



**St. John's Methodist Church
Whitchurch
June 2024
Newsletter**

Message from the Manse

Hello friends,

As I write thousands of year 6 pupils are sitting their SATs, the culmination of four years of preparation for these tests. Yet these are tests which in the grand scheme of things matter not. Yes, at the time and for the individuals and schools involved, they matter a great deal. No one wants to feel like they've not got to the standard they 'ought' meet.

Pity the poor GCSE and 'A' level students whose exams will still be underway when you read this. Hoping against hope that they'll make the grade and earn their ticket to the next stage. Because that's in essence what these summative assessments are. A ticket to the next thing.

Hannah is currently taking her GCSE's and the stress levels are high. In my day we went on study leave before the exams start and then only go into school for the exams. Not anymore... well not at the local school here in Whitchurch. Breakfast revision, normal lessons between exams and after school revision sessions. Study leave comes right at the end when she gets 3 days off school marked as "Study Leave" but the only exam she hasn't done by that point is Physics.

And if that's not enough pressure...there seems to be such pressure for children and young people to know what career they want to pursue, so they can choose what subjects to do to get that ticket. How many friends did you have when they were 14 who knew what career they wanted? Thinking at 14 about what I might want to do for 'A' levels, never mind whether I wanted to go to uni, just didn't compute.

But this pressure is put on our children today. Which seems ironic in an age where the expectation of settling into a job which would last until retirement seems like a relic of a bygone age. Today we assume at least one mid-career shift. I wanted to be a teacher, ended up working in a funeral directors out of hours service (I loved that job!), started as a lay worker convinced that I would never want to be a minister, and well here I am. My cousin was a primary teacher and has just retrained to be a sleep coach. My fellow trainee ministers came from all walks of life. How we start out is rarely where we end up.

The only person who knows the end from the beginning is God. He alone knows the path we'll take, with all its twists and turns along the way. And whatever twists and turns there are, none of them are wasted with him. When Jesus picked his disciples, he did so knowing who and what they were and it all informed what fulfilling their calling to proclaim the Good News looked like. The way they communicated, where they went, the roles they fulfilled in the early church. No one was rejected because they hadn't passed GCSE Maths.

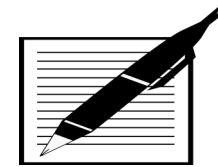
So, pray for our children and young people, that the pressure wouldn't get to them, and they would be free to spend as much time as they need to work out what they want to do next. Changing their minds as much as they need to. Pray that they would absorb the boosts and knockbacks, knowing that these don't define who they are as people or what they are worth.

Pray that they would know above all else that they are loved. Just. As. They. Are.

With blessings for June,

Rev. Donna

Steward's Letter



Driving a vehicle on the road is not something I particularly enjoy, and as I get older I find it increasingly difficult to stay awake if the journey takes more than half an hour or so. Even worse is having to put up with the behaviour of other drivers with whom we share our roads that drive us to shout and gesticulate from behind the wheel when they just can't play by the rules, and worse still put not only themselves in great danger but yourself as well.

I sometimes wonder as Church goes what we're supposed to do, how are we supposed to react? If our behaviour, and especially what we say was made known to everybody else would we be proud of ourselves?

Many years ago my father who was later commended for 50 years' loyal service as a local preacher was summoned to court for failing to stop at a junction that had displayed a very clearly marked STOP sign; little did he realise that the local constabulary was situated directly opposite the junction. He had been spotted, number taken, and duly required to attend his court hearing where he of course pleaded guilty as charged.

A few weeks later he happened to be leading the service in the same town. He noticed a gentleman sitting a few rows from the front he felt he knew but couldn't quite remember how, and then to his horror realised it was the court magistrate who had but a few weeks earlier imposed the fine for the traffic offence at the junction. I'd love to know what words were exchanged as they shook hands on the way out after the service.

'...There is nothing covered up that will not be uncovered, nothing hidden that will not be made known.'

Sobering words for each one of us I'm sure.

Andrew

Services & Preachers

2nd June Paul Jackson

9th June Rev Donna (Communion & Annual Church Meeting)

16th June Rev Donna (Baptism)

23rd June Local Arrangement

30th June Liz Duffy



TEA & COFFEE ROTA

Please could you provide milk and biscuits, taking the biscuits home if they are not needed. Tea and coffee are provided.



