



## Circuit Newsletter September 2021

Dear Friends,

Each September brings a new Methodist year. This new year brings with it some quite significant changes - we have dropped from 6 to 4 Ordained Circuit Staff; all activities stopped during the pandemic, and some have not yet restarted; some of our chapels have closed; some of our friends have died during the pandemic; we haven't seen some of our friends since before the pandemic started and they are continuing to be cautious about returning to church (and other activities); some folk have left the Methodist Church following the Methodist Conference decision to permit same-sex marriages in our church buildings (*if the local church council decides that should be the case*), but a few folk have joined our churches and become members during the pandemic (while on Zoom) and we are now meeting them face-to-face and getting to know them better.

In an example of risk-taking mission, rather courageously, some of our churches are managing to provide 'Hybrid' Worship - i.e. both online and

in-person simultaneously - a significant change for our Worship Leaders and Preachers and also those who oversee the computer and technical things for worship.

We have two feasibility projects underway in the Circuit - one focussed on the Lune Valley churches and one focussed on the use of the Garstang building.

These changes impact upon all of us across the Circuit - some of us will continue to feel anxious about the Covid concerns and hesitant to be involved in activities, others will be desperate to get everything going; some will be feeling upset at the loss of members, others will be bewildered at their resignations; some will be delighted about the prospect of hosting same-sex marriages in our buildings, others will feel that it isn't appropriate in their particular context; some will feel frustrated that things have not gone 'back to normal', while others will feel excited about the new opportunities that have arisen and lay ahead of us.

As we journey into this new Methodist year, let us be aware of the variety of feelings present in our churches, our Circuit and also in our wider communities. Let us seek to journey together, offering care and compassion, seeking understanding, offering respect, and empathy. And let us hold one another in prayer as we continue following the Way of Jesus.

I pray that people will look at us and say (as they said of the early church) "See how much they love one another", and may that love we have for one another flow out from us into our local communities and into the wider world by our service to others, our care for creation and our striving for peace and justice.

You remain in my prayers.  
Grace and peace, Steve



All are welcome at  
God's Table

*Psalm 31: 24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.*

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## News from Silverdale

For some years now we had wanted to make changes to our Hall. Closure during the Covid lockdown provided the ideal opportunity to carry out the work and we now have a newly decorated and carpeted room for our own use and also for the community. We would be happy to offer this facility to other churches in our Circuit who would appreciate an away-day in the peaceful surroundings of Silverdale.



## Funeral Fees for Church Members

I was recently asked why the family of a church member should pay a fee to the Minister for conducting their funeral - the reason for this is that the level of the 'Stipend' for a Methodist Minister (a stipend is similar to a salary) is calculated Connexionally on the assumption that Ministers will receive fees for the funerals (*and the weddings*) that they conduct (note in many places, Methodist Ministers primarily conduct the funerals of church members, rather than people from the wider community). If a Minister does not receive fees for funerals and weddings, the Minister may not have sufficient income to provide for themselves and their family. If a local church chooses to waive the fee for the use of the church building for the funeral of a church member, that is a decision for the local church.

For the sake of clarity, the Stipend for a Methodist Minister is set nationally each year - for the year 2021-22, the Stipend is £25,824 (*note - tax, national insurance and pension are then deducted*). This information is in the public domain, so I am not revealing anything confidential.

Grace and peace, Steve

*Ezekiel 36: 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.*

## News from Calder Vale:

Over the summer holidays we have had a couple of Family Times on Sunday afternoons with games, crafts and a picnic. We focused on International Friendship Day and made friendship bracelets and Danish baskets. We watched the story of the Good Samaritan and the Song "Make new friends, But keep the old. One is silver, And the other, gold." The second afternoon took the theme of preparing for Harvest We did potato printing and prepared pictures and slogans, of a lot of things we are thankful for, to go onto a Harvest Poster which will be displayed on the notice board. The story was about a harvest basket that contained potatoes (eyes), corn (ears) bananas (hands) and a lettuce (heart). We have all these and can choose to use them to be kind and helpful and caring. We also had a selection of different varieties of apples to see if we knew our apples.

Our Pop Up Cake stalls have raised funds for Isaac who is going with his local scout group to Malawi next year( It should have been last year) Over £350.00 and £450.00 for Cancer Research to help Tony and Denise (from the Lunch Box, Garstang) on their way in the London Marathon. They continue to make our Friday lunches and have done since the first lockdown.

We are looking forward to being back in school for Open the Book. It was good to do the stories on Zoom but we missed the interaction of the children.

We will celebrate our Harvest festival on: **Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> September at 10.45 am** with our friends from Scorton and Rev Keith.

On **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October** we have a return visit of John Bell. We are restricted on numbers so places will have to be booked. Please get in touch with me for details.

Edith Gorst. 01995 602078



## PRAYER FOR NEW BEGINNINGS (NORTH LANCASHIRE CIRCUIT)

WRITTEN BY THE PRAYER BUDDY CO-ORDINATORS & JO TOWERS

*Lord of the Morning and New Beginnings, we Praise and Worship you.*

*As the golden rays of dawn break into a new day, help us to start afresh, to let go of the darkness of the past.*

*God in your mercy, you have given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

*Let us walk closely with Jesus and touch the hem of his cloak.*

*Recall the past while looking forward hopefully.*

*Listen for the Spirit's voice; share the message with those on the journey.*

*For the adventures and challenges of new beginnings, we ask for your guidance, knowing that you are always there for us. Help us to adventure on, trusting in you for all things.*

*With your help and guidance, show us how to start life again and to press the restart button so we can burn as never before, spreading your love to others.*

