts

Revd Stuart Hickerman

Revd Arthur Wakelin

Lay Staff

Stephanie Aspinall

Rachel Cooper

Becky Garner

Alice Hall

Alison Lynley

Sandy Wagg

Stoke-on-Trent Mission (11/18)

Give thanks for:

- a new physical home for Oasis to mission out of and His provisions in many ways;
- the faithful service of the Church Leadership Team at Gateway who show great commitment and faithfulness to Christ and to the Church;
- a sense of God being at work within Wesley Hall and a real awareness of God's blessing resting on us.

Please pray for:

- SwanBank as we have journeyed through a period of change in a variety of ways. Particular prayers for our youth work and for a growing sense of 'family' as we see new faces week by week in our Sunday worship;
- Oasis as we seek to appoint a new pastor to lead us into the next chapter;
- the practical matters of the finances and property issues which are presenting real challenges currently for The Gateway;
- new leaders for Wesley Hall as the congregation ages and we look to the future.

Dear Lord, we give thanks for the ongoing privilege of ministry in this area praying for continual wisdom and guidance through the change and growth of this next season. We ask that in the every day challenges we face as churches and individuals we will continue in your strength, upheld in your loving arms, having our eyes open to the hidden treasures we may encounter and able to praise you in all circumstances for your glory and honour. Amen.

DAY 19

Keele University & Chaplaincy

Chaplaincy Team at Keele: *Free Church & Coordinating Chaplain:* Revd James Pritchard, *Anglican Chaplain:* Revd Stephanie Couvela, *Lay Catholic Chaplain:* Mr Niall Hammond, *Muslim Chaplain:* Mrs Rukia Bi, and our *Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistant*.

Give thanks for:

- the life and work of Keele University; its focus on education and research equipping individuals and society for future challenges;
- the founding vision of Keele for ‘the pursuit of truth in the company of friends’ an ethos that continues to guide the institution;
- ecumenical and inter-faith work at Keele, particularly for the community of Keele Chapel seeking to be a diverse and inclusive community bearing faithful witness to Christ in worship and service;
- the support and commitment of the university towards chaplaincy and the openness for the chaplaincy team to share in mission and ministry in a secular environment.

Please pray for:

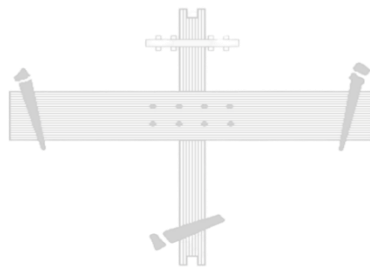
- James and his family (Sarah, Rebecca and Adam), for James’ equipping as he undertakes a year of change offering chaplaincy to both Keele and the Queen’s Foundation in Birmingham;
- the recruitment and selection of a new Free Church Chaplain to be at Keele in September 2025;
- the Free Church Chaplaincy Resource Group overseeing chaplaincy at Keele, for Revd Peter Hancock who chairs the group and represents the district;
- the pastoral work and hospitality offered by the chaplaincy team;
- the Student Chapel Fellowship where faith is nurtured and formed;
- the life of worship and prayer at Keele especially the TEN:15 Sunday service and community;
- ‘Haven’ facilitated by the chaplaincy to support LGBT+ people of faith;
- our volunteer chaplaincy assistant as they share in the life of Keele for a year developing their gifts, exploring vocation and deepening discipleship;
- staff and student faith groups seeking to nurture their discipleship and bear witness in their studies and work;
- James’ work and ministry beyond Keele especially his involvement in Pastoral Supervision.

The life of the university:

- the challenges of education in a context that is increasingly commercialised and for better access for those from diverse backgrounds;
- those who face additional challenges alongside their work or studies especially, mental health and financial difficulties;
- key areas of research seeking to make the world a better place: *Sustainability, Global Health, Social Inclusion, Liberal Arts and Sciences and Digital Society*;
- all places of further and higher education in our district where lives are being shaped and equipped.

Continued...

