

# Praise and Protest



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

2024-2025



## DAY 1

## Chair of District: Revd Helen Kirk

Sometimes it can be hard to know what to pray or how to pray.

We watch in horror and helplessness as violence continues in Gaza, Ukraine and others places throughout our world. We live with the perpetual anxiety of climate crisis and wonder what difference we can make. We are deeply concerned about the desperate social issues we see in our communities and long to transform lives.

And so, we have trust in God, whose love is unconditional and whose hope is eternal and we pray, not for easy answers, but for divine presence.

When I struggle to know what to pray, I find ancient prayers and oft sung hymns can be helpful and therefore I commend to you Alan Gaunt's hymn as a framework for your devotion on the first day of the month.

We pray for peace,  
but not the easy peace  
built on complacency  
and not the truth of God.  
We pray for real peace,  
the peace God's love alone can seal.

We pray for peace,  
but not the cruel peace  
leaving God's poor bereft  
and dying in distress;  
we pray for real peace,  
enriching all the human race.

We pray for peace,  
and not the evil peace  
defending unjust laws  
and nursing prejudice,  
but for the real peace  
of justice, mercy, truth and love.

*Continued...*

We pray for peace:  
holy communion  
with Christ our risen Lord  
and every living thing;  
God's will fulfilled on earth  
and all creation reconciled.

We pray for peace,  
and, for the sake of peace,  
look to the risen Christ,  
who gives the grace we need  
to serve the cause of peace  
and make our own self-sacrifice.

God, give us peace;  
if you withdraw your love  
there is no peace for us,  
nor any hope of it.  
With you to lead us on,  
through death or tumult, peace will come.

## DAY 2

### **Superintendent**

Revd Gordon Gresswell

### **Ministers**

Revd Alison Crookes

Deacon Michael Doherty

Deacon Suzie Sale

Revd J. Neil Stacey

Revd Susan Banks

(C of E)

Revd Mark Elder (Baptist)

Revd Ceri Gardner (URC)

### **Supernumeraries**

Revd John Carr

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**

*Community & Family*

*Worker:*

Nicola Brown

*Administration:*

Liz Barton

Heather Oulton

Daniel Raja

## North Cheshire (11/1)

The North Cheshire Circuit is made up of more than 20 congregations (including two in MHA homes) in many different contexts: the city of Chester, the town of Runcorn, large and small villages; ecumenical partnerships with MHA homes.

### **Give thanks for:**

- new staff coming to the circuit;
- continuing commitment to helping refugees, asylum seekers and all those needing sanctuary;
- work reaching out into local communities: with schools and places of welcome.

### **Please pray for:**

- new attempts to work together in the different parts of the circuit;
- the continuing development of the initiative to create an outdoor reflective space in Mickle Trafford;
- the development of small groups for learning and caring across the circuit;
- the connections made with people through our commitment to be inclusive and justice-seeking;
- the victims of injustice – in our own society and across the world.

*God of justice, mercy and grace,  
give us eyes to see others as you see them;  
give us hearts which burn with your  
compassion;  
and give us hands which reach out with your  
life-changing kindness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

## DAY 3

### **Superintendent**

Revd Janet Aspey

### **Ministers**

Deacon Tim Coleman

Deacon Shirley Hassall

Revd Allen Moyo

Revd Alma Fritchley (URC)

Revd Paul Withington

(CofE)

### **Supernumeraries**

Revd Pat A. Billsborrow

Revd Dr Andrew E. Pratt

Deacon Annie Trembling

### **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 and 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 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. 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 Andrew Webb

### **Ministers**

Revd Nic Langton-Miller

Revd Anna Carrington

Revd Yanyan Case

### **Supernumeraries**

Revd Dr Keith Davies

Revd Margaret Eaton

Revd Andrew Lindley

Revd Dr Philip Lockett

Revd Pat Percival

### **Lay Workers**

Margaret Quine

Becky Taylor

Lynn Tindale

Julia Tomes

## **Dane & Trent (11/5) (1)**

The Dane & Trent Circuit is steeped in Primitive Methodist history. Our circuit is made up of sixteen churches from Biddulph and 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. Our churches are not just buildings, but we are the people of God, disciples and stewards, today looking to follow Christ in building the Kingdom and caring for God's world.

As we begin a new Connexional year, we are delighted to be finally fully staffed, each member of our ministerial team bringing different gifts and graces. We welcome Revd Andrew Webb as our new Superintendent and Revd Anna Carrington as a probationer.

We are located within some beautiful areas, but it is the people, lay and ordained, who make Dane & Trent Circuit what it is and we thank God for the willingness of so many to serve God in this place.

Throughout the circuit, we are exploring new ways of 'being church' and different ways in which we can engage and support God's people. 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 look with anticipation to the future knowing that God goes before us. We place our trust in our triune God, and ask that the Holy Spirit may continue to lead and inspire us.

## DAY 5

## Dane & Trent (11/5) (2)

### Give thanks for:

- Revd Andrew Webb;
- Revd Anna Carrington;
- the Circuit intentionally seeking God's guidance to enable us to see where and how we need to change;
- new places for new people taking place across our circuit and the exciting possibilities of more beginning;
- the prayerful encouragers in the Circuit;
- the faithful who support the work in the Circuit through prayer.

### Please pray:

- for our staff team as they begin to work together in leading the circuit;
- 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; purposefully seeking ways to engage and support people in our local areas;
- that we might discern the gifts of your people and encourage them to grow.

*Holy God,*

*Once again, we step out in faith with you surrounding us. We thank you for the churches and people of our circuit and the opportunities you continue to provide for us to share the Good News of the Gospel. Although we are all different, help us to be united in our love for you.*

*Make us attentive to your still small voice speaking to us and though us. May we know your will for your Kingdom in this area of the country.*

*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 position of County Ecumenical Officer came to an end in September 2023, causing some difficulties with the ecumenical scene. We are now with our friends in Merseyside, and although the new arrangement does seem to be working reasonably well, there have been some teething troubles and there is room for improvement.

