

# Link

The magazine for the  
Sandbach and Haslington Mission Areas  
of The Methodist Church



'But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners,  
Christ died for us.' *Romans 5:8*

March – May 2021

# Welcome to Link

Link is produced for members and friends of the following Methodist Churches:

Elworth (CW11 3JG) [www.elworthmethodistchurch.com](http://www.elworthmethodistchurch.com)

Ettiley Heath (CW11 3NE) [www.church4all.org.uk](http://www.church4all.org.uk)

Haslington (CW11 5PW) [www.facebook.com/haslingtonmethodistchurch](https://www.facebook.com/haslingtonmethodistchurch)

Winterley (CW11 4RP) [www.facebook.com/winterleymethodistchurch](https://www.facebook.com/winterleymethodistchurch)

Unity Methodist Church (UMC) [www.unitymethodistchurchsandbach.org](http://www.unitymethodistchurchsandbach.org)  
[www.facebook.com/UnityMethodistChurchSandbach](https://www.facebook.com/UnityMethodistChurchSandbach)

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UMC Postal Address: The Wesley Centre, 16 Chapel Street, Sandbach, CW11 1DS

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## Jeremy's Sabbatical

Jeremy will be on sabbatical from 1 February until 30 April and won't be back to work until Tuesday 4 May. Revd Robin Fox and Revd Helen Stubbs have kindly agreed to cover for him in his absence. If you have need of either of them, then please contact your pastoral visitor or church leader in the first instance.

Sunday worship will alternate between a pre-recorded Soundcloud service and a 'live' Zoom service and my thanks to those who have agreed to contribute to and put together these services. Further details appear below and in the Unity article.

Kind regards and see you in May!

*Jeremy*

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# Jeremy's Page



By the time you read this, the season of Lent will have begun and in previous years, we have put on a Lenten study course, which has been well received. For Lent this year, I encourage you to pick up and read the Gospel of Mark: try and read it in one sitting!

Like other writings of the time, it was meant to be heard read aloud. The pace of the story that unfolds, the repetitions in the story and the summaries of events all point to a story that was intended to be heard in public and all in one sitting (and not as weekly portions as we have today).

The power of the narrative draws the reader/audience into the heart of the action and allows us to align ourselves with the main characters, Jesus included. It helps us answer the question, "what is Jesus doing here" and by extension, "what should we do too?"

It also has special resonance for our times now. The Gospel of Mark was written at a time when the followers of Jesus were undergoing great persecution by the Roman Emperor, Nero. The gospel is written to show an audience in pain and suffering that Jesus too had to undergo suffering but that a time will come when such suffering will cease as those who oppose God's kingdom will be defeated and the present world of suffering will end. Mark portrays Jesus' own example of how to live faithfully in times of great trial and testing – truly a message for our times.

When you have read the entire gospel (it is the shortest of the four gospels after all!), try to find or buy a commentary or study guide for the gospel of Mark.\* This will help you tease out some of the recurring themes of the gospel and help you in applying it to your own life today. And then sit back and listen to the drama as it unfolds week by week in this year's lectionary as we follow the gospel of Mark right through to the end of the church year in November. I guarantee there is treasure to be found there!

Happy reading!

*Jeremy*

\* Tom Wright's books, *Mark for Everyone* and *Lent for Everyone: Mark* are good starters.

# Worship on Zoom, Soundcloud and on the phone

Although our buildings are closed, there are still many ways in which we can worship God together.

During Jeremy's sabbatical, services are alternating each Sunday between a 'live' Zoom service and a pre-recorded Soundcloud service, either online or on the telephone. This gives an opportunity to worship together.

For those who are not online, you can ring in every Sunday just before 10:30am and listen on your landline or mobile phone:

Just before 10:30am on Sundays, dial: 020 3695 0088

Meeting ID: 846 6388 3875 # Participant ID: # Meeting Password: 364966 #

For those online, the Zoom link is:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/84663883875?pwd=d2Q3OWMoWk5EVHlxWUJ1VmdYQUo5QTo9>  
Top Meeting ID: 846 6388 3875 Passcode: 364966

There continues to be a pre-recorded Soundcloud service every other week and this can be found at: <https://soundcloud.com/user-426144288>

And finally, every Saturday morning at 9:30am, we hold our weekly prayer meeting. This lasts about 20 minutes.

