

Salford **Methodist** Circuit 



Circuit Magazine

Edition 3 - July 2020

Putting it Back

*Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred
Are you still prepared to follow?*

*Have you made a choice to remain and serve,
though the way be rough and narrow?*

*Will you walk the path that will cost you much
and embrace the pain and sorrow?*

Will you trust in One who entrusts to you the disciples of tomorrow?

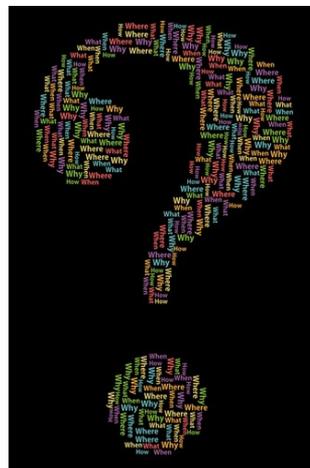
Some years ago I was part of a major development project in a church, which involved stripping out every single thing from the hall and side rooms, and putting everything under a huge tarpaulin in the church itself while six months worth of building work ensued. Some things went straight to the tip, but much was retained. Stripping everything out was a big operation, but compared to putting it back together, it was a piece of cake!

When we came to the day when the building was handed back to us, and we could begin to find homes for things in the completely remodelled building we made an agreement that nothing would be put back without asking questions such as “why do we need this?”, “what is its purpose?”, “would someone else make better use of it?”, and “is it appropriate in the new and exciting building?” Some things came back in, some things were given away, and some more things were tipped. And I don't remember any comments along the lines of “I really miss that!”

That was then and this is now. So what might this have to do with us here in 2020 seeking the next step forwards? We have been stripped of the routines and patterns of our lives, and especially of our church lives. It's not time quite yet to “put it back together” but now is the time to begin thinking about it. I believe we need to ask similar kinds of questions about the life of our churches. Not about things, but about what we, as God's people, do in our buildings. How do we use our time, our energy, our resources, and especially our people resources, moving forward? We still don't have a clear plan on what we will be able to do, or how, but I believe it's really important that we don't just try to slip back to exactly what we were before, but to seek prayerful guidance on what God wants us, the church to be and do.

The questions we need to ask are those relating to our individual church communities, but there are also questions we need to ask ourselves. As churches we need to look at the activities that make up our church life. Is this of value to God's work in this community? Is this where we should be putting our time and energy, or are there more valuable things we can do? Is doing this about me, or about others' needs? At the top and bottom of this article I have quoted from a hymn in *Singing The Faith* which also asks questions. The last line of the chorus asks the question, “*Will you trust in One who entrusts to you the disciples of tomorrow?*” The disciples of tomorrow - the people of God's church of tomorrow will only exist in our church families and our church buildings if we take steps to enable them to meet Christ in their lives. If we don't, then our church communities have no future, and our church buildings will soon become white elephants, or nice residential properties, or building sites. That's the stark truth. We've probably known it for a long time, but we've carried on regardless, because that has been easier for us: to please ourselves and do what we enjoy doing. We may have taken some small steps, but is it enough to give our church families a future?

It has taken a pandemic, an international tragedy of epic proportions, to pull us up short and make us think. We've discovered much about ourselves and about God during this time. We know what we have missed, and what we have gained. How will our learning and thinking help us to make the right decisions about the life of our churches?



So what do we do as churches; what are the activities of our churches' lives? And should we pick them up as they were before, or adapt them and reshape them for the way forwards? Or have they reached the end of their useful life? I said this was about questions for our churches, but that it is also about questions for us as individuals. What is my role in the church moving forward? How do I see myself contributing to the life of my church, and helping to build its future? Are there things I feel I can no longer do, or, for that matter, no longer want to do? Are there things that I did before which I have not missed during lockdown? Where is my heart in this? This is a time for reality and honesty, as well as for dreaming the way forward. It is a time to be realistic about what is possible. This is a time to admit our individual limitations, as well as to envision a future.

