



District Newsletter – December 2021

District Chair's Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends,

In him was life, and that life was the light of all people" (John 1.4)

I have struggled to offer a pastoral letter since early Autumn, because we are living through a very busy time, but more so because I have been unsure of wisdom in the face of the challenges of this time, so I have, by default, stayed silent.

We continue to live with the pandemic, meaning that whilst some things have been restored, some people are unable or have not returned. Whilst we give thanks that in some places new friends have joined, overall, we are not quite sure where we are.

The Methodist Conference's decisions around 'Oversight and Trusteeship' and 'God in Love Unites Us' have added to the shifting landscape. In some places new arrangements have been entered into within or between churches with a hopeful spirit; elsewhere, chapels have closed or longstanding members and friends have departed. The numbers involved may be limited overall, but that does not diminish the deep distress and sadness wherever this has occurred.

More widely, in these weeks we have remembered those who have died, including in war; and have witnessed a continued violence too often against women; or terror and violent attacks (even in Methodist churches); or the drowning of migrants in the English Channel through wanting a better life; or a climate-change conference that produced too little. Humanity's selfishness and self-certainties abound.

Thus we enter Advent, a season of darkness. Sometimes, words of comfort do not come easily, and the light of hope is not easily found. I don't want to write in simplistic, insensitive, or trite terms. I am reminded of Wittgenstein's saying that: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent".

Yet in the darkness, Advent is also a season of preparation, of waiting not passively but attentively, which, the rest of the Gospel teaches, often means attending to the discomfort and disorientation of our neighbour, of standing with them when hurt, and of speaking boldly against injustice. In doing so, our presence with one another can itself bring a little light or hope, for it reflects and speaks of the one who, in incarnation, became present to us. God was the only one who could truly speak into the darkness: the Word was with God, and became flesh among us (John, 1.1-18). God spoke into our world through Christ Jesus.

How we need God to continue to speak into our world, and to each one of us, to bring light into the darkness this Advent! Again, for this we need to prepare attentively: our faith is not a rushing forwards through tinsel and paper wrappings to a too easy Christmas; it is about patiently, profoundly, attentively allowing the deep birthing of Christ Jesus into our hearts and relationships, into our minds and thinking, and into the actions that God needs of us, if God's kingdom of peace and light is to be known and realised in all our communities and societies.

May God speak to our world once more; may we be listening; and, from his full store, may all receive and share the grace he gifts to all. In your hurt, disorientation and joy, and in your standing with others in theirs, may your Advent, Christmas and New Year be surprisingly and deeply blessed.

The Revd Dr James Tebbutt



DISTRICT NEWS AND EVENTS

Revd Donald Sapsford – 100th Birthday!

As a District we send our congratulations to the Revd Donald Sapsford who will be a hundred years old on 29th December 2021. For many years both Donald and his wife Laurie were active ministers in the northern part of the county and have since spent their retirement in Aspatria. Subject to any correction (!), we believe that Donald is our senior supernumerary minister in the District. We send our continuing appreciation for their ministry, and our love and good wishes, to them both on this special milestone.

Cumbria – An Ecumenical County

As many of you will be aware there was a celebration at Keswick Methodist Church on 28th November when Church leaders reaffirmed their commitment to an ecumenical county. The official news release for this event is shared below and afterwards our own Chair of District commented as follows,

“This was a significant, reverential, and joyful moment on Advent Sunday to reaffirm the Cumbria Ecumenical County. Rooted in prayer and relationship, we continue with humility to recognise that collectively we are called to show and share God’s love. Accordingly, we committed ourselves to a new phase in our Covenant Partnership and Companionship, undertaken in faith, repentance, and trust.”

News Release – Renewed commitment made to Cumbrian churches working together

Cumbrian church leaders have reaffirmed their commitment to continued ecumenical working during a special Advent Sunday service.

Ten years after Cumbria became England’s first ecumenical county, the Service of Reaffirmation at Keswick Methodist Church saw denominational leaders sign or commit to a Declaration of Covenanted Partnership and a Declaration of Companionship.

Heavy snow and dangerous road conditions in some parts of the county meant that, unfortunately, not all attendees could make it to the service, which came a decade after partner and companion denominations first signed a Declaration of Intent at Ambleside.

Since then, churches have worked together to grow God’s Kingdom in the county and have developed the ecumenical God for All vision and strategy.

Representatives from mission communities (groups of mutually supportive, mission-focused churches), local Churches Together groups and ecumenical projects from across Cumbria, also attended the Service of Reaffirmation.