'...live up to the life to which God called you. Always be humble, gentle, and patient, accepting each other in love. You are joined together with peace through the Spirit, so make every effort to continue together in this way. There is one body and one Spirit, and God called you to have one hope.' Ephesians 4 1b-4 CEV



Creative and redeeming God, thank you for your work in your world and your invitation to share in it. Help us to live our lives in ways that reflect yours. Give us unity as your body, that we might demonstrate your goodness in our beautiful diversity. By your dynamic Spirit embolden our faith and equip us as we seek to live our lives through your grace and seek to share it with others in all we do say and are, Amen.

DAY 20

'The mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.' (Isaiah 55:12b)

Trees can communicate with each other! They do it through mycorrhiza – a partnership of fungal mycelia and roots running deep through the soil, a hidden treasure in a dark place. Fungi crotchets life together in ways we are still trying to fathom. A tree on the edge of a forest, attacked by aphids, sends a message telling other trees to make their leaves waxier to resist the assault. This partnership, and others like them, are the beating heart of creation, this was God's intention, and indigenous people knew this long before western scientists discovered it. Western humans, always seeing themselves at the centre, stepped away from the Creator's patterning of nature. If we are willing to see the more-than-human world as more than human, then perhaps we will hear the song of the mountains and hills, and the clap of the trees in the field.

God – the architect of all that is seen and unseen, we give you thanks for the entangled life you created and claimed as 'good'. We are sorry for making this world about us and eroding the memories of those who knew your ways long ago. Help us find our place as partners amongst the more-than-human world, so that justice for creation becomes possible. Creator Spirit, draw us close to the soil, that we might feel the fabric of life beneath us, Amen.

Revd Simon Sutcliffe

Lead Chaplain: Sharon Mayer

Thank you for taking the time to pray for the Chaplaincy. Our mission is to serve the farming community in any way it can be it listening, advocating, handholding during difficult circumstances, sign posting or raising awareness of the problems farmers face to a wider audience.

Farmers have been reliant on the support subsidies they have received for many years because the true cost of food production has not been recognized. It costs money to provide food in terms of rent/mortgages, energy, labour, input costs of feeds, seeds, fertilizer, machinery, fencing, storage and everyday operations just like any other business but supermarkets have consistently squeezed prices effectively taking the subsidy and converting it into cheap food with tacit assent from Government. This subsidy is disappearing fast but contributes only a tiny part of the new cost of living crisis. Many farmers are below the poverty line unless they have well secured businesses and many livelihoods are at serious risk impacting heavily on family relationships which are already strained.

The relentless attacks on what is generally superb animal welfare and the use of hormones (none in this country) and antibiotics (virtually the lowest in the world) does not help and there is an increasing disregard for the ownership of animals as sheep thefts and dog attacks abound. The level of stress and sense of feeling misunderstood when putting food on everyone's table is very prevalent, leading to high levels of poor mental health and sadly one of the worst suicide levels of any industry.

Please do pray over these things – thankyou – it makes such a difference. On a lighter note the Chaplaincy is supporting about 80 families via lunch clubs, 1:1 support and social events and is much appreciated. I am stepping down from the lead role to be replaced by one of my current assistants, Helen Rutter, who is well versed in the trials of farming life but brings much experience and a large dollop of much needed humour into it all. Please make her welcome and pray for her as she steps into a very demanding full time role. Pray for the rest of the team who do so much, many on a voluntary basis. They are all much appreciated for what they do.

Thank you so much for your very valued prayers.

DAY 22

North Staffordshire (11/22)

Superintendent

Revd Liz Singleton

Ministers

Revd Christine Legge

Revd Joy Ventom

*Keele University Free
Church Chaplain:*

Revd James Pritchard

Supernumeraries

Revd John Taylor

Revd Richard Parkes

Support Staff

Circuit Administrator:

Michelle Bradbury

Circuit Finance Book

Keeper:

Kaye Chadwick

The Circuit comprises nine churches in urban, suburban and rural settings. We are committed to the calling of the Methodist Church and seek to live out this calling by encouraging and equipping our churches to be welcoming and inclusive; to offer inspiring worship; and to show radical compassion and engage with social and climate justice. Over this Connexional year (2023/24) we are looking to extend the ways in which resources are shared across the Circuit; to encourage a greater uptake of the resources offered by the District and the Connexion; to be more proactive in making people aware of opportunities for learning and development; and to enable people to deepen their faith and grow their confidence in sharing their faith.

