

Dear Friends,

Wasn't it good to be together at the end of June for a good sing with the Winterley Methodist Brass Band, a picnic together, and sunshine, scripture, and escapology! Plus craft activities to explore our theme. A big thank you to Broomhall and Sound for their hospitality, and the lay workers for their crafts. Most of all, a big thank you to God who smiled on us, and in whose name we gathered.

It took me many years as a teenage Christian to realise the faith wasn't just about me and my relationship with God, but we and our journey of faith together. I was taught to pray by a Roman catholic priest, but it was in prayer meetings with others I learnt the depth of fellowship. Jesus called people by name but he called them into a group of disciples. The gospel stories tell of 12 named men and a group of women - some of whom are named - who were often closely gathered around Jesus. They heard him teach, saw him at work, learnt from him and gathered round him at the end of the day, praying together and began mission together, being sent out in twos. That group in the gospel stories formed the embryonic church - later sharing their experience of his resurrection and meeting together for prayer and worship in houses and the temple courts to share their faith and welcome others into their number. Paul's favourite image of the church in the New Testament is the body - hands and feet, eyes and ears working together under Christ as head to form the church.

We live in a world of subtle individualism - famous people are praised for their achievements, or examined for their wealth. TV personality shows have people competing against each other either in a sewing room, on a dance floor, or a love island. Our summer news has been dominated by the choice of our next prime minister - again, a personality based contest that's feeling increasingly presidential.

We are also living through a summer in which it is impossible to deny the effects of the climate emergency - around the world we must act together to try and save each other from drought, fire, storms, and increasing numbers of refugees, as people in huge numbers seek to escape some dangers and find much sought after sanctuary. Only together will nations and communities find ways to solve these huge problems and increasing emergencies. I believe it is time to be still, and see the world for the fragile planet that it is, it is time to seek the soul of creation, and rediscover faithfulness to the creator.

British people together led the industrial revolution with the first huge wave of carbon emissions as we powered industry by coal; we mined, built, and forged an empire that briefly dominated the planet. Together people gathered into Trade Unions and fought for health and safety, humane working conditions and ever fairer wages. Human society has achieved mass education, clean water, farming to feed the multitudes, peace in Europe and across continents, national independence movements, and incredible achievements such as space travel and moon landings. As I write, the Commonwealth games are opening in Birmingham, a great celebration of togetherness amongst nations that share a history.

We are at our best when we work together. The word Christian is about a unity with Jesus - who is 'other', and the word Church is a verb as well as a noun - it's about doing togetherness. We often call it fellowship. Our Primitive Methodist Heritage reminds us of

the power of passionate prayer as people sought the Lord together, and having found the Lord worked passionately together for his Kingdom.

The challenges facing us are huge, and we must face them together. We are a Methodist Circuit - that is a grouping of churches, whose primary role is to share the resources we have together as we share God's mission to the world. We have many small churches in our circuit who find it increasingly difficult exist alone, we need each other, and we need to work together for our common good and the purpose of mission. One of the challenges that faces us as we decline (and

we must be honest about decline, like the climate emergency, the days are gone of denying it and hoping it won't get worse) is how to work together. I believe it remains a good idea for a few small churches to talk together about being one Church Council - exploring creatively how to use people and buildings for mission, but I know not everyone agrees with me! For some years we have shared in small grouping of Local Mission areas, with a variety of success across the circuit. The Circuit Meeting in June approved a plan to form the circuit into three new Mission Hubs, and each hub would be given the salary for a full time equivalent lay employee - the challenge is for each hub to pray together and discern together what those new posts might look like. We hope to encourage some part time community workers who will liaise with the council and other bodies in partnerships that will enhance our communities. We hope some of them will be pastors to care for declining churches and elderly people. We hope that some may increase our contact with families and children to share faith and grow the church. It may be that some develop particular gifts and ministries such as music and worship. It may be that some are pioneers who start new work outside the box of what we call traditional church life.

This is the gift and the challenge we now face - and we must face it together. There is much freedom to be creative - churches have to talk together, dream together, work together, get together, and together hear the whisper of God's holy spirit calling us so that we can respond together.

The details of the roll out of the mission hubs, and dates of initial meetings this September are elsewhere in this newsletter. I hope you can prayerfully respond to this news, and find ways of responding together - it's a huge challenge, but together with God we will find our way.

As Charles Wesley Wrote:

*1 All praise to our redeeming Lord,  
who joins us by his grace,  
and bids us, each to each restored,  
together seek his face.*

*2 He bids us build each other up;  
and gathered into one,  
to our high calling's glorious hope,  
we hand in hand go on.*

Rev Rob Hilton.

