

# Withington Methodist News

December 2020



# SUNDAY WORSHIP

Unfortunately due to the new lockdown rules to be implemented from the 5<sup>th</sup> November to the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, we will be suspending 'in person' worship at Withington. However, as per the guidelines, we will still be broadcasting a live service on YouTube at the usual time of 10:45. The link and further information can be found below.

*'Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.' - Luke 1, 11-14*

## DEAR FRIENDS,

Why is Advent such a magical time of year? I think it's because everyone is expecting a miracle at Christmas. Just consider all the popular Christmas films - each one has a miracle as its central plot, whether it's a boy hoping his parents will get back together, a shop owner hoping he can keep his business running, or a town that needs a new hero to help "save Christmas."

You might be reading this and wishing for your own miracle this Christmas, probably a much smaller one than what makes a good Christmas film, but no less important to you. Maybe you are looking forward to finally seeing your loved ones and friends for a few days this Christmas. Maybe you are wishing for a new job in the New Year or hoping that things will get back to normal sooner than expected.

2 000 years ago, there was a couple who hoped for their own miracle, but like many, they had long given up on this dream. Zechariah and Elisabeth prayed for a child, but year after year, that prayer went unfulfilled. The couple gave up on their dream, but didn't give up on God - they remained

faithful. Then, one ordinary day, the extraordinary happened: an angel told Zechariah that he and his wife, Elisabeth would have a son after all. He would have a special purpose and would prepare God's people for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

What is interesting is that Zechariah had no problem with the big miracle: God sending his Son to be the Saviour. It was the little miracle he had trouble with, the miracle in his own life. Even though God had done a similar thing many times before Zechariah refused to believe his wife, Elisabeth could bear a child.

He did something we often do. We believe in the big things of God - sending his Son to be our Saviour, creation and heaven, but when it comes to smaller miracles, we limit Him. It's as if we say: Yes, God can create heaven and earth, be born of a baby, and send us to heaven, but He can't possibly change me, fix my relationships or get me a job.

And God's answer to us is: Yes, I can. You see, the biggest miracle has already been done - Jesus. Everything else is small to God. So maybe today, like Zechariah, you are letting God know that there is something too big for Him. Something even He cannot change. The story from the gospel of Luke reminds us that there is nothing too difficult for God and He is still in the business of doing miracles. Even in your own life.

Have a blessed Advent and Christmas,  
Rev. Krystyna

## A REFLECTION FROM CAROLINE WICKENS

It's Advent Sunday, and the beginning of a new church year. There is always something hopeful about a new beginning, and Advent is no exception. We sing 'O come, O come, Emmanuel', not just in longing for Jesus to come, but also in hope and the expectation that God will be with us in the days ahead.

Today's psalm picks up on that longing for God to be with us:

Restore us, O God;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

This is psalm 80, and it cries out to God to come to us and save us. The psalmist recognises that the people are facing trouble, and offers a memorable image to express that:

O Lord God of hosts,  
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?  
<sup>5</sup>You have fed them with the bread of tears,  
and given them tears to drink in full measure.

The picture helps us imagine people weeping uncontrollably, until even their water-bottles are filled with salty tears. And this year, we too have had to face suffering and grief – we share in heartbreak and lament.

Yet the words of the psalm reassure us that God will act. God is the shepherd of the people, close to them, paying attention to their needs:

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,  
you who lead Joseph like a flock!

And God is also cosmic ruler, whose power is as sudden and dynamic as lightning:

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth!

Our hope is in God, who cares for us and knows us as a shepherd knows the sheep, but who also has immense, unfathomable power to shine suddenly on our lives.

But the closing words of this psalm resonate with Christian hope and expectation in unexpected ways:

Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,  
the one whom you made strong for yourself.

Hundreds of years before Jesus' time, the psalmist spoke in ways that can be understood as looking forward to his coming. For Christians, Jesus is the one at God's right hand. He is the one in whom we encounter God's strength. He is the one through whom we see God's hand at work.

And when we see God present in Jesus, then everything will change:

we will never turn back from you;  
give us life, and we will call on your name.

We know, of course, that it's not that simple – even with Jesus at our side, we can still turn away from God. But we recognise, as Advent begins, that in Jesus there is a whole new kind of hope, the hope that God is with us, sharing our life, and showing us how to share the life of God.

## PRAYER LIST

We remember in our prayers:

Those who face an uncertain future.

Those who are lonely

Prisoners of conscience

Those living with HIV or Aids

**Promilla**, Noel, Urima, Aima, Hannan,

Stella,

Thandi and Peter,

Cliff,

Cliff's Mum and Dad,

Phil,

Simon,

Robbie's family (Ruth, Sarah and Daniel),

Barbara,

Lizzie and her family,

Sylvain and family



# WORSHIP WITH US

## Sunday Morning Live Stream

Please join us in Sunday morning worship, live streamed from Withington Methodist Church-

[https://youtu.be/8xPsOEL\\_IY](https://youtu.be/8xPsOEL_IY)



## Manchester Circuit Sunday Evening Service

A warm welcome as ever to our worship tomorrow evening.

The Zoom platform will be open from 6pm for those who wish to catch up with others from their church, and as usual worship will begin at 6:30.