One thing I am very clear about is that we are one family, one Circuit, a group of churches who belong to one another. And we need to do the future together. We need to take the steps that need to be taken together, supporting and encouraging one another. And we need to be very sure that God is with us in our journeying and our decisions. Some of those decisions will be hard for us, but God will hold us through them.

Lockdown is coming to an end. Some things are resuming. Some things will never resume. And we are changed by life in these last few months. We have never for one moment stopped being church, or praying and seeking God. Where is God taking us next? And do we have the courage to be really honest, and to build forwards a realistic future that can help to encourage the path of the "disciples of tomorrow"? Being locked down was a piece of cake - we just did it. But what happens next?

*We will walk the path that will cost us much
and embrace the pain and sorrow.
We will trust in One who entrusts to us
the disciples of tomorrow.*

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Rev Clare Stainsby

Being Grateful



As I look out of the manse window to the back garden, I can see such luscious greens and reds and blacks. The green is from the trees and bushes and the few potted plants we have. The red is from the red brickwork from the garage of our next-door neighbours and the black is also from that garage. It is a peaceful garden; we can hear the sound of the traffic passing on Manchester Road but we're used to that after living here for seven years in July. From the front of the manse we see lots of houses and traffic and people passing by. We hear the children passing by for school. Only a few at the moment but by September I am sure there will be the excited buzz of the children, sometimes a little cry and the sound of a frustrated parent trying to rush their children and push a buggy at the same time. At 8.15 a.m., I hear the sound of the school minibus backing into the drive, my neighbour

waves goodbye to her son. At the moment my neighbour's son isn't in school full time he goes in for three hours and the time for pickup is at a later time to normal. We went out each Thursday night to clap and bang pots and pans and cheer for the NHS and Key Workers, we could hear all around us more people doing the same, at the same time. We know that we are blessed to be so near our children and grandchildren who live with us and in Cadishead. I am grateful for my family here and in Scotland. We have a lovely wee park near us too, Victoria Park that is really well looked after by the council and the 'Friends of Victoria Park'. We never take the car into Manchester, we get the bus which takes about 20 minutes. I've been looking at the stars this morning; its night time in Australia, there are beautiful sunsets and sunrises that I have seen from the other side of the world thanks to Helen who used to attend Monton but who now lives in Australia. Then I look out of the window of the manse now and am grateful that I can look out of the living room and see the green and the red and the black and the rain watering the plants. Did I mention my rocking chair that I have inherited from Hayley and Andrew? It is the chair that they got to feed our Archie, who will be three in August, and rocked him back to sleep when he was up in the night as a baby. It sits in the light of the patio door with a 'Granny blanket' and a cushion on it, looking cosy and inviting.

I am grateful that during this lockdown period I have been able to sort files out and catch up with paperwork. I continue to be grateful to have the ability to read scripture; praying for understanding before I read it and as I read it. I am grateful when I take pen to paper or finger to computer and begin to write, I'm even more grateful when I have something to write! When I'm not too sure what scripture is saying I am grateful I have the ability to reach for my commentary to look deeper into God's word. I am grateful to the late Reverend Linda Day for her strictness of how important 'exegesis' is to get a clearer background to where the writer was coming from and the need for us as preachers to bring the Word into the context of today. I am grateful I've had the opportunity to write prayers and choose music. I'm grateful for the phone that keeps me in touch with people

and the pastoral visitors who are also doing so. I am grateful to the Chaplains at the hospitals who have visited and delivered cards for me when I have been unable to visit. I am grateful to the people who have been knitting angels for the MHA Project that Rev Kate Le Sueur is responsible for. I am grateful to you, our congregations who are understanding of the situation that we are in and everyone who is keeping the practical things we need to do for the continuing function of the church, *our church*, during the temporary closure of the buildings. I am grateful for your support to Clare and myself as we continue to minister to you in a different way, not the way that we would choose to. I am grateful for 'Zooming' so that some meetings etc, can still take place, including the upcoming Methodist Conference; I pray for the organisers of this and those who will participate.