Your prayers for the difficulties to ease enabling us to work together better would be appreciated.

We praise God that we are all one in Christ, and together, in God's name, we will protest against wrongdoing and injustice, including areas in church life where we see this happening.

**Let us pray:**

*In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray for God's divine wisdom. Give us a deep sense of unity, born out of sincere love and mutual respect. In our differences and weaknesses, may we remember grace, and when we stumble, grant us the strength to journey on. May we be one in purpose and spirit, and may we show the values of our kingdom in our journey here on earth.*

*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 making links with community agencies and the council officials in our area. He covers part of the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District, part of the Nottingham and Derby District and the Birmingham District as well as the southern part of our District. Ours is his smallest area.

### **We give thanks for:**

- Robert as he continues to lead us in looking at the things we are able to do together, especially making links with Christian Fellowships who are not part of the established denominations, so that together we can share the Good News of Jesus Christ in our localities. It is good when together we can praise God and give thanks for the ways in which we are led to serve and to share in words and deeds the message which Christ entrusted to us;
- the work of the chaplains in our area. For 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. We also pray for 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. We also give thanks for the chaplains in the more rural areas who attend the agricultural meetings.

### **We pray:**

- for links with community groups, that together we may be people seeking to bring help for those in hardship and need;
- for those who are working for debt justice to help those who have been exploited in diverse ways when already in financial difficulties;
- for 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. We need to be ready to contact our new MPs and encourage them to be aware of the needs in the communities which they represent. To name the areas where there are major drug problems for example, and ask them to act;
- for a wider vision to find ways to welcome and meet some of the needs of those who have come into our area from Ukraine and other war-torn countries;
- that we will always seek justice and peace for all who suffer abuse in any way. We pray that our churches will be known as 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 be more aware of those around us, including those who are isolated from others. Lord, stir us in your service and may our lives bring praise to your name. 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

### Superintendent

Revd Rob Hilton

### Ministers

Revd Donna-Marie

Broadbent-Kelly

Revd Sarah Butcher

Revd Robin Fox

Revd Carolyn Lawrance

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 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

## Cheshire South (11/8) (1)

We have faced some challenges this last year and have embarked upon mission planning for the future. We are looking to a balanced and sustainable budget and mission-focused staffing with a mix of lay and ordained staff alongside our team of stewards and others who give time and energy above and beyond. Some property schemes and new staff have been approved and embarked upon to focus a new approach to mission. Thanks for praying with us and 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 churches are grouped into three Mission Networks to facilitate resources for mission. Engagement with poverty and deprived areas both inspires and challenges churches in the Circuit; recent surveys of churches and communities in the Sandbach & Alsager Network have revealed levels of deprivation previously overlooked, and ways of serving that have been affirmed. Most of our churches are small and rural and seeking to find ways to continue as everyone gets older.

### Give thanks for:

- the life and ministry of Revd Jim Needham who died in March 2024;
- our Local Preachers who lead worship and preach faithfully in our churches, and especially for our newly-admitted Local Preacher Janet Martin-Jackson and our Local Preacher on-trial, Lesley Peake;
- the creativity and variety of worship that features in the Circuit, including the Contemporary Worship in Sandbach and Haslington, Café Churches in Betley and Woore, Messy Churches in Rope Green and Copenhall, Lego Church and the Second Sunday Family Brunch in Alsager;
- the faithful service and leadership of our Circuit Stewards;
- the developing community at The Haven coffee shop in Crewe;
- the growth and development of the Dinner Hub in Alsager;
- the fruitful relationship between Sandbach Churches Together which makes the Foodbank and Pantry in the town possible;
- the Chaplaincy ministry of Supernumerary Revd Charlotte Lorimer at Leighton Hospital;
- the completion of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage by Revd Robin Fox.

## DAY 9

### Lay Workers

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

### Lay Pastor in training

Jane Parker-Aiken

### 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 Cliffe (Finance)  
Dr Geoff Dickinson  
Briony Myles-Hook

### 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)

### Please pray for:

- the discernment, development and funding of New Places for New People work in the Circuit;
- our Circuit Leadership Team as it implements a mission plan for a sustainable future - we ask for faithfulness, wisdom, patience, and discernment as we seek God's guidance through this time of profound change;
- peace through the times of dying, and hope in times of new life and work;
- our Local Preachers as they lead worship and preach, and particularly for on-trial preacher, Lesley;
- our children and young people's work to share the gospel in relevant ways, particularly praying for our Messy Churches, Forest Churches, Lego Church, Toddler Groups and the Circuit group going to 3Generate, as well as the lay workers and volunteers involved in this ministry;
- the Kingdom work which:  
feeds the hungry at Alsager's Dinner Hub and the Food Bank and Pantry in Sandbach;  
includes young people and parents through learning woodcraft at The Lightworks;  
shares faith through partnership with the Oakhanger Project outdoor pursuits;
- activities and events that seek to find relevant ways to discuss faith and current issues, e.g., Movies with a Message at Wells Green, discussion groups at The Haven, Faith for the Future at Wesley Place, and Bible studies at Coppenhall, amongst others;
- Revd Donna Broadbent-Kelly as she prepares for her sabbatical in the summer;
- a deeper sense of prayerfulness around our Circuit.

*God who loves us, You call us to faithful living.  
May we focus on mission in everything we do;  
Enable us to discern before we decide, keep us in unity  
as we act, and Inspire us to seek justice for others  
more than comfort for ourselves. Give us the courage  
to let go when we need to, and find new ways together  
of delighting in your creative presence in our midst.  
In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

## DAY 10

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

**EDI Officer:** Revd Julie Hassall

The Methodist Church cherishes its rich heritage of praise and protest, and today maintains that commitment to be a truly inclusive and welcoming Church. In this District we are proud to embrace the Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) which 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.

