

# CIRCUIT NEWS

*Loving others as God loves us*

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## A word from our Superintendent

Hello Church,

The pandemic is still with us. While we have been looking forward to being 'together again', in the 'normal' way, to fellowship and tell lots of stories of our personal experiences, our worship and social life is being further restricted. There are stories we do not wish to share with our "online community" or in a socially distanced meet-up, but within a gathered, closed fellowship we once cherished. Well, should stories of frustrations, suffering, losses, isolation, unemployment, and abuse have to wait a little longer to be told? What about celebration stories of births (children and grand-children), significant milestones, defining moments, and reconciliation, should we wait until restrictions are lifted? With your support, I say, no way!

We are the Church, a community whose Lord is Jesus Christ on whose promise we stand. We have swiftly learned how to sing, and enable others to sing, new songs to the Lord in strange contexts. We are coming to grips with how to be a caring church during the pandemic when people mostly need our relief. We are gradually understanding how to be patient with one another. Above all, we're getting to know how to create space to pray and tell our stories to God.

History is on our side. In the USSR, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the church could not openly gather. During and immediately after the WWII, the church could not be 'normal'. Even so, in all those restrictions, the people of God told their stories, in creative ways, to one another and to God. We can do likewise. As we go through this pandemic, I invite you to be the church in the Triangle of Love. Love for God, Love for neighbours, and Love for yourselves. In this Triangle, we will be inspired to create space to tell our stories, difficult stories, the Story of Jesus.

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:8-9).

Live blessed to tell the Story. Marcus

## A warm welcome to our new Youth Pastors, Lay Pastor & Ministers.

We are delighted to welcome **Ruda Mvundura** and **Ady White**, our newly appointed circuit youth pastors. Ruda will be based at Earlsdon Methodist Church and Ady at Nuneaton Methodist Church but both will be supporting youth activities across the Circuit.

They started their roles on 1st September and were commissioned along with our new lay pastor at a live-streamed service from Central Hall on Thursday 24 September. Despite the challenges of lockdown they have been going through their inductions with members of the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) and meeting key people in the churches. (*Look forward to hearing more about them and from them in future newsletters.*)

Our new lay pastor for church planning and evangelism, **Trevor Gay** will be a familiar face to many of you. We hope that his commissioning will be the first of many across the circuit as we explore how this new form of 'lay pastor' ministry and calling can enrich our churches. (*see article on Coffee Shop Sunday overleaf*)

We say welcome to three new ministers: Rev'd Ian Coates (supernumerary), Rev'd Neil Bishop and Rev'd Kathryn Darby (not in circuit appointments) and are also pleased to welcome Helen Bishop as a local preacher.

## A new look for our website: [covnunmethodist.org.uk](http://covnunmethodist.org.uk)

If you haven't checked it out yet, take a look at our new circuit website, which incorporates profiles of circuit staff, a preaching plan search tool and officers and latest news and events.

Congratulations to the winners and runners-up of the website quiz who will be receiving their prizes this week. You can still have a go at the website quiz which is available (with answers) at <https://www.covnunmethodist.org.uk/publications.html>



## God at work in ordinary places!

**Since the Circuit Evangelism and Church Planting team (Stream 3) started our circuit Coffee Shop Sunday adventure last December, God has taken everyone involved on an amazing journey and is driving us all forward.**

Between 1st December and mid-March there were 8 physical gatherings in **Costa Coffee** at Gallagher Retail Park, Coventry. Numbers grew from 22 to 57 people. We also established a Facebook Group which had had 72 members by March so as we entered lockdown, we decided to focus on keeping in touch with our members virtually online.

Now 7 months on:

- *Online membership has grown to 284.*
- *We have released 13 pre-recorded online worship services on YouTube (averaging more than 250 views each).*
- *We are holding 4 virtual prayer sessions per week on Zoom and Facebook Live with more than 20 participants at each session.*
- *Two inspiring Prayer Booklets (see below) have been developed collaboratively online and published by 54 co-authors from four continents.*
- *Over 1400 hard copies of the prayer booklets have been sent out and many more PDF versions downloaded.*

Coffee Shop Sunday has become a unique, growing fellowship of love and support. We thank God every day for always being at the centre of the new church gathering and for enabling so many people to meet Him in ordinary places.