Did I mention that most of all I am grateful to our unchanging God, our faithful God, our ageless God who is with us always and forever? I am so grateful to God for all of the above and so very much more. In the rollercoaster of the ups and downs of how we are feeling during this pandemic it may be difficult to feel grateful. So much of our energy can be directed into the negativity of this time, we may even be blaming certain people and groups of people and when we are focused on those feelings we are in danger of being drowned in the negativity and this brings us down sometimes to an all time low. We may even forget of the times when we have been so grateful to God for the events, the relationships, the situations we have experienced throughout our lives. I encourage you to begin each day and end each day by thinking about even the smallest thing that you have been grateful for within your day. Colossians 3: 15-16 NIV may help you to do this:

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God".

Thank you, God, for being with us always and forever.

Rev Kim Ratcliffe

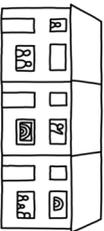
A Message from the Treasurers

In this time of uncertainty it is important to understand how churches can continue if we are not physically there. One of the concerns is about money and the bills that have to be paid. Is there something that we can help in situations like this? For example, some are still putting aside their offerings each week ready to take when church will be open again. Instead why not think about paying it directly to the Church's Bank Account. We are sure the Treasurers would be delighted to see money still coming into the account on a regular basis. Not only does it help to pay bills and other expenses, but it also takes pressure off the Treasurer.

If you are interested please have a word with your Treasurer for bank details and see what they think.

BEATTITUDES

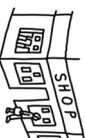
FOR A GLOBAL PANDEMIC



BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO STAY INDOORS FOR THEY HAVE PROTECTED OTHERS



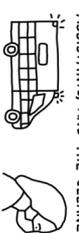
BLESSED ARE THE UNEMPLOYED AND THE SELF-EMPLOYED FOR THEIR NEED OF GOD IS GREAT



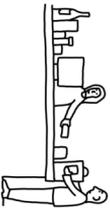
BLESSED ARE THE CORNER SHOPKEEPERS FOR THEY ARE THE PURVEYORS OF SCARCE THINGS



BLESSED ARE THE DELIVERY DRIVERS AND THE POSTAL WORKERS FOR THEY ARE THE BRINGERS OF ESSENTIAL THINGS



BLESSED ARE THE HOSPITAL WORKERS: THE AMBULANCE CREWS, THE DOCTORS, THE NURSES, THE CARE ASSISTANTS, AND THE CLEANERS FOR THEY STAND BETWEEN US AND THE GRAVE, AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS SURELY THEIRS



BLESSED ARE THE CHECKOUT WORKERS FOR THEY HAVE PATIENCE AND FORTITUDE IN THE FACE OF OVERWORK AND FRUSTRATION



BLESSED ARE THE REFUSE COLLECTORS FOR THEY WILL SEE GOD DESPITE THE MOUNTAINS OF WASTE



BLESSED ARE THE TEACHERS FOR THEY REMAIN STEADFAST AND CONSTANT IN DISTURBING TIMES



BLESSED ARE THE CHURCH WORKERS: THE DEACONS, PRIESTS AND BISHOPS FOR THEY ARE A COMFORTING PRESENCE IN A HURTING WORLD AS THEY CONTINUE TO SIGNPOST TOWARDS GOD



BLESSED ARE THE SINGLE PARENTS, FOR THEY ARE COPING ALONE WITH THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND THERE IS NO RESPIRE



BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE ALONE. FOR THEY ARE CHILDREN OF GOD AND WITH HIM THEY WILL NEVER BE LONELY



BLESSED ARE THE BREAWED, FOR WHOM THE WORST HAS ALREADY HAPPENED THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED



BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE ISOLATED WITH THEIR ABUSERS FOR ONE DAY - WE PRAY- THEY WILL KNOW SAFETY



BLESSED ARE ALL DURING THIS TIME WHO HAVE PURE HEARTS: ALL WHO STILL HUNGER AND THIRST FOR JUSTICE; ALL WHO WORK FOR PEACE AND WHO MODEL MERCY MAY YOU KNOW COMFORT. MAY YOU KNOW CALM. AND MAY THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE LOVE OF GOD, AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BE WITH US ALL. AMEN

National Carers' Week Prayer

Read Ruth ch 1 : 5–18, the story of Ruth and Naomi.