During the past year we have been sharing around the Chester & Stoke-on-Trent Methodist District the training which many in our churches have been invited to participate in from the perspective of particular roles. Almost 300 people have joined in with that training and I am grateful especially to Revd Simon Sutcliffe for his time as our designated learning officer is helping to plan and deliver the training.

Those sessions I hope proved helpful to many of you as you continue to think and pray about matters of inclusivity. We were reminded of our unity in Christ which continues to call us to praise and protest in the ways we live out our life together and serve the present age. Those who participated were encouraged to make use of the 'Equality Impact Assessment' in planning new activities, to reflect on '*who might be impacted if we did things in this or that way?*'

We were invited to slow down our decision-making processes, to take a breath before making judgments on activities within our communities as part of our commitment to really celebrating diversity. For myself, I was heartened by the number of people who fed back that they had found it a useful time, and asked if the material can be shared more widely in local churches. The answer, of course is an emphatic **YES!!** The more widely the conversation is shared, the greater will be the benefit of the wisdom and prayer surrounding matters of EDI. Follow this link for access to the material you can use in small groups and fellowships: [www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/the-inclusive-methodist-church/training-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/mandatory-edi-training-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/training-resources/training-resources-english-language-version/](http://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/the-inclusive-methodist-church/training-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/mandatory-edi-training-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/training-resources/training-resources-english-language-version/)

As you begin the round of church councils this year, remember to include EDI on your agendas and talk to one another about the things you are planning/doing. Think about who might be excluded from what you are doing and what you might do about that. Matters of EDI/JDS within our District are not about ticking boxes on forms to say that we have done the training required of us – but are a living, breathing part of how we show God's love in the places where we live and work. This is about being the very best that we can be! If you need any help or have any questions/thoughts to share, please do get in touch.

*Continued...*

### **God of grace, we give thanks for:**

- those who have engaged with the EDI training during this year, and have seen the positive impact of reflective practice for our shared ministry;
- all who have the courage to re-examine old ways of working in a spirit of openness to learning.

### **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, give us the gift of courage in learning new ways of working, passion in serving our communities, and a deep desire to grow into the people you called us to be – big hearted, vulnerable, generous and gracious followers of Christ. Help us to be open to learning more about you, seeking your way, and defending those whose voices have not yet been heard – that your Kingdom may grow. Amen.*

Revd Julie Hassall – [julie.hassall@methodist.org.uk](mailto:julie.hassall@methodist.org.uk) – 01538 751907

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## **DAY 11 Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism**

‘One day children were brought to Jesus in the hope he would lay hands on them and pray over them. The disciples shooed them off. But Jesus intervened: “Let the children alone, don’t prevent them from coming to me. God’s kingdom is made up of people like these.”’ (*The Message: Matthew 19: 13-14*)



We at Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum have been working hard to make our site (both physical and virtual) accessible to all. Part of this mission is to become a playful museum. This means giving ourselves and our visitors permission to explore creatively and fearlessly. You may find at the museum some obvious ‘playful’ touches such as a dedicated children’s space, free activities for sensory-seekers, a welcome to furry companions such as dogs and bears, but there is a more profound ‘permission’ at play (forgive the pun): to allow ourselves freedom to experience the story of the remarkable Christian social justice movement of the Primitive Methodist (PM) Society.

*Continued...*

Whilst understanding that we should treat our artefacts with respect to preserve them for future seekers, and that the PM story is both of its time and with a human and eternal resonance, we permit ourselves to touch, move freely in the space, make noise and be radical.

Our theme this year is 'Childhood', for we celebrate 200 years since the first publication of the Primitive Methodist Children's Magazine which opened up new vistas to young minds. We continue this work today as we open up the PM story to new audiences, young and old.

**We give thanks for:**

- the opportunities to make known the PM story of compassion and justice through our partnership with the Probation Service as our travelling exhibition continues to tour England and Wales;
- our deepening relationships with specialist schools and alternative provisions to provide a safe inspiring space for creative, informal learning and support;
- our loyal volunteers, friends and trustees and their shared passion for our work;
- Hassall Road Book Emporium that continues to support the project.

**Please pray for:**

- the challenges that maintaining a heritage site bring, especially our fundraising efforts;
- a continued increase in visitors and a recognition of the relevance in an uncertain, unjust world of what we can learn from the Primitive Methodist story;
- our outreach to the local community through our Peace Garden project and other activities, that they will be a blessing;
- that local preachers and other church members will be inspired to come to learn, reflect and play.

***God of the marginalized who spoke into the hearts of working women, men and children, and whose Spirit filled them with hope, courage and compassion, speak to us now.***

***Renew in us a hunger for justice and peace within our communities, our nation and the world. Embolden us to speak out against unfair practices that prevent the flourishing of individuals.***

***Open our minds and hearts to all we can learn from our history and tradition and unbind us from prejudice and cynicism so that we may move forward together towards the fulfilment of your Kingdom.***

***Wonder-Creator endow us with childlike curiosity and delight in all we encounter and make us unafraid to lead others to Jesus. 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.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12: 28-29 (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.*





**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 including such initiatives such as City Celebrations and the annual Civic Prayer Breakfast (which attracted over 350 people in 2024). 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:

- CareLink – helps 300 lonely and isolated older people to socialise and maintain healthy independence in their own homes;
- Restart – offers support, housing and spiritual development to 120 homeless people and, specifically, ex-offenders;
- Money Matters – helps 200 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 and at risk of exclusion in society. 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 Roger Baker  
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. 6000 employees. The Methodist Church is a lively, community focussed Christian family with a lively and growing children's and youth work. Due to various factors we are seeking God's way forward as a church and circuit and are in discussions with various parties to outwork God's purposes and plans for our future. We continue to reach those marginalised by the oppression of sin and the world's injustices by showing the unique love and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is able to save.