The joining details follow-

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84344057526?pwd=Z3d0ZW90TUlnZHdITktrZmtjZ3grUT09>

Meeting ID: 843 4405 7526

Passcode: 1901

One tap mobile +442039017895, 84344057526#

# WORLD AIDS DAY

1<sup>st</sup> December

In 1991, a decade after the emergence of HIV, twelve artists gathered in a gallery in New York's East Village. They had met to discuss a new project for Visual AIDS, a New York HIV-awareness arts organisation.

It was there that they came up with what would become one of the most recognised symbols of the decade: the red ribbon, worn to signify awareness and support for people living with HIV.

At the time, HIV was highly stigmatised, and the suffering of communities living with HIV remained largely hidden. The artists wanted to create a visual expression of compassion for people living with HIV.

They took inspiration from the yellow ribbons tied on trees to show support for the US military fighting in the Gulf War. Additionally, they decided that the elegant loop of the ribbon shape was easy to make and replicate. They avoided traditional colours associated with the gay community, such as pink and rainbow stripes, because they wanted to convey that HIV was relevant to everyone. They chose red for its boldness, and for its symbolic associations with passion, the heart and love. Over 103,800 people are living with HIV in the UK. Globally, there are an estimated 38 million people who have the virus. Despite the virus only being identified in 1984, more than 35 million people have died of HIV or AIDS, making it one of the most destructive pandemics in history.

Today, scientific advances have been made in HIV treatment, there are laws to protect people living with HIV and we understand so much more about the condition. Despite this, each year in the UK over 4,450 people are diagnosed with HIV, people do not know the facts about how to protect themselves and others, and stigma and discrimination remain a reality for many people living with the condition.

World AIDS Day is important because it reminds the public and government that HIV has not gone away – there is still a vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education.

## What can you do?

This year, many of our amazing fundraisers are unable to distribute fabric ribbons for us and some of our retail partners are closed for lockdown.

So, for this World AIDS Day we've created a virtual red ribbon so you can #RockTheRibbon wherever you are.

You can find the virtual ribbon at the following link to add to your email signature or print and stick in your window-  
<https://www.worldaidsday.org/virtualribbon/>

At the same link you can donate to National Aids Trust to help continue their mission of ending HIV stigma, stopping HIV by 2030 and supporting HIV rights.



# #GOD IS WITH US

## Christmas Campaign 2020

It is fair to say we're all a bit uncertain about what Christmas is going to be like this year – and perhaps we're feeling a bit anxious about this. It's also fair to say that this year as much as ever it is critical we reach out to people who aren't part of our churches. The Christmas message of Emmanuel – the good news that God is with us – feels perhaps more pertinent than ever before in this extraordinary year.



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

The individuals whose 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?

As part of this campaign the Methodist Church will be releasing a video on their YouTube channel which will be narrated by the 24 campaign participants and will simply show clips of each person-

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTeKtVcU\\_BVasnfmWVZkIJA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTeKtVcU_BVasnfmWVZkIJA)

A weekly prayer and reflection produced by JPIT will be emailed out along with Withington's weekly newsletters.

# NEWS FROM THE CONNEXION

## 3 NOVEMBER 2020

### A message from the President of the Conference about the second national lockdown in England

Dear Friends

We are all devastated by the expected introduction of a second national lockdown in England as well as the ongoing restrictions imposed in Scotland and the firebreak that our sisters and brothers in Wales have been living under for the past couple of weeks. Scientific advice is being heeded to bring down the rising rate of the virus and its possible consequences. The introduction of the lockdown from Thursday in England may be necessary but its consequences will also be far reaching.

There will undoubtedly be a serious setback for the economy, and people who are struggling financially and in numerous other ways will be greatly affected. It could prove to be a tipping point for many people. The poor and the vulnerable have and will continue to be hit the hardest. There is a feeling of hopelessness for many people.

Our National Health Service staff and other keyworkers are already tired through the outstanding service they have given to us all, particularly during these past few months and this second lockdown will be especially difficult for them. They need our continued support, encouragement and prayers.

Governments, all those in political life plus medical and scientific advisers are having to make very hard decisions on our behalf which, in a number of places, are far from popular. Whilst they rightly need our scrutiny, they also need our support, encouragement and prayers, that their decisions will help people's well-being.

One of our Methodist Presbyters commented to me recently that during this period she was trying to develop what she calls a 'sacrament of kindness'. I like that phrase very much. In the concerns of the moment we all need in our living to develop to each other a 'sacrament of kindness'. So much seems to be against this idea but it is something every single one of us could develop

in our attitudes to ourselves, to other people and indeed the communities we serve.

Finally, as I write as the President of the Conference, I would be denying my role if I did not specifically mention something of our Faith. Bishop Leslie Newbiggin of blessed memory was once asked whether, as he looked to the future, was he optimistic or pessimistic?

His reply was simple and straight forward 'I am' he said, 'neither an optimist nor a pessimist. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead!'

Therein lies our hope. The God who is with us in the worst of situations, even when the flame of hope seems very weak. Such is our faith and hope in the risen Christ. Not a hope which ignores the shadows of suffering, but a hope strong and secure in the assurance that love is at the heart of all things, that the eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms. The best of all is, God is with us.

A Prayer by Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

Let nothing disturb or dismay us, O God, for all things are passing and you alone are unchanging. All things are wrought in patience, O God, and those who possess you lack nothing. Our sufficiency, O God, is in you alone, now and always. Amen



## 4 NOVEMBER 2020

### The President of the Conference responds to the latest lockdown guidance

Our churches have responded in different and imaginative ways to the challenges of the last few months. Local trustees have had to make the appropriate decision about opening their buildings for worship in response to their context whether that be a national lockdown in England, the firebreak in Wales or all those living with restrictions in Scotland and the Islands of our nations.

