

Link

The magazine for the
Sandbach and Haslington Mission Areas
of The Methodist Church



"A voice cries out: "In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people
shall see it together..." *Isaiah 40: 3 and 5a*

December 2020 – February 2021

Welcome to Link

Link is produced for members and friends of the following Methodist Churches:

Elworth (CW11 3JG) www.elworthmethodistchurch.com

Ettiley Heath (CW11 3NE)

Haslington (CW1 5PW)

www.facebook.com/haslingtonmethodistchurch

Winterley (CW11 4RP)

www.facebook.com/winterleymethodistchurch

Unity Methodist Church (UMC)

www.unitymethodistchurchsandbach.org

www.facebook.com/UnityMethodistChurchSandbach

New Horizons@UMC (Wheelock) (CW11 3RT)

The Welcome@UMC (Sandbach Heath) (CW11 2LE)

Wesley@UMC (Wesley Avenue (CW11 1DG) and The Wesley Centre)

UMC Postal Address: The Wesley Centre, 16 Chapel Street, Sandbach, CW11 1DS

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Jayne Bunn (Unity)

Articles (up to two sides of A5) for the next edition can be given to any member of the team by 12 February.



As I write this, we are still unsure as to what Christmas is going to be like this year. The talk at the moment is of “tiers”, “bubbles” and sitting down to a Christmas meal with the windows wide open!

In the midst of all this, the Christmas message of Emmanuel – the good news that “God is with us” – feels perhaps more pertinent than ever before in this extraordinary year.

From the Methodist Church website:

“The Methodist Church Christmas campaign for 2020 #GodsWithUs seeks to share this good news through twenty-four stories of individuals and their experiences of this extraordinary year. Each day of Advent ... there will be a testimony ... reflecting on what hope has looked like for them this year and how they have experienced God with them.

The ...stories the campaign tells include those who have felt the painful effects of isolation this year, who have experienced extreme poverty, who have struggled with poor mental health, who have lost loved ones – like so many millions of others. But ultimately, incredibly, God’s loving presence radiates from each of them in beams of powerful hope. Hope that is so necessary for such a time as this.

The campaign name, which ties in with our Presidential theme for the year, of course comes from John Wesley’s purported words on his death bed: ‘the best of all is, God is with us’ which reminds us that even in the times which feel most uncertain, we can be certain of God. Who do you know who needs to hear this message over the coming months?”

The stories will be shared on **Unity Church’s Facebook page***; a new story for each of the 24 days leading up to Christmas Eve. When you have seen the message for yourself, please share it with someone who you think needs to hear words of Christian hope, especially at this time.

A familiar reading (usually) heard in our churches at this time of year is the opening chapter of John’s gospel. Verse 5 reminds us that Jesus came into our world to be the light of the world. He comes still to be light to the people and *‘the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.’ John 1:5.*

We are living in dark times and for many 2020 has been a time of darkness, loss and despair. The words of hope carried to us in John’s gospel and in the testimonies contained

in #GodIsWithUs remind us that even in the darkest times, the light of Jesus shines through and is not overcome. For some, this might be all that we have to cling on to; a timely reminder that the best of all is God is with us.

**GOD
IS WITH**
*you
me
us*

After this most difficult and testing of times, I wish you peace this Christmas and hope for the year ahead and those of you who have lost loved ones in these last months, my thoughts and prayers are with you especially.

Jeremy

* www.facebook.com/UnityMethodistChurchSandbach

Worshipping together on Zoom, Soundcloud and on the phone

On weeks when there is no worship at Wesley Avenue, you can access a service on Zoom, either online or on the telephone. This service is either live or the pre-recorded Soundcloud service. This gives an opportunity to see one another and worship together.

For those who are not online, you can ring in and listen and take part in the service by ringing on your landline or mobile phone:

Just before 10:30am, dial: 020 3695 0088

Meeting ID: 846 6388 3875 # Participant ID: # Meeting Password: 364966 #

For those online, the Zoom link is:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/84663883875?pwd=d2Q3OWMoWk5EVHlxWUJ1VmdYQUo5QTo9>

Meeting ID: 846 6388 3875 Passcode: 364966

There continues to be a pre-recorded Soundcloud service every week and this can be found at: <https://soundcloud.com/user-426144288>

And finally, every Saturday morning at 9:30am, we hold our weekly prayer meeting. This lasts about 20 minutes.

To access on your landline or mobile phone:

Just before 9:30am, dial: 020 3695 0088

Meeting ID: 240 209 483 # Participant ID: # Meeting Password: 426301 #

For those online, the Zoom link is:

<https://uso4web.zoom.us/j/240209483?pwd=ekdJTk5LZ2t1Z2hnaHlzd3hPZE1tdz09>

Even without our buildings, there are still many ways in which we can worship God together.

Congratulations!

Friends from Elworth Methodist Church were delighted to join family and the whole community in congratulating Jean Ellershaw who has been awarded a very well deserved British Empire Medal. It was a special moment when Ray Fox presented Jean with flowers on the first service held at the church after lockdown. Jean continued her work as she led this (socially distanced and a bit different!) thoughtful and thankful service.