We do this by preaching the Gospel and demonstrating it through our work with Christians Against Poverty, supporting Christian Concern, the baby-loss group, youth street outreach, toddler group, ministering to the agricultural community through our weekly livestock market outreach, connections with the local Air Training Corp, baby banks, biker outreach, and training and enabling young leaders to grow in their faith. We enjoy a growing men's fellowship gathering monthly in a local pub and weekly in a local field for food, fellowship, pastoral care and prayer.

Once again this September we are ministering in one of our local estates with another visit from the Extreme Tour. They are a group of American rapper evangelists and the locals absolutely love them! 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 seeks to bring as much glory to God as we can.

### **Give thanks for:**

- the growing work with our 20 to 30 year olds at MDMC;
- the six men we baptised in the River Tern, five of whom are in their 20s & 30s;
- women's Breakout and for lives being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit bringing healing and freedom;
- the chaplaincy work with the local ATC, 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;
- the on-going work with Christians Against Poverty in MD and surrounding areas;

*Continued...*

- the Big Blue Bus and its witness around the area including a new work at Prees Heath amongst the biking community;
- 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 which continues to grow;
- the growing connections at Hinstock and for Paul & Ness and the team as they continue this valuable outreach;
- God's goodness, faithfulness and provision to fulfil His calling to share the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ despite the oppression and injustice we have faced during the year.

**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 on Fairfields and the outreach in September;
- the continued blessing and development of baby-loss group headed by Kat;
- 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;
- 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;
- the new Christians to become committed disciples and members of the local churches;
- 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 Christ alone;
- Revd Mark and all the church leaders to faithfully lead God's people and make more disciples of Jesus whatever the cost;
- for the deep healing of the Holy Spirit for all those who have suffered trauma over the last year.

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” (1 Thess.5: 23-24 NKJV)

*Dear Father, thank you that there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus.*

*May we be enabled as your people to love, serve and bless all those we seek to reach out to in your holy name. Thank you for the power of your Holy Spirit to rise above all those ungodly powers and strongholds that seek to silence and thwart us. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you continue to build your church and thank you that the gates of hell shall not prevail against us. Amen.*

## DAY 15

## Potteries Mission (11/15) (1)

### **Superintendent**

Revd Jenny Dyer

### **Ministers**

Revd Joe Adams

Revd Paul Parker

Revd Pam Roberts

Deacon Rachel Thomas-Prasad

### **Lay Workers**

*Lay Pastor:*

Paul Owen

*Children and Families*

*Worker:*

Matt Cooke

*Administrator:*

Francesca Gravano

As anyone who visits Stoke will realise, it is a post-industrial conurbation. Its heritage of pits and 'potbanks' (potteries) is visible everywhere, but the spoil heaps from the pits have been redeveloped into nature reserves and the potbanks have become museums. The town centres have many boarded-up shops and there is evidence of deprivation everywhere. Many fine buildings are falling into decay, including former churches. Nevertheless, Stokies have a strong sense of local pride, often focussed on one of the two football clubs.

The Potteries Mission Circuit is one of two Stoke circuits, and comprises sixteen churches, stretching from Brown Edge in the north to Trentham and Blythe Bridge in the south. Most are in the 'six towns' but some are slightly beyond the boundaries of Stoke-on-Trent in rural Staffordshire.

### **Please give thanks for and pray for:**

- the foodbank outlets at Temple Street, Tunstall and West End;
- the new community garden at Temple Street;
- our 'night shelter' in Burslem, offering meals and support to those experiencing homelessness;
- children, families and young people's groups at Blythe Bridge, Norton and Tunstall;
- new Junior Churches at Broadway, Norton and Tunstall;
- Open-the-Book teams going into schools in both the north and the south of the Circuit;
- Deacon Rachel Thomas-Prasad, our newest staff member, arriving in 2024 to lead Longton Central Hall and Fegg Hayes chapel in mission and outreach;
- Matt Cooke, who took over as Children and Families Worker in summer 2024 and is working with Broadway, Fegg Hayes, Norton and Tunstall;
- 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;
- Helen Snashall, the outgoing leader of the Fegg Hayes Hub, as she moves to be a URC community worker in Huddersfield, and her successor at Fegg Hayes, Laura Carter;
- ambitious plans at Longton Central Hall to seek a partnership with a housing association to provide affordable apartments;
- faithful congregations, some confident and some fragile, in our towns, suburban neighbourhoods and villages;
- our three new worship leaders in training.

Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;  
we are the clay, and you are our potter;  
we are all the work of your hand.  
*(Isaiah 64: 8)*

*We thank you Lord for the Potteries,  
their past and their present;  
this powerhouse of the industrial revolution  
and the potters and paintresses  
who played their part in the planting of our congregations.*

*We praise you for that form of Methodism that was called 'Primitive'  
that poured forth from this place  
and proclaimed and published your life-changing power  
throughout the nineteenth century.*

*We protest against the problematic, post-industrial landscape  
of our city and people's lives,  
against poverty and deprivation,  
against the painfully high numbers of children in care,  
against depression and lack of hope.*

*In this present age we pray for positivity,  
and practical pastoral support for people and communities.*

*We pray for the power of your Gospel  
to keep the kilns of our faith and passion burning.*

*You are our potter and we are your clay.  
You have not finished with us yet.  
Never cease to form and refashion us  
to play our part in your perfect will.*

*Revd Jenny Dyer*

## DAY 17

## Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB)

### **District Executive Committee:**

Mavis Bailey. Sylvia Harrison, Margaret Lindley, Ruth Parrott, Kath Roberts, Chris Thompson

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 Trustees meeting. There is a Trustee for each area and an Ambassador for each District. The Trustees meet twice a year, and once with the Ambassadors on Zoom. We are now in the area which comprises of: Chester & Stoke-on-Trent, Liverpool, North Wales and Manchester & Stockport. Margaret Lindley is our Trustee.

