

Salford Methodist Circuit 



**The God of Love
hears our prayers**

Circuit Magazine

Edition 6 - February 2021

Where Do We Go From Here?

January seems like such a long month! But it's no longer than so many other months. I think it's the short days, and the uninviting weather that are a big factor in making it drag. Of course the lockdown, and the continuing bad news with which we are constantly being bombarded, relating to the pandemic: the high death rates, the unimaginable numbers of people infected, the overwhelming of the NHS and the pressures all of this is causing to the lives of so many, is another factor in making January seem a long month.

As you read this, no doubt our churches will still be closed for worship. It is clear that the current strain of the pandemic is exceedingly transmittable, and the instruction to "stay at home" is not given lightly. Even those who were eager to see churches reopen in the summer are now saying that we need to hold back at present. It's especially important now, when the vaccine is being rolled out, and the possibility of an end to the nightmare might not be so far away, that we remain patient. It's also vitally important that we as churches are seen by the general public to be standing in full solidarity with them in this time of difficulty and isolation. The time for resuming a much greater degree of normality will come, and hopefully not so many months from now.



So how will we emerge from all of this? I guess that is the question most on my mind at present. And I ask it from two angles. First of all, how will we be at the end of all this? What will the church look like: what will we be able and willing and sufficiently energised to do? How will it be for us to be together with others, after so long apart? What will be the cost of the pandemic on church life? And I'm not referring to the financial cost though that will clearly be a part of it. The physical and emotional strain will no doubt also have taken its toll. But we'll only know the answer to those questions when we actually do emerge. Once we can be together, we can support one another as we peer into the unknown future, and take decisions on how we can best worship and service God, and be a beacon of light to the communities around our buildings in the days, months and years ahead. It's a daunting prospect, but we do it together, as church families, as churches of this circuit, and most especially we do it holding tight to the hand of God, who is constantly holding on to us, and has done throughout this past year, as always.

The other part of the question is more practical: how will we emerge in a physical sense? One matter that I have been considering this week, along with Kim and the circuit preachers, is how do we put a plan together for worship in a time when so much is still uncertain. Before Christmas I asked for plan dates to attempt to write a plan for all churches open from March to May. This was before the current pandemic spike and lockdown of course. Our feeling at present is that there is unlikely to be any reopening in March, and April remains largely uncertain. Of course Holy Week and Easter fall into that period, and it fills me enormous sadness to face the possibility that we might not be able to celebrate these important events in our churches for yet another year. The decision we have taken is to focus on May, and I am in the process of sorting a plan which offers

all of our seven churches a fortnightly service in May, as a step towards a full plan, hopefully over the summer months. Kim and I are very clear that we want to be with our individual churches on the day they reopen. The staggered start and fortnightly services will pretty much allow that to happen. I don't intend to share details of these services with anyone until much nearer the time. Of course, if an earlier reopening is possible in some or all of our churches, then it will need to be re-written to accommodate that. We're certainly not writing that off as a possibility. But equally, we won't be rushing to reopen until we have a greater level of certainty that we can do so safely for all concerned. What a celebration, what a resurrection that will be when we can do it!

I started off by saying how long January seems. It may be February by the time you read this. One very strange book in the Old Testament is the Song of Songs, which is the only collection of love poetry in the Bible. It's there, because it can be read in praise of God, as well as being seen as poetry about human love. One passage from it keeps running through my mind (I once set it to music!) :

My beloved spoke and said to me,
"Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me.
See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.
Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come,
the cooing of doves is heard in our land.
The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance.
Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me."

Song of Songs 2: 10 - 13

The winter of Covid 19 will soon be passed. I don't mean winter as in the dark months of the year. I mean winter in terms of this darkest of times in all of our lives. It WILL pass. We will do all we can to ensure that it passes completely. Days are already getting longer, bit by bit. Early signs of the spring to come are showing in some places, between snow showers. We will find ourselves emerging from the darkness of winter, and into the spring of new opportunities. We will see the world we knew before begin to emerge again. And we will see it through new eyes because the things we once so took for granted will have become unimaginably precious. We look forward to that day, and it will come.