The Rev Andrew Dodd, President of Churches Together in Cumbria, said: “It was a shame that numbers were limited at the service due to the sudden wintry weather which hit the county.

“But I give thanks for all those who were able to attend and all those I know who would have been praying for us, though the snow and ice meant they were not able to get to Keswick.

“It was an opportunity to give thanks, too, for the continued commitment to our joint working together as churches in Cumbria in the coming years. We heard some wonderful stories as to how that united approach in Christ is truly helping God work his purposes out in our county.

“It is wonderful to know that a new commitment has been made to that joint working and our prayers would be that the coming years will see a sense of renewed growth and sense of mission through God for All.”

Leaders from the four partner denominations – United Reformed, Methodists, Salvation Army and Anglican – and those of companion denominations – the Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic Church, the Religious Society of Friends and the North Western Baptist Association – all committed to signing or affirming the new document. The wintry weather meant that leaders from four denominations were unable to attend but the document is being circulated to gather signatures.

The service included a series of four special reflections which focussed on ecumenical working to support mission in Kirkby Lonsdale, across social responsibility, in and around the Cockermouth area and as part of the Network Youth Church, which supports hundreds of young people across Cumbria in their faith journeys.

The Rev Dr Paul Goodliff, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, also gave an address at the Service of Reaffirmation.

In 2011 leaders from the Methodist, United Reformed and Anglican churches first joined together to sign a Declaration of Intent. They were joined in 2016 by the Salvation Army.

Since then, the partner denominations – along with the companion denominations - have developed the God for All vision and strategy. That is currently being refreshed around four new themes: Speak Boldly, Follow Daily, Care Deeply and Tread Gently.



Representative Synod Minutes – 11th September

Although the minutes are not normally circulated more widely there is information included which on this occasion will help to inform everyone about cultural changes within the life of the Methodist Church, particularly thinking about the Justice, Dignity & Solidarity and the Safeguarding Reports. The minutes are attached to the electronic version of the Newsletter, with thanks to the Synod Secretary, Janice Rusling, for providing them.

Churches in Lunesdale Family Project

Attached to the electron version of the Newsletter is a copy of a report about the above project. It is worth sharing with you as it lets us know about good work that is being done in the District, and hopefully it will endorse and encourage other work and projects elsewhere. With thanks to the Revd Wendy Thornton and Lol Wood (Project Leader) for allowing us to share this.

Cumbria District Data Protection Bulletin 2

“We don’t have any personal data in our church.”

I hope that by now your church/circuit has a ‘Fair Processing Statement’ that refers on to the national Privacy Notice for the Methodist Church. If not, please see [Bulletin 1](#).

Thank you to everyone who completed the District Questionnaire. We sent off the District summary spreadsheet to the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes at the end of August. On the basis of that questionnaire, there seems to be a reasonably widespread view that some churches don’t have any personal data, so they don’t need to comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). I think this makes us consider the question ‘What is personal data?’ So, **how many of these four photos contain personal data?:**



Have a go now at answering the question. Answers within this bulletin below.

Personal data is information about a living human being, and that includes names. I think that means that minutes of a Church Council meeting contain personal data if the names of those attending are recorded.

The head-and-shoulders photo of a person contains personal data (i.e. what they look like); the tree doesn't; the mobile does even if there are no contacts stored on it because it has a MAC address which is generally linked to the registered owner; the dog probably does because by law all dogs must be microchipped, and the microchip contains the personal data of its owner.

I hope this helps us all to recognise that personal data is very common. Of course some personal data, such as your credit card number, is more sensitive than others, and it's important to be proportionate about personal data. But every church has some personal data, so GDPR cannot be ignored by saying "We don't have personal data in our church."

Do you ever write emails to a large number of people? If you put everyone's email addresses in the 'To' line of an email, then everyone's email addresses are visible to everyone else, which is not good data protection practice, unless you've got agreement from everyone on the list. That's why more and more people are using the 'blind carbon copy' (bcc) option instead. One problem with this is that the people who receive the email don't know who else your email has gone to, which can cause confusion. So, here's a tip: include something in your opening greeting that helps people know who your email has gone to, e.g. 'Dear Church Council members'. Of course, you still have that list of email addresses, so here's another tip: write a 'note to self' that you have all this personal data (the email addresses), so that when you do 'Data Mapping', you've got a head start.

If you have any views on this bulletin, or have any queries about data protection, please do get in touch with me, and I'll see what I can do.