The Government has commended the churches on their adherence to the guidance and the care they have taken to help protect worshippers in their buildings. It is sad that the freedom to make those decisions has been removed as part of national efforts to control the spread of the virus in England (as is the case in Wales). We will continue to engage with the Government to try to ensure that where appropriate church buildings can safely reopen for worship sooner rather than later.

Many churches have been at the heart of supporting local communities, for example through food provision, support groups and mutual aid groups. As we enter into periods of new restrictions, we encourage people to continue loving their neighbour through this kind of service. As we have seen, the pandemic and lockdown have hit the poorest and most marginalised the hardest. The Methodist Church, along with others, have been speaking out about the impact of household debt and poverty, and we must continue to do so.

The Revd Richard Teal

President of the Methodist Conference

## 6 NOVEMBER 2020

### A pastoral message from the Secretary of the Conference

A message from the Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler to the Methodist people following a further lockdown in England and continued restrictions in Wales and Scotland.

I don't want to exaggerate our current situation by suggesting any similarity between our position and his, but I have turned to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Letters and Papers from Prison as I think about the 'lockdown' that began at midnight today. Even 'lockdown' can seem to be an exaggeration as for many life will not be so very different. Unlike in the Spring, schools and other educational establishments are still open; there is no restriction on the number of times per day that someone can leave their home; churches can be open for individual prayer, funerals, and the live streaming of acts of worship (as always, up-to-date guidance for ministers and managing trustees is available on the Methodist Church website). Our liberty has been restricted for the sake of others; it is going too far (I think) to claim that our liberties have been infringed.

None of that makes lockdown easy; there is a number of reasons why this feels so hard. One is the divergence with which we have to live in the Connexion. As activities in England become more confined, there is soon to be an easing of the restrictions in Wales. Scotland (at the time of writing) continues to operate a policy of regional tiers. The Isle of Man and the Channel Islands have had a very different experience in some respects and may feel more isolated than before from the rest of the British Isles. Remembering that we are one Connexion has never seemed so important.

Another reason that this feels hard is the time of year. Bonhoeffer wrote to his parents on 9 November 1943, 'Now the dismal autumn days have begun and one has to try to get light from within.' I was talking to a friend last week about some practical arrangements which involved meeting outdoors and said that I supposed it was harder than in the Spring because November seems grimmer than April. 'That's because,' he replied, 'November is grimmer than April.' This might be one year when we do not complain about

preparations for Christmas beginning too early; the Christian message is that it is when the darkness is deepest the light of Christ shines most brightly.

Bonhoeffer continued that letter in November 1943, 'Your letters always help with this.' The discovery of pandemic for me and many others has been the range of communication technology available to us and the simple importance of keeping in touch. One of the principal tasks of ministry (for the whole community not just the ordained) is to maintain the links; that many church buildings had not reopened for worship before governments ordered their closure again was testament to the imaginative ways of sustaining fellowship that had been adopted. Of course, meeting online is not the same as gathering around a table but neither is it simply 'better than nothing' and we shall continue to reflect and to explore what it means to be a church that is drawn together in physical and non-physical ways.

A third reason that this is hard, however, is the (temporary) loss of a church service in those buildings where public worship had resumed. Bonhoeffer wrote in April 1943 of the ringing of the prison chapel bell being the best time to write home. 'It's remarkable what power church bells have over human beings and how deeply they can affect us. So many of life's experiences gather around them.' Meeting in a church building has a similar resonance. It is not simply about being in a particular place for a particular purpose on a particular day but about somewhere that has resonance with an host of memories, both communal and individual. 'I think,' Bonhoeffer went on, 'of all the different parishes I have worked in, then of all the family occasions.... I really cannot count all the memories that come alive to me, and they all inspire peace, thankfulness, and confidence.' At a time when we are anxious about when the restrictions will be lifted, reminding ourselves not of what we are missing but of what has blessed us in the past can be a gateway to peace, thankfulness, and confidence, and not only for us but for one another as, confined to our homes though we we might be, we make sure that we keep in touch. 'I don't expect a long letter from you' wrote Bonhoeffer to one of his friends, 'but let's promise to remain faithful in interceding for each other.'

Jonathan Hustler, 5 November 2020.

## 7 NOVEMBER 2020

### Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

We are very sad to hear of the death of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks and we extend our sympathy to the Jewish community, his family and friends. A man of faith and a highly respected theologian and philosopher, he reached out to wider society and was well known to many through his writing and broadcasting. Among many things, he will be remembered for his commitment to developing understanding between different faiths. May his memory be a blessing.



*Revd Ruth Gee,*

*Assistant Secretary of the Conference and Connexional Ecumenical Officer*

## 9 NOVEMBER 2020

### Presidency marks Inter Faith week with letter celebrating friendship

An open letter from the Revd Richard Teal, President of the Methodist Conference and Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, to mark Inter Faith Week 2020.

Dear Brothers and Sisters of all Faiths,

We greet you all at the beginning of this Inter-Faith Week 2020 with good wishes of peace. This is an occasion when we celebrate our friendships and also when we consider what we share in common. The Methodist people are known to be friends of all and enemies of none. That friendship we would like to extend to you again this year, with respect, and indeed love.

