How to be a Just Church in an Unjust World

Stories from around Sheffield Methodist District

Barnsley, Derbyshire North East, Doncaster, Rotherham & Dearne Valley, Sheffield, Trinity and Peak Circuits



PASSIONATE CONTEXTUAL WORSHIP

A Prayer for Synod

Gracious God, we pray that the Spirit of the living God fall afresh upon us as we prepare for the District Spring Gathering.

Thank you that we can gather in your name. We thank you that you have called us by name, to serve at this particular time, giving us roles and responsibilities in this district. We thank you for what we have accomplished in your name Lord, our God. Receive all honour and glory.

Almighty God,

bless us as we explore the theme of the day, "How to be a Just Church in an Unjust World." Guide us in our formal business, workshops and discussions so that we may become the people you want us to be, a people reflecting the light of Christ in all we do. We entrust ourselves to you, lead us into your future. Help us to hear you through each other and enliven our imaginations to catch your vision for us.

Lord, our God,

Give us new ideas, new hope, and new power as we serve you "For Such a Time as This." Help us to love as you do and act wisely and joyfully, so that others will be drawn to your salvation and hope. May we build each other up and encourage each other today and always.

Faithful God,

May your Holy Spirit always be at work among us, helping us to be more like Christ in our love for you and our neighbours. "They will know we are Christians by our love". We ask your blessing be upon our District Spring Gathering. May we be truly open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Help us to become ever more fully the Church that you have called us to be. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour!

- Amen-

Revd. Margaret Mwailu - Synod Secretary.



There are two district gatherings each year in which the business of the Representative Synod is conducted.

The District Synod sets the policy for the district, serving as a link between the Conference and the Connexional Team on the one hand and the circuits and local churches on the other. It has oversight of all district affairs, formulating and promoting policies, through its various officers and committees to assist the mission of the Church, to give inspiration to the leaders in the circuits and to ensure the interrelation of all aspects of the Church's life throughout the district. The Synod may bring matters to the Conference.

Our Representative Synod, comprising over 100 ministers, circuit lay representatives and district officers, meets in September and April each year. In addition to discussing formal business, Synod is an opportunity for us to gather as a district to worship, learn and share stories.



CHAIR'S MESSAGE

elcome to this latest edition of the Sheffield District magazine in which you will find many powerful stories of what is happening in churches and circuits across the district, as we continue to share in God's mission.

The focus of our Spring Gathering/ Synod is "How To Be A Just Church In An Unjust World?" That's a question that presents us with many challenges about how we, as followers of Christ are called to step up, speak out and make a difference in every sphere of life.

In this magazine, you will find many examples of how people right across this district have identified needs in their communities and then had the vision, courage, and determination to do something about it. I hope, like me, you are encouraged and inspired by the imagination, ingenuity and creativity that is in evidence.

Every circuit has stories to tell, and different needs have emerged in various contexts. Warm Spaces have been created in many places to support those struggling with the cost-of-living crisis and you will find stories about them on pages 10 and 11. But, elsewhere throughout this publication you will find accounts of how the Methodist people, in partnership with others, are providing support to young families, people who are homeless, children and



young people, those seeking asylum and others too.

In addition, you will find testimonies from individuals about the work in which they are involved and the people they meet through that work, as well as information from those who led the "How To" sessions at the District Gathering and guidance about how to get involved with the "Justice Quilt" project.

In Luke's gospel we find the words of the prophet Isaiah through which Jesus made plain his purpose – "to proclaim good news to the poor ... to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." It is our calling to continue that work in ways that make sense in our day and time.

It's wonderful to see how our calling to seek justice is being lived out across the district, but there is always more that we can do to bring about a more just world with the help of the Holy Spirit. May the experience of the District Gathering and/or the reading of these stories inspire us all to share in God's work of transforming the world.

Gill Newton District Chair



Are you a Justice Seeker?

S eek ye first the Kingdom of God is Christ's call to those who put their trust in him. At its beginning in 2013, Sheffield Methodist Circuit formed a Justice and Peace Mission Action Group that has persisted and evolved, Jenny Carpenter, past Vice President of Conference explains.

"Individuals with particular passions exchange information, encourage attendance at events exploring interfaith, racial justice, poverty, fair trade, climate change and peace issues, and provide worship material based on justice themes. We draw on the expertise of the Joint Public Issues Team and bodies such as Christian Aid, Church Action on Poverty, and Fellowship of Reconciliation, as well as on more locally based ones such as South Yorkshire Climate Alliance, Kairos Sheffield, Assist and City of Sanctuary.

"On the Church Action on Poverty's

annual October pilgrimage, we have visited anti-poverty initiatives across the city. While supporting the growing number of food banks we also work for a society where they are not needed. We have led several Circuit Services, including one based on John Wesley's own justice and peace agenda – still, unfortunately, relevant today.

"We have brought Memorials on Israel/ Palestine through circuit and district to Methodist Conference. At the Climate Justice Demo in Sheffield in November 2022 marking COP 27 (see photo of Romeo with our banner flag) we led the singing of "Come and Join the Demonstration" and Romeo Pedro proved a very telling speaker. We are promoting Eco Church as a significant response to the climate and nature emergencies.

"What we are now proposing is a community of Justice Seekers across the



District who will communicate electronically as well as meeting every two or three months to focus on specific justice issues. Each individual will share what justice impacts they and their local church are seeking to make. We will learn from each other and prove that *The Kingdom of God is justice and joy.*"

The Justice Seekers' Quilt

nspired by the Walking with Micah project that has engaged Methodists throughout the country, Anne Hollows from St Andrews Psalter Lane Church explains about the Justice Seekers Quilt.

"I'm sitting looking at 35 quilt blocks produced by people from across the District which have so been completed for our Justice Seekers' quilt. They include the work of experienced quilters, enthusiastic amateurs and absolute beginners, embracing traditional and experimental designs. We are now assembling the blocks received so far, leaving plenty of room for further contributions. The themes of justice seeking, developed through the Walking with Micah project, focus on

- Tackling Poverty seeking life in all its fullness
- Flourishing environment right relationship between people, planet and God
- Justice for refugees one people, one world
- Opposing discrimination we are all made in the image of God

Peace is emerging as a theme from continuing discussions.