To access on your landline or mobile phone:

Just before 9:30am on Saturdays, dial: 020 3695 0088

Meeting ID: 240 209 483 # Participant ID: # Meeting Password: 426301 #

For those online, the Zoom link is:

<https://uso4web.zoom.us/j/240209483?pwd=ekdJTk5LZ2t1Z2hnaHlzd3hPZE1dZ09>  
Meeting ID: 240 209 483 Meeting password: 7cnijY

# World Day of Prayer – Friday 5 March 2021

'Build on a strong foundation' prepared by the Women of Vanuatu

This year's services are all affected by the current restrictions due to the Covid pandemic. But the national organising committee hopes we can all participate through other ways of worshipping. Some churches have deferred a service until later this year, others have a telephone or Zoom service, some plan to sit at home and read the service through privately at a set time while some are pre-recording and broadcasting on YouTube. In this way it is hoped we will share with the women of Vanuatu.

As you will probably know the World Day of Prayer service for Sandbach is planned to be held via Zoom at 2:00pm. Contact [jayne.unitymc@gmail.com](mailto:jayne.unitymc@gmail.com) to obtain the link, either for computer or telephone access.

The service booklet will be delivered to those who register with a postal address; please indicate if you need a large print copy.

The website [www.wwdp.org.uk](http://www.wwdp.org.uk) has lots of helpful information including a recorded service (not identical to the designated one we will be holding).

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## Racial Justice

Racial justice (or injustice) is very much a hot topic at the moment and so the Sandbach Justice and Peace group arranged a series of two Zoom events to explore this topic in more detail by getting real stories from real people.

At the first session on 7 January we invited three speakers from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to talk to us about their own experiences of prejudice, and I found it quite shocking to discover the amount and level of prejudice that exists in this day and age in our local area and, most shockingly, not just in other church denominations but also in the Methodist Church. Examples given included: feeling isolated and unwelcome, even in a church setting where others distanced themselves and moved away; someone refusing to shake hands during the Peace; someone refusing to serve a cup of coffee; being ignored by shop staff; difficulty finding work – being overlooked for being of colour or for having a strange foreign name; having work marked down unfairly; refusal to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace for a disability; aggression and shouting racist slurs on countless occasions. Although our speakers hadn't experienced physical violence they did know of others who had.

I was aware that there had been some abuse posted on Facebook in relation to a Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest in Sandbach and this was reported in the Guardian: "Beneath a

screenshot of a post ..... one comment said: "I'll bring my raincoat just in case," with a picture of the (Ku Klux) Klan. And at the actual event it was reported that "People came up to us shouting that segregation was a good thing, that 'All lives matter', and one guy said he'd come back with a shotgun if we touched the cenotaph. It was the most bizarre and horrible experience." Well of course all lives matter and that is the point, because it would appear that a substantial number of the population are still of the opinion that was held over a century ago during the time of slave trading, that black lives don't matter.

According to one of the founder members of the BLM movement in Sandbach, it was the "insidious, pervasive nature of racism against black people which inspired BLM in Sandbach" and she posed a question which is certainly worth continuing to ponder on "How can we hold people accountable for racist actions and still remain compassionate?" As Christians we should ask ourselves what Jesus would do in this situation. He wouldn't be silent, he would call it out as wrong, and yet he would still be compassionate. How can we do the same?

At our second session we invited Professor Anthony Reddie to speak. Anthony is, according to his website: "an established and committed scholar in the field of Black Liberation Theology, who has dedicated his life to research, teaching, and in depth scholarship in the United Kingdom and around the world. Anthony is rooted in the Methodist tradition both as a scholar and a Methodist Local Preacher. He has served the Methodist Church in the training of its preachers and clergy, enabling those preparing for ministry to engage with issues of race, class, and diversity."