Meanwhile, stay safe, stay well, stay in touch with one another, and stay in touch with God. God will do a new thing from out of the disaster that has been Covid 19. And His church — the people who worship and serve Him — will be called upon to share in all that He has in store.

Rev Clare Stainsby

Outside The Box

Why are children so much more interested in the wrapping paper and the boxes rather than what comes out of the box? We have been getting a few bits together for when we eventually move at the end of August this year. We are fortunate enough to have a house to move into and have begun some renovations and thinking ahead to how we want the rooms to look. I ordered some paint and a lamp for the living room round about November time. The lamp and its shade came in an enormous box. Big enough for a 4 year old and a 3 year old to fit in together.

Aleck had put Archie and Louie in the BIG box on Christmas Eve when we were able to see them. They thought it was absolutely great, Aleck then shouted to me, "Granny I can't find Archie and Louie anywhere, have you seen them?". I went into the kitchen pretending that I was sad they had gone missing and shouting out "Archie, Louie, where are you?" I could hear them giggling and saying "shhh." I wish I could have seen their wee faces inside of the box and if it had been big enough, I would have probably joined them. After a few moments of this going on I said, "Oh well Grandad, I can't see them so I'd better go and get on with things." Then two very excited wee boys with enormous smiles on their faces suddenly opened the box up and jumped out of the box giggling and giggling. I pretended to be shocked but glad to see them calling them wee rascals.

My service on the 24th January was, I hope, an encouragement for us all to think outside of the box, even step outside of the box of our church buildings. This is something that we have been trying to encourage for a long time now. I recognise that when we are nice and secure inside of our church buildings, places we feel at home in, places where we can maybe even shut ourselves away from what is happening on the outside, it may be difficult to see beyond the four walls.

Louie and Archie were inside of the box for only a few minutes but you could hear their excitement of wanting to break out of the box and enter back into the other things that were happening that Christmas Eve. Inside of the box, they couldn't see us and if they burst out of the box and Aleck and I weren't there then they would have been puzzled.

Coming out of our church buildings, after our act of worship, after the coffee mornings, after the concerts and social evenings, after a time of possibly quiet prayer, who is there to speak to about our experiences? The friendships developed over the days since childhood. The fun the laughter, the tears, the sacrifices, the reverence of being with like minded people because of our faith. Even when we go home, maybe those who we live with may not understand what we 'get' out of attending church. I think that this is the same with people in our communities too. People in our community, they share coffee together, they go to events together, they engage with like minded people, they take their children to school, they do the same things as us who attend church.

One of the things that has been so positive about thinking outside of the box a good few years ago was the planning and development of the foodbank. Unlike other activities that happen inside of our churches, people come because of a need for food as well as support. Can you believe that in 2021 people are not being able to put a meal on the table. People who may work but, because of whatever reason, for a short period of time, they have had to put their pride to one side because of their need to feed their families as well as themselves. Boundary Road, the only church in the circuit, after a lot of

consideration and probably some doubts too, took that step outside of what they were used to doing each week with the various groups using the building. They, with churches together and in Irlam and Cadishead and volunteers from other churches around the circuit and from the community, saw this need. In doing so everyone involved in the project took that step outside of their church and homes as well and welcomed and encouraged the community to take that step inside of the Boundary Road Building.