### **Give thanks and praise for:**

- the friendships made at MWiB events and meetings open to all - our inclusion and diversity;
- the opportunities to link with women throughout the world through Conferences and through the Easter Offering Service;
- our contributions to the MWiB grants which enable, resource, empower, and equip women both in this country, and in those served by our Mission Partners;
- our initiatives to combat Period Poverty by asking all churches to provide Period Products in their cloakrooms.

MWiB works for global social justice, so **please pray for:**

- our protests against injustice to be heard and acted upon;
- those who are in need and have few resources to provide for their families;
- those who are living through war, terror and violence;
- our leadership team as they make new working connections in our District and Area.

*Mother and Father God,*

*Help us to listen to your voice, that we may learn to serve you with open minds and hearts, and to prayerfully act against the injustices we see in our society. We pray for those who have no voice, for women who feel they have few rights, for those who struggle to make ends meet and for those who are abused. We ask that as the Body of Christ, we may contribute to making this a fairer world, where each person is respected and loved. 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

Becky Garner

Nick Jeffries

Becky Poole

James Shaw

Liz Thompson

Sandy Wagg

## Stoke-on-Trent Mission (11/18)

### Give thanks for:

- God's strengthening presence as we seek to serve him faithfully;
- the faithfulness of the many people who serve sacrificially;
- our new Circuit Safeguarding Officer;
- new missional opportunities being explored.

### Please pray for:

- several new staff members across our Circuit as they settle in;
- guidance as we seek to discern God's will;
- a growing sense of 'family' as new people join us.

*Dear Lord,*

*We pray for Godly wisdom and guidance as we seek to serve you faithfully, that we would learn more of your will and ways. As we endeavour to be Christ centred, we recognise the challenge to be people who genuinely love our communities by working for justice, advocating for those who are ignored and protecting those who are vulnerable. We ask that in the everyday challenges we face as churches and individuals we will continue in your strength, to make a difference. Give us boldness to share in our words and our actions the Good News of Jesus who brings salvation and freedom.*

*Amen.*

## Ministry:

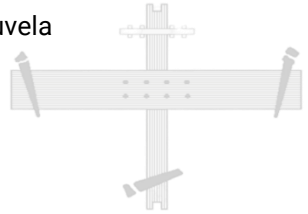
Coordinating and Anglican Chaplain: Revd Stephanie Couvela

Free Church Chaplain: Revd Simon Sutcliffe

Lay Catholic Chaplain: Mr Niall Hammond

Muslim Chaplain: Mrs Rukia Bi

Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistant: Nathaniel Johnson



## Give thanks for:

- the life and work of Keele University; celebrating its 75th anniversary;
- the Universities 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:

- Stephanie as she steps into the additional responsibility of coordinating chaplain;
- the Chaplaincy Team as it navigates changes in staffing and activity;
- the recruitment and ministry of a new Free Church Chaplain;
- 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;
- those who face additional challenges alongside their work or studies especially, mental health and financial difficulties;
- Nathaniel the volunteer chaplaincy assistant as he shares in the life of Keele for a year developing his gifts, whilst exploring ordained ministry within the wider Church;
- staff and student faith groups seeking to nurture discipleship and bear witness in their studies and work.

## 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;
- 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...*



Psalm 24: 1 'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it'

*We praise you God our loving creator!  
For the wonders of the world and the mysteries beyond our knowledge.  
For the richness and diversity of humanity, for all you have made we praise you!  
For all you have done and do within and beyond the church, we praise you!  
We pray for those who share our lives, our loved ones and those we struggle to like.  
Lead us to see your image and likeness in all,  
to respond with love and compassion following the way of Christ.  
Empower us to stand up for those whose image is undermined by prejudice,  
whose value is reduced to their contribution to society,  
or who are rejected just for being the person they were made to be.  
By your dynamic Spirit, embolden our faith and equip us,  
help us to live our lives through your grace  
and to share it with others in all we do, say and are. Amen.*

*Revd James Pritchard (Former Free Church Chaplain)*

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## **DAY 20**

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?

How long will you hide your face from me? (*Psalm 13: 1*)

A number of the Psalms complain to God. They do so because the writer / singer believes that God has let them down, has abandoned them, or brought misfortune upon them. They protest to God for God's lack of care and providence. That protest comes from a place of great faith. They protest to God because they know God is capable of great things, that God is just and merciful – they just don't feel it now! That is why nearly all the protest psalms end in praise – the author knows who they are protesting to.

I will sing to the Lord,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me. (*Psalm 13: 6*)

Why do I have to suffer like this, oh God?  
Why can you not reach down and rescue me?  
I feel lost and abandoned,  
Broken and bruised.  
Others are looking at me and laughing.  
I know you. I know that you are God that flung stars into space,  
Held back the waters and sculpted the mountains.  
You are a just God full of wisdom, love, and mercy.  
You are my God, and I long for you.

*Revd Simon Sutcliffe*

## DAY 21

# Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy

**Lead Chaplain:** Helen Rutter

Our mission is to serve the farming community. We listen, advocate, walk alongside in difficult circumstances, signpost to resources, and raise awareness of the problems farmers face to a wider audience.

This year, we are focusing on resilience in our rural communities by raising awareness of mental health, building confidence together to have difficult conversations, and challenging language that reinforces stigma. We are excited to be partnering with Pwrpas to deliver mental health awareness training in October.

