



District Newsletter – January 2021

District Chair's Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends,

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

In this new year we find ourselves in a third lockdown, with many more suffering from the virus, or, terribly, losing lives or loved ones. Many, I know, are personally affected, and I feel for you; as I feel also for all who are afraid, exhausted, or struggling to make ends meet.

In recent weeks, you may have found like me that bible passages from the time of the Babylonian exile (such as from Isaiah chapter 40 onwards) have seemed to be especially pertinent in our present dislocation and 'exile' from normal living, and in their encouragement that God has not forsaken for there will be restoration and a building anew. The quotation from Psalm 137 verse 4 at the beginning perhaps similarly applies now as then. Collectively and individually, it poses a question, a challenge, a calling: how do we sing the Lord's song in these disrupted, strange times; how shall we still sing the Lord's song?

'Singing the Lord's song' is a simple way of summing up much of our calling and purpose as God's people, literally and figuratively in all that it means for our speaking, being and acting as Christians. It may be easier in happier rather than more difficult times, but at all times we are invited, challenged and called to sing of our experiences of God's faithfulness and love, of God's goodness and grace, of God's redemptive purposes and presence. At this time, we have begun to learn to sing in new ways, by adapting to worshipping online or sharing service sheets at home, and we have begun to put our singing into practice in some new or more urgent ways, by revising our patterns of fellowship and care, or by giving food parcels or whatever may be required, even if there is so much more yet to be done.

At heart, what is the song that you want to sing, from deep within your soul and experience, still to tell of God's love for those who are broken and bereaved, or for those who need the bringing of God's justice and care through human angels or agency? What is it that rises within you, a song for yourself or others at this time of struggle, that speaks of your hopes and fears, your trust and thanksgiving, your resting in the God who holds you?

The song that rises with me goes back many years to a desire to stand with those who are struggling and suffering, and to encourage others in better places to stand with them. More importantly, what is the song that rises in you? Maybe also some familiar lines of hymns or songs come to mind. Here are some that are presently resonating for me:

What shall I do my God to love, my Saviour, and the world's, to praise? Whose tenderest compassions move to me and all the fallen race, whose mercy is divinely free for all the fallen race, and me! (Charles Wesley, STF 516)

Faithful One, so unchanging...All through the storm your love is the anchor, my hope is in you alone. (Brian Doerksen, STF 628)

Show me how to stand for justice: how to work for what is right, how to challenge false assumptions, how to walk within the light. (Martin Leckebusch, STF 713)

God of grace and God of glory...Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the living of these days. (Harry Emerson Fosdick, STF 682)

More importantly, what words rise within you at this time: what is the Lord's song that you want to sing, or need to have sung for you?

May you find again the Lord's song within you to sing for yourself and for others. May God Bless you in your prayers and endeavours, in your busyness and stillness, and in your experiences of 'exile' and of 'home', to discover that God will be with you in all things.

With my prayers for you,

James

The Revd Dr James Tebbutt



The Reverend David Hall

We are sorry to announce the death of the Revd David Hall, a supernumerary minister in the Kendal Circuit, on 14th January 2021. We give thanks for David's life and ministry, for his gifts and service, and for all that he means to those who have known and loved him. The funeral is likely to take place on 5th February 2021, but at the present time restrictions will necessarily apply, and, when we have more details, we will confirm them in the weekly District mailing. In the meantime, please uphold Janet, David's wife, and his family and friends in your prayers, and indeed all who are bereaved at this time.

District Chair's Letter re Church Closure during lockdown

Dear Friends,

The closing for worship of Methodist churches in the Cumbria District during lockdown

Many of you will know that since the first lockdown the Superintendent ministers and then all the ministers with pastoral responsibilities in our Circuits have met regularly to consider how best to respond to the pandemic. This week we decided that I should write on behalf of us all to recommend that during lockdown all Methodist churches in the District should generally be closed for public worship. (There are separate provisions applying for pastoral offices such as funerals, and the Government guidelines do not currently permit opening for private prayer; so here we are talking about gathering for general worship.)