PS - I am training to run the London Marathon this year - I must be mad! I'm asking for Sponsorship for Brain Tumour Research (A great example of working together for good) who our family obviously benefitted from in 2019. If you feel you could sponsor me the link

is below, or find it on my Facebook page. I'm happy to come and talk about my running challenge, and our journey through cancer treatment to this time of fund raising for charity - just ask for an appointment. I will also accept cash and direct donations if that's easier. Thank you.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Rob-Hilton2?fbclid=IwAR3n4q5oia7dtw8Gb43TL0-LX22fzaYI5TlbLUtUcXLSzu57Isjoil0ECbA>

## **The way forward – Circuit Mission Strategy for working together for a Faithful and Fruitful Future**

*Standing Order 500:*

*The Circuit is the primary unit in which Local Churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help.*

Cheshire South Circuit Leadership team (CLT) presented 3 papers at the Circuit Meeting in June to be considered together as a single proposal to enable the members and Churches within the Circuit to focus on mission while continuing to provide fellowship for existing members.

### **Financial Proposal:**

It is proposed to **reduce the assessment by 25% for 1 year**. This will be followed by a change in the way that the assessment is calculated in future. The reduction in Circuit income will be funded by the sale of some Circuit Properties.

### **Mission Hub Proposal:**

It is proposed to merge the existing mission areas and form **3 new mission Hubs**. Circuit staff in each hub will work together to nurture faith and mission across the whole hub, using their gifts for the benefit of all. The proposed Mission Hubs are:

- Sandbach & Alsager Mission Hub
- West Rural (Borders & Wrenbury) & Nantwich Mission Hub
- Crewe & Rope Green Mission Hub

### **Lay Staff Proposal:**

It is proposed that each Mission Hub receives a **full time lay worker/pastor** to focus on mission and growing churches within their hub through pastoral work, leading midweek worship and involvement in community focused projects. This will be a Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) post and the hours may be shared between more than one person in each hub. These posts will be in addition to the hours already worked by lay workers in the Circuit and will be funded by the sale of some circuit property. The new role is not the same as the lay pastoral roles being explored by the Methodist Conference and each Mission Hub will be able to tailor their job description to meet the needs of their particular area.

### **Moving Forward:**

These 3 papers, which constitute a single proposal for the way forward, were discussed at the Circuit Meeting to explore how they will affect members and churches "on the ground". The reduction in assessment for the year was welcomed as all churches are struggling with falling membership and increased energy bills. The creation of new Mission Hubs was also positively received, as churches have found it hard to maintain relationships with each other across such a large circuit.

The Meeting agreed with the direction proposed by the CLT and gave their blessing for the work to start

### **Next Steps:**

A meeting will be held in each of the new Mission Hubs at the end of September to look at the way forward in more detail. The meetings will each be facilitated by Rev David Willis, our new District Mission Enabler who lives in Crewe and introduced himself to the Circuit Meeting via a video. All are welcome to attend and we hope that there is a good representation of people from across each mission hub area.

The dates for the Mission Hub meetings are:

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September** - West Rural (Borders & Wrenbury) & Nantwich, 7pm, Audlem

**Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September** - Sandbach & Alsager, 7pm, venue tbc

**Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September** - Crewe & Rope Green, 7pm, St Stephens

*Please forward information to be put into the next Circuit Newsletter to Circuit Administrator, [1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com](mailto:1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com) or phone **07598 580541***

*Thank you*

## Poole Methodist Chapel Quiet Garden & Labyrinth

Wettenhall Road, Poole, Nantwich CW5 6AL

### Teas in the Garden

Wednesdays in August, 2-4pm

Why not join us in August on a Wednesday afternoon? Homemade cakes and scones, gift stall



The primary vision of the Quiet Garden Movement is to initiate and resource a network of local opportunities for prayer, silence, reflection and appreciation of beauty; for learning about Christian spirituality; and for experiencing creativity and healing in the context of God's love.



The **Methodist** Church 

**P.A to the Superintendent Minister and Circuit Administrator  
in Cheshire South Circuit**

20 hours/week, (£11,440p/a)

Permanent

Cheshire South Methodist Circuit requires a Personal Assistant to the Superintendent Minister and an Administrator for the Cheshire South Circuit (one post).

Cheshire South Methodist Circuit supports the mission of 22 churches and additional circuit projects across Cheshire from Alsager and Sandbach into the borders of Wales and Shropshire.

For more information and an application pack please email:

*[1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com](mailto:1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com)*

Applications by **12 noon 24<sup>th</sup> August**, interviews **31st August**, role to begin as soon as possible.