"The quilt project is, of course, not just

about creativity. Most importantly it presents an opportunity for groups to discuss themes from the Walking with Micah project that are important for them as individuals and groups. While some have been individual efforts, others have developed from discussions leading to the production of blocks. But the creativity dimension is important too; not just in terms of skills with needle and thread but in the opportunity for voices seldom heard to engage in the production of something that represents their thinking. This applies as much to the elegantly designed blocks as to the slightly irregular rainbow of buttons glued together by a group of children. We have footsteps; mugs from a warm room; scales of justice; a map of Africa; a food bank; a bird; a tribute to heroes of justice and various representations of children."

If you feel inspired to contribute to the quilt, there's still time and help is also available, contact the District Office at admin@sheffieldmethodist.org or visit: sheffieldmethodist.org/about-us/synod/ justice-quilt-project.html



Justice, Dignity and Solidarity

ello! I'm Jill Marsh, I'm a minister who candidated from this district, trained here and began my ministry here so it is great to be back among you.

Currently my role is to help the whole Methodist Church in our work with the Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity.

We believe in a God who wants justice for all people, who has given dignity to all people each made in God's image, and who wants us to stand in solidarity with each other as God's children, across the whole humongously rich and glorious human race.

Despite the really challenging times that we are living through I've been constantly delighted to see, again and again, the gifts of God shared freely as people give of their time and energy across the Methodist Church.

I think of the church which started with pudding... puddings brought from people's many and different home kitchens in celebration of their own home cooking.

I think of the church which began routinely putting the whole of each worship service (prepared for projection) onto an ipad so that anybody with visual challenges could change the font and the colour to read through the service.

I'm reminded, too, of the church which helped a young non-binary person by beginning

to use 'Sisters, brothers, siblings' in worship, greeting all the people present.

There are so many small ways in which Methodists are beginning to live out our commitment to reflect God's all-inclusive love for all people, in our life together! But our vision of being a church which reflects God's love for all people is not yet reality.

Perhaps you, too, like me, remember school sports lessons?

For some of you, they will have been the highlight of the week... a chance to relax and have fun, a time to use your body in an active way and to see what you could do for your team.

For others, like me, they will have been horror points... hoping and praying that you weren't the very last one to be picked and that some other poor person would have the humiliation that you sometimes had, of all eyes being on you, knowing that nobody wanted you.

For some people church is a place to belong, to take part, to be busy and to show what God can do through them, as they work together.

For some people church feels like a place where they 'don't fit', where they feel they can't do what is expected of them, and where they wish they could be somebody they are not.

The Strategy for Justice, Dignity and



Solidarity, which will be the focus of much of our Synod, has many big aims. These are:

- for the rich diversity of people within the Methodist Church to be recognised as a cause for thanksgiving, celebration and praise;
- to eradicate all discrimination and coercive control within the Methodist Church, and for all people to be treated justly and with dignity across the breadth of the Methodist Church;
- for a paradigm shift (a profound change) in the culture, practices and attitudes of the Methodist Church so that all Methodists are able to be full participants in the Church's life

These big aims can only be reached by God's transforming power and yet we know that God has chosen and called us to be our 'selves' and to work alongside each other. What a responsibility but also, like so much of the work God calls us to, what a privilege and a joy!

Eco Church

he Methodist Church has set an aspirational target of becoming a net zero carbon emissions church by 2030. In the Sheffield District churches are already acting to reduce their carbon footprint.

There are churches in most circuits in the Sheffield District who have either been awarded a bronze or silver Eco Church award or are registered with the scheme and are awaiting their awards.

Eco Church is a scheme designed to motivate and equip churches to express care for God's world in worship and teaching, management of church buildings and land, community and global engagement and in the lifestyles of the congregation.

Circuit	Church	Award
Trinity	The Crossing	Bronze
Sheffield	Banner Cross	Bronze
Trinity	The Grove	Bronze
Sheffield	Killamarsh	Bronze
Sheffield	Wesley Hall	Bronze
Sheffield	Millhouses	Bronze
Sheffield	St Lukes Lodge Moor	Bronze
Peak	Hathersage	Bronze
Sheffield	St Andrews Psalter Lane Church	Silver
Rotherham & Dearne Valley	Holy Trinity Thorpe Hesley & Scholes	Silver
Barnsley	Emmanuel	Silver
Doncaster	Sprotborough	Registered
Sheffield	Chapeltown	Registered
Rotherham & Dearne Valley	High Street Centre, Rawmarsh	Registered
Sheffield	Stocksbridge Christian Centre	Registered
Sheffield	Emmanuel Waterthorpe	Registered

*list correct at the time of publication

Churches have been working hard to achieve their awards by switching to low energy light bulbs, serving Fairtrade food and drinks, creating gardens to encourage wildlife, improving recycling, holding services dedicated to celebrating God's creation and much more.

Tom Rattigan, Missional Property Enabler, said: "It's inspiring to see how many of our churches are supporting the Eco Church scheme and are working towards our aspirational aim of being a net zero carbon emissions church. We are in a climate crisis, which makes care for creation an essential part of being fit for mission. I would encourage all churches to explore the Eco Church scheme and your district team are ready to support you on your eco journey."

Barnsley Circuit has planned the first Eco-Fest in the town to celebrate how the church and other local groups are helping to save our planet. The Mayor of Barnsley and local Councillors are also due to attend in support of the work. After being postponed due to the snow, the family friendly event will now take place on Saturday 2nd September.

Energy Efficiency Fund

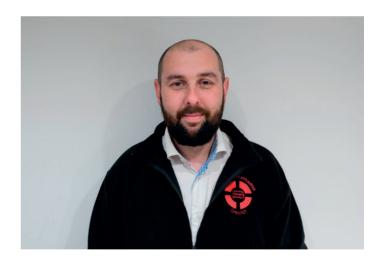
n an era of spiralling energy prices, uncovering ways to run our properties more efficiently allows us to make best use of our financial resources. The Energy Efficiency Fund has been created to help your church take steps towards both of these.