Creator God, you designed us for one another, for companionship, love, nurture, and care, when we read of the life of Jesus, a life of your love in action. We see your love for us writ large on every page we see healing those who are sick: enabling those with disabilities: befriending those who were outcast, calming those who were disturbed; welcoming the children.

Faithful God we pray for carers; uphold them with your strong and patient love.

We pray for those whose vocation it is to care, for those who work in hospitals, residential homes, care in the community schemes. We pray for them and ask that these carers may find joy, satisfaction and a sense of worth in what they do. May they be shown appreciation and support by the people and communities among whom they work.

Faithful God, we pray for carers; uphold them with your strong and patient love.

We pray for those caring for loved ones at home. We pray for the parents of children with chronic illnesses, terminal diseases, demanding disabilities, severe behavioural problems. We pray for children responsible for the care of their incapacitated parents and their younger brothers and sisters. We pray for families caring for their elderly through illness or disability through confusion through their last days.

We pray for them, asking that their love for one another might hold them together through the struggles of their life. Make us sensitive to the needs of those who care and ready to help them however we can.

Faithful God, we pray for carers; uphold them with your strong and patient Love.

Amen

By Christine Odell, sent in by Vera Williams

Dwelling in the Psalms – Psalm 91

In our Pastoral Group on WhatsApp we keep returning to Psalm 91 during these strange and anxious times. The following is an interpretation and reflection on Psalm 91 by Pat Marsh and taken from her book 'Dwelling in the Psalms'. **Anita Shepherd**

Psalm 91

Those who live in the shelter of the Most High
Will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
This I declare about the Lord:
He alone is my refuge, my place of safety:
He is my God, and I trust him. Psalm 91:1-2 (NLT)

Interpretation

God will protect all who dwell in him,
his shadow will fall on them and be a place of rest;
they will have nothing to fear either by day or by night;
no evil will harm them.
He will shelter them as with the gentle wings of a bird,
protect them as with the shield of a mighty warrior;
he will charge his angels to care for them,
he will answer their prayers and with long life and salvation he will reward them.
God will protect and bless all who dwell in him.

Reflection

This Psalm is worth committing to memory; such is its strength and beauty. Unlike many of the psalms, here there is no questioning of God's apparent absence in difficult times, only total trust in his presence and love. It's a very assured statement of confidence in God; a promise of God's comfort, protection and care for those who "rest in the shadow of the Almighty."

Another person's shadow will only fall on us if we walk very closely alongside them. And maybe that's the key to Psalm 91's beautiful promises. We are called to "dwell in the shelter" of God, so that we might find "rest in his shadow". Called to dwell there, to make our home there; not just to run to him in emergencies, but to stay so consistently close to him that we can rest easily under his shadow. That's quite a challenge, but one that gives us complete assurance of his protection.

Prayer

Sheltering God,
thank you for your promises of protection and love;
thank you that those who walk closely with you need have no fear.
You are our refuge and shield, our gentle sheltering,
protective armour, promise of salvation;
a swift answer when we call.
Teach me to dwell with you, Lord,
to stay so close that I'm always walking in your shadow;
and should I stray, Lord,
step alongside me and lead me back to that intimate place. Amen.

Thank you to Pat Marsh for allowing us to use her work

Every Knee Shall Bow

Every knee shall bow
In weeping for George Floyd who lost his breath
Every knee shall bow
In protest against the knees of prejudice that put him to death
Every knee shall bow
In repentance of white supremacy whose oxygen is discriminations
Every knee shall bow
In solidarity with those protestors demanding justice in 'this-crime-nations'
Every knee shall bow
In defiance to the oppressive status quos in the society
Every knee shall bow
In respect to those who dream and strive for equality
Every knee shall bow
In support of Black people who are beautifully made in God's equal image
Every knee shall bow
In giving up our privilege and identifying with the powerless in our global village
Every knee shall bow
In anger against the silence of people on the face of injustice now
Every knee shall bow
In prayer for peace, for equity, for justice, for action, for forgiveness,
for grace and for love.