We look forward with optimism to when **Coffee Shop Sunday** might be able to meet up again physically at Costa Coffee.

We thank God for Trevor, Annie and the Stream 3 team for being an inspiration to the Circuit.

For further details contact Trevor Gay 07966 388195 [trevor\\_930@hotmail.com](mailto:trevor_930@hotmail.com)

**Blog** <https://coffeeshopsunday.blogspot.com/>

**Facebook Group** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2589604707787300/>

**Instagram** <https://www.instagram.com/coffeeshopsunday1/>

**Twitter** <https://twitter.com/CoffeeSunday1>

Both prayer booklets can be downloaded from the circuit website or hard copies can be ordered via Trevor.



## Changes in the Circuit Office

A huge thank you to Amanda Bicknell, our former circuit administrator, Jayne Nowell, our former circuit bookkeeper and Lynne Horsler who has been covering the administrator role.

We needed to recruit for a new full-time post combining the administrator and book-keeper roles and also incorporating some outsourced support to another circuit. From a strong field of applicants we are delighted to have appointed Jane Bennett to the role.

Jane took up post on 21st September and is very quickly getting to grips with life in the Circuit Office. Her office hours are Monday - Friday 9.00 - 4.30 and she will normally be based at Bedworth Methodist Church although for the time being is predominantly working from home.

The Circuit Administrator can be contacted by phone: 07517 693474 or email: [office@covnunmethodist.org.uk](mailto:office@covnunmethodist.org.uk).

### Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) and our Circuit Evangelical Growth Action Plan (EGAP) Update

The Circuit is very grateful to Helen Holdforth and Christine Welham for their leadership and hard work over many years as Circuit Stewards on the CLT. They are both taking a well-earned break and have stood down from office this September.

We are delighted to welcome two new Circuit Stewards, Tendai Munemo, who will be coordinating the **Justice, Compassion & Peace** stream and Karen Brooks who will be coordinating the **Worship & Spirituality** stream. They join our five remaining circuit stewards: Mary Hobbs (**Children, Youth & Family**), Peter Dibble (**Discipleship through Learning & Caring**), Trevor Gay (**Evangelism & Church Planting**), Andy Pinks (**Staffing & Staff Well-being**), and Mike Hobbs (**Financing & Resourcing**) who along with Bill Holdforth (Chair of Invitation Committee), Viv Kershaw (Circuit Meeting Secretary) and our Circuit Ministers make up our Circuit Leadership Team (CLT).

For the past 16 months, we have been developing and implementing our Evangelical Growth Action Plan (EGAP), which is our Circuit's expression of the Methodist nation-wide 'God for All' strategy. (See the Circuit Website)

### FOR ACTION

**LOCAL CHURCHES** are invited to consider the latest EGAP update, circulated at the September Circuit meeting and **to start to develop your own Mission Action Plans.**

**INDIVIDUALS** are encouraged to **prayerfully consider how God is calling you to become involved in the seven EGAP streams of 'Loving others as God loves us'** in your local church or at circuit level.

# AROUND THE CIRCUIT CHURCHES

## How we are 'being church' during the Covid 19 period

Our congregation at **Arley** have been self isolating during lockdown as most of us fall into the vulnerable category. We have tended to rely on post and telephone rather than technology to keep in touch with each other! Rev'd Jane Braund has sent through a weekly service sheet and newsletter by email or post and we have had fortnightly Zoom coffee chats.

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> October will see our Church open for it's first service since lockdown. At the October Church Council meeting, we will be considering how to begin the 100 year birthday celebrations for the church again as they were postponed from this year.