The Energy Efficiency Fund provides match funding, reducing the cost to churches of a survey examining multiple aspects of energy use in chapel buildings. In partnership with our recommended contractor EcoEnergy, we have developed a bespoke survey and report designed to highlight the most significant opportunities for improved energy efficiency for our church buildings, and steps which can be taken to address these:

- · Current heating source and future best options
- · Insulation and value around fabric performance
- · Doors, windows, and secondary glazing
- Lighting
- · Air flow and draft reduction
- · Solar options and renewables
- Small power and hot water
- Over heating
- · Recommendations for the future

This will then return an action plan as well as recommendations for future works and a proposed timeline for these works. So far 12 churches in our district have applied for an eco-survey to be completed and actions are starting to be created.

To apply for a grant or to find out more visit: sheffieldmethodist.org





Baby Basics in Doncaster

or some time, Sprotborough Methodist Church (SMC) had supported food banks, Link to Hope and the hygiene bank, but we were keen to explore how we could further serve others in our local community and live out our calling, Sarah Beckingham explains. Baby Basics seemed like a great charity for our church and community to be able to support.

Baby Basics was established in Sheffield in 2009 to support vulnerable families in the community. Since those early beginnings Baby Basics has grown into a network of centres across the UK. Many of you will be familiar with the charity as it made headlines when the Duchess of Cambridge visited the Baby Basics West Norfolk centre in early 2020. Since then, the now Princess of Wales has visited many centres across the UK and Baby Basics UK is part of the #ShapingUs initiative from The Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood, spearheaded by HRH The Princess of Wales.

SMC had the pleasure of opening Baby Basics Doncaster in the early spring of 2021. It was for us a silver lining to lockdown. I had, in the past considered if this was something we could do, but with busyness of life, I had put it on the backburner. From those isolating days of lockdown 2020 we were able to use the time to put in place everything we needed to open a centre in Doncaster; something which (unknown to us) the team in Sheffield had been praying for. Thanks to initial funding from Doncaster Circuit, we were able to get the centre up and running. We continue to be supported by Doncaster Circuit as well as external funders and individual donors.

Fast-forward to February 2021 and due to the overwhelming response of donations from our community, Baby Basics Doncaster quietly opened its doors ahead of schedule. SMC was filled with donated items - nappies, Moses baskets, clothes etc all waiting to be sorted and passed onto a new family.

We are currently a small centre compared to many of the network centres, but we are growing and striving to provide all we can for all vulnerable new-borns in Doncaster.

We work with professionals from a range of agencies across the city, such as community midwives, family hubs, mental health support workers, schools, charities such as Changing Lives, Refugee Integration, Housing associations and health visitors. As we pass our 2nd anniversary, we have completed just over 200 referrals.

By providing Moses basket starter packs, prams, and cots we can give families some security in the early months of life with a newborn. It won't solve the financial difficulties some families face, or the uncertainty that a new teenage mum might experience, or the isolation of a refugee finding their place in our community. But we know that we are relieving the burden, giving hope, and expressing the Methodist way of life by caring for those around us, serving our community and challenging injustice.

Responding to Homelessness in Doncaster

or the last four years Tickhill Methodist Church and friends from Doncaster Circuit and the community have fed people who are homeless on the streets of Doncaster.

Pastor Alice Curry explains: "On a Monday, as an act of service and witness, members of Tickhill Methodist Church with friends from the wider circuit and community have fed homeless folk on the streets of Doncaster. We prepare the food in church, sandwiches, fruit and a drink, and deliver it in time for an evening meal. We are providing 40 meals at the moment and any leftovers we take to the homeless hostel so nothing is wasted. Our brilliant co-ordinator Mandy organises the volunteers into teams who shop/prepare or deliver according to the rota. We have made good friends gathered round the table, not just in the safe and known environment of a church but in the places where homeless gather. We have also heard both heart-breaking and heart-warming stories.

"At Christmas we deliver goody bags as well as food. Two years ago, we asked if our supporters could help us to give a gift of a pair of socks and a chocolate bar to tuck inside. The response was overwhelming and since then, like our feeding the homeless project, our socks for the homeless project has grown to become a duffle bag stuffed with toiletries, wipes, treats, hats and gloves, pens, notepads and anything else we can think of that might help. This year we delivered 78 bags.

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Re-imagining City Mission Church for a changing City Centre landscape

R evd Jonathan Haigh talks about how the centre of the city of Sheffield is changing and how we have to adapt our mission to move with the times.

"The centre of Sheffield is changing. Retail and office spaces are being converted into coffee shops, entertainment venues, restaurants, and residential dwellings. The footfall of people walking past the iconic Victoria Hall is growing and so are the opportunities to offer an invitation to join a city centre community of faith. The formerly very traditional Methodist Church has also gone through change – out of necessity to survive the covid pandemic. It is now fellowship based and those who come are encouraged to get involved with the worship.

"From January we are being prepared to become a Church of Sanctuary and we want to welcome people from all nations to join us. The work in the evening reflects this mission ethos that all are welcome. Oasis Recovery Church is an ecumenical community supported by the Methodist Church, Salvation Army and the Church Army and offers the sharing of food, friendship, and faith exploration with people on the margins of the city. It feels like God is preparing us 'for such a time as this' to be ready and confident to offer a wider invitation to an incoming tide of people moving back into the city.

"A prophecy shared by a member of the church seemed to quicken our hopes and dreams of refreshed city mission; "I feel that God has said that the time of decline has ended, and that growth has begun". Over the following weeks there were other signs that this was God's timing. Firstly, a bequest from an elderly member, and then an opportunity to take over the shop at 35 Chapel Walk as our midweek outreach centre.

"The ecumenical mission is now visible. Prayer, fellowship, bible study and warm space is now available to all those who cut through Chapel Walk. New relationships are being forged and our presence is being noticed. We and our mission partners are creatively looking to use this space to share Jesus and make disciples. It is a safe space in the heart of the city."

CommuniTEA in the Trinity Circuit

allcroft and The Grove Methodist Churches hosted CommuniTEA events in December with the help and support of local organisations.