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, taught us to acknowledge the work

of God in all peoples of faith. To recognise the finger of God, to rejoice in God's work, and praise God with thanksgiving for God's presence and work amongst people of all faiths.

We share with you a life of dedication to our traditions and faith. This year in particular Methodist People have been reflecting on the fact that in spite of all the suffering and struggles we have faced collectively as a Kingdom and worldwide that the best of all is that God is still with us. This we choose to affirm in faith and hope of a better future.

With renewed friendship and every blessing,

The Revd Richard Teal, President of the Methodist Conference, 2020 - 2021

Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, 2020 – 2021

## 20 NOVEMBER 2020

### Statements on possible cuts to foreign aid

Following reports that the Government may announce it is no longer committed to 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) spending on foreign aid, the Presidency of the Methodist Conference and the Chief Executive of All We Can, the Methodist relief and development charity, have made the following statements:

The Revd Richard Teal, President of the Methodist Conference, and Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President, said:

"Times are tough for many of us – both here in the UK, and for our brothers and sisters across the globe. UK Aid is a percentage of the UK's GNI – and so it changes each year, and is never beyond what we as a nation can afford. It is vital that we preserve the UK's reputation as a champion of global justice. A measure of a nation's values is seen not only by actions in times of plenty but by resolve during other times too. As Christians, we believe it is our duty to stand alongside our global neighbours, and seek justice for the most vulnerable. As we are called to love our neighbours – wherever they might be - remaining vocally committed to 0.7% GNI is a moral imperative."

Graeme Hodge, Chief Executive of All We Can, the Methodist relief and development charity, said:

"We must remain committed to our global neighbours – especially during these challenging times, when international aid had never been more needed. As Covid-19 threatens to wipe out 25 years of development progress, and force many millions back in to poverty, we must continue to support the most vulnerable through UK Aid. In our own work at All We Can, we have seen how our local partners have pivoted their work to reach even more people at this time. Remaining committed to 0.7% GNI ensures many more marginalised communities across the globe can rebuild and recover in the wake of Covid-19."

## 25 NOVEMBER 2020

### The President and Vice-President react to cuts to the foreign aid budget

Following the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer today that the foreign aid budget will be cut from 0.7% of national income to 0.5%, the President and Vice-President of the Conference have made the following statements:

#### **The Revd Richard Teal, President of the Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain, said:**

To go back on our promises to the world's poorest people would be short-sighted, unprincipled and wrong. The UK has a global reputation for the quality of its international development work. The government has just announced a big increase in spending on defence. In the light of this it is counter-productive to cut the vital aid that helps to build more stable communities and open societies. We are also recognised for our determined support of the international 0.7% target. This huge cut reneges on a commitment that we have made internationally. It is a commitment that our churches have welcomed on many occasions and one that we want to see maintained.

#### **Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President of the Conference of the**

## **Methodist Church in Britain, said:**

Our aid programme is vital and effective. It supports education, helps people to escape from chronic poverty and provides women with the opportunities to overcome entrenched discrimination. The Methodist Church in Britain's partners in various parts of the world have direct experience of the value of UK aid and the good that it has brought to their communities. A cut in funding will inevitably undermine vital support to programmes at a time when people are particularly vulnerable. We urge MPs to resist this cut and appeal to the government to think again.



## **25 NOVEMBER 2020**

### **First national Christmas campaign brings Methodist churches and charities together**

**#GodIsWithUs: Stories of service, loss and sacrifice through the pandemic reveal the hope and joy of a loving God who is with us at all times**

For the first time the Methodist Church of Great Britain has come together with charities and other Methodist organisations to retell the good news at the heart of the Christmas story through 24 experiences of people affected by the pandemic and other traumatic events this year.

Stories such as Meryl from the Welsh borders whose husband of 58 years died this year in a care home but who has found peace in her faith during a traumatic time.

Or, Dionne, an Action for Children foster carer living in Northumberland. Her story looks at life as a foster carer and how, when her foster daughter turns 18 in January, she has a difficult decision ahead – but through all the uncertainty, God offers her a path ahead.

Chris is a Methodist lay-worker in Newcastle, who works at a debt advice centre. Her story looks at how she meets with God in her work and in the people she supports.

Sam, a local preacher based in London, reflects on the murder of George Floyd and how he finds God's presence in the cries for justice of in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Speaking about the #GodIsWithUs campaign, the Revd Richard Teal, President of the Methodist Conference, said:

“The final words of John Wesley were ‘The best of all God is with us’. This is the good news that our neighbours, our friends, our families, and our communities need: that we are loved by a God who is with us always, no matter what we're going through or what the future brings.”

The campaign is supported by Methodist bodies such as international aid charity, All We Can, care home provider, MHA and advocate for young people, Action for Children, all of whom have faced significant challenges of their own this year.

Sam Monaghan, Chief Executive of Methodist Homes (MHA) said:

“2020 has touched us all in so many ways and I am delighted that two of the stories during the season of Advent are being told by people connected with MHA, one of our members and one of our music therapists. For many of MHA's residents, members, staff and volunteers, they have known God

journeying with them and as a source of comfort through the past year, and He will continue to be with them as we go into Christmas and 2021.”

Graeme Hodge, Chief Executive of All We Can, said:

“We are delighted to join together with our Methodist Family to rejoice in the promise that even during such troubled times, God is with us. We hope that people will come to know this truth more deeply over the Christmas period through sharing in the stories of Maureen and Moses, two people supported by All We Can’s work in Uganda.”