Anthony challenged us to think about the status quo – it may be good for the majority and therefore any challenge to that is seen as aggressive and in the wrong.

But let's not forget the minority and how they feel about it. One example given was about the pulling down of the statue of Edward Colston, a philanthropist and slave trader. The local council in Bristol were not even willing to engage in a debate about his statue because he was seen as a hero to white people. There is always more than one 'story' to consider, one size doesn't fit all and we should be sensitive to the needs of others, even if they are in the minority.

Anthony compared early Christianity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Resistance is where Christianity started – the early Christians were part of a resistance movement against the Roman Empire which considered Jews to be second class citizens in their own country.

There shouldn't be a need for a BLM movement, but it is required because for centuries black lives have been seen as not mattering. During the years of slave trading African people were considered not to be human beings, and although we have come a long way since then there are still, sadly, many examples of oppression of black people and inequality.

We were challenged to discuss how we can become agents for change, and voices for truth. We need to learn more about the injustices and share stories with others so that they too are made aware of the issues. We need to take the burden of responsibility away from those affected by having the courage to speak out against any act of injustice. It is good to gain an understanding of different cultures, opening ourselves up to new experiences, and hence learning about our differences and celebrating them rather than fearing them. It may be that we feel we are too insignificant to achieve anything but as it says in an old African proverb: "If you think you're too small to make a difference then you've never shared a bed with a mosquito"! This reminds me of the story of the young woman throwing the stranded starfish back in to the sea. She couldn't save them all but she could make a difference to a few individuals. It also made me think of the ripple effect, which the Dalai Lama sums up nicely "Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped in to water, the actions of individuals can have far reaching effects".

What does the bible say about this? "So God created mankind in his own image....", Genesis 1: 27; "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.", Galatians 3: 28. Do we see everyone in this way? Do we see all people as God sees them?

Anthony summed up with three points:

- we should see love as a revolutionary action – it is not passive or weak - and we need to challenge in love
- we need to practice 'deep listening' – to hear all of the different stories
- we should identify those whose voices are heard the least, or not at all, and it is those people that need our help.

I pray that we can do those things and that we can see all people as through the eyes of children – not black and white, just people. We are all God's children and all should be treated with respect and love.

*Karen Foster*

## Foodbank update

It has been another busy three months for the Sandbach foodbank, with 26 referrals in November, 35 in December and 24 in January. Our average number of referrals per week in 2020 was 5, and during 2019 it was around 2.5, so our workload has doubled since the start of the pandemic.

We continue to benefit from the generosity of local people, with lots of donations of both food and money coming in, particularly during the run up to Christmas. This included a food collection by the cricket club and a raffle held by Iceland which raised £120. In addition to our referrals for food parcels we prepared 37 Christmas food parcels for local families referred by the Children's Centre, Families Centre and local primary schools – these contained special Christmas items including Christmas cake, Christmas pudding,

mince pies, a tub of chocolates, and some fair trade chocolate angels which included the Christmas story.

If you would like to donate food to the food bank you can do so at the Wesley Centre on a Wednesday afternoon between 2:00 and 4:00pm when our collection box is outside. You can also donate at the Nationwide, the Co-op on the Hill and One Stop on Price Avenue. At the moment we are pretty well stocked, but the items we get short of more quickly are as follows: long life fruit juice; uht milk; coffee; tinned fruit; and sugar. Please see our Facebook page for the latest information about shortages.

Thank you for your continued support.

*Sandbach Foodbank volunteers*

## News from Unity Methodist Church

During Jeremy's sabbatical, Sunday worship will alternate weekly between pre-recorded Soundcloud and 'live' Zoom services. Access details for these appear earlier in Link.

Here is the plan for the next couple of months...