At **Balsall Common** we were so pleased to be able to provide 2 outdoor services during September - the first services at the Church for many months. This included our harvest festival where the Scouts, Cubs, Beavers and Explorers were able to donate to the Cyrenians even though they could not take part in the service due to lockdown restrictions. While only a few could attend, those members of the congregation really appreciated being able to worship together as a church again.

We still provide a weekly newsletter with a service sheet as we have done to all our members since the start of lockdown. A weekly Zoom call allows a time of fellowship. We are now actively investigating how we can stream services to members who feel vulnerable and do not wish to attend service, especially now as we hope to restart some indoor services.

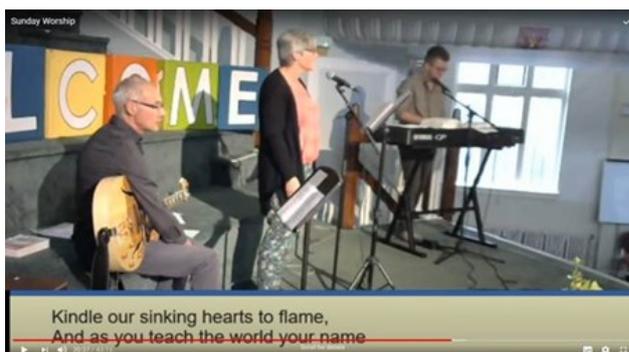
Sending warmest greetings to all churches in our Circuit. May God continue to support, protect and bless us during this time of national emergency.

The **Bedworth** Methodists realise now, more than ever, that church is not the building and we have had to learn new ways to worship God whilst physically separate but united in the Spirit! To this end the weekly worship at home sheets have been a great help and we are thankful for all the hard work and dedication of our Ministers and Local Preachers who each week ensure we have this aide to worship. It's lovely to think that most Sunday we can still worship together even though we are apart! Bedworth has also held Zoom services. Who knew IT could thus enrich our lives!

On 13th Sept we held our first Sunday worship in our church since lockdown and celebrated our Harvest Festival in church on 27th Sept. We hope to open our doors for Sunday worship at least once a month.

Whilst we unable at present to open our doors and welcome people in our community, Deacon Sheila, every Tuesday and Friday morning, sets up a table and few chairs outside of our church and invites people to approach her if they need a prayer or just to ease their mind in private conversation. I'm sure this has been a source of comfort to many people and an opportunity for mission in Bedworth. Special thanks to our pastoral care team who have provided doorstep visits and regular telephone calls. The social side of things has been ongoing with Zoom quizzes and socially distanced bench picnics in Bedworth Park.

Livestreaming Sunday worship at Central Hall



### CENTRAL HALL

We have been able to continue to care for and nurture our congregation as we are in email contact with over a 100 members and we have around 40 members for whom other members print out and deliver service sheets. Others receive information through the post so that we can keep in touch with everyone. Life group leaders are keeping in contact with their members and some of the Life groups have been meeting in gardens. Stephen and Sheila have been compiling a monthly newsletter that everyone receives as well. We have also set up a church parent's group and young people's group on email so that we can contact our young people through their parents.

On the first Sunday of the month Stephen has been sending out an invitation to 'Break Bread' on Zoom at 9am and he also holds a Zoom

Bible study every Wednesday at 3pm. Sheila, Doreen and Graham have been keeping in contact with people and follow up any pastoral concerns. We have started to hold very successful 'test' services with an invited congregation which we have also livestreamed. These have been very well received and we are hoping to carry on with these for the time being so that over time, every member of our congregation will have been invited to a service.

Stephen and Sheila are discussing having a Ministerial presence at the church one afternoon a week so that people can come and talk or pray with social distancing guidelines in place of course! Junior Church leaders have been running a competition for the young people on 'What sparks their curiosity about God' to keep them in touch with each other.