I am sad to say that I have heard from a handful of people negative thoughts about the foodbank. Comments like, “yes but **they** can afford...”. “Well, **I’m** not wanting to support it”. “There really isn’t a need for this sort of thing in our area”. If those who do support it and work at the foodbank were to be present when things like this have been said, how do you think they would feel? There is an enthusiasm of those being able to make a difference. We have a choice of seeing and thinking outside of the box, instead of being inside of a box with no light, the four sides of the box closing in on us, the bottom of the box becoming uncomfortable and the lid pressing down, pushing us further into the foundations of the buildings that had been built for worship yes, but for mission and seeing and being able to help those sad and difficult situations that we know exist in our communities, but may chose not to see for whatever reason. Many of us have felt trapped inside of our own homes for the past 11 months or so. Many of us have not been able to function as we are used to doing. We haven’t seen or been with our families. Just as we may feel the need to be able to see and get out of our homes that seem to have become boxes. We have a growing need for releasing the top of the box and bursting out of it, to get the fresh air and to not breathe in the same air that we have breathed in over the past centuries. We have heard the Gospel but there are so many people who have not heard us proclaim it because we don’t like being outside of the four walls of our churches. We and the people we know or have yet to meet have a need to hear what the gospel is proclaiming today! We need to hear it in a language we can understand and in the deeds that we know we can do and need to do. I believe that, just as I heard the excited giggles inside the box as Archie and Louie were waiting for their time to burst open out of the box and see what was happening where Aleck and I were. We need to burst open from our churches and see what is happening outside. Being with and seeing where other people are coming from. Re-connecting with the basic principles of the Christian faith. We do have a gospel to proclaim, yes proclaim it and also re-claim it and grow with it in whichever way it may lead.

We can do this together. With Christian love and prayers,

Rev Kim Ratcliffe

God Is Love

We're really grateful to everyone who sent in ideas, following the service on Sunday 17th January, to help make our churches more visibly alive in the coming months. We met as a staff on Zoom, and discussed possible options. We are keen to try one thing soon, and then move on to something else before too long, so that things remain fresh and different.

The idea we'd like to try in February is something close to the project Monton have had up for some time, which invites passers by to tie a ribbon to the railing and say a prayer. February of course contains Valentine's Day, and everyone recognises the heart as a symbol of love. We as Christians believe that God is love! Our idea is to have a selection of hearts available outside each church and an invitation for people to tie one up, on the railings or on a tree, or whatever works at each church, and say a prayer as they do so. Kim and I will supply some hearts for each church, but others at the churches may also wish to provide some too. People of our communities can also bring their own. Ours will be weather proof. There will be a poster to put up alongside them explaining what it is about, which will be similar to the front cover of this magazine. It's not about writing a prayer that others can read - we don't need to put prayers in writing to God, because God hears the very thoughts of our heart.



Another way to emphasise this might be for each church to have some hearts in its windows. No explanation needed. We could even put hearts in our house windows to share in this. We'll leave it to you to decide on how you might get involved with this. Matt will also be putting things on the Circuit Facebook and Instagram on the same theme, which can be shared with your friends.

Kim and I will ensure the posters are up, and that there are some hearts at each church to start us off. Let's see how it goes. We'll start thinking of ideas that may connect with Holy Week and Easter in March so let us know if you have any ideas.

Worship in the Salford Circuit

While our buildings remain closed and restrictions apply, we are still active in our worship of God.

Every Sunday we share in worship on YouTube. You can watch along when it goes 'live' at 10am, or you can catch up at anytime as the videos will stay online indefinitely. A full written transcript is also available on our website.

To find the details of the Sunday Worship, visit www.salfordcircuit.org.uk/worship

We also offer the service on DVD for free each week for those unable to access it online. We try to get these out in time that you can watch along on a Sunday morning. If you, or someone you know, would like to receive a DVD, please contact Matt Collins.

Pray Each Day



A Pull Out Prayer Resource

**We know that people are praying at this time.
This programme offers you something to pray about each
day of the month, in which we can share together.**

**Day 1. The whole world in a time of pandemic - may we work together
as one.**

Day 2. Our nation, its leaders and decision makers.

Day 3. Our city of Salford and all its people.

**Day 4. The communities that surround our homes, including local
businesses.**

Day 5. The people of our street, our neighbours, known and unknown.

Day 6. The people of all our churches.

Day 7. Our ecumenical neighbours and friends.

Day 8. The family of Boundary Road Church and all connected with it.

Day 9. The family of Emmanuel Church and all connected with it.