The Food Champion from Rhubarb Farm, an environmental social enterprise who provide work placements, training and volunteering opportunities for people who are unemployed, recovering drug and alcohol misusers, exoffenders, have mental/physical ill health or learning disabilities, prepared a two-course meal at Hallcroft Methodist Church. It was open to the whole community at the cost of £1 per person. The food was provided by Fairshare who collect surplus stock and redistribute it to save it going to waste.

Around 30 people came along, some church members, some people who usually attend other activities at the church such as the Memory Group, and some who had seen it advertised elsewhere and wanted to make new friends or reconnect with old acquaintances.

A small team from the church, along with

volunteers from the Retford Lions came to help welcome guests, lay the tables, serve the food and do the washing up. There was a lovely atmosphere in the room. Everyone enjoyed being together, chatting round the tables and enjoying a full plate of stew with potatoes and vegetables and a delicious bowl of crumble and custard followed by a cup of tea or coffee.

The whole exercise was repeated the following night at The Grove Methodist Church, with local church volunteers, and again, it was great to welcome people from different community groups.

Following on from this, The Grove hosted a Holiday Food Hub over two Friday lunchtimes whilst the schools were closed for the Christmas break. It was incredible to see the number of crates of food that were available and to be able to provide anyone from the local community with the chance to fill a bag with the surplus food. Those who didn't have to rush back home hung around, enjoyed a cup of soup, the warm space and some company.

Youth Space in Hillsborough, Sheffield

ollowing a chance conversation with a young person at the Easter Holiday Club, Revd. Michelle Deans and colleague Jillian knew they needed to create something new for young people in Sheffield.

Rev Deans explains: "At the end of the Easter Holiday Club 2022, an idea sprouted from a conversation with one of our young people. It went along the lines of, "We've only got one more Holiday Club after this because we'll be too old after the Summer..."

"Jillian Winnard and I discussed this quandary and wondered how we could build on the relationships, garnered over the years, with this group of soon to be teenagers. They had engaged well with the dramatic interpretation of the Easter story and seemed keen to learn more about the Christian Faith.

"After several discussions with others and lots of prayerful thinking, we decided to try and develop a monthly youth event. The idea being that we would invite the young people we already had connections with.

"So, in July 2022 we launched a taster session of our brainwave, with the support of Jonathan Buckley, our Circuit youth coordinator. We call it Youth Space with the evening split into three sections: My Space, Youth Space and God Space.

Recycled Crib

he "Grotty Crib" as it was known by some was created by the Barnsley Circuit Youth Group as part of their reflection on the "There Is Room" resources. Made out of "junk" in December 2022 the scene was as far from your conventional "cute" or "cosy" crib scenes as you could get.

The aim of the game was to create something out of items we could find lying around church or home that were either going to be thrown away or sat around gathering dust. What we found was a scene that spoke dramatically not just of eco-injustice but also so many other issues of justice around the world through which we gained a deeper appreciation of the gospel.

To start off with the stable itself was made out of shipping pallets which spoke to some of us about the way in which people are often treated as "packages" to be shipped around the world. Conversation ensued about the so called legal methods governments use to palm refugees and other asylum seekers off onto other countries, and the lengths to which individuals will go to find safety and of course those that would take advantage of them.

As we found and used the variety of African and Asian shirts for the bodies of the wise men we talked about their different styles to ours and how God's love draws people who are like us and very different to us. One or two of us talked about the challenging attitudes of those "Ten youngsters came to that first event; we had a great night. They were so enthusiastic and shared their ideas with us of what they would like to do at the monthly sessions. Since September, we have continued to meet on the first Friday of the month. Our numbers continue to increase; at our last session we had 30 youngsters in attendance. We hosted the Circuit Christmas Youth event; 36 young people representing six churches from across the Circuit turned up. It was a fabulous night!

"We are so grateful to God for helping us connect with young people, from the Hillsborough area and beyond. Each month these youngsters hear about the goodness of God in some form or other, have lots of fun and get to blow off some steam. We have been able to come alongside families, holding them in prayer, through some tough situations.

"On our Big Quiz Night, in aid of Tearfund, hosted by Hillsborough and organised by Hillsborough Trinity, Wisewood and Brightholmlee Methodist Churches, provided an opportunity for us to connect even more. We had young people, and their families participating in the fund raiser, where we raised over £100.

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in our chapels, schools and towns towards those who are different for one reason or another.

The rainbow flag that the young people wrapped Jesus in to symbolise the fulfilment of God's promises became a strong conversation starter with one or two about the inclusion of all sexes and genders in God's plan to redeem and save the whole of creation.

The overall effect of using buckets, cardboard boxes, brooms and bamboo canes to build our crib meant that it did look quite "grotty" which held perhaps released the greatest insight of all. God comes to the broken and grotesque and through time, power and love transforms it into cosy pictures of love. We hope never again to forget that grotty does not mean unloved, that broken does not mean useless and that ALL can be saved!

The crib was taken into the town centre as you can see pictured and was part of the Barnsley Churches Together Christmas Outreach event, sparking interest and conversation with many who were walking past. The art of our young people brought fresh revelation to us and to many this year, and we hope we will all be a little more attentive to the voices of our young people going forward. They might not always speak the right "churchy" language but they speak quite powerfully of the love of God if we choose to listen (or look in this case).

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Warm Spaces

hrough the autumn the sense of impending doom was palpable. Utility bills soaring. Food prices rising. Government support in limbo. Many of our churches were already supporting people for whom the bare essentials of life were beyond reach. The coronavirus pandemic had exacerbated the already existing loneliness and poverty epidemics.

Already weary from two long years of Covid disruption, and wondering what the future held for our congregations, was there anything churches could do?

So the district offered up grants for up to £500 and within weeks of the first conversations about how our churches could act as warm welcoming spaces, nonjudgmental alternatives to being alone or cold, applications for grants started flooding in. Some were adaptations of existing activities – extra hours, wider advertising, making the switch from a price list to pay as you feel. Others were bold new experiments. Others still the spur to act on ideas which had been percolating for some time. As a district we have supported forty churches with warm space grants totalling £20,000.

THE CROSSING CHURCH, WORKSOP

Deacon Emily Hoe-Crook said: "Like many other churches there's been a mixed response - some weeks hardly any takers, other times we've had a fair few people and some really worthwhile conversations.