Alec Bounds,
Cumbria District Data Champion,
boundsalec@gmail.com



Other Events and Information

Pioneer Stories

Over the next five years The Methodist Church hopes to plant many New Places for New People. These are projects focused on forming new Christian communities for those not yet part of an existing church and may look quite different from established churches. A series of short testimonies from some pioneers have been brought together and the playlist can be viewed [here](#). To find out more about New Places for New People access [here](#).



Pioneer Practice

The Church Mission Society and HeartEdge are running a free webinar series in the New Year to look at how pioneering works on the ground. The sessions will be at 8 pm on 13th, 20th, 27th January and 3 February and are led by Jonny Baker with different guests each week who will share how they pioneer. For further details and to book use this link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/pioneer-practice-tickets-212413463387>.

Digital Support

Eleanor Ledesma is the God for All Digital Support Enabler, and her job is to help churches and Mission Communities make the most of digital opportunities to connect with one another and with their communities. She also manages God for All social media and has worked on the new God for All website which has just launched. Check it out here <https://godforall.org.uk/>. So, if you have any questions or would like advice on social media, websites, live streaming or anything digital, [please get in touch with her](#). There is also a new [God for All Facebook Page](#) – so if you are on Facebook, please click ‘Like’! It’s full of news, events and encouragement from around Cumbria and is the go-to-page for anything to do with God for All and Mission Communities in Cumbria. There is also a [God for All Digital Support Group](#) for anyone involved with digital for their church or Mission Community. You can ask questions, share ideas and find out about the latest research and training opportunities.



Line Management Training
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

For more information e-mail a member of the team by clicking here

When?
All training is free and held online over zoom. We are repeating each standalone day on the following dates:

- 30/09/2021
- 14/10/2021
- 09/11/2021
- 12/01/2022
- 23/02/2022
- 18/03/2022
- 26/04/2022
- 09/05/2022
- 16/07/2022

Each day will be run from 1000 - 1530

New to Line Management?
Join the Learning Network Team and

- Identify the key skills and qualities needed to manage lay employees
- Gain clarity on the different functions of line management
- Understand the line manager's role in the employment cycle
- Understand conflict styles and conflict escalation

To book on click here

LN

This training is being offered throughout the Connexion and for further information contact James Pickin:

Email: pickinj@methodistchurch.org.uk

Mobile: 07799 900483

CUMBRIA METHODIST DISTRICT DIARY

JANUARY 2022

6	09:00	God for All Strategy Group – Church House, Penrith
14	10:00	District Finance Group – Zoom
19-20		Superintendent's Residential – Thornleigh Hotel, Grange over Sands
22	10:00	District Circuit Treasurers Meeting

25 10:00 District Policy Group

FEBRUARY 2022

5 Ecumenical Ministry Development Day – North Lakes Hotel, Penrith
9 19:30 District Safeguarding Group – on Zoom
12 10 District MDR Group – Stainton Methodist Church
22 19:00 District Grants Committee – on Zoom
27-1 Visit of Mrs Barbara Easton, Vice-President

MARCH 2022

3 10:00 District Probationers Committee – Penrith Methodist Church
5 10:00 District Circuit Stewards Meeting – Stainton Methodist Church
16 10:00 Presbyteral Synod – KSAT Circuit
17 13:30 God for All Operations Group – on Zoom
22 10:00 District Policy Group
29 09:30 NW&M Learning Network Forum - VTBC
31 09:30 Lay Employee Day – on Zoom

APRIL 2022

30 10:00 Representative Synod – South Lakes Circuit

MAY 2022

14 10:00 District Stationing Briefing – Stainton Methodist Church
24 13:30 God for All Operations Group – on Zoom

JUNE 2022

9 10:00 Regional Learning Network – Preston TBC
18 10:00 District Safeguarding Group – Penrith Methodist Church TBC
21 13:00 God for All Strategy Group – Bishop's House, Keswick
23-30 Conference - Telford

JULY 2022

7 10:00 District Policy Group

SEPTEMBER 2022

10 09:30 Representative Synod – North Cumbria Circuit
14 09:30 God for All Operations Group

OCTOBER 2022

13 09:00 God for All Strategy Group – Church House, Penrith
19 10:00 District Policy Group

NOVEMBER 2022

16-18 Ministers Retreat

DECEMBER 2022

13 13:30 God for All Operations Group – on Zoom

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 in January and any information for this to be sent to the District Administrator, Carolyn Dickinson, by 10th January.

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