Day 10. The family of Glazebrook Church and all connected with it.

Day 11. The family of Monton Church and all connected with it.

Day 12. The family of St. Paul's Church and all connected with it.

Day 13. The family of The Height Church and all connected with it.

Day 14. The family of Wesley Church and all connected with it.



Day 15. All those currently suffering from Covid 19.

Day 16. All those who have lost loved ones to Covid 19.

Day 17. Those who live alone, especially those who struggle with loneliness.

Day 18. Those suffering from any kind of mental illness at this time.

Day 19. Those suffering from any kind of physical illness at this time.

Day 20. All carers.

Day 21. All care home residents and their staff.

Day 22. Families struggling to cope during limitations

Day 23. Businesses that are struggling through this time.

Day 24. Schools, and all who are a part of them.

Day 25. The foodbanks and other organisations supporting people in need in our community, those who are keeping them going, and those who are benefiting.

Day 26. Students and their families.

Day 27. All who work in the NHS and the other emergency services.

Day 28. Those who continue to work through times of lockdown.

Day 29. Those who are hungry around this world.

Day 30. Those suffering from the effects of war, and its perpetrators.

Day 31. Peace, in lives, hearts, homes, and communities.



Prayer In The Salford Circuit

We have a weekly virtual Prayer Meeting on Tuesdays on Zoom.

Details of how to join are in the Weekly Email.

You can join these calls even if you don't have a computer, as you can phone in from a landline or mobile phone.

To get the phone number and codes to do this, contact Matt Collins

Methodist Dial-a-Prayer

The Methodist Church nationally provides a 'Dial-a-Prayer'

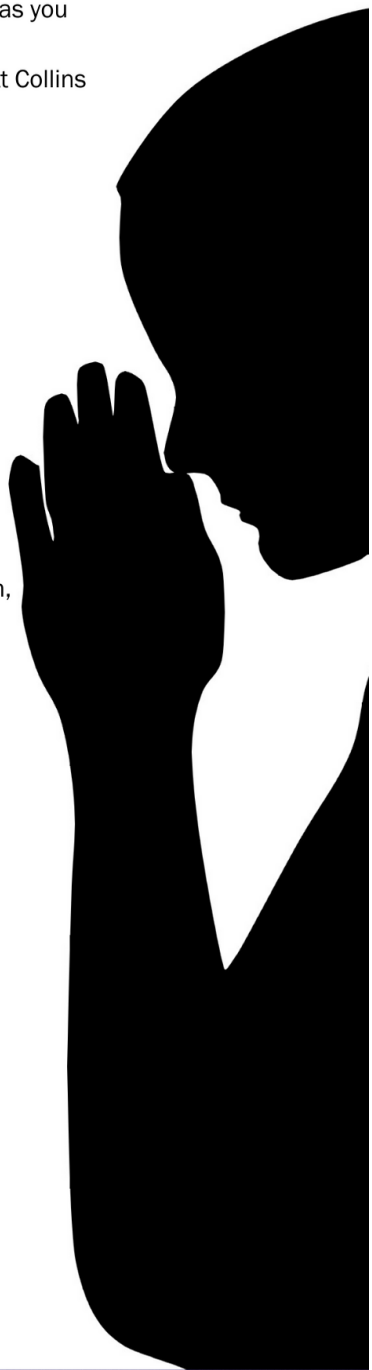
To listen to a weekly prayer call 0808 281 2514
(updated Thursdays)

To listen to a weekly pastoral message from the President and Vice President of the Methodist Conference call 0808 281 2695 (updated Mondays)