"We had the Cafe space at our disposal, and a small band of faithful volunteers, and a great Seated Exercise class leader who was keen to offer classes to run parallel with Warm Space. Additionally, I brought many board games from home, and we invested in an all-singing all-dancing license which allowed us to show films (plus cake... lots and lots of cake...).

"We've had several homeless people come to take shelter on one of our recently purchased sofas, have a slab of cake and some gentle conversation - one gentleman in particular likes to share his stories and introduce us to his style of gospel music.

"On one occasion a young woman came in seeking a safe space to talk, pray, and receive anointing with oil. This lady is a keen musician but doesn't have her own instruments, so she spent a blissful half an hour playing the grand piano in church - that encounter felt very much like an opportunity to show God's love, both through her and us.

"Another time one of our dear members who lives with Alzheimers was able to come with a friend and share in coffee and cake, much to the delight of church friends who don't get to see her very often.

"So, despite some weeks feeling 'slow', Warm Space at The Crossing Church has seen both familiar and new faces come inside for the warmth of hot drinks and fellowship, and we have seen that unique encounters can happen when the doors are open and the kettle's on."

GREAT HOUGHTON, BARNSLEY

Great Houghton initially opened at tea time one day a week expecting to attract young families on their way home from school. This did not attract much interest so they changed their hours and now open from lunchtime onwards one day a week and it is now busy every week.

One week, a young mother arrived with her two children and was very soon joined by another mother with hers. They pulled two tables together and the children went to play with the toys in the corner. After a little while another woman arrived on her own but carrying two small parcels in colourful wrapping paper. As the time went on, they were joined by other adults and children who all came and sat around the same tables.

A hot meal was served which everyone seemed to enjoy and then the final arrival was a person who turned out to be the father of the first two children (the birthday children) and he brought with him a cake and candles.

The few parcels on the table were opened with great excitement and then everyone in the room joined in singing "Happy Birthday" before the small party returned home. The volunteers felt privileged to be part of such a special occasion and to see so much enjoyment in the faces of the children and their parents.

HOYLAND & BIRDWELL, BARNSLEY

The chapel at Birdwell also offers a warm space at the same time as it is open for food bank collections which means the people attending can have access to many other services, IT, DIAL, digital champions, to name a few. Throughout the day there are games, an exercise club, a prayer meeting and a Lego club. Of course, warm food and lots of fellowship is available throughout the day. This is what a couple of the regulars have to say

Lee aged 47, "Over the last couple of months Warm Spaces has been a very big help in my life. On arriving to the space I've always been greeted by good friendly people that were more than happy to help me with a warm meal every time, they helped me with food parcels and gave me help regarding my energy bill from getting too much to keep up with. Now I am getting a lot of help with benefits that I did not know how to claim by myself through the DIAL advisor at the Chapel, I'm so glad that some people do care these days, it has gave me hope that I did not really have before, I met new people every time I went who had similar problems to me and had a few laughs playing board games that I hadn't played in years, it's been a big help to me. Thank you!"

Mike, "I have been going to the warm space project at the Chapel in Birdwell since it began. Going there has saved me financially on heating bills. Run by volunteers, I've always received a warm welcome. There's always a smile and welcome, a nice garden for summer and company if you are lonely or down of spirit. There is a debt and benefit advice service working out of the Chapel called DIAL which helped me with my PIP claim. There is, also a digital champion's course which I've attended on occasion. This is a good place to be and is what it says on the tin 'warm'."

DORE, SHEFFIELD

Dore Methodist Church joined "People Keeping Well in S17" in response to the coronavirus lockdowns. This co-ordinating group was established to identify and attempt to meet needs in the area, bringing together councillors, council officers and representatives of voluntary groups and faith communities. Being part of the group informed the opening of their Coffee Club, which became their warm space.

ROTHERHAM & DEARNE VALLEY CIRCUIT

The warm spaces offered in the Rotherham & Dearne Valley Circuit have all been slightly different. The churches at Furlong Road in Bolton on Dearne, Central in Aston, St John's in Swinton, Clifton and Wickersley in Rotherham have all been opened up to support their local communities.

At Furlong Road we have offered games and fellowship, hot drinks along with soup and a roll. Furlong Road Church Steward June Walker said of their warm space, "People have got to know each other better and understand each other better."

At St John's the church initially adapted their T-Junction which has been running on a Wednesday to provide the warm space in Swinton. As well as the usual coffee, fellowship, hymn singing and monthly communion, soup and a roll was added for anyone who needed it.

From the turn of the year the church at St John's have been working with the local community café Honeypot who were to lose their home in the local council building while refurbishment took place. This would have been the loss of a daily warm space in Swinton. Instead they have been housed in the church Monday to Friday and are providing this valuable amenity and warm space between 10am and 2pm.

Rev Jenny Park spoke of the Warm Spaces across the circuit. She said, "People have got to know one another in fellowship in providing the warm space".

Neil Harland, District Mission Enabler said: "The closer our church is to the heartbeat of our neighbourhood, the better chance we have of recognising its pulse. And the more likely community leaders are to treat us as a trusted partner. Investing in developing relationships of trust makes a difference. When did you last invite your local councillor to visit an event or regular group at your church? Do your stewards ever share a coffee with other local faith leaders? If there is a local community forum or resident's association, decide who from the church will show their face and report back. What if you stopped one thing your church does together and instead spent this time volunteering for local charities? If you use Facebook, join vour local online community and comment positively on things other people have posted.

"Yes this does take time, but the result will be your experiments being more likely to hit the spot. Even in an increasingly atomized culture, the number and depth of local connections between our church members and our neighbours is vital for the impact of warm spaces or any other venture.

"Being shy is not unusual. Opening the door of a public building and becoming the guest of strangers can be terrifying. Deciding that today is the day I will leave my flat and make some new friends can require enormous willpower. Especially if you have learned to live with being judged.

"Polite persistence has been key for many of our warm spaces. They have invited again and again. Streets have been pounded, posters attached to public notice boards, leaflets pushed through thousands of letterboxes. Personal invitations have been extended. Social media and websites have had a part to play too.

"Wording has mattered too. Emphasises have been tweaked, and positive reasons for coming articulated more clearly.