Jenny Broad



We were grateful to Chris B and her sister who created a poppy tribute around the front of the church at New Horizons (Wheelock) to mark Remembrance Sunday.



We are currently deciding on a Christmas display. If we can, we hope to hold a Christmas service too. Meanwhile we are collecting new toys, gift vouchers, selection boxes and Christmas Eve box items for the Wishing Well charity in Crewe. They can be left at the Wesley Centre on Wednesday 2 December 2:00 to 4:00pm or at Wheelock Church Hall on Saturday 5 December 10:30am to 12.30pm.

News from Unity

Well we've opened, then we've closed and at the time of writing we think we may be able to open again in December. Pre-Lockdown Two, services proceeded smoothly with pre-booked places allocated, and helpful stewarding, but of course wearing face masks and not being able to sing, plus the wide distance between those there made things less than ideal. Details of what is happening will be confirmed when we know! However there are many ways to worship available and hopefully you have found one. Of course, we are together for our Zoom services even though we're all sitting at home! If you haven't joined in one of these, do give it a go.

We had the opportunity to celebrate Harvest Festival at New Horizons (Wheelock) in October. Even though we couldn't sing the familiar hymns we had a wonderful time of fellowship led by Mr Paul Jackson. Flowers had been arranged beforehand and were brought as we arrived, to create a focus display around the pulpit. The gifts of food and toiletries placed at the front were supplemented with gifts from the Scout group and pre-school. The Beavers and Cubs used this opportunity to provide evidence towards their community service badge. Carol Griffiths and Jayne Bunn then joined with their 'Zoom' meeting to talk about the work of the foodbank, why it is needed and how their contributions would be used. It's disappointing not to have the annual Churches Together Christmas Dinner, but the Christmas Day Zoom service will be happening. Don't miss that! I guess this will make the events to mark Christmas 2021 even more special.

Unity Church council agreed that the uniformed groups could resume the use of our halls after the half-term holiday. The Guides met just before the second lockdown and relished the chance to meet together but we are unsure if they can meet again before Christmas. The Scout group decided the fluctuating regulations created too much confusion, so will

wait until the New Year to meet. Although most of the weekly activities in the Wesley Centre cannot take place at present, the Monday and Friday morning gathering of babies and their parents/carers is allowed, and it's great to know that it's in full swing. When the mums rejoined it, many of them actually shed tears of joy.

Jayne Bunn and Bryan Glassonbury

News from The Church on Ettiley Heath

Sunday 11 October saw our first Zoom Church4All service celebrating harvest and led by Mr Malcolm Crook from Crewe. We were also joined by Cheshire East Youth Choir. We were pleasantly surprised that 49 people logged on and over one hundred people were present from various areas of the country.

For our second Zoom Church4All service (15 November), we were joined by Revd Malcolm Lorimer from Nantwich. The service was based on water and having the faith which Peter had when he stepped out of the boat; are we stepping out of our boats, i.e. our comfort zones and helping others who need our support more than ever at the present time when our lives have changed dramatically over the past months. Do we have the same faith as Peter did? Again, we had well over forty people logged onto our service which is really inspiring and what makes it, so heartening is the number of children who join in.

Our Church4All Facebook page now has over fifty members. If you look at our Church4All Ettiley Heath FB page you can watch the crafts and songs on our You Tube channel.

On Sunday 6 December we will be hosting our Advent Service at 11:30am and on Saturday 19 December at 4:00pm you are welcome to join us for our Christmas Concert4All. Please contact Helen if you wish to take part.

Edna Lawton

Online Christmas Concert

Although Karen, Lynne and Rob are unable to perform a Christmas Concert in the Wesley Centre, they have been working hard on a virtual concert. This includes music recorded at their 2017 Christmas Concert and also some recent socially distanced recordings... (Rob recorded the piano tracks, emailed them to Karen who added her vocals, Rob then added his vocals and finally Lynne did the same).

The concert will be available from early December at: soundcloud.com/virtualconcert

News from Elworth

Elworth folk have been busy out in the community as much as possible sharing church events in a new way.

With our coffee lounge windows being suitable for displays and the fact that we are situated opposite Elworth park, we have risen to the challenge to share our church activities with local people, which fitted in well with our theme for this year 'Building bridges'.

Harvest in the park provided us with an opportunity to involve passers-by. We had contributions of food from villagers who having seen our display, went away, did some shopping and then returned with a donation. One young boy gave us an apple that he had in his pocket. All the harvest gifts were then passed on to Chance Changing Lives in Crewe.

The walking group managed a stroll along the canal path and a small group planted Spring bulbs in the church garden, a sign of hope.

Remembrance Sunday was a challenge for us as we normally arrange a service at the local war memorial which is attended by members of other churches and a large community group. As part of our service we would read out the names on the memorial. As we were unable to do this we displayed the names on the park railings surrounded by poppies. With a host of poppies which had been put on display by other local people and the laying of the Church and the Boys' Brigade wreaths, we were still able to play our part. The coffee lounge windows were beautifully decorated and admired by many.