*Inspire and equip us as we seek to worship and serve.*

*New Beginnings, Fresh Starts, slates wiped clean.*

*Like a new page in the school exercise book.*

*That's how it is when you forgive again and again.*

*We pray for the re-opening of groups and the decisions that need to be made so these are welcoming, helpful and giving glory to God .*

*Lead us by your Spirit to reconnect with our local community and those who don't feel able to return just yet.*

*We pray for our Circuit Brothers & Sisters as we bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

*Keep us faithful, strong and ready to hear your call and be a blessing to others.*

*Through dark and difficult experiences, O God, walk with us.*

*May we wait on you, listen on you to lead us.*

*Your words to teach and encourage us: 'As I have loved you, so you must love one another'.*

*If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here.*

*Every morning we ask you to make us alert to opportunities for new beginnings and look to God, even for a moment before beginning anything.*

*You will renew our strength and we will soar like eagles.*

*We will run and not grow weary. We will walk and not be faint.*

*Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.*

**Amen**

## Connecting Churches through Prayer Buddies—*News from The Methodist Blog*

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*A new Circuit Prayer Buddy scheme offers support, fellowship and sharing of creativity for congregations in Lancashire.*

Shortly after beginning her new role as a Circuit Administrator at the North Lancashire Methodist Circuit, Jo Towers discerned that there was an opportunity to develop a Circuit Prayer Buddy partnership. Jo explains,

“I have been following A Methodist Way of Life - a way of trying to live our lives in response to God's love that is made known to us in Jesus. I felt that bringing this into my role was important so started the job asking questions such as, 'How can we encourage one another to develop a rhythm of discipleship that includes regular, practical actions of worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism? And how do we help them to develop a rhythm of prayer as communities?’”

“As congregations, we all have an opportunity to support one another in love and pray for each other. I suggested the idea of a Prayer Buddy Partnership to the Superintendent, and from that was invited to speak at the next Circuit Leadership Team meeting and at a Circuit Meeting. Once the idea had been approved I set about gathering a group of church Prayer Co-ordinators and organising the first match between churches. We rolled out the Prayer Buddy Partnership at the same time as Thy Kingdom Come in Ascension week on the approach to Pentecost. I now believe this was God's perfect timing to introduce this!”

The Circuit Prayer Buddy Partnership works like this:

- Jo allocates individual churches to pray for another using a 'Prayer Clock', for a period of three months
- When churches are first matched with another church, they introduce themselves through either the Prayer Co-ordinator, Pastoral contact or Steward and from this share key points, such as the joys and challenges the Church Community is currently experiencing. Monthly communications are encouraged between the Buddy churches with any specific Prayer requests.
- Specific Prayer requests can be exchanged ensuring that they comply with any GDPR rules and more general prayers are shared for the Superintendent, Ministers, Lay Workers, Local Preachers, Circuit Stewards and the wider Circuit.
- After three months the churches are given new buddies.

Feedback from the first rotation has been positive, says Jo. Comments have included:

“It has been interesting to talk to people in other churches and to hear their joys and concerns.”

“It has made us aware of others within the Circuit. This does help to remind us that we are part of a wider community, locally and nationally.”

“Good to be able to share joys and difficulties with another church, especially when our Church is small.”

“We have been singing our final hymn outside and our craft group has started up again. I have spoken to our Prayer Buddy about this.”

The scheme has offered a new way of communicating informally between churches which has allowed for the exchange of ideas such as one church recommending the creation of a 'WhatsApp' group to help keep people in touch when they are not meeting so frequently in person due to the pandemic.

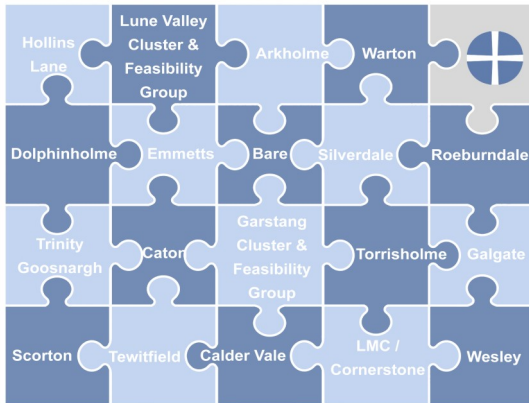
Jo says, “We want to learn through the process and so will be taking on board the initial feedback before the churches receive details of their new Prayer Buddy in September. We would be looking to invite and encourage all Ministers, Local Preachers or Worship Leaders to include the church they are praying for in their intercessions at each Sunday service; this also reminds everyone in the congregation.”

*1 Timothy 2: 1-2 I urge, then, first of all that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*

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<https://www.northlancsmethodist.org.uk>

<https://www.facebook.com/northlancashiremethodistcircuit>



**New Prayer Buddy Churches  
coming soon!!**

### Harvest Services

- ◇ **Bare 19th September 10:30am Rev Roy Burley**
- ◇ **Calder Vale 19th September 10:45am Rev Keith Borwick**
- ◇ **Dolphinholme 26th September 10:45am Peter Gorst**
- ◇ **Hollins Lane 19th September 10:30am Rev Emma Holroyd**
- ◇ **Lancaster 19th September 10:30am Lynne Blair**
- ◇ **Roeburndale 12th September 2pm & 6.30pm Rev George Barton**
- ◇ **Scorton 12th September 10:45am Local Arrangement**
- ◇ **Silverdale 3rd October 10:30am Rev Andrew Champley**
- ◇ **Trinity Goosnargh 26th September 10:45am Rev Keith Borwick**
- ◇ **Warton 26th September 10:00am Rev Emma Holroyd**
- ◇ **Wesley 26th September 10:30am Susan Wilson**