June

2nd Hazel & Mike

9th Briony & Linda Weston

16th Chris & Elaine

23rd Linda Jenkins & Dot

30th Avril & Nancy

**Please also take the tea towels and towel home, wash and return.
If the dates above are not convenient, please let me know.**

Cheshire South Methodist Circuit

Dear Churches and members of Cheshire South Methodist Circuit,

I currently have responsibility for constructing our Circuit's preaching plan. After putting together the plan, I reflected on what I was seeing, and what I hear around the Circuit. This letter invites you to join my reflections.

I want to honestly and openly discuss an obvious issue with the most recent plan (June to August 2024): the many Local Arrangements. Each church line has 3. This is because there are not enough preaching offers to cover the plan.

Why were we so short this quarter?

This is because:

- Some preachers are unavailable this quarter for what I hope are temporary reasons
- Sadly, Rev Jim Needham has died.
- Other preachers have recently recognised it is time to step back from preaching
- All active ministers have had more holiday this quarter and some have Sundays out of the Circuit (eg. Girls'//Boys' Brigade camp as chaplain.
- Others too are away and I know this quarter is often tricky to fill'

So, will future quarters be better?

Probably, but not by much. We have Deacon Jill moving on, and so lose the preaching she has offered. On the other hand, there should be fewer holidays among the remaining ministers, I hope some previously unavailable preachers are available again, and we should be gaining a new on-trial Local Preacher. However, looking at the numbers, I'm not convinced there will be enough preaching offers so I can only give each church two LAs. And this assumes that those currently offering appointments can continue to do so.

So what now?

There are no easy answers. We cannot simply get the preachers to do more as they are doing what they can. Many preachers serve numerous capacities in their churches, in addition to their personal/family commitments. It is not simply the demand of physically being present at church but a service takes preparation and prayer time. What about preachers offering more appointments per Sunday, or even ministers

returning to a pattern of preaching three times on a Sunday?

This makes little difference to the plan as it is morning slots we struggle with to fill. Beside how healthy is it to stretch ourselves so thin? It would reduce the quality of our worship and potentially impact our health.

That line of thinking assumes that the problem is too few preachers. What if the problem is that we have too many churches? I suspect that we have a similar proportion of preachers to total members now than we had in the past. I do not think that is true for our churches. While some churches have closed, the remaining churches have often become smaller, so one preacher is usually leading worship for fewer people. While worthwhile lots of smaller gatherings draw more heavily on our dwindling resources.

As I said, there are no easy answers. Going forward, it is likely we will increasingly struggle to fill the plan. For now, I will continue to do the best I can, sharing out preaching offers and LAs. While I know that some excellent worship is happening in LAs, I do worry about the impact so many will have on churches and worshipping.

I am sharing this to honestly name the situation we are in. This allows us to lift it to God in prayer, and ponder what God might be calling us to. Will God provide the preachers? This is always possible, but how well has prayer worked in the past few years?

I find myself drawn to Isaiah 43:19 *"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."* This year I have been pondering how God often works in highly unexpected ways. God started a great nation from an old barren couple, chose a spokesperson who struggled to speak to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, and even sent his beloved son Jesus to save us all through that horrible death on the cross. God's unexpected ways are often not easy, but offer hope of transformation and new life. With trepidation and a spark of excited hope, I wonder: what will God do here?

I invite you to pray and prayerfully ponder with me. What are our priorities? These may vary from church to church. What matters more: gathering as our tight-knit church families (with more LAs), or having accredited preacher led worship (with travelling)? Does worship have to be on Sunday mornings, or will other time or days work? Why do we gather for worship? What is God saying to us and calling us to? What do we need to let go? At some point, I think we will need to make some decisions, as churches and as a Circuit. For now, we pray and seek to discern where God is leading.

Thank you so much for the many things you do, including reading this long message. So many people serve our churches and Circuit so faithfully in many roles. I think this current season of life within church is really difficult, but we have a God of new life, who makes ways in the wilderness. So we trust, pray and see where we are led.