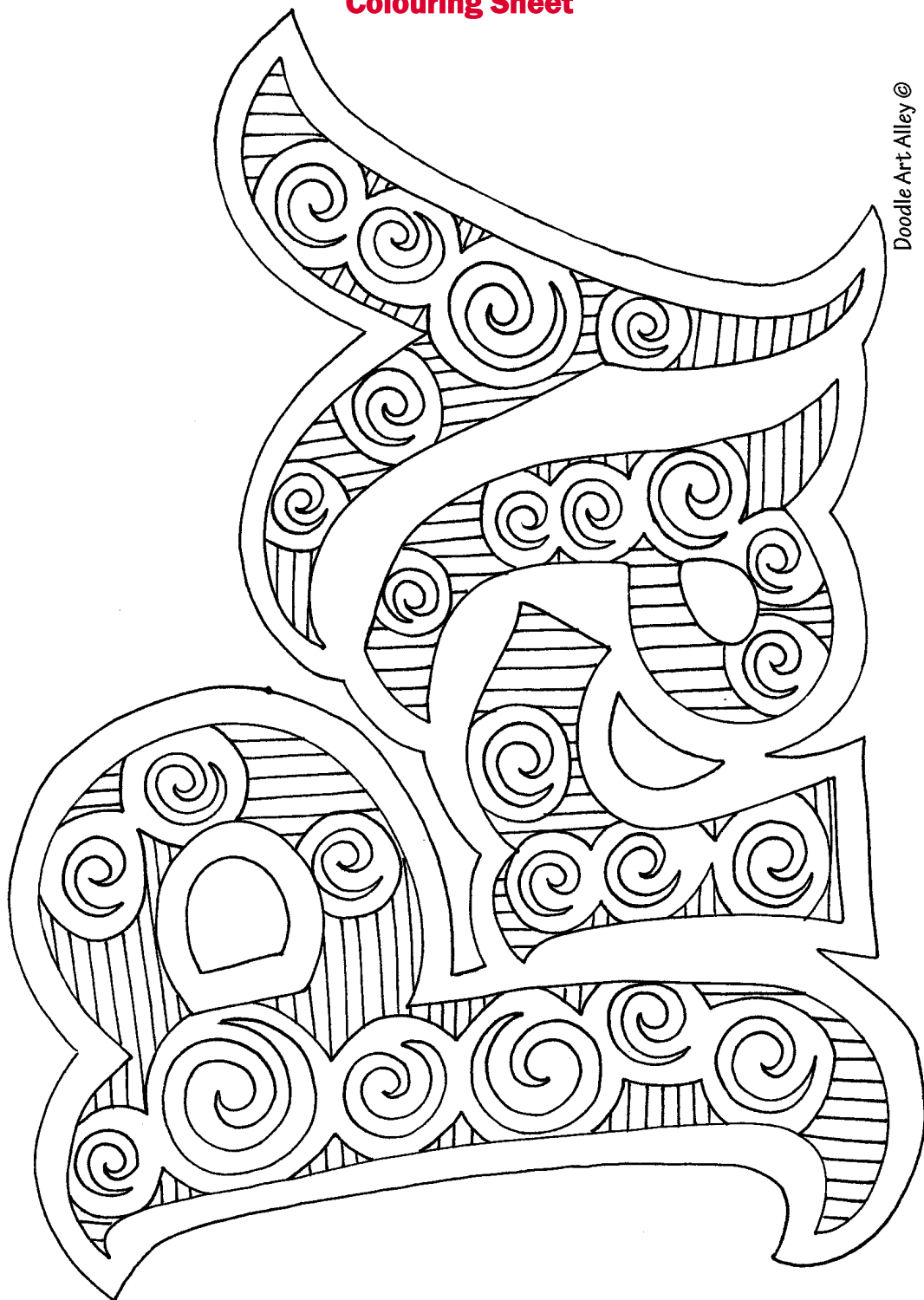
To hear news and stories from across the Methodist Church, call 0808 281 2478 (updated fortnightly on Thursday)

More Prayer Resources

You can find more prayer resources on our website at www.salfordcircuit.org.uk/prayer



Colouring Sheet



A Covid Prayer

Here Lord, in this place, the Spirit is moving...