Karis Kolawole, Action for Children Head of Faith Partnerships, said:

“This year, as never before, we’ve learnt what can be achieved by communities coming together, which is why Action for Children is delighted to be part of this Christmas campaign with so many others.

“Our frontline staff have worked tirelessly to support some of our country’s most vulnerable families as the pandemic hit hard, with children and young people among those to suffer the most.

To be able to share the story of one of our dedicated foster carers, doing all they can to give the children in their care a safe and happy childhood, gives us all hope at this very special time of year.”

In addition to sharing stories of hope, a free CD has been produced for churches to give to people who are not on the internet so that they can join in the campaign during Advent and Christmas. Over 6000 copies have been pre-ordered.

The campaign is a partnership across the whole Methodist family, including the Connexional Team, JPIT (Joint Public Issues Team), Methodist Schools, Methodist Forces Board, MHA, All We Can, Action for Children, Methodist Ministers' Housing Society, Methodist Women in Britain, and LVPT (the Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust).

# CLOSER DESPITE COVID

## With Alma Oceandy

I was born in Palangka Raya, Borneo island, Indonesia which has thousands of islands. Major islands usually have their own denominations. I was baptised in Kalimantan Evangelical Church denomination. The church was established through the mission works of Rhenish Missionary Society and Basel Mission among the Dayak people in Borneo.

At 15, I moved to Java island to continue my high school in Bogor, West Java, where I attended Protestant Church in Western Indonesia denomination and had my confirmation there. 3 years later I moved to Bandung still in West Java for my university and joined Indonesia Christian Church denomination for 5 years as well as Navigator student ministry. When working as a mining engineer in remote places I used to go to the church that was available in the area as sometime it is the only church there.

When I moved to Brisbane, Australia I attended Uniting Church. I met my husband, Delvac in and we got married in my home church in central Borneo. In April 2002, we moved to Manchester so we have been coming to WMC for 18 years now.

I remember the first week after we arrived in Manchester we were in the bus and looking for a church that we might try to come. When we passed Withington village, we saw the Withington Methodist Church notice board from the bus window. I didn't remember what was written there but it liked a calling for us to come to knock WMC door the next Sunday evening.

It was a cold April evening in a foreign place to which the warm and friendly welcome from WMC people were just what we needed at that time. I remembered I was coughing so much that night and then the late Betty Harris voluntarily went to the kitchen and gave me a cup of drink. Soon we came to the morning service and met more people who were all lovely and very welcoming. Late Brian and Margareth Harrison invited us for a Sunday lunch in their house.

Our daughter, Adelia was born in 2004 and people at church are very helpful and so caring. Joshua was born in 2010. Both of them loved to come to the

children and toddler groups and we made many new friends there. It is very nice and so important for us to have church as part of our family which I believe makes us feel like at home. Indeed, Manchester is the town where I have been staying for the longest period of time in my life and still counting.

During this time of pandemic, I really missed chatting with people after the church services on Sunday and in the weekday coffee morning. Really hope and pray that the pandemic will be soon over and we can meet again. In the meantime, please take care, enjoy things that we never have chance to do before and remember every promise of God.

Two of my favourite verses in this hard time:

Habakkuk 3:17-19 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.

Roman 8: 28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.



# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: WRITE FOR RIGHTS

## 2020 Campaign

Imagine being locked away, alone, not knowing if anyone cares where you are. Now imagine receiving a letter from someone you don't know, telling you they believe in you. That's what real letters can do: bring hope to people in the direst of situations. And when they arrive in huge numbers, they are also an unmistakable reminder to the prison authorities and others that the world is watching.

Each year Amnesty International highlights a number of cases of people being imprisoned for defending human rights. With the help of Lynette, Withington Methodist Church usually rally together to support Amnesty International and send letters of support to these people. Unfortunately this year we are not able to spread the word and gather support in person at Withington so below are some of the cases highlighted by Amnesty along with addresses so you can take action individually. Lynette has also kindly offered to send some cards on behalf of the church as a whole.

To find out more about the Write for Rights campaign and the rest of the cases please visit - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/>

### Germain Rukuki – Burundi

Germain Rukuki is serving a 32-year prison sentence for his peaceful activism in Burundi. Early on 13 July 2017, he and his wife Emelyne Mupfasoni were woken by heavy footfall and banging on their door. Dozens of security forces had piled into their compound. Officers interrogated the couple, who are both NGO workers. They arrested Germain and transferred him to Ngozi Prison where he has been held ever since. On 26 April he was found guilty of sham charges including 'rebellion' and 'threatening state security'. His previous association with the NGO Action by Christians for Abolition of Torture (ACAT-Burundi) was used against him. ACAT Burundi was shut down in 2016



for allegedly ‘tarnishing the image of the country’. The prosecution used an email Germain had written to them when they were still legal. Just weeks after his arrest, Emelyne gave birth to their third son, who Germain has never met.