Give thanks for:

- the ways in which churches are embracing Circuit services and events;
- the continued support that many of our churches are giving to the Newcastle-Staffs Foodbank through both the practical work of volunteers and the provision of food items;
- the willingness of people to undertake safeguarding training and work towards making their churches a safe and welcoming environment for those who are vulnerable;
- the pastoral care and support shown across the Circuit by ordinary people with extraordinary hearts of love and concern.

Please pray:

- for a continued willingness to work together towards better understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus;
- that the momentum generated by Circuit worship services and Circuit facilitated Bible study groups will continue;
- for a stirring of hearts and minds that there might be an eagerness and desire to serve God through the roles of church and Circuit steward;
- for the Circuit Leadership Team as they work to put into practice the aims and visions of the Circuit Mission Policy;
- for the new Circuit project at Baldwins Gate.

*Lord, touch our minds, that our thoughts may be worthy of you;
touch our mouths, that we may speak of your love;
touch our hands, that we may serve in your name;
touch our hearts, that we may love the unlovely;
and touch our feet, that we may always follow you, Amen.*

Manager: Ian White

Since 2012 the 'District Team' has continued to work with a number of Circuits across the District to support mission and ministry. There are many hidden treasures in our District both in terms of mission opportunities but also resources. Together we have a gospel to proclaim – good news for all throughout the earth. We work with Circuits to find ways of sharing the gospel in these times. In a wide range of contexts we seek meaningful ways of sharing good news through the local church.

The support we have offered in six Circuits to date, with work continuing in four Circuits, has been very positively received.

We are keen to discuss with Circuits how we might be able to support them and to liaise over specific needs for which members of the District Team will be recruited.

Give thanks for:

- continuing positive responses to the involvement of the Team in Circuits and local churches;
- openness across the District to engaging with the Team in a variety of situations and for a variety of reasons;
- each member of the District Team who brings their own unique gifts and graces to work across the District;
- the coordination of the Team and the discernment of new opportunities for mission and ministries;
- our ability to work with other Districts who have embraced the concept of the Team and who have now made appointments to develop the Church's calling in this way;
- clear evidence of the sustainability of work to ensure that when the presence of the Team comes to a conclusion fruitful activity is maintained in the local context.

Please pray for:

- the ongoing work in the Mid Cheshire, Cheshire South, North Cheshire and Potteries Mission Circuits
- circuits and churches as they discern paths of Ministry;
- ongoing, strong mutual support amongst the members of the Team as we share and develop our experiences and seek further new ways of working.

Loving God

Help us to be open to your hidden treasures in mission, in ministry and in each other.

Help us to see potential as you see it. Help us to recognise gifts as you do.

Help us to value the diversity and depth of ministry amongst us

That hidden gifts may be used to build your Kingdom,

Amen.

DAY 24

Staffordshire Moorlands (11/24)

Superintendent

Rev'd Julie Hassall

Ministers

Rev'd Richard Pope (AP)

Rev'd Eleanor Smith

Cliff College Principal:

Rev'd Ashley Cooper

Supernumeraries

Rev'd John Bates

Rev'd Colin Cooper

Rev'd John Edwards

Deacon Peter Ogle

Rev'd Joyce Smith

Rev'd Anthony Tagg

Rev'd David Watson

Rev'd E. Wollaston (URC)

Lay Staff Team

Mark Hatcher

Rachel Moore

Abigail Ratcliffe

Nicola Turner

The Staffordshire Moorlands Circuit is a beautiful area in which to live, to worship, and to serve.