"At the time of writing, feedback from our warm spaces is still being collated, but it is already clear that collectively invitations have been accepted by hundreds of members of our congregations, hundreds more who don't currently join us for worship, and hundreds of new people we had not yet met before."

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"So, despite some weeks feeling 'slow', Warm Space at The Crossing Church has seen both familiar and new faces come inside for the warmth of hot drinks and fellowship, and we have seen that unique encounters can happen when the doors are open and the kettle's on."









TRANSFORMING MISSION

How to...











How to... Become more accessible

Lead by Beth Wright and Marie Brown, Mencap

Mencap Area Fundraising Managers Marie Brown and Beth Wright are leading an insightful session on 'Welcoming people with a learning disability into our modern congregations and making reasonable adjustments'.

For 75 years, Mencap has provided essential support to the 1.5 million people with a learning disability and their families in the UK. We are the UK's largest provider of services for people with a learning disability. Right now, people with a learning disability face inequality in every area of life. They face barriers finding a job, accessing activities in their local community and receiving good quality healthcare. We tackle these issues head on by providing support, giving expert advice and information that empowers people and their families campaigning for change and equality to support people with a learning disability.

The interactive workshop will offer a safe space to explore our understanding of a learning disability and an open conversations of how we can make reasonable adjustments to encourage change and make a fully inclusive church. We will focus on integration and accessibility towards everyday activities for people with a learning disability.

If you are unable to attend the workshop or have any additional questions please contact Beth Wright, Area Fundraising Manager, North. Beth.Wright@mencap.org.uk | 07929710500

How to... Influence your MP

Lead by Roo Stewart, Joint Public Issues Team

When it comes to caring for creation, many churches in the UK have worked hard to make positive changes to their buildings and practices to reduce their carbon footprint and encourage their local ecosystems to flourish.

But how often do we feel that, despite our best efforts, it's only a drop in the ocean? Once we've turned down our thermostats, separated our recycling and installed our low-energy bulbs, how else can we make a difference? And what about other people in our neighbourhoods, for whom environmental concerns are a lower priority, too much of an inconvenience or would be unaffordable in the short term?

The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) has developed a programme that encourages church congregations to take that next step in their eco journey. Called 'Net Zero in My Neighbourhood', it aims to inspire congregations to develop a strong relationship with their local authority or council, so that the whole community can benefit from the passion and knowledge that churches can offer in caring for our neighbourhoods.

More than 85% of councils in Great Britain have set a target for reducing their carbon emissions to net zero. Often, we have found that there is some budget available, and councillors who carry the responsibility for bringing carbon commitments to fruition, but with competing needs, spiralling costs and (sometimes) a lack of public accountability, councils are still far from where they should be.

Councils manage things like local roads and public transport, waste and recycling and planning applications for housing builds and upgrades. They could support community energy organisations and demand particular policies for new housing developments. Councillors are usually more accessible than your local MP and are often passionate and knowledgeable about your neighbourhood. A few councillors might be eco enthusiasts themselves, but most councillors will really appreciate the research and ideas that churches and faith groups can offer, their understanding of the needs of people in their neighbourhood and the ability of churches to organise themselves to make a difference.

All this leads to a challenge: will your church take seriously the opportunity to get to know your local councillors better and to help them implement policy changes that will benefit your community (and the wider world) for the long term? JPIT is working with Hope for the Future to help congregations form effective, meaningful relationships with their representatives. If you'd like to explore how this could form part of your church's mission in your neighbourhood, start by looking at our website: jpit.uk/net-zero-in-my-neighbourhood

How to... Become a Church of Sanctuary

Lead by Revd. Inderjit Boghal

Sanctuary Sunday is observed at the end of Refugee Week (19-25 June 2023). It falls this year on 25 June. It is an opportunity for congregations to focus worship and prayer on issues raised by the experiences of refugees, to include and learn from refugees. Jesus started his life as a refugee, taken to Egypt for safety by Mary and Joseph. We cannot honour Jesus and ignore refugees.

Sanctuary Sunday was established jointly by the Refugee Council, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and City of Sanctuary, and is supported by CTBI as part of the development and promotion of Church of Sanctuary.

Church of Sanctuary is a faith-based initiative and is a call to a prophetic Christian witness and expression of hospitality as a clear challenge to hostility. The aim is to take steps to build hospitality which is mutually enriching. The hope is that churches will become places for all and proud to foster welcome, hospitality and safety to people fleeing violence and persecution, as a clear demonstration of Christian discipleship.

In a Church of Sanctuary all members of the congregation work together to:

- learn about and understand real life experiences and stories of people seeking sanctuary, and help others to work from facts not fiction
- embed the values and cultures of welcome, hospitality and safety, and use these to support people seeking sanctuary, and



include them in your activities

share with pride your vision, commitment and achievements, and let others know about the positive contributions of refugees to society and the benefits of welcoming cultures.

The idea of Sanctuary is enshrined in theology. It is an important ecclesial concept. The association of sanctuary and holiness is universally recognised. Where God is honoured holiness is centred on the presence of God. The dwelling place of God is holy, and called sanctuary (Exodus 25:8). Hospitality is holiness in action.

The Christian tradition of Sanctuary is deep and is rooted in the Hebrew concept of Cities of Refuge, and related to safeguarding and protection and hospitality.

How to... Act justly with money

Lead by Rosie Venner, Programme Manager at the JustMoney Movement

It's not easy to talk about money, but we can't afford not to. What we do with money, how wealth is shared and how money is used by investors, banks, and companies, shapes the kind of world we live in. This workshop explores practical ways to connect your faith and your finances on the issues you care about, from the local to the global.

The JustMoney Movement, is an ecumenical Christian charity with a vision of a fairer, greener world. Rosie leads the Money Makes Change project, equipping Christians to explore ethical issues around money.





How to... Turn vision into action: Introducing Faith Rooted Organising

Lead by Deacon Kerry Scarlett

Are you finding it difficult to turn vision into action? This can be because you are starting a new thing in church or community, or because you are trying to develop something which has changed over time perhaps?