<p><b>Send a message of support and solidarity</b>          Amnesty International Regional Office for East Africa, the Horn and Great Lakes          c/o Burundi Team          Riverside Studios          Riverside Lane, Off Riverside Drive          PO Box 1527-00606          Nairobi          Kenya          ✉ burunditeam@amnesty.org</p> <p><b>Language</b> French or English  <b>Suggested message</b> <i>Write to Germain and/or his wife Emelyne Mupfasoni. End with the Kirundi words Komera Turikmwel (Stay strong, we are</i></p>	<p>together!)  <b>Creative action</b> Post photos of your actions on social media using the hashtags #FreeGermainRukuki #FreeDefenders</p> <p><b>Can I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Send a religious card or message?</b> Yes</li> <li>• <b>Send an Amnesty card or mention Amnesty?</b> Yes</li> <li>• <b>Include my name and address?</b> Yes</li> </ul> <p><b>Send an appeal letter</b>          Urge the President of Burundi to release Germain Rukuki immediately and unconditionally.</p>	<p><b>Write to</b> President of the Republic of Burundi          Evariste Ndayishimiye          c/o His Excellency Mr Ernest Ndabashinze          Embassy of the Republic of Burundi          Uganda House Second Floor          58-59 Trafalgar Square          London WC2N 5DX          ✉ <a href="mailto:presidence@burundi.gov.bi">presidence@burundi.gov.bi</a>          🐦 <a href="#">@GeneralNeva</a></p> <p><b>Salutation</b> Dear Mr President  <b>In your letter ask him</b>          Release Germain Rukuki immediately and unconditionally.</p>
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## Jani Silva - Colombia

Environmental defender Jani Silva was born in the heart of the Colombian Amazon. For decades, she has stood alongside the campesino farmers in the Putumayo region, defending the environment and natural resources. She has been repeatedly followed, intimidated by unknown people with guns and received death threats by those who oppose her work.



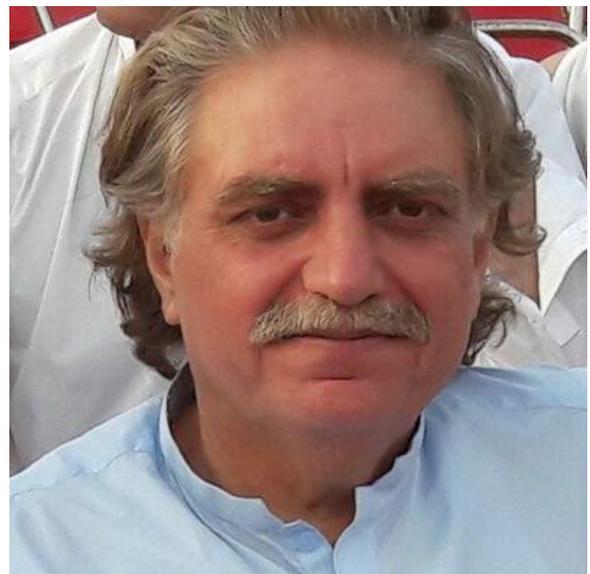
Jani co-founded ADISPA or the Association for the Integral and Sustainable Development of the Amazonian Pearl in 2008 to preserve the peasant Amazon Pearl Reserve Zone and the rights of those living there. This placed her and other members of ADISPA at loggerheads with the Ecopetrol oil company, which won a licence to operate in areas overlapping with the reserve in 2006. In 2009, the licence was transferred to the Amerisur oil company. Since then, at least two oil spills have poisoned the water sources that local communities depend on.

Jani remains at great risk. Covid-19 has made matters worse, confining her and other ADISPA activists to their homes and limiting their protection.

<p><b>Send a message of support and solidarity</b>          Oficina Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz          Carrera 37ª #25B – 42          Bogotá          Colombia</p> <p><b>Language</b> English or Spanish  <b>Suggested message</b> I support and admire your work. You are not alone. Thousands of people around the world are working so that you, your families and the community are protected. Thank you for defending our environment.  <b>Creative action</b> Complete one or more of these lines, and draw a picture that represents the ones</p>	<p>you've chosen: Nature is &lt;&lt;fill&gt;&gt; to me. Thank you for taking care of it. The river represents &lt;&lt;fill&gt;&gt; for me. Thank you for protecting it. Water means &lt;&lt;fill&gt;&gt; to me. Thank you for fighting for it.</p> <p><b>Can I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Send a religious card or message?</b> No</li> <li>• <b>Send an Amnesty card or mention Amnesty?</b> Yes</li> <li>• <b>Include my name and address?</b> No</li> </ul> <p><b>Send an appeal letter</b>          Urge the President of Colombia to protect Jan Silva and all ADISPA members so they can safely defend the natural resources.</p>	<p><b>Write to</b> President of the Republic of Colombia Mr Iván Duque          Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26          Bogotá          Colombia          ✉ contacto@presidencia.gov.co          🐦 @IvanDuque</p> <p><b>Salutation</b> Mr President  <b>In your letter ask him</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect Jani Silva.</li> <li>• Create and implement a collective protection plan for the peasants (Campesinos) that live in the peasants' reserve zone of the Amazon Pearl.</li> </ul>
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## Idris Khattak - Pakistan

Human rights defender Idris Khattak was forcibly disappeared by men in plain clothes on his way home from Islamabad on 13 November 2019. His family received no news of him. With Amnesty's help, Talia, Idris's daughter, began her fight for his return, despite being warned not to. Her bravery paid off. On 16 June 2020, the authorities finally admitted that he was in state custody. They said he would



be charged under the 1923 Official Secrets Act, which provides for up to 14 years in prison or even the death penalty. Idris, an independent researcher, is a former consultant for Amnesty International and other NGOs, and is Pakistan's expert on enforced disappearances. He documented human rights violations faced by people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan. He is diabetic and requires daily medication, and is at greater risk during Covid-19 as the conditions of his detention remain unknown.