March 7 - Soundcloud - Stephen Parker-Aiken and worship leaders  
March 14 at 10:30am - Zoom - Jane Parker-Aiken  
March 21 - Soundcloud - Tim Cooke  
March 28 (Palm Sunday) at 10:30am - Zoom - Norma Stolworthy  
April 2 (Good Friday) at 10:30am - Zoom - Roger and Denise Hunt  
April 4 (Easter Sunday) at 10:30am - Zoom - Stephen Parker-Aiken  
April 11 - Soundcloud - Bryan Glassonbury  
April 18 at 10:30am - Zoom - Roger and Denise Hunt  
April 25 - Soundcloud - UMC worship leaders

## Gift Aid

If you Gift Aid your donations to the Methodist Church, it can claim 25p from HMRC for every £1 you donate. That's as long as you've paid the basic rate of income tax and make the donation from your own funds. That means Gift Aid can increase the value of your donations by 25%, so you can give even more to the causes you care about.

Many of you are already supporting the church in this way, and the church is very grateful for this support. If you're not yet doing so, now (as we come towards the end of the tax year) is a good time to consider whether you could.

If you would like to Gift Aid your donations to Unity Methodist Church or just want to know more, please send me an email – [karen.unitemc@gmail.com](mailto:karen.unitemc@gmail.com) .

*Karen Foster*

# News from The Church on Ettiley Heath

Church4All continues to play a huge part in the life of the church family at Ettiley Heath. Our Advent service on 6 December was well received and led by Malcolm Crook from Crewe. Saturday 19 saw our Church4All Christmas Concert4All with lots of different people taking part. Elworth Grange Care Home joined us on this occasion plus some of our hall users. Lots of recordings can be found on YouTube.

Before Christmas, the Church family also made efforts to visit all church members and friends living on their own and surprise them with a gift. I visited "My CWA" (formerly Cheshire without abuse) in Crewe with our usual contributions to support the families suffering domestic abuse. They are always so grateful and happy to see you.

We are also looking forward to remembering our church family on Mothering Sunday.

The New Year saw leading members of Church4All giving their talents and many hours rehearsing for the JOSEPH production which took place on Sunday 31 January. It was a really great show by all concerned.

At the time of writing, our next Church4All service is Sunday 21 February at 4:30pm, led by Geoff Dickinson. The theme of the service is "I am on Journey" linked to the Bible story of the Good Samaritan.

During March we will be hosting two online Church4All services, both having animal and pet theme. March 7 service will be at 4:30pm; March 21 service time TBC.

As well as our Church4All Facebook page we now have our own web address: [www.Church4all.org.uk](http://www.Church4all.org.uk) or email us at [info@church4all.org.uk](mailto:info@church4all.org.uk)

*Edna Lawton*

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## Christian Aid Week

Christian Aid week is 10 to 16 May. It's unlikely that there will be house to house collections again this year, so any fundraising will be down to any creative ideas we have. Get your thinking caps on and contact Deborah Darnes ([Darnes@talktalk.net](mailto:Darnes@talktalk.net)) with your suggestions.

Last year there was a sponsored bike ride and a virtual concert and we raised £3,371, so let's see if we can beat that total this year. We currently don't have a Methodist rep for Christian Aid so if you fancy being the rep for the mission area, or just your own church, please contact Deborah.

# News from Elworth

From October we were happy to be able to open our church doors once again for worship. Although numbers attending were restricted it was a time of real joy and hope for many people. Although there was no singing or chatting people spoke of the comfort they found simply sitting in the church and listening to the organ being played even if nothing else had happened.

We rose to the challenge of celebrating Christmas in a different way although we were able to hold a carol service and a Christmas day service in church before we had to close the doors again. Once again the lounge windows were used to display nativity scenes and a host of angels were arranged in the branches of the trees in the park. Over 60 angels went to new homes and the displays became a good talking point in the community. We did need to rescue a few fallen angels after the storms. A Christmas gift box was delivered to everyone on our Pastoral list and other friends in the community. Included in each box was a booklet compiling people's Christmas memories the earliest of which dated back to 1944.



Our hopes are that in future, even when we are back in the church building, we will continue to find new ways of sharing / displaying our events in the neighbourhood.

The bulbs which were planted in the church garden at the end of last year are now beginning to show reminding us that Spring is on its way and giving us hope for new things to come.

We continue to keep in touch with the church family and friends with our weekly newsletter and anyone wishing to have a copy can email: [jean.ellershaw@btinternet.com](mailto:jean.ellershaw@btinternet.com). Word searches and quizzes have all added to our activities.