In the Spring lockdown, Government guidance indicated that churches should generally be closed, but present guidelines have allowed them to remain open (subject to restrictions). In this scenario, ultimately it is not for the Methodist Church as a whole, nor for the District or Circuits to make the final decision, but rather for the local trustees to determine whether their church should be open for worship or not (formally this might require a meeting of the church council, but between meetings appropriate decisions can sometimes be made by church stewards). Notwithstanding this, the wider Methodist Church has emphasised that no one should feel obliged to open for or to lead worship, a message which our denominational partners have similarly emphasised, and which as ministers we collectively endorse. Additionally, since superintendents have responsibility with others for making preaching plans, they have the ability to suspend plans, not least so that preachers are not obliged to take services.

We, the superintendents, ministers and I, all recognise that, even when a preaching plan has been suspended, the decision to open for worship is ultimately that of the local trustees, and this letter does not seek to suggest or presume otherwise. However, collectively we feel that it is unwise for any church to open for general public worship at this time, and we therefore recommend that all churches be closed.

We recommend this not with any joy but out of our responsibility as churches to help limit the spread of the virus; to help ensure that our congregations (and those opening up etc.) can be as safe as possible; and so as to avoid us risking inadvertently transmitting the virus to others or needing to call upon the resources of the health service. We all miss the fellowship and encouragement of worshipping physically together, but much has been developed in recent months to enable worship and care to be offered virtually or remotely in various ways, which if not the same is nevertheless important. In numerous ways we have all had to exercise restraint during this time, and to stand with others in deprivation of various kinds, which we know for many has been far greater than the loss of worshipping physically together. We therefore ask you to consider this carefully if you have not already done so and to talk it through with others.

We hope that this letter may help you with the difficult decision if not already made, recognising that we all have ambivalent feelings about this. If however you are one of the very many churches that have already decided to close for now, we hope that this letter supports you in your decision, and affirms a sense of collectively seeking to play our part and to witness appropriately in this international emergency.

Please be assured of our prayers for you and one another at this time. In Advent we recognised the darkness, but also the shining of the light which the darkness has never overcome; if the darkness continues into this New Year, so does the light, which continues to reveal the Epiphany of God's life shared amongst us in our communities and in ourselves, helping us to come through, loved by the one who loves us all.

Thank you, and God Bless,

The Revd Dr James Tebbutt



DISTRICT NEWS AND EVENTS

District Property Secretary Vacancy

**Are you passionate about using the Church's property resources for mission?
Do you have a heart for supporting lay and ordained with property matters?**

This role is a joint appointment with the Cumbria and Lancashire Districts and replaces two volunteer posts for a **two year fixed term pilot project** (with the possibility of continuing thereafter if successful and subject to funding). Please see attached to the electronic Newsletter the advert which gives more information. The closing date is 5th February 2021, and an application pack can be requested from Carolyn Dickinson, the Cumbria District Administrator.

The Visit of the President of the Methodist Conference – 26-28 February 2021

The visit of Revd Richard Teal to the Cumbria District has been planned for some time and a decision will be made by the end of January as to whether this will take place in person or virtually (with the further lockdown, a virtual visit is looking ever more likely). The elements of the visit are set out in the Diary section below, but here are some further details for the Saturday.

On Saturday 27th February (if meeting physically, at Wigton Road Methodist Church, Carlisle, otherwise on Zoom) there will be at 10 am a session where the President will meet from wider than the Church various representatives from rural communities and the agricultural industry. At 2 pm, there will be another session when members of the District located or interested in the Rural mission and contexts of the County are invited to join a session with the President. If held physically then more people can attend, but otherwise to be effective for the conversation planned by Richard, numbers may need to be more limited if held on Zoom. If you are interested in being part of this afternoon event, please inform Carolyn.

Ordinands Testimony Service – 13 March 2021

This service, postponed from last year because of the pandemic, will be a celebration of the ministry and forthcoming ordination of the Revds Zena Smith and Andrew Sterling, and an opportunity for them to share their testimony with the District ahead of their ordination service on 18th April. If able to take place physically, the service will be held on 13th March at 3 pm at Stricklandgate Methodist Church in Kendal, but will also be live streamed so that many others can be involved. If restrictions are still in place the service will take place 'virtually' and again be shared or streamed in various ways. Please note the date and time in your diaries so as join this special service if you are able.

Partnership in a Pandemic: An Update on the Cumbria-Argentina Methodist Partnership

2020 plans and what actually happened!

The planned programme for 2020 included a visit by our District Chair, which it was hoped would include development of a link with the Methodist University in Rosario. Cumbria was looking forward to a visit of

Nora Viacava and Natalia Ochoa from the Argentine Methodist Church (IEMA) – both being involved in a programme of development of lay leaders there. Nora heads up FeMMA (the equivalent of Methodist Women in Britain) and was to lead the Cumbria MWiB Residential Conference in November.