This workshop acknowledges how challenging it can be to move from vision into action, particularly at a time when so many of us are feeling overwhelmed by the busy-ness. Faith rooted organising practises offer a way of doing things different, and not by just expecting you to 'do more things' Through intentional listening, discerning and acting, faith rooted organising helps us to rediscover many of the practises which enabled early Methodism to flourish.

Why not explore the Faith Rooted Community Organising free residential course at Cliff College. Contact Julian Bond **bondj@methodistchurch.org.uk** for details.



Chaplaincy - Where did it start?

t's hard to know where the journey started. I've felt for years that it's not enough to open the doors of the church and wait for people to come. We have to go where people are, as Jesus did.

On way of doing this is chaplaincy. In my view it's not rocket science. It's about being caring and interested in people wherever we meet them. We all try to support our family and friends, in effect being chaplains to them, though never using that word.

I was lucky enough to get early retirement, and in 2009 I became a part-time volunteer chaplain to South Yorkshire Police. I started visiting the officers and staff at Snig Hill station in Sheffield for two or three hours a week. Later I started going to Woodseats station and the new HQ at Carbrook as well.

What do I do? I talk to people. I pray. I try to remember names. I'm often offered a cuppa, and I sometimes go out and buy milk if needed, make drinks and wash up.

It's interesting. I see more about what goes on than most people. Every week I'm impressed by the range of tasks the Police tackle, the skills and knowledge they apply, and how hard they work, often long and unsocial hours.

It's a privilege. I have access to everyone from the cleaner to the Chief Constable. I'm

conscious that I'm a guest on someone else's turf, and their rules apply. I try to recognise when people are too busy and focused to be distracted. Conversations are often about football or holidays, but even that shows that someone cares. And sometimes people want to unload a burden they are carrying.

And they do carry some heavy burdens. Someone said recently that any uniformed officer who has served more than a few months suffers from PTSD. At any time 10% are off with stress related illness. The officers all face their share of domestic violence and death. They never know what lies behind a front door they knock on. Every year there is a memorial service in the Cathedral honouring those who died in service. But there is laughter too, and banter among colleagues, which helps to release some of the tension.

South Yorkshire Police has been through hard times, as we all know. A prominent politician described them as 'rotten to the core'. That did not square with the people I know. They are now rated much more highly by the national inspectors. Some Christian colleagues date the start of the change to the National Day of Prayer for the Emergency Services some years ago, when a few of us walked several times round the HQ building in prayer. Could it be......? There used to be six chaplains. Three of us were Methodist, and one was Wesleyan Reform – yes, chaplaincy is in our DNA. Covid reduced our numbers, and we need more. Could you spare two or three hours a week? If you feel God might be nudging you, send an email to johnwilkins73@gmail.com

"Conversations are often about football or holidays, but even that shows that someone cares. And sometimes people want to unload a burden they are carrying."

Christian Aid Global Neighbours Scheme

Volunteer Christian Aid Teacher, Andrea Clark talks about her role in Sheffield, empowering children to be courageous advocates for justice

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN AID TEACHER?

Christian Aid Teachers are volunteers who were often former teachers. They have a desire to share with pupils the life-transforming work that Christian Aid carries out and the faithbased motivation to do this. They support schools by leading assemblies, taking lessons or running workshops to support the school curriculum e.g. within Religious Education or Personal Social and Health Education. They can also help schools working towards Christian Aid's Global Neighbours Accreditation Scheme. All teachers are safely recruited and receive ongoing training.

WHY DID I VOLUNTEER?

Having been involved with Christian Aid at different points through my life, often with the House to House collections as part of Christian Aid week each May, I knew something of their passion for our world, alleviating poverty and seeking justice for the most disadvantaged around the world. Sharing such concerns and stepping back from working in Primary Education for over 30 years, I felt I could put my skills to good use volunteering with Christian Aid.

WHAT'S MY EXPERIENCE SO FAR?

Volunteering so far has included; supporting the curriculum in lessons e.g. working with years 5 and 6 tackling the question 'What is Charity?'; leading assemblies; running workshops on a variety of global issues such as girls in education, single use plastics and climate justice; and supporting schools registered on the Global Neighbours Scheme. I have found pupils engage well in thinking about their world, have a keen sense of injustice and are enthusiastic in sharing their thoughts and ideas for how things can change for the better.

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL NEIGHBOURS SCHEME?

A variety of schemes exist to encourage pupils' understanding of our world. Global Neighbours provides a framework for thinking about global citizenship education in schools. It gives ideas for the curriculum and collective worship enabling schools to weave a global perspective into their provision and help young people become active global citizens and courageous advocates for change. It gives pupils time to reflect on the world of which they are part. It encourages them to nurture the values, attitudes, understanding and skills needed to seek a more just and sustainable world to live in well together. locally and globally. To find out more: christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/schools/ global-neighbours-accreditation-scheme

To arrange a Christian Aid Teacher to visit your school please email: schools@christian-aid.org

To find out more about volunteering: christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer

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"Pupils engage well in thinking about their world, have a keen sense of injustice and are enthusiastic in sharing their thoughts and ideas for how things can change for the better"







Freedom Community Project

My visit to 10 Downing Street by Mark North

n Wednesday 22nd March I had the privilege of attending the Community Champions event at Number 10 Downing Street, where I was able to meet the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak. This event is held by the Prime Minister to celebrate and thank those who strive to make their communities a better place. It was an absolute honour to be invited by our MP Mark Fletcher, and quite honestly, a shock. In fact, I was so shocked that when I first received the email, I thought it was a scam.

When arriving in London, I had the opportunity to look around the Houses of Parliament with Mark Fletcher and share some of the things that are happening within the Bolsover community and the issues we face. After touring the Houses of Parliament, we went on to 10 Downing Street and this was an experience all on its own. I never thought I would get the opportunity to go beyond the black door but once inside, 10 Downing Street is a unique and special place.

We were moved through to the State Rooms where we met a multitude of people, from all over the country, who work tirelessly for their communities. One incredible lady stood out to me, she sadly lost her son, at the age of 26, to an undetected heart condition and has spent the last 20 years campaigning for better heart monitoring in young people. Finally, I had the opportunity to meet the Prime Minister, it was an absolute privilege to speak with him and share the history of Freedom, the importance of our work within our community and beyond and our vision for the future.