Rev Raj Patta is a minister in the United Stockport Circuit

The Listening Post



At present, many of us are separated from friends and family. Sadly during this unprecedented and very difficult time, we haven't been able to hold our normal Listening Post sessions at The Height Methodist Community Church, which usually happen on a Wednesday and Saturday.

We have been reminding people that they can still access the Listening Post by phone. It may be that you have a query we can help with or maybe you would simply enjoy a chat!

The number is **07404 309 066**

The phone will be answered each day between 2pm and 4pm. At other times you can leave a message and we'll get back to you.

Take care, keep safe and well.

Jennie Smith, on behalf of the Listening Post Team

Covid-19 Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will,
Place me in lockdown with whom you will;
Put me to doing essential work in service of others,
Put me to suffering bored, cabin fever and stress;
Let me be employed for you,
Or furloughed for you,
Honoured with applause for you,
Or ignored for you;
Let me be free,
Let me be isolated,
Let me be online for you,
Let me be in church for you,
Let me have all the tins,
Let me have not enough loo roll:
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
To your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
You are mine and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

Deacon Jon Miller is a Deacon in the South West Wales Circuit

Worship & Prayer in the Salford Circuit

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

Every Sunday we post an **act of worship** on our YouTube channel. You can watch along when it goes 'live' at 10am, and the videos remain up after, so you can catch up at any time. A full transcript of the service is also available from our website.

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

We also have a weekly **Prayer meeting** on Zoom every Tuesday at 7pm. Details of how to join are emailed out each week, sign up for our Circuit emails at www.salfordcircuit.org.uk/mailing-signup.

If you don't have access to Zoom, you can call into the Prayer meeting from any landline or mobile phone. For the details of how to do this, contact Matt Collins on 07737 922493.

The Methodist Church in Britain also offers a free 'Dial-a-Prayer' service, allowing you to hear a recorded prayer by calling **0808 281 2514**.

The Pilgrim People of the Movement

When Methodism changed from a connexion of societies to become a denomination or church we began to erect and use separate Methodist buildings which became our churches. Methodism came first, our buildings came second.

As we begin to think about 'going back into our buildings' I am hopeful that we will take time to consider what we have learned from being out of them. I am hopeful that we will have solidified our understanding that church is not a building - we teach that to our children, but do we hold that in our hearts? We, the people, are the church, the body of Christ meeting together in community, acting together in mission, longing together for the transformation of our world, responding together to our calling.

I'm praying that as we share a road map for leaving lockdown, with all its needful risk assessments and procedures, we will guard against entering another lockdown, that of being so caught up in our buildings that we miss the opportunities to be church without them.

Anecdotally, I have seen and heard of such amazing innovation and creativity over these last months, as churches seek to serve their neighbourhoods and be good news and speak good news. All around the Connexion new and wonderful things are springing up.

As our managing trustees consider carefully their next steps my hope is that they carve out time not only to navigate a way through the 29 pages of the risk assessment, but to first undertake a spiritual assessment; to what is God calling this church, this chapel? I believe the Spirit might be asking us to be brave, to not cling to the old but to be the pilgrim people of the moment. Let's be a people of vision, let's not long to get back to normal, let's see what God might do if we allow ourselves to be led somewhere new.

Let us be generous and gracious to one another, allow different churches and chapels to make the decisions they need to without pressure to get on with the usual, allowing instead time to consider the Spirit.

I am reminded of Charles Wesley's wonderful Pentecostal hymn:

*Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work, and speak, and think for thee;
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up the gift in me.*

Let us guard the holy fire, and guard our buildings only as a means of that; let us keep walking the way together bearing the burden of grief for all that and those, which and who have been lost, in love for one another and in service to our world.

Jude Levermore is the Head of Mission for the Methodist Church in Britain



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Page 2 - 3 'Have You Heard God's Voice' Words

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Page 4 Photo by Rev Kim Ratcliffe

Page 6-7 Cartoon by Dave Walker on CartoonChurch.com

Page 8 Dwelling in the Psalms by Pat Marsh,

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