



*Dear Friends from around the circuit,*

*Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

We have begun this new Methodist Church year like no other year and amongst the backdrop of concerns which being in a pandemic brings, I pray we find ourselves setting out into the year ahead in hope. Finding our hope and placing our trust in God.

We are all too aware of the pandemic, of the deep implications being felt in this global storm and yet God is with us. May God continue to be our strength and joy.

We have had reason for celebration with welcoming the Revd. Ian Pruden and his wife Lis into the circuit. The welcome service has been viewed 322 times and counting. I wonder where we might have fitted that number gathered in one place. It is wonderful to have Ian on the staff team and thank God for the blessings which we are coming through his Ministry amongst us.

On the matter of ministry, I would like to echo the thankyou expressed in last month's issue of the Herald. The generosity of gifts shared, and the extra miles covered in the diligence of supporting the new pathways discovered around accessible worship along with ensuring places of worship are COVID secure has been exceptional. Also, a special thank you for all the excellent pastoral care so many have given throughout this challenging time. May we continue to go forth with God leading the way.

Many churches within the circuit have re-opened for worship services with others preparing for the first services to take place in COVID secure sanctuaries. Please do remain vigilant, especially when arriving and leaving church services. Several safety measures have been put in place and risk assessments have been completed with great care to manage risk, however, we must not become complacent, nor forget that we are still journeying through a pandemic. Risk assessments are ongoing, needing to be under regular review and fit to meet up to date requirements. We are ever grateful for the Circuit Support Group being on hand to help and encourage trustees to regularly check in with new guidance when it is given.

Places of worship are presently exempt from some of the government restrictions but not exempt from following the law and government guidance. We are having to carefully watch, pray and respond accordingly to the changes. Please do be prepared for the potential changes that might mean we need to press pause again on gathering within our church buildings. We are called to love our neighbours, and this means playing our part in the fight against the spread of the virus. Also, let us not become disconnected from the reality people are experiencing and how God is calling the Church into action. To love and serve the Lord through meeting people with kindness, compassion and the love of God when so many are in great need.

Please do look out each month for the next publication of the Herald and please do get sharing your stories as we witness to God with us. Like the rainbow has found a resurgence is symbolising hope across the world, let us also remember it remains a symbol of God's promise to all upon the earth. Also, in the Herald you will find prayer prompts included in issue 14. Let us not cease to pray, but commit everything to God through prayer, for without God in all we do, we risk becoming a clanging gong. Furthermore, let us remember that sometimes the Spirit leads us in such ways that we become part of the answer to someone else's prayers. Jesus both prayed and fed the hungry. As we enter into the darker nights and winter months, may we shine like stars for Jesus, taking every opportunity to do all we can live out our discipleship through serving God and others that they too might know the love of God.

There is much I could include in this letter, but to be restrained I will conclude with flagging up the Circuit Harvest Service. You will be able to share in with this service when it becomes available on YouTube or via the Worship at home written service for the 18<sup>th</sup> of October. This year the circuit's harvest appeal is for The Farming Community Network. All churches should have received details on how to send any donations collected for the circuit's harvest appeal and further information about the work of The Farming Community Network is available online. I hope we will keep being encouraged by the many ways we can come to God in worship. To God be the glory!

I continue to hold everyone in my prayers.

Yours in Christ,

*Gareth*

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