The churches within its boundaries face the very real challenge and privilege of serving the market towns of Leek and Cheadle, smaller villages, and hamlets. These past years have seen a sharp increase in loneliness and isolation, the challenge of the cost-of-living crisis – and yet across the area we have been witnesses to the hidden treasure of compassion and tenderness in our shared life together. Our leadership team is a source of inspiration and wisdom, and we walk on in faith.

Give thanks for:

- those whose hearts have been stirred by the Holy Spirit to creative ways of ministering and have been bold in sharing those thoughts and seeds;
- the ongoing ministry of Supernumerary colleagues in service and in prayer;
- the commitment of those who work in administration, all those involved in the ministry of minute taking, and whose work supports the outreach of the Circuit;
- all who have heard the gospel in 'outdoor' events throughout the year.

Please pray for:

- the ministry and outreach of 'The Gathering' – a new project within the Circuit seeking to bring people into relationship with Jesus. We pray for fruitfulness and joy in this new group;
- all who are finding it hard at this time, to let go, to find the hidden treasure beneath other agendas and sometimes, traditions. We pray for a spirit of openness in our moving forward together;
- the Circuit Stewards and Leadership Team who listen and pray and speak the treasure of wise words into sometimes difficult situations. We pray that they will know how much their ministry is valued.

God of all grace, grant us the vision to spot the hidden treasure in our communities as we seek to serve you, to cherish those who work alongside us and strive for fullness of life. Give us the courage to set down all that you do not ask us to carry, the passion to go on even on difficult days, and the longing to draw others to the warmth of your loving. So that in us, through us, and sometimes in spite of us your Kingdom may come. In Jesus name, Amen.

Ministry: Revd William R. Porter



The Beacon house of Prayer started as a Methodist fresh expression in 2007 and is now a non-denominational charity, creating a dedicated place for prayer for individuals and Christian groups, and involving a small dispersed community who facilitate and lead the ministry.

We have a fantastic group of people as part of the Beacon and it is a privilege to be in our sixteenth year of ongoing ministry here at the house. Even though we are a smaller community since the pandemic, we have been encouraged by those who have continued to bring their gifts of volunteering in the Beacon ministry.

We are pleased to have added four new trustees as part of the leadership team. Finances continue to be challenging and we are looking at ways of encouraging new supporters to give to the Beacon charity. Wider connections with other prayer groups nationally and wider have flourished during and since the pandemic. We are grateful to God for his grace again in all he has enabled us to do as the house of prayer here.

This year we are planning our second Immerse training course in the autumn of 2023. It will be a three-month training in worship, prayer and discipleship, and enabling people to experience time in a house of prayer. We also hope to open up a prayer garden in the land adjacent to us, as part of a wider petrol station and convenience store development in the area.

Thank God with us for:

- all those who continue to lead rhythms of prayer and worship in the house, and for our wider volunteers who offer hospitality and prayer for others.
- the flourishing online connections with other prayer groups and many houses of prayer in the nation.-all visitors who drop in for refreshment, encounter and the healing touch of Jesus.

Please pray for:

- the new Immerse discipleship course in autumn 2023; that people will be led to apply and be blessed in their faith as they participate
- the development of the land next to us; for the regeneration of the area and for the establishing of a prayer garden
- for our financial support to grow and to enable us to continue this ministry of being a prayer hub in the area.

Lord, you who call us to seek you first before all things, enable us to find the treasure of the secret place of stillness and intimacy with you.

May our lives be so centered on the wonder of your presence that we radiate the love and light of Christ in all we do.

In his name, Amen.

District Safeguarding Officer: Chris Lewis

Safeguarding within our churches remains as vital, but as challenging, as ever for us all. Every year we thank God for the work of all those who hold positions of responsibility for safeguarding in our churches and this year is no exception. A heart for love and care is key to our identity as followers of Christ Jesus, and so it must be reflected in the way we respect, protect, and treat each other. Only if each one of us focuses this through our thoughts and actions can we continue to embed a culture of safeguarding throughout our district, circuits and churches.