Both exchanges had to be postponed but close contact by e-mail, Facebook etc has continued.

A link between a village school (Langwathby) in Cumbria and a Methodist primary school in Rosario was launched but has been put on hold while schools are closed. One of the teachers from Rosario (Geri de Paris) visited the school while visiting Cumbria with her family in 2018 and keeps in touch. Both schools are keen to develop the link when circumstances permit.

Covid 19 Appeal



Covid 19 hit South America hard. IEMA saw an urgent need to distribute food and other essentials to needy people in the churches and their communities. In July we received an urgent request from Bishop Americo to say that funds were running out and could we help? An appeal to our churches in Cumbria produced an immediate and generous response and just under £6,000 was sent to IEMA.

Bishop Americo wrote: “Our gratitude is immense for the generosity of your help with the families that IEMA is assisting. The money you have sent has benefited very many families who give thanks with joy and gratitude”.

Keeping in touch

The far-flung nature of the Methodist churches in Argentina has led them to make much use of modern technology. Consequently they were well-placed to stream services during lockdown, make videos and generally keep in touch with each other and with us.

A minister in the Patagonia District invited us to contribute a reading and prayer to a “devocional” (a short service on video) seen by church members in that part of the country. The Bishop also invited us to make a short video, giving thanks for the Partnership, which was circulated to all churches for inclusion in worship. Stephen and Graciela Cohen in Bariloche (Patagonia) sent a message of appreciation of the Partnership together with pictures of their visit to Cumbria in 2015.

James Tebbutt sent a video with a Christmas greeting, which IEMA circulated via Facebook.

The strong link that has developed between the women of Cumbria District and FeMMA has continued with frequent exchanges by e-mail, Facebook etc. FeMMA has a Facebook page that we can tap into and IEMA has a good website.

Throughout the lockdown Pastora Cristina Dinoto has posted a daily prayer on Facebook, which has been relevant to the current situation and has proved inspirational.

Plans for the future

We look forward to reinstating the exchange visits postponed from this year and developing the school and university links. The university link proposed would be between Cliff College and UCEL – the Methodist University in Rosario.

We have much to learn from each other and, whilst the use of modern technology is a great way to maintain ongoing contact, we have found that exchange visits and “making friends” have been invaluable in developing and deepening the links between our two churches.

The Back Story

The seeds of the Partnership were sown at the millennium, when Methodist Bishop Aldo visited Cumbria, and it really took off in 2005 when 5 representatives from Cumbria visited Patagonia. Exchange visits both ways by church leaders, members and young people since have cemented the Partnership between IEMA and Cumbria District.

The Partnership is supported by the District Partnership Group in Cumbria and by the national leadership team in Argentina.

Although there is an obvious inequality of resources between our two countries, we and IEMA have wanted the partnership to be one of mutuality and, whilst we have supported some projects financially, we have

also gained a great deal from our Argentine friends. They are now skilled in the use of information technology, necessitated by the vast area that their church covers. They are strong on social justice issues and enthusiastic in worship.

Ray & Joan Wager on behalf of District Cumbria-Argentina Partnership Group.
January 2021

District Website

Many of you will be aware from visiting our current District website that changes are afoot, and we are currently working towards a new website to be launched in a few weeks' time. To add interest and context to the site, we would like to include photographs of people, places and events around Cumbria and would appreciate photographs from across the District. If you have any photographs that you would be willing to provide (including permission to publish them as appropriate) please can you email them to Carolyn with brief details of when, who, what, where, etc.. Thank you.



Other Events and information

Called to Be – Exploring Ordained Ministry Day

This event organised by the Methodist Regional Learning Network is taking place on Zoom on Saturday 23 January between 10 am and 12.30 pm. For more information if you are wondering about, even just a little, and wanting to explore the possibility of ordained ministry in the Methodist Church, to book please contact Gabriella Mahadeva (mahadevag@methodistchurch.org.uk / 020 7467 5274).

Christians on Ageing – Conference Calls

This Charity - "A resource to the Churches" - organised a number of conferences on Zoom last year and a new series of these events have been arranged for the coming months. For details of these please see the email attached to the electronic copy of the Newsletter or visit their website using this link: <https://christiansonageing.org.uk/conference-call-2/>.