During Lent, using the newsletter, we will be inviting everyone to give some thought to the words of hymn 660 from Singing the Faith, "Called by Christ to be disciples", with the verses divided up each week and two or three questions to consider.

Our main hope as we move towards Easter is that the church doors can be safely opened again very soon and that we will be able to meet together.

*Jean Ellershaw*

# Fair Trade

As I write this Fair Trade fortnight is in the future, however by the time you read it, it may have finished, as it starts on 21 February. Still I think it's right that we remember what it stands for and why it's needed.

**So, what is Fairtrade?** Fairtrade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world.

**Why is it important?** By requiring companies to pay sustainable prices (which must never fall lower than the market price), Fairtrade tackles the injustices of conventional trade, which traditionally discriminates against the most vulnerable. It enables them to improve their position and have more control over their lives.

**How can I make a difference?** With Fairtrade you have the power to change the world every day. With simple shopping choices you can get farmers a better deal. And that means they can make their own decisions, control their future and lead the dignified life everyone deserves.

**What items are available?** Buying Fairtrade is easy. There are over 6,000 Fairtrade products, so when you shop, look for the FAIRTRADE Mark.



Some items are more readily available than others, like bananas, chocolate, coffee, tea and sugar. There are lots of other things too, including cotton (in clothing), flowers, gold, fruit juice, wine, beauty products, and herbs and spices.

**What about buying locally?** Fairtrade isn't in competition with UK farmers and buying local and buying Fairtrade need not and should not be mutually exclusive. Fairtrade focuses mainly on products such as coffee and bananas that can't be grown in temperate climates or products that can't be grown in sufficient quantities in the EU. For some items, local supply is not able to meet the total demand and so imports are necessary to meet demand. Other products are seasonal in the UK and for as long as shoppers want to buy out of season, there is a need to import from other countries. The choice facing shoppers is not necessarily between local and Fairtrade certified but between Fairtrade and conventional imported goods. It is up to each person to weigh up these choices and shop accordingly.

What does the Bible say? The Bible advocates for justice and equality: for example Micah 6: 8: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Fairtrade asks that we respect people, showing them the dignity of being paid what their work is worth. As it says in Leviticus 25: 14, "When you make a sale to your neighbour or buy from your neighbour, you shall not cheat one another."

So, let's remember the importance of buying fairly traded goods, not just during Fairtrade Fortnight, but all year round.

*Karen Foster, with content taken from the Fairtrade Foundation website:*  
[www.fairtrade.org.uk](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk)

# A Methodist Way of Life

This article borrows extensively from the website of The Methodist Church and its pages on A Methodist Way of Life.

As Methodists we are a church called to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. A Methodist Way of Life is a way of living that life. It is how we try to live our lives in response to God's love, made known to us in Jesus. The Methodist Conference of 2018 first discussed the way in which our lives as Methodists could be given a framework and the result is the commitment card which is reproduced below.

Like the early Christians (Acts 2: 42-47), we seek to express what it means to follow Jesus in the regular, practical actions of worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism. The commitments of A Methodist Way of Life remind us of, and provide a compass for, Christian living. The commitment cards state that as far as we are able, with God's help:

## **Worship**

- We will pray daily.
- We will worship with others regularly.
- We will look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world.

## **Learning and Caring**

- We will care for ourselves and those around us.
- We will learn more about our faith.
- We will practise hospitality and generosity.

## **Service**

- We will help people in our communities and beyond.
- We will care for creation and all God's gifts.
- We will challenge injustice.

## **Evangelism**

- We will speak of the love of God.
- We will live in a way that draws others to Jesus.
- We will share our faith with others.

May we be a blessing within and beyond God's Church, for the transformation of the world. It is intended to be something we discuss together (admittedly not easy at the moment!). How can we support one another in living by these commitments and how can this help us to grow in faith together?

For more details: [www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/a-methodist-way-of-life-commitment-cards](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/a-methodist-way-of-life-commitment-cards)