<p><b>Send a message of support and solidarity</b>  Talia Khattak  c/o Amnesty International South Asia Regional Office  23/2 Horton Place  Colombo 07  Western Province  Sri Lanka  🐦 @TaliaKhattak and  🐦 @shumaisa77</p> <p><b>Language</b> Urdu, English or Pashto  <b>Suggested message</b> <i>Write to Idris's daughters Talia and Shumaisa. We stand with you and hope you are reunited with you father as soon as possible.</i>  <b>Creative action</b> Idris loves Russian</p>	<p>literature and gardening. Send your book recommendations, or photos of yourself planting trees.</p> <p><b>Can I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Send a religious card or message?</b> No</li> <li>• <b>Send an Amnesty card or mention Amnesty?</b> Yes</li> <li>• <b>Include my name and address?</b> Yes</li> </ul> <p><b>Send an appeal letter</b>  Urge the authorities to tell the family of Idris Khattak where he is, and to release him immediately and unconditionally.  <b>Write to</b> Prime Minister Imran Khan  Prime Minister's Office</p>	<p>Constitution Avenue G-5/2  Islamabad  Pakistan  Fax: +92 51 9215519  ✉ info@pmo.gov.pk and  ✉ spm@pmo.gov.pk  🐦 @ImranKhanPTI  📘 @ImranKhanOfficial  <b>Salutation</b> Your Excellency  <b>In your letter ask him</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Release Idris Khattak immediately and unconditionally. If there is evidence that he committed an internationally recognised crime, he should be remanded by an independent court and receive a fair trial.</li> <li>• Grant him access to a lawyer and his family.</li> </ul>
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## Nassima al-Sada – Saudi Arabia

Nassima al-Sada, a prominent Saudi Arabian activist and human rights educator, has been detained in Al-Mabahith prison in Dammam for over two years. She has spent many years campaigning for women's freedom, including campaigning for women's right to drive and ending the



male guardianship system. She is at risk of being sentenced to a lengthy prison term. She was arrested on 31 July 2018, and was held in solitary confinement from February 2019 for a year. She has also endured threats and illtreatment. Her first trial session began on 25 June 2019. Her latest trial session in March 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19. So far, all of her court sessions have been closed, with diplomats and journalists banned from attending. A mother of three, she is allowed one weekly phone call with her family, but no visits, not even from her lawyer. Her detention is part of a recent wave of arrests that target Saudi women's human rights activists.

**Send a message of support and solidarity**

Amnesty International  
For Moussa  
Postbus 1968  
1000 BZ Amsterdam  
Netherlands  
🐦📷 @nasema33

**Language** English

**Suggested message** *Write to Nassima's son, Moussa. We stand in solidarity with the true champion of reform in Saudi Arabia, arrested, ill-treated, held in solitary confinement and detained for more than two years for educating and promoting human rights.*

**Creative action** Nassima loves

animals and her garden. Share photos of yourself in nature or with your pet on your social media channels. Include a personal message to Nassima, or suggested tweet: We stand in solidarity with the true champion of reform in #Saudi @nasema33, arrested, tortured, held in solitary, and detained for over two years for educating and promoting human rights. We call on @kingsalman to #FreeNassima.

**Can I**

- **Send a religious card or message?** No
- **Send an Amnesty card or mention Amnesty?** Yes

- **Include my name and address?** Yes

**Send an appeal letter** Ask the King of Saudi Arabi to release Nassima al-Sada immediately and unconditionally.

**Write to** His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud c/o His Excellency HRH Prince Khalid Bin Bandar Bin Sultan Al-Saud Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia 30 Charles Street, Mayfair W1J 5DZ

**Salutation** Your Majesty  
**In your letter ask him**

Immediately and unconditionally release Nassima al-Sada and all women human rights defenders and activists detained for their peaceful human rights work.

## ALL WE CAN

### Give Extraordinary Gifts this Christmas

Although this year has been a strange and difficult time for many of us, you can still spread joy and hope at this special time of year through giving our loved ones Extraordinary Gifts, which will in turn bring hope and joy, as well as helping to change lives in some of the world's poorest communities.

Coronavirus has unarguable changed the world, but All We Can's work continues and is more important than ever. All We Can continues to work closely with their long-term local partners to help them respond to the needs of the communities they serve. The gifts they are selling will help communities respond to the challenges of coronavirus – from ensuring that the most vulnerable can wash their hands, to helping families support their livelihoods in lockdown.

You can order Extraordinary Christmas gifts either by visiting [allwecan.org.uk/shop](http://allwecan.org.uk/shop) or by calling the extraordinary gift's team on 0300 770 1428.