With love and prayers,

Revd Sarah Butcher on behalf of Circuit Leadership Team

Please join us at **Bumps Babies & Toddlers** from 9.30-11.30am for craft, toys, singing, stories coffee and chat. A children's clothing hub is also available so come and find some new outfits for your growing children. We are keen for more people to join our rota of helpers so if you would like to help or just want to come and say hello, please speak to someone on the rota.

BBT Rota for June and July

	Leader	Open up	General & Craft	Tea
3rd June	Donna/Briony	Briony	Elaine Brenda	Sarah
10th June	Kathryn	Briony	Sarah	Chris
17th June	Kathryn	Mike	Brenda Dot	Hazel
24th June	Kathryn	Briony	Dot Elaine	Sarah
1st July	Kathryn	Mike	Elaine	Chris
8th July	Kathryn	Briony	Brenda Dot	Sarah
15th July	Kathryn	Mike	Dot Chris	Hazel
22nd July	<i>No BBT School Holidays</i>			

Sue Acty

Most of you will already know about the sad passing of Sue who in the relatively short time with us became a very active member and a good friend to us all.

Her musical talents have brought such pleasure to us and enhance our Sunday worship. Her great experience with leading choirs was shown when we were allowed during Covid to sing as a choir while the congregation were not. In stepped Sue and we had a small group (Including me!) performing.

Sue also gave time and energy, despite her health issues, to the life of St John's becoming Church Council Secretary and, working with Dot, took responsibility for Fund Raising.

I could go on!

On Tuesday 21st May, after a private family cremation, a service of thanksgiving was held at St John's and we were not surprised when Rev Donnas eulogy revealed Sue's life as being filled with many examples of her talents and achievements,

I think the Bible reading 1 Corinthians 13. was most apposite as her love for life, humanity and most especially Brian and her family was very evident. We continue to think of them and in our prayers.

Prayers

We all pray in different ways and at different times. Rather than produce set words which you may not find fits with your thoughts, I am highlighting events and situations across the spectrum from global to local and personal which reflection and prayer.

The war in Ukraine rumbles on with millions affected and thousands dying and Gaza , Israel and Yemen are other areas of great concern.

Natural disasters such as flooding and earthquakes bring devastation and loss of life to so many places and people across our world. Remember the aid workers in these situations. Think of climate change and the governments who need to respond to tackling it in time

Across the world there is so much repression and fighting—some situations we rarely hear about

In our own country many are struggling to make ends meet and there is considerable industrial unrest. Solutions need to be found.

Our community reflects the national picture and its response through the various agencies and charities should be remembered. We know people of Whitchurch prove to be ever generous through the FOOD-BANK

Our church has a mission in Whitchurch and all our activities are centred on being in the community through BBT, More+ on Monday which continue for the present. Our Church Council as trustees have responsibilities in making decisions for our church.

Thaen ourselves, families and friends - whether joyful or sad we are aware of our needs and those of others.

Lastly remember Brian Acty and his family

Bringing all this to Jesus

.Senior Moments!

For a recent birthday I received a pad which could stand up headed Signs for Senior Moments. I keep it next to my usual chair and flip them over every so often. I thought you might smile at some of them. I sometimes cringe because they are too close to the truth. Here we go!

All my favourite memories are in the past

What if the “Hokey Kokey really is what it’s all about?

I’ve forgotten more than I’ve ever learned.

Trust me. At ny age I’m an expert⁵ on everything.

Age brings wisdom— - -

Or age shows up alone. You never know.

I have trouble remembering simple words like.....

Uh...Uh

Taxi

The following drivers are willing to provide a lift to church. Please telephone before 9.30am on that day.



Please note also that trying to predict in advance is not easy, so some changes may be necessary.

2nd June	Pete Shingler
9th June	Mike Nimmo
16th June	Pete Shingler
23rd June	Hazel Nimmo
30th June	Pete Shingler

Stewards

2nd June	Andrew
9th June	Hazel
16th June	Dot
23rd June	Mike
30th June	Dot



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July/August 2024 Newsletter

Please let Chris Crowther have all your submissions for the next Newsletter by Thursday 20th June (the longest day)

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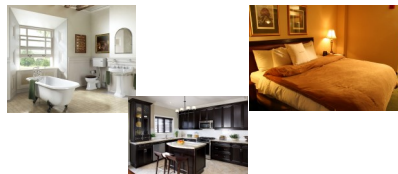
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