We have not been together in the same space for such a long time, let's take time and space to reflect on the months gone by, and think and pray for those who have enabled us to be here today,

For those who have shielded to protect themselves, and their families, and those around them, who have missed family get togethers, marriages, funerals, who haven't had the opportunity to say goodbye,

I say thank you to them, and ask you Lord to protect them and keep them safe bounded by your love.

For those who have isolated whether it be once or several times to protect others from symptoms, and/or this virus, whom too have missed opportunities, times with those they love,

I say thank you to them, and ask you Lord to protect them and keep them safe bounded by your love.

For those Lord, who have been furloughed, or out of work, not just once but time and time again, who have and are dealing with despair, worry of how to feed their children, pay their bills, keep a roof over their heads, whilst dealing with home schooling and pressures new,

I say thank you to them, and ask you Lord to protect them and keep them safe bounded by your love.

For those Lord, who have been bereaved, for those who have said a hushed goodbye through masks or barriers, or those not able to say goodbye, whom have relied on hospital teams to relay messages to loved ones,

I say thank you to them, and ask you Lord to protect them and keep them safe bounded by your love.

For generations of children whose lives and experiences have been forever changed, exams not taken, silent freshers, virtual lessons with friends not yet met, missing friends, classrooms with half classes, the ever-isolating threat hanging over head,

I say thank you to them, and ask you Lord to protect them and keep them safe bounded by your love.

For those Lord, who have kept in work to enable the rest of us to remain safe, for the bus, train and taxi drivers, the shop workers, the refuse collectors, lorry drivers, food retailers, bakers, farmers, manufacturers,

I say thank you to them, and ask you Lord to protect them and keep them safe bounded by your love.

For the teachers Lord, who overnight developed lesson plans on screen, who deal with the ever-changing regulations, who can mix with whom, not knowing how assessments will be held, supporting parents as well as children in the virtual world, for again overnight developing skills in testing,

I say thank you to them, and ask you Lord to protect them and keep them safe bounded by your love.

For all workers Lord, within Health and Social Care, whether front line or supporting the front line, for working hours beyond hours, for leaving loved ones at home, for caring for those whom we love most dearly,

For all the many thousands who have answered the call for vaccinators and vaccinating team supports, those donning uniforms for the first time in years, those stepping up for the first time, for those managing vast centres and teams, for mobilising people to be where they need to be and when,

I say thank you to them, and ask you Lord to protect them and keep them safe bounded by your love.

For all Lord, suffering anxiety, depression, isolation of being alone, of not being able to reach out, we know many more people are struggling through this pandemic, rising suicide rates, so many more struggling alone,

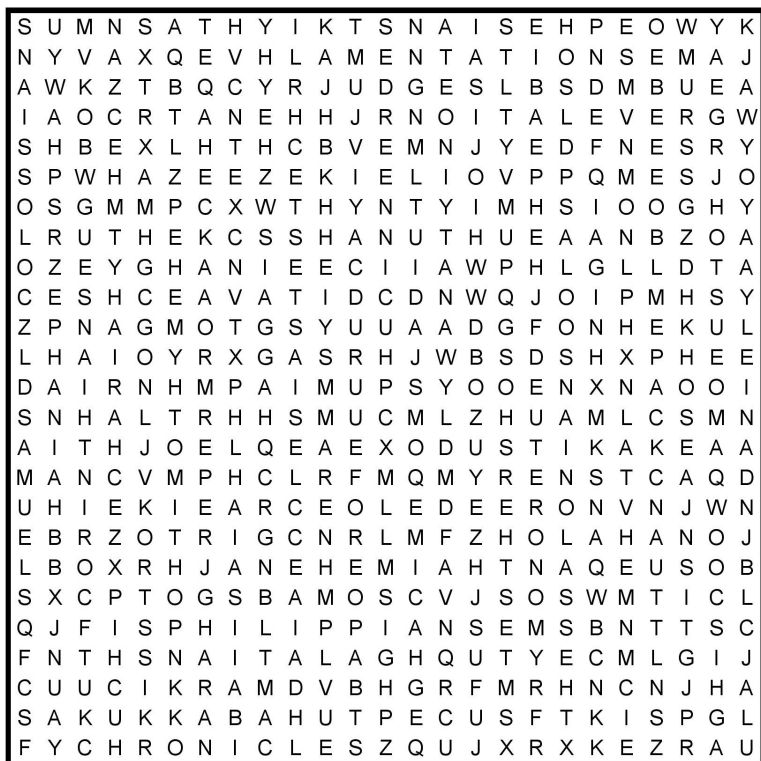
I ask you Lord to protect them and keep them safe bounded by your love.