*Hello to everyone from **Collycroft**. Over the Summer we have met a few times with the Sunday Scene children and young people in the open space of Bailey Park for "Pray and Play" sessions - a time for everyone to share news and pray together followed by the children playing and ending with a blessing. We had a teddy bear Sunday when we were able to deliver teddy bears for the children to hug as for all of us we have missed being able to hug our friends and families.*

*Since lockdown we have been taking the opportunity to get essential repairs done in the chapel building, specifically the roof/chimney and the floor in the school room.*

*Since the beginning of September Sunday Scene have been meeting on Zoom sessions and have been encouraged by the possibilities those attending bring. One Sunday we had an impromptu Pet Sunday with a cat, dog and two hamsters! Deacon Sheila is leading our Harvest Family Service on Zoom and we hope to deliver a selection of ingredients to the doorstep of each family for them to make and bake a dish together. We plan to collect items for the Foodbank as our Harvest gift from the church family.*

*We send our best wishes to everyone in the circuit family and our prayer for God's blessing on each church and home.*

### **Earlsdon**

Thanks to technical "know how" of a few of our members, some of us have been able to experience our own Zoom after-service coffee catch-up on Sunday mornings after joining live streamed services by the District or others. A regular emailed newsletter has been set up which is also posted out to those not on email along with worship sheets or details of recorded services. The Prayer Group has continued to meet weekly on Zoom to pray for those in need. Prayer shawls and flowers have been delivered as a tangible way of sharing in the difficult and joyful experiences of people in our community. Pastoral visitors have made regular calls and have provided much needed support to the bereaved and isolated. Some of our congregation are involved in supporting Coffee shop Sunday. In summary, people at Earlsdon have held each other and the community in love during these troubled times and will continue to do so as we look forward to returning to worship whatever format it may take.

Our Church Hall Secretary keeps the church hall community advised as to where we stand and preparations are being made to enable us to open buildings safely at the point that this is approved by church council. We have liaised with two primary schools in our area in order to provide financial support for families in need and are having ongoing discussions about what else we can do to help the surrounding community.

This month we have been getting to know Ruda our new circuit youth pastor who will be based in Earlsdon and are looking forward to working with her.

At **Meriden** we have continued "to be church" by liaising between members. Many of our congregation are elderly so checks have been made to ensure that they are getting food delivered and "take away" meals too. We have done our risk assessment and we are hoping to restart for Harvest at the end of September or early October.

### **Ryton**

Over the past 5 months, worship has continued with services emailed or delivered to all the church family weekly. The District service has been attended by a number of our members, whilst others have appreciated radio or television services. Zoom meetings were attempted but only 5 people were willing to try it, one of whom couldn't hear anything. Several have joined up with Coffee Shop Sunday, either during the gatherings or following on FaceBook.

We also sent out the *Daily Hope* free phone number from the Church of England 0800 804 8044 and the free phone lines for prayers and news from the Methodist church: *Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514; Listen to news: 0808 281 2478*

Pastoral care has been maintained through weekly phone conversations with the deacon, regular calls from pastoral visitors and a network of care between the church family members. A monthly newsletter has also been sent out and church steward, Joanna Davis, has sent regular updates between times.

For the future, we have moved on from open air worship attended by 9 to our first indoor service, attended by 18. We plan to continue with indoor worship, but not every week initially, whilst maintaining email/ printed services for those not able to be present. For the time being, we are not opening up the back of the church: halls, kitchen and toilets. Pastoral care will continue, with weekly diaconal calls to those not able to attend worship and occasional calls to everyone else, alongside the pastoral visitors' calls.

### **Woodside Avenue**

*Woodside has been re-opened for some weeks now and our latest venture is to live stream our services, which then are accessible on YouTube for those unable to attend. We have also an audio version via telephone for those without a computer. We would welcome any other churches interested in sharing one of our services so they can observe at first hand how we have complied with Covid19 guidelines. Owing to limited capacity pre booking is necessary and that can be done by email to [jen.holmes@gmx.com](mailto:jen.holmes@gmx.com) by mid-day Saturday.*

*This poster in the window of Bedworth Methodist Church says it all!*