### **Current Challenges**

For many years, farmers have relied on subsidies because the full cost of food production is not recognised. Producing food involves significant expenses: rent, mortgages, energy, labour, feed, seeds, fertilisers, machinery, fencing, storage, and daily operations. Supermarkets have consistently driven down prices, converting these subsidies into cheap food. As these subsidies quickly diminish, many farmers now live below the poverty line unless their businesses are exceptionally secure, putting countless livelihoods at risk and straining family relationships.

Farmers also face intense scrutiny over animal welfare, despite having some of the highest standards globally. Misinformation about hormone and antibiotic use worsens their situation. Sheep thefts and dog attacks add to their stress and sense of being misunderstood.

This year has been especially tough due to adverse weather affecting crops and winter feed for livestock. These pressures lead to poor mental health among farmers, resulting in one of the highest suicide rates of any industry.

It is crucial to recognise and address these challenges, supporting our farmers who continue to provide our food under increasingly difficult circumstances. Their wellbeing is vital for their communities and the entire food supply chain.

In line with this year's theme of "Praise and Protest," inspired by Isaiah's three key actions for becoming a justice-seeking Church, we encourage you to include the following in your prayers:

### **Learn**

Almighty God, guide us to be attentive to Your ways. Help us discern how we can live justly in our local communities and churches. Teach us to understand the challenges faced by our farming communities and inspire us to learn how to support them better.

*Continued...*

## **Seek**

Loving God, we seek Your presence and guidance. Open our eyes to see Your ways and to love our neighbours as ourselves. Show us how to recognise injustice in our midst and give us the courage to act. May we actively look for what You are revealing to us as the Body of Christ, both corporately and personally.

## **Defend**

Merciful God, help us to become more aware of the voices of the marginalised and silenced. We pray for the strength to support others in their protest and to stand up for those who cannot defend themselves. Empower us to get involved and make a difference in the lives of those in our farming communities.

## **Give thanks for:**

- the unwavering dedication of our chaplains and volunteers who tirelessly support our farming communities;
- the resilience and strength of farmers who continue to provide food despite significant challenges;
- partnerships like the one with Pwrpas that help us address mental health issues and build stronger, more supportive communities;

## **Please pray for:**

- farmers facing financial insecurity and the stress it brings to their families;
- the success of our mental health awareness training and other initiatives aimed at building community resilience;
- greater awareness and understanding of the full cost of food production and the challenges faced by farmers.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support for the Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy. It makes such a difference.

*Lord, we lift up our farming communities to you.*

*May your peace and strength sustain them in these challenging times.*

*Help us to be a source of support and advocacy, showing your love and justice in all we do.*

*Guide us to learn, seek, and defend as we strive to build a more inclusive and justice-seeking Church.*

*In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*

## DAY 22

## North Staffordshire (11/22)

### **Superintendent**

Revd Liz Singleton

### **Ministers**

Revd James Pritchard

Revd Joy Ventom

*Keele University Free  
Church Chaplain:*

Revd Simon Sutcliffe

### **Supernumeraries**

Revd Derick Chambers

Revd Richard Parkes

Revd John Taylor

### **Support Staff**

*Circuit Administrator:*

Michelle Bradbury

*Circuit Finance Book*

*Keeper:*

Kaye Chadwick

*Circuit Lay Pastoral*

*Assistant:*

*Vacancy*

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 engage with social and climate justice. Over this Connexional year, we are looking to continue extending the ways in which resources are shared across the Circuit; to further encourage a greater uptake of the resources offered by the District and the Connexion; to explore the possible missional uses of the Methodist Church building in Baldwins Gate; and to enable people to deepen their faith and grow their confidence in sharing their faith.

### **Give thanks for:**

- 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 pastoral care and support shown across the Circuit by ordinary people with extraordinary hearts of love and concern;
- the willingness shown by many to explore new ways of being church.

### **Please pray for:**

- an eagerness and willingness to work together towards better understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus;
- a stirring of hearts and minds that people might respond to the call to serve God through the roles of church and Circuit steward;
- the Circuit Leadership Team as work through a transition period and change of ministers;
- opportunities to open up at Baldwins Gate;
- recently appointed lay employees in the Circuit.

*Lord, we often forget when we pray that the answers we seek might rest with us.  
May we have the eyes to truly see what is happening around us;  
the ears to hear the cries of the poor and the broken;  
the hearts to love beyond our own boundaries;  
and the hands to hold the lost, to embrace the lonely, and to comfort those who  
mourn. Help us when we pray to seek the ways in which we can work in  
partnership with you. Amen.*

## DAY 23

## The District Mission and Ministries Team

**Manager:** Ian White

Since 2012 the 'District Team' has continued to work with a number of Circuits across the District both in forming teams for mission and ministry and also in helping Circuits to build their own teams.

The key purpose is to work with Circuits to find ways of sharing the gospel in challenging 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 and are keen to discuss with Circuits how we might be able to work with them to liaise over specific needs for which members of the District Team will be recruited.

There are succession issues to pray for both in terms of the management of the team for the future but also how the team will be utilised.

### **Give thanks for:**

- continuing positive responses to the involvement of the Teams in Circuits and local churches;
- continued openness across the District to engaging with the Team in a variety of situations and for a variety of reasons;
- all colleagues who have worked with and in the District Team over the past 12 years bringing their own gifts and graces often bringing prophetic words and opportunities to the local churches;
- 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;
- an emphasis on sustainability of the particular 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 of team members across the District;
- circuits and churches as they discern paths of Ministry.