And so we take encouragement, whether those with responsibility for safeguarding, those who have experienced harm or those who pose a risk to others, from the words of the prophet:

Isaiah (41:10-13)

“So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
For I am the LORD your God
who takes hold of your right hand
and says to you, do not fear;
I will help you.”

DAY 27

The Methodist Book Centre

Gitana Street, Hanley ST1 1TY

Manager: Julie Ann Ellis www.CRfL.co.uk 01782 212146

The Mission Statement of the Book Centre is:

- to support the Christian Community in mission and ministry through resource and education;
- to encourage growth and depth in commitment to Christ;
- to focus on customer needs and to exceed expectations.

Please pray for the Book Centre as it seeks to:

- provide resources designed to make worship in the District attractive, relevant and inclusive;
- make available books etc which engage in kingdom values and living faith including new and imaginative ways of outreach, fresh ways of being church, community development and, especially, work among young people;
- present material which encourages a culture of continuous learning – helping ministers and members to live reflectively;
- promote the development of relationships with other denominations especially the Church of England and the URC.

Also please pray for :

- the Manager, Staff and Management Committee as they look to develop the work of the Book Centre in new and imaginative ways;
- the customers who come regularly into the Book Centre seeking new materials and support as they develop their own and their church's faithfulness to the gospel;
- the outreach by the Book Centre beyond Methodism and beyond our District at Conferences, Synods, festivals and other gatherings.

DAY 28 Learning Network

The Learning Network is part of the Connexional Team but we are a dispersed staff working across the districts including the Chester and Stoke-on-Trent District. It is great to know that you pray for us as we partner with you in the purposes of the Methodist Church.

Simon Sutcliffe is the aligned officer to Chester & Stoke-on-Trent District.

Through our work, we aspire to equip Circuits to be places of lifelong learning. For learning, read discipleship in its widest sense – whether that is about your focus and mission, how you resource yourselves, prayer, worship, evangelism and service, learning together and caring for each other. We draw on the wisdom and experience amongst the whole church and beyond as well as offering what we bring in our own areas of skill, knowledge, and experience. From September the Learning Network will have a change in structure. We will be one team (rather than working in regions) that will offer resources across the connexion. There will be 6 Learning Managers who will line manage Learning and Development Officers in regional staffing groups.

So what areas do we particularly support?

- Lay workers, local lay pastors, Supervision, Justice Dignity and Solidarity.
- Spirituality, prayer, Methodist Way of Life, vocational exploration and discernment (group).
- Children, youth and families, new places for new people, the One Programme, young adults (the influencers) and Climate Justice, Evangelism.
- Theological literacy, Supervision, Circuit Stewards, Evangelism, Pioneer ministry.
- The training and support of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders including tutors and mentors on the WPL 3.0, Candidate Support, Circuit Stewards, Biblical Literacy, justice dignity and solidarity.
- Positive Working Together, Domestic Abuse training, Mental Health First Aid training, Church and Circuit Reviews.
- Children youth and families, Pioneer pathway and campfires, safeguarding training – *Alison Hulse*
- Supervision and Leadership.

Give thanks for:

- the many opportunities we get to stand alongside Methodists – whether ordained, lay or volunteer – and offer support in a continued context of shifting uncertainty;
- the privilege of developing peer support networks, signposting to helpful resources, developing facilitated sessions for circuits to explore vision and imagining new ways of being church with those God is calling to pioneer;
- all those who equip others.

Continued...

Please pray for:

- each team member and safety as they serve across the connexion;
 - the newly structured Learning Network as it seeks to serve the whole church;
 - wisdom in prioritising our resources to develop learning circuits enabled to fulfil 'Our Calling';
 - health and wellbeing of the team;
 - appreciation of God's creation and exploration of ways to reduce our carbon footprint and impact on the natural world;
 - imagination to overcome challenges of communication, distance and relationship to enable learning and development;
 - sensitivity to the emerging needs of circuits and churches who continue to experience change and uncertainty;
 - a heart for the gospel of Jesus Christ in all we do.
-

DAY 29 Mission around the District

District Mission Enabler: Revd David Willis

There are number of exciting missional opportunities that we are all in some way seeking to develop. Some are driven by our local activities and actions as increasing numbers of our faith communities access our District Fisher Fund. Others are re-imaginings of how we live our lives, engage with our faith, and interact with the communities to which we regularly belong. Fuelled by our increased engagement with resources and the opportunities gifted to us by the Connexional team around New Places for New People and the Methodist Way of Life.