Loving Lord, you have bounded us together in your Love, help us to reach out to those in you own communities, and beyond, to share your Love with all around us, protect and keep us all safe in Your arms, forever bounded by Your Love.

Amen

Written by Ruth Dawson

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE WORD SEARCH



BiblePuzzles.org.uk

ACTS
 AMOS
 CHRONICLES
 COLOSSIANS
 CORINTHIANS
 DANIEL
 DEUTERONOMY
 ECCLESIASTES
 EPHESIANS
 ESTHER
 EXODUS
 EZEKIEL
 EZRA
 GALATIANS
 GENESIS
 HABAKKUK
 HAGGAI
 HEBREWS
 HOSEA

ISAIAH
 JAMES
 JEREMIAH
 JOB
 JOEL
 JOHN
 JONAH
 JOSHUA
 JUDE
 JUDGES
 KINGS
 LAMENTATIONS
 LEVITICUS
 LUKE
 MALACHI
 MARK
 MATTHEW
 MICAH
 NAHUM

NEHEMIAH
 NUMBERS
 OBADIAH
 PETER
 PHILEMON
 PHILIPPIANS
 PROVERBS
 PSALM
 REVELATION
 ROMANS
 RUTH
 SAMUEL
 SONG OF SOLOMON
 THESSALONIANS
 TIMOTHY
 TITUS
 ZECHARIAH
 ZEPHANIAH

Updating Contact Details

We have decided to use the new year as a chance to update our list of contact details for everyone in the Salford Circuit, to make sure they are up to date and all in one place.

If you have received a printed copy of this magazine, you will also have received a card and envelope. Please complete the card and sent it back in the addressed envelope.

If you received a digital copy, you can complete an online form at:

www.salfordcircuit.org.uk/updatecontacts

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Matt.

Data Protection—Be Aware of What You Share

This is just a reminder. No one should share an address, telephone number or email address with anyone else unless they have the owner of that data's express permission to do so. This includes on Facebook, in emails and in phone calls.

When the data protection laws changed in 2018, we also reminded churches that it was inappropriate to put names and medical details in a prayer book or to share them in prayer without that person's express permission. That remains the situation now when worship and prayer are online. We don't need to tell God names and details anyway, when God knows the thoughts of our hearts. We can still pray without naming names.

As individuals, we all have a right to privacy, and as Churches and as individuals, we all have a responsibility to protect that.

The Next Edition of the Circuit Magazine

The next edition of the Circuit Magazine will be published in the April, and we are always looking for items to include. It could be a prayer, a poem, a photo, a story, or news about an organisation or project you are involved with.

Please send any items for consideration to Clare or me; our contact details are on the back page. Please include details of where you got it from. Thank you!

Matt Collins



www.salfordcircuit.org.uk



www.facebook.com/salfordcircuit



[@salfordmethodistcircuit](https://www.instagram.com/salfordmethodistcircuit)



www.youtube.com/salfordmethodistcircuit



Sign up for our weekly Circuit email newsletter at
www.salfordcircuit.org.uk/mailling-signup

Rev Clare Stainsby

15 Sunflower Meadow, Irlam, M44 6TD
0161 278 2762 cestainsby@yahoo.co.uk

Rev Kim Ratcliffe

10 Liebert Drive, Pendlebury, M27 4FP
0161 376 7458 kimiratcliffe@aol.com

Matt Collins

Circuit Communications Officer
07737 922 493 salfordcircuitcomms@gmail.com