*Loving God,*

*We praise you for ministry across the District – lay and ordained in such a variety of places and styles.*

*Focus our prayers and action in challenging times on your Will, your way and your purposes for your Church and for us as individuals.*

*Make us a justice seeking people seeking your love in an inclusive and loving way.*

*Bless us as we journey together.*

*In the name of Jesus,*

*Amen.*

## DAY 24

## Staffordshire Moorlands (11/24)

### Superintendent

Revd Julie Hassall

### Ministers

Revd Denise Williamson

*Cliff College Principal:*

Revd Ashley Cooper

### Supernumeraries

Revd John Bates

Revd Colin Cooper

Revd John Edwards

Deacon Peter Ogle

Revd Joyce Smith

Revd Anthony Tagg

Revd David Watson

Revd E. Wollaston (URC)

### Lay Staff Team

Janette Barber

Mark Hatcher

Rachel Moore

The Staffordshire Moorlands Circuit is a beautiful area in which to live, to worship, and to serve. The ten Churches of the Circuit are continuing our exploration together of what it means to be a church which is active and vibrant every day of the week, not just on a Sunday. Our Circuit Mission Statement embraces our heritage of praise and protest – encouraging those who worship here to use their voices to offer thanksgiving to God, as well as building real change within communities which is life-enhancing. This we are striving to do through partnerships within local community groups, working with other churches, local and district councils, community support groups, climate action organisations, and many others. Our commitment is to get to know the stories of those who love alongside us and be ready to be those who breathe in God's Kingdom – learning, seeking and defending in big ways and in small ways, day by day.

### Give thanks for:

- the non-faith groups who have called us to witness 'outside' - breaking down barriers which separate us from each other;
- those who exercise ministry within the circuit in ways which are quiet and yet bold, active listening, learning and praying;
- the words of personal testimony which have been shared this year, in natural and normal ways, reaching out into community;
- the leadership and vision of the Circuit Leadership Team in encouraging and listening.

### Please pray for:

- partnerships in schools around the Moorlands - Godly Play, Open the Book, and all the creative ways in which the Gospel is shared;
- those churches which are actively learning to love justly in their local communities;
- those who are struggling to find a voice – and all who are alongside them in solidarity;
- colleagues called to service in new and different ways, praying for energy and vision.

*God of limitless imagination, inspire your church to be a truly inclusive and life-affirming body, where all are cherished and justice shows itself in the ways we learn, seek and defend. Give us courage in living out our vocation, passion in speaking out alongside others, and joy in praising you, our confidence and our hope. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

# DAY 25 Beacon House of Prayer and Christian Centre

**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.

This last year has been encouraging in many ways in the life of the Beacon. Although we no longer meet on a Sunday, we have established community touching points, some healthy rhythms of prayer and sustainable ways of staffing and hosting in the house. Numbers in our community have stabilized as have financial support. There have been opportunities to develop ministry and activities online, and we feel the Beacon continues to be a valuable presence in the city and wider. The Beacon is now much more visible, with a petrol station development just completed on the corner of the land by us. We continue to develop opportunities to serve the churches of the Stoke on Trent and local communities. The beacon hosts special evenings of worship, leads half day retreats, becomes a hub for prayer at Christian festivals, and networks amongst other houses of prayer in the UK.

Our current projects include creating a prayer garden next to the Beacon, and developing a café space on a Friday morning, 'Transformation Café', to offer friendship and prayers for healing to those in the local community. William is in the middle of a year-long prayer mission to visit the 51 capital cities of Europe, to meet Christians and do a prayer walk with the cross in each place.

## **Give thanks for:**

- the seventeen years of continued prayer and presence in the house of prayer in Stoke on Trent, and for all who help maintain its ministry;
- the petrol station and convenience store just opened next to us, a sign of regeneration of retail business in this area;
- all visitors and guests, local and from a distance, who come for refreshment, encounter and the healing touch of Jesus.

## **Please pray for:**

- the launching of the 'Transformation Café' on a Friday morning in the summer, and the opening of the prayer garden space next to our building, that they will be a blessing and oasis for people who use them;
- the opportunities to minister out of the house, especially William as he visits capital cities of Europe, to prayer walk with a cross and pray for God's help and a spiritual awakening across the continent of Europe.

Prayer (from 2 Thessalonians 1: 11 - 12)

*God we pray that you will make us worthy of the calling of the gospel in our time. We ask that you will cause the godly desires and dreams of every congregation to be fruitful, that new kingdom projects will thrive and old kingdom work will be sustained. Prompt and inspire our faith so that the good deeds of your people in this district may bring glory to the name of Jesus. In his name we pray, Amen.*

**District Safeguarding Officer:** Thomas Simm

Safeguarding within our churches remains, as always, a challenge to us all, but key to ensuring that we can welcome, love, care for, serve and protect all those within our communities in a way that pleases the Lord.

**We thank God:**

- for all those who hold responsibility for safeguarding in our churches;
- for hearts that seek God's compassion, strength and justice in all that we do.

**And we pray:**

- whether we are those who hold responsibility for safeguarding, those who have experienced harm or those who pose a risk to others, that it is his light that will guide us in all we do throughout this year.

We take encouragement in this from Ephesians 5: 8 - 10:

*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.*



# DAY 27

# The Book Centre

Gitana Street, Hanley ST1 1TY; 01782 212146; [www.CrFL.co.uk](http://www.CrFL.co.uk)

**Chair of Trustees:** David Pickles    **Manager:** Julie Ann Ellis

Early in 2023, the District Policy Committee decided that it no longer wanted to be the Trustees of the Methodist Book Centre and that it would close unless the business could be transferred to a new charity. Four members of the Management Committee, together with three others of different gifts, set up a new independent charity (registered number 1206463) and in April 2024, the business of the Book Centre was transferred to that new charity which is now trading as:

THE BOOK CENTRE – (Christian Resources for Life)

The Trustees of the new charity are busy planning and implementing enhancements and developments of The Book Centre aiming to achieve an increased witness to the gospel of Christ, an enhanced involvement with churches of all denominations, a greater support to church leaders and a secure future for the business. Yet, at the same time, much remains the same: Thanks to SALTBOX, we operate in the same premises in Gitana Street, and open 10:00am to 4:00pm Monday to Saturday (disabled parking just outside the shop). The same staff team, led by Manager Julie Ann Ellis, are ready and able to provide guidance and help as you search through the same (and improving) well stocked display of books, greetings cards, gifts etc. The phone number is the same (01782 212146), also the website: [www.crfl.co.uk](http://www.crfl.co.uk)

## **Please pray for The Book Centre as it looks to:**

- advance the Christian religion by operating a Christian bookshop to distribute resources, to individuals, groups and church leaders enabling the discovery or development of their Christian faith;
- raise awareness and understanding of Christian beliefs and practices;
- seek out, and present, resources to help educate those interested in social aspects affecting today's world, e.g. climate change, social cohesion etc.;
- help individuals deal with significant life events (birth, marriage, death etc.).