As this month soon draws to a close, we may still have many unanswered questions about where we are and where we are heading. We are in the in-between. There are challenging realities of where we find ourselves, but also, huge opportunities for discovery, exploration and transformation.

The Serenity Prayer

*Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
Amen.*

DAY 30

Chester & Stoke-on-Trent District

District Chair: Revd Helen R. Kirk

Deputy Chair: Revd Yvonne J. Pearson

Deputy Chair: Revd Liz J. Singleton

Synod Secretary: Mr Ian C. White

Presbyteral Synod Secretary and Assistant Synod Secretary: Revd J. Paul Parker

District Safeguarding Officer: Ms Chris Lewis

District Treasurer: Mr Glenn Parkes MBE

District Mission Enabler: Revd David Willis

District Digital Enabler: Mr Robin Perry

District Administrator and PA to the Chair: Mr Rob Glassonbury

The District Centre is based at Broad Lane Methodist Church, Bishops Wood, Nantwich. Through lockdown and beyond, the District Administrator has been working from home with core hours of 9:30 to 11:30am weekday mornings and seeking to ensure the smooth running of the District and the support of the Circuits, ministers and lay leaders of the Circuits by providing resources and information and acting as a hub for the life of the District.

Give thanks for:

- the ongoing work of district officers as they seek to enable and encourage circuits and churches in their calling to share the good news of Jesus Christ in their localities.

Please pray for:

- the district officers named above and their faithful ministry;
- the outworking of the Connexional “God For All”, “Walking With Micah” and “Justice, Dignity and Solidarity” initiatives;
- the District Synod, District Policy Committee, District Resourcing for Mission Group (responsible for handling grant requests), District Safeguarding Board and Safeguarding Officer and other district committees that seek in a variety of ways to support and enable the work of the circuits;
- the Stationing process as the Connexion seeks to continue to cope with the acute shortage of ordained presbyters.

Prayer: *Faith (St. Benedict)*

Gracious and Holy Father,

give us the wisdom to discover You, the intelligence to understand You,

the diligence to seek after You, the patience to wait for You,

eyes to behold You, a heart to meditate upon You, and a life to proclaim You,

through the power of the Spirit of Jesus, our Lord, Amen.

DAY 31

The Methodist Connexion

Please pray for:

- The Revd Gill Newton, President of the Methodist Conference 2023/2024;
- Deacon Kerry Scarlett, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, 2023/2024;
- The Secretary of Conference, The Revd Dr Jonathan R. Hustler, the Assistant Secretary of Conference The Revd Michaela Youngson, and all who hold Connexional Office;
- the Methodist Conference 2024 in Leeds, and all who will plan and lead it;
- The Revd Helen Cameron, President Designate of the Conference in 2024/2025, and Vice-President Designate Mrs Carolyn Godfrey as they prepare for their year of office to start in July 2024;
- members of the Connexional Team based in London and Manchester, and Cliff and Queen's Colleges.



This Prayer Handbook, together with the Connexional Prayer Handbook (copies available from The Methodist Book Centre, Gitana Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 1DY), is an invaluable way of supporting and holding one another in prayer.

It is also a way of discovering the rich fabric of our District, the very many ways in which people are seeking to serve God, and the Spirit-led hopes, dreams and visions being explored and developed.

This Handbook is available electronically on the District Website.

Paper copies can be ordered by post by sending 50p per copy plus 60p P&P to:

The Methodist District Centre, Bishops Wood, Nantwich, CW5 7QD

Prayer Handbook Editor: Mrs Sue Taylor who would welcome any constructive feedback.

Cover Photo: *papaver rhoeas* (common poppy) which, when the petals open, reveals the hidden treasure of the cross inside.