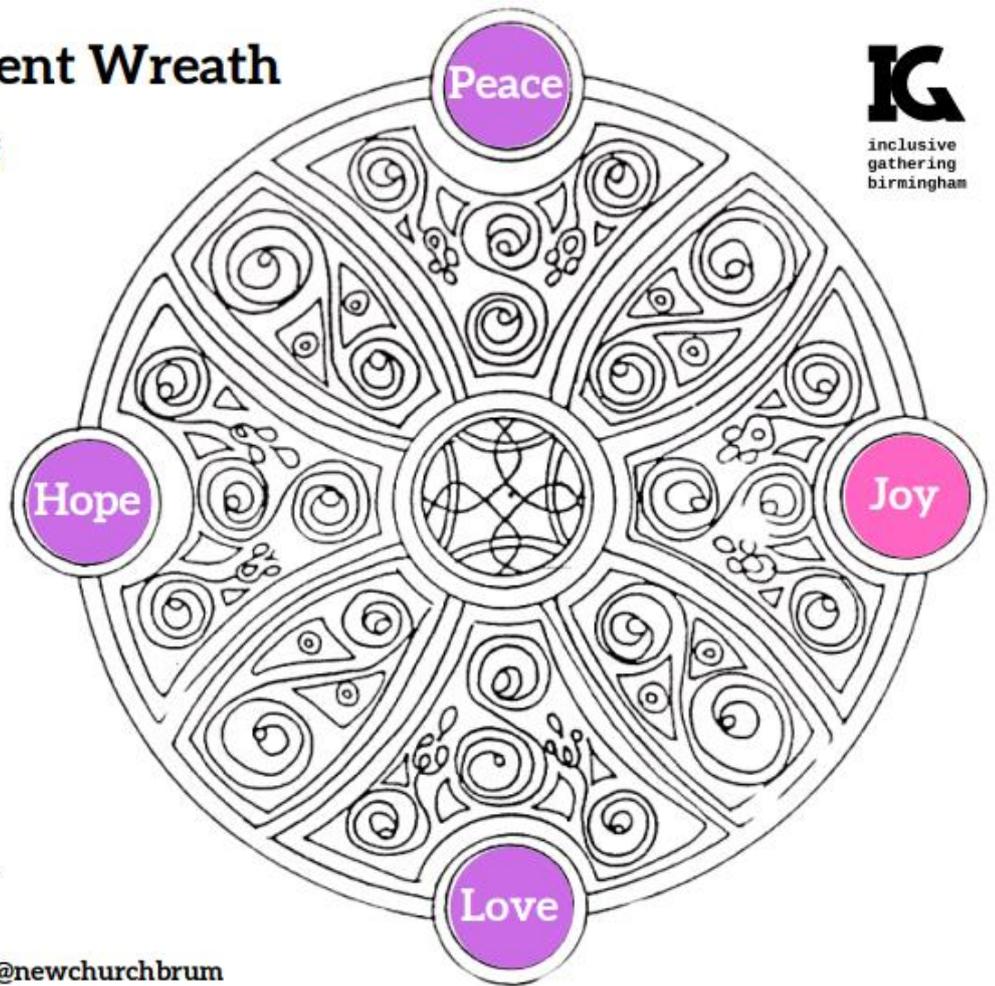
# THANK YOU FOR READING!

## Simple Celtic Advent Wreath

1. Print this sheet on a piece of A4 paper.
2. Fill in the design with any pen or crayon colours you choose.
3. Cut around the outside of the design.
4. Place the design on a plain-coloured dinner plate.
5. Place 5 tea lights on the circles (with a white one in the centre.)
6. Light the candles for Hope, Peace, Joy and Love on the 4 Sundays of Advent. Light the centre Christ candle on Christmas Eve or Day.

*This printable wreath is intended for use with tea lights that will be lit briefly during an Advent service or personal reflection. If you plan to keep your candles lit, please use battery-operated tea lights instead for safety. Please don't leave candles burning unattended.*

[www.inclusivegathering.org.uk](http://www.inclusivegathering.org.uk) @newchurchbrum



**IG**  
inclusive  
gathering  
birmingham

**The next magazine will be out on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January.  
Weekly newsletters will be out every Sunday on the Withington Methodist Church Facebook Group and via email.**

If you have anything you would like to contribute to next month's magazine, or the weekly newsletters please pass it on to Caroline Fielding - [withingtonmethodistnews@gmail.com](mailto:withingtonmethodistnews@gmail.com)

**If you would like to receive a emailed copy of the magazine or newsletter please email - [withingtonmethodistnews@gmail.com](mailto:withingtonmethodistnews@gmail.com)**

# Withington Methodist Church

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[www.withingtonmethodistchurch.org](http://www.withingtonmethodistchurch.org)

Editor: Caroline Fielding/ Giselle du Toit - [withingtonmethodistnews@gmail.com](mailto:withingtonmethodistnews@gmail.com)  
Minister: Rev Krystyna Kwarciak

## Sunday Services

Morning Worship : 9.15 am  
Booking required

## Regular Activities

Monday	Monday Monkeys – 10:00am - 11:30am
Tuesday	Tuesday Tots – 10:00am - 12 noon Tuesday morning coffee fellowship see <i>inside cover</i>
Wednesday	Rambows – 5:30 - 6:30pm Brownies – 6:30 - 8:00pm
Thursday	Needles & Yarns craft group – 2-4pm
Friday	Men's Club – 2:00 - 4:30pm
Saturday	Contact Centre – 2:30 - 4:30pm

## About Withington Methodist Church

We are a community of people who meet to worship God every Sunday morning and evening (see inside cover for details). Our services are open to all. At our morning service, we have both a crèche and Junior Church available for children ('All Age Worship' will only have the crèche as older children are welcomed into the main service).

During the week we have various other activities & organisations meeting at our premises. We have two toddler groups a week and are open weekday mornings for anyone to have a coffee and a chat. Our craft group meets on Thursday afternoons for anyone who wants to bring a craft or learn a new one. We have various rooms available for hire for anything from a once off hourly basis to a long term let, please speak to the Church Office for details, or email [withingtonmethodistnews@gmail.com](mailto:withingtonmethodistnews@gmail.com).