## **Please pray for:**

- the Trustees and Staff as they look to develop the work of the Book Centre in new and imaginative ways;
- each customer who connects with 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 outside of the shop as it makes available Christian Resources for Life in Christ, at Synods, festivals, church celebrations and other gatherings;

(If you would like a bookstall at a forthcoming event, please contact Julie Ann Ellis at the shop.)

## 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 & 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.

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.

### **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.

### **Please pray for:**

- each team member and safety as they serve across the connexion;
- the Learning Network as it seeks to serve the whole church;

*Continued...*

- 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.
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## **DAY 29      Mission around the District**

**District Mission Enabler:** Revd David Willis

Over this last year we have been working hard trying to discern and form our District strategy around New Places for New People (NPNP). It is hoped Connexionally that through partnerships and by resourcing NPNP – new Christian communities can form for those not yet part of an existing church. We often now hear folk in wider society describing themselves as 'spiritual, but not religious', and allowing emergent faith communities that can speak into this reality, in a natural and organic way, feels really important for us moving forward.

There are three principles that we believe need to be central:

1. We identify places of real potential that may be able to form distinct faith communities.
2. Through partnerships with these places and using the resources on offer, create a consistent and intentional presence.
3. Building strong relationships – seek to naturally discover organic ways of engaging with faith (i.e. discover what a Methodist way of Life means/looks like for them)

Allowing things to be 'emergent' though, has been a little scary. As it requires real patience, discerning and listening. Which are not necessarily all qualities I personally revel in. However, as we continue to move forward and the pieces fall into place, it does feel spirit led and that has been so reassuring.

Alongside all of this, over this next Connexional year, I will continue to seek to support all our Local Churches and Circuits in developing their mission and ministry. So, if there is anything I can do to support your church or Circuit do feel free to give me a shout. I don't necessarily have all the answers to hand, but I am more than willing to go on a journey with you so that we may discover them together.

*Continued...*

Contact: Revd David Willis  
david.willis@methodist.org.uk – 07863 953958

**Give thanks for:**

- our great and rich history, and for all that we have inherited. From the stories and testimonies that can be shared from the beginnings of the Primitive movement – to our more recent history of investing in church planting and seeking to become missional faith forming communities;
- the opportunity that we have been given through New Places for New People and for continued 'God for all' Connexional commitments and strategies;
- those in all our churches and Circuits who have a deep heart for mission and ministry;
- those who give their time and their energy;
- those who have been supporting and encouraging me in my work. Being out of Circuit ministry on paper can seem quite lonely, but over the past two years I have found so many welcoming and befriending colleagues and faith communities. Thank you to all of you!

**Please pray:**

- for our plans and approach around New Places for New People. We have a deep desire to create a structure that is responsive, resilient and able to reach those who are seeking;
- that we are able to gain the approval needed from various places to begin to make our plans and dreams into realities. That we may be able to effectively share our vision and hopefully inspire and encourage others;
- that the ground for our next steps is already being prepared, so that we may continue to work in faith;
- for our churches and Circuits as they too wrestle with dreams, ambitions and realities. That we all may find courage, energy and hope no matter the challenge or opportunity.

*Loving God, we thank you that you never change.*

*That you are the same yesterday, today and forever.*

*We thank you that your hand is forever over our lives.*

*Nurturing, guiding, protecting, pointing, and encouraging.*

*Lord, at times it feels like change is all around us and this can be scary.*

*May you always allow us to remember your presence and your calling.*

*May we always remember that you never ask of us more than we are able.*

*May you continue to give us peace in these in-between times.*

*Trusting to hope. Hoping to love and loving most all – no matter what.*

*In Jesus' name. Amen*

## DAY 30

## Chester & Stoke-on-Trent District

District Chair: Revd Helen R. Kirk

Deputy Chair: Revd Liz J. Singleton

Synod Secretary: Mr Ian C. White

Presbyteral Synod Secretary: Revd J. Paul Parker

District Safeguarding Officer: Mr Thomas Simm

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 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 procession on Palm Sunday is usually thought of as a parade of praise. It can also be interpreted as a protest or even funeral procession:

*Continued...*

*Bless our praise palms, O God of Celebration.  
May they remind us of the simple joys of living.  
May we remember the excitement that comes with following Christ.*

*Bless our protest palms, O God of Justice.  
May they remind us that Empire is not a thing of the past.  
May they make us bold and brave to stand up against injustice.*

*Bless our funeral palms, O God of Comfort.  
May they remind us of the road that lies ahead.  
May they encourage us in times of grief and pain.*

*We give you thanks for the praise and the protest.  
Guide our steps through this year as we cry out together:  
"Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna!" Amen.*

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## **DAY 31                      The Methodist Connexion**

### **Please pray for:**

- The Revd Helen Cameron, President of the Conference;
- The Vice-President of the Methodist Conference Mrs Carolyn Godfrey;
- 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 2025 in Telford, and all who will plan and lead it;
- The Revd Richard Andrew, President Designate of the Conference in 2024/2025, and the Vice-President Designate Mr Matt Forsyth, as they prepare for their year of office to start in July 2025;
- 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 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.