Conversations about prayer

This series of five short events organised by the Methodist Regional Learning Network is part of the 2020-21 Year of Prayer within the Methodist Church. There will be a brief conversation starter from the facilitator, then time in small groups to share. The sessions start at 11:45am and end at 12:40pm allowing time for people to attend the Connexional prayer meeting at 12:45pm should they wish to.

if you would like to know more please contact Edel McLean (mccleane@methodistchurch.org.uk) and to book please contact Rob Glassonbury (nwmannnetwork@gmail.com).

- 19 January – Prayer & Social Justice led by Andrew Lunn
- 2 March – When Prayer is Difficult led by Edel McClean
- 27 April – Praying with Children led by Alison Hulse
- 15 June – Helping a Congregation to Pray led by Sheryl Anderson
- 13 July – Prayer at Home led by Alison Ransome

The Evangelism and Growth Team

The Methodist Connexional Evangelism and Growth team have published their first monthly newsletter which provides news and resources to help in the commitment to be a growing, evangelistic, inclusive and

justice-seeking church. This can be viewed as an attachment to the electronic copy of the Newsletter or use this link: <https://dmtrk.net/BVI-766F4-A1F7116D4D5B7FE125FTT53FF0CAAE75F59FD0/cr.aspx> .

PROPERTY MATTERS

The Methodist Church 

Each month the Methodist Church Property Team produces an e-bulletin focused on giving updates on property related guidance and legislation as well as providing information and links to related subjects. If you would like to sign up to receive this, you can do so using this link: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/property-matters/> .

Spiritual Sustenance when isolated

The Methodist Church's Weekly News bulletin has compiled a list of resources that are available from the Methodist Church on a daily and weekly basis. For those who are not already aware of these, the details can be found on the email attached to the electronic copy of the Newsletter, or use this link: [Spiritual Sustenance when isolated \(methodist-news.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/property-matters/) .



CUMBRIA METHODIST DISTRICT DIARY

JANUARY 2021

- 20-21st Superintendents' Residential Meeting – Zoom
23 10:00 District Treasurers' meeting – Zoom
26 10:00 District Policy Group – Zoom
27 10:00 Candidates Committee – Zoom

FEBRUARY 2021

- 1 13:00 Regional Learning Network Forum – Zoom
6 10:30 District Ministerial Development Review meeting – To be confirmed
11 19:30 District Safeguarding Meeting
26-28 Rev R Teal – Presidential Visit (NB all events may be by Zoom)
 - Friday evening – Ecumenical Leaders gathering
 - Saturday morning and afternoon – Rural Church workshops – Wigton Road, Carlisle
 - Sunday morning – preaching Solway Circuit
 - Sunday afternoon and evening – Tea and service – Stricklandgate, Kendal

MARCH 2021

- 13 10:00 District Circuit Stewards' Meeting – Keswick or Zoom
13 15:00 District Ordinands' Testimony Service – Stricklandgate, Kendal
17 09:30 Presbyteral Synod – Wigton Circuit
17 14:00 Superintendents' meeting – Wigton Circuit
23 10:00 District Policy Group – Stainton

APRIL 2021

- 13 10:00-13:00 Lay Employee Day – Zoom
24 9:30 Representative Synod – Western Fells Circuit
28 19:30 District LP meeting with Bob Bartindale - Zoom

MAY 2021

- 4-7 Diaconal Convocation
8 10:00 District Stationing Briefing – Stainton

JUNE 2021

- 7 10:00 Regional Learning Network Forum – Preston
24-1 July Conference - Birmingham

JULY 2021

8 10:00 District Policy Group

SEPTEMBER 2021

4 10.00 District Finance Group

11 9:30 Representative Synod – South Lakes Circuit

OCTOBER 2021

9 10:00am District Local Preachers' Meeting – Carver Uniting Church, Windermere?

This has been sent to Ecumenical Representatives, District Officers, Ministers, Supernumerary Ministers, Lay workers, Circuit Stewards, Circuit Administrators, and others who have subscribed to this Newsletter. Please feel free to circulate this among your churches and to others who may find any of these items of interest. If anyone would like to be added to the circulation list, please contact the District Administrator, Carolyn Dickinson.

The next issue of the Newsletter will be February and any information for this to be sent to the District Administrator, Carolyn Dickinson, by **Thursday 4th February**.

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