Freedom is a charity that supports people across Derbyshire and the surrounding areas who are struggling with debt, benefit, housing,

"The Freedom Community Project follows a clear mission, based on their Christian principles, to care for the most vulnerable regardless of race, religion, or sexual preference. Mark is an absolute credit to the Bolsover Constituency, and he is the personification of a Community Champion."

and mental health issues. We try to provide, in a holistic way, opportunities for people to move forward with their life. Everything we do is based around Cafés where people can come and sit, be at home and get out of the cold. With the Cost-of-Living crisis upon us it is an opportunity for people to get their issues sorted.

As we grow and develop, our mission is to provide all those we work with, not only opportunities of support but also training opportunities, good quality housing, and the final part of our vision is to buy businesses to help people into employment.

Mark Fletcher MP said: "I had the pleasure of inviting Mark North, Founder and CEO of the Freedom Community Project to 10 Downing Street for an event recognising our Community Champions, hosted by the Prime Minister, to celebrate members of the community who make our constituencies a better place to live and work."

"The Freedom Community Project follows a clear mission, based on their Christian principles, to care for the most vulnerable regardless of race, religion, or sexual preference. Mark is an absolute credit to the Bolsover Constituency, and he is the personification of a Community Champion."

Inclusivity at The Hub at Hope

R evd. Jonathan Brook leads The Hub at Hope in the Peak Circuit, a church re-imagined and celebrating God's love in creation. He explains:

"Recently at one of The Hub at Hope gatherings, we re-enacted the story of a woman anointing Jesus and thought about how Jesus viewed women as we celebrated 'International Women's Week'. The extravagance, the pungent smell and the risk the woman took. led us to consider the provocative love that Jesus shared whilst he walked on his earth, and that we too are all able to know and emulate. The theme of inclusivity at The Hub keeps being brought back to us, and at this gathering was no exception. For people who feel the church is irrelevant and not interested in them for who they really are, we progressed this story to the snowy outdoors. In the melting snow that was left, we walked planting our footprints, considering how God loves us

for all our uniqueness. We then noticed that someone had walked through the snow with 'big shoes', this unknown person had trodden the path before us! Who were they? We did not know, yet we could put our feet in their footprints. As we did this, we thought about how God loved this person for whoever they were...unconditionally. This love just keeps on giving, even if we in humanity think it's just or unjust, for God his love is especially for an unjust world.

"Our vision at The Hub remains to share and show God's love to those that especially struggle with a traditional style of church service. We dare to re-imagine what church can look like; communion outside on a hill, walking or biking up a hill to celebrate the transfiguration or a muddy walk and ride to pray for our communities and meet people as they gather in communal places.

"We hope to express the vision of new

people & new places. Do we have all the answers? Of course not, but we strive to walk with Jesus in new ways of worship and by doing so, we pray that people will see that God really does love them for who they are."



"Do we have all the answers? Of course not, but we strive to walk with Jesus in new ways of worship and by doing so, we pray that people will see that God really does love them for who they are."





Recycled Uniform Pop-Up Shop

A s a parent you often hear "My school trousers are too short", "I've got a hole in my jumper", "my shirt is too tight", and the budget that month just doesn't stretch to new uniform, so the Rotherham and Dearne Valley Circuit has stepped into help.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of volunteer Sallyanne, a pop-up uniform shop has been created in St John's Methodist Church.

Throughout the year families can bring and exchange their school uniforms for the next size or style they need.

Pastor Ed Archer-Siddall said "We have done this for a couple of years now and our intention is to keep it going while ever the need is there and we are able to fulfil it.

"We appreciate school uniform can be expensive, but also once kids have outgrown items, many are still full of life, therefore the pop-up shop allows for clothes to be recycled and passed onto others removing the need for everything always having to be new."

Once the school uniform shop was deemed successful the team at St John's also heard about the need for Prom dresses, so before "Prom Season" dresses are offered in the same way as the uniform.

Ed added "Once we heard a number of girls couldn't attend their school prom as they couldn't afford to buy a new dress, we knew we had to act and we've been able to support families in this way too."





For such a time as this

For Such A Time As This is our strategy for resourcing your mission, supporting you to respond to the good news of God's love in Christ using the gifts and talents that God has given you. We know it is easy to be overwhelmed by the challenges before us, to feel powerless or despondent.

But we believe that God has made us who we are, has called each of us by name, and will equip us with as much as we need to live out our vocation. We draw inspiration from the Old Testament story of Esther who risked her own life to use the limited influence she had to save her people from genocide. God does not need someone better than you. There is no need to wait for a more opportune time. God has prepared you and directed your time to be God's agent right here and now: for such a time as this.

Your district is here to support you in this. Right now we are focusing on:

GROWING DISCIPLES

fostering a restored culture of high-quality small group and personal discipleship, nurturing leaders and bringing access to any training you need

PASSIONATE CONTEXTUAL WORSHIP

sharing best practice so our acts of worship are occasions when we expect to encounter the presence of God, supporting growth of complementary dispersed and gathered worship

SHARING STORIES

making testimony normal, sharing stories, making communication easy and creating a culture of invitation to relationship with Christ

TRANSFORMING MISSION

encouraging and equipping innovators, breaking new ground, asking searching questions and embracing change

SIMPLIFYING PROCEDURES

to release your time and energy for sharing stories, passionate contextual worship and transforming mission

PROPERTIES FIT FOR MISSION

making your premises fit for your missional needs and reducing our carbon footprint

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our District Gathering, shared stories in this magazine and taken part in the How to... sessions. We hope you found it an inspirational day and this magazine a motivating read.

Our Keynote speaker: Revd. Dr Jill Marsh

How to... session leaders: Deacon Kerry Scarlett, Roo Stewart, Revd. Inderjit Bhogal, Rosie Venner, Marie Brown & Beth Wright

Organisations:

- Action for Children All We Can Compassionate Sheffield Cornerstone Bookshop Christian Aid Exodus Project Freedom Community Project GB Ministries
- Good Taste Just Money JPIT Learning Network Mary's Meals Mencap MHA UTU











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