Jean Ellershaw



Justice and Peace update

Although we have not been able to meet face to face, we decided that there are still things that can be done from a justice and peace point of view and so the 'group' 'met' on 29 October to do something small towards trying to put the world to rights! We are hoping to arrange a discussion evening on racial justice early in the new-year, so look out for adverts for this event in the not too distant future. It will be on Zoom and will involve speakers from outside the church who have first-hand experience of racial injustices, with the opportunity to break out into small groups for discussion. As our thoughts turn to the events in Palestine more than 2000 years ago, we would ask you not to forget the plight of the Christians living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories today. Here are some words from the Christmas Message by H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah (Archbishop and Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem from 1987 to 2008) for Sabeel - Kairos:

“Many in the Holy Land are still in the old darkness, which generates injustice, blindness and prevents one people from seeing the image of God in the other people. Many, failing to see the image of God in the other, turn the other into an enemy and themselves into killers of their brothers and sisters. Why is peace absent, even though everyone wants peace? Because the powerful do not want God’s peace, based on justice and on the equality of all God’s children. They base their peace on their power and money, and do not care about the human being’s dignity and equality with all one’s brothers and sisters. In the land of the Nativity, there is still death, destruction and hatred. Those who celebrate Christmas, those who believe in God in the land of the Nativity, should remove the death, destruction and hatred, and turn the land into a land of light and life. Those who believe in God’s mystery in Christmas throughout the world—true believers, and sincere rulers – should be able to see the light, and act for justice, peace and equality in the land of the Nativity. Achieving peace in our land is our responsibility and the responsibility of believers all over the world. Our peace indeed is in the heart of every believer, in the prayers of every believer, and in the voice and action of every church for justice, peace and equality in our holy land.”

A prayer: God of the Universe and All Earth’s Peoples, teach your church how to resist oppression in ways that are an expression of your love. Lord, lead us to practice justice, love and kindness, and to speak for those on the margins of our societies. Your community come on earth as it is heaven. Amen.

Our attention was drawn to resources from the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) and Church Action on Poverty relating to debt caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. From the Reset the Debt website: “Since the beginning of lockdown, an estimated six million people in the UK have fallen behind on one or more household bills, with poorest households hit the hardest. This is an urgent problem that demands a solution. That’s why we’re asking the Chancellor to create a Jubilee Fund, to pay off and cancel unavoidable Covid debt for households in the UK.” There is a campaign asking MPs to write off these debts. If you would like more information or to join the campaign and write to our MP Fiona Bruce, head to <https://resetthedebt.uk/>

Our next meeting is planned for 21 January and is open to all. Please send me an email (karen.unitymc@gmail.com) so I can make sure you are included on the invitation.

Karen

Foodbank Update

As I expect you can imagine the food bank has continued to be very busy over the past three months. The stats look like this as compared with the same time last year:

	August	September	October
2019	17 parcels	12 parcels	16 parcels
2020	15 parcels	23 parcels	23 parcels

It's interesting to note that August was relatively quiet, that could be because we were still doing our weekly small parcels for families that would normally get a free school meal (13 parcels each week). September and October were back to more or less double the number of parcels we have been used to, and during November we had our biggest day so far, with 9 referrals, and 14 in the week as a whole. Well done to Lis and her team for coping so admirably.

Although Harvest Festival celebrations were, for obvious reasons, somewhat different to previous years, we were still blessed with many wonderful donations from local churches and schools, for which we are very grateful. And the donations keep coming in, as Elworth Cricket Club had a collection for us this month and plans to do another in January. Iceland has been doing a raffle during November to raise funds for us and they are going to buy the items we are short of when the raffle has finished. Of course we couldn't function without the many donors (of food and money), all of the lovely volunteers who give of their time so freely, and the premises provided to us by Unity Methodist Church. A big thank you to everyone, too numerous to mention, and I would be in danger of missing someone out!

We are currently planning special Christmas parcels for families in the area identified to us by the Families Centre, the Children's Centre, and local primary schools. These will contain special Christmas items, including Christmas cake, Christmas pudding, chocolates, fancy biscuits, and crisps. We also hope to include 'A Host of Angels' in each parcel – these are a box of six Fairtrade chocolate angels with **the** Christmas story included.

We are still accepting donations of non-perishable food items at the Wesley Centre on a Wednesday afternoon between 2:00 and 4:00pm, and donations can also be made at the Nationwide Building Society, the Co-op on the Hill, and now at the One Stop shop on Price Avenue (recently added). If you have a large donation and/or can't manage to take your donation to one of our collection points, please contact the food bank using our email address (sandbachfoodbank@gmail.com).

January 2021

Sunday 3 10:30am Service at Elworth**

Sunday 10 10:30am Unity Service at Wesley Avenue*

Sunday 17 10:30am Unity Service at Wheelock*
10:30am Service at Elworth**

Sunday 24 10:30am Unity Service at Wesley Avenue*

Sunday 31 10:30am Unity Service on Zoom (see earlier article for access)
10:30am Service at Elworth**