



*What is God saying to ...Me, our church, The Circuit?
Together working towards God's Kingdom.*

February 2021

Hello everybody

We start a new year in the hope that, as we move forward, 2021 will be an improvement on 2020! But no doubt there will be challenges!

When we first met to try to find out what God was calling us to do to nourish faith throughout the Airedale Circuit, we didn't think we would be facing the kind of problems we have had to deal with. From face to face with a cup of tea and a biscuit to arm's length over ZOOM we have tried to keep focused on the **why** of what we are doing rather than let the circumstances we found ourselves in dictate our decision making.

This has not, as you can imagine, been easy. But we have slowly made progress and you will realise we are close to being able to make some decisions about the future.

These decisions will be those of the membership of the Methodist Church in the Airedale Circuit. Your representatives on your own Church Councils will have the opportunity to vote on whether your chapel wants to join the Church being formed from all of the chapels in your area.

In an ideal world these meetings should be face to face but we can't guarantee that at the moment, but we keep our fingers crossed.

All along we have been conscious that there is a danger of getting so involved in running the church that we forget that the church is the body of Christ on earth and we must be about His business.

The idea behind forming three churches means we will be able to minimise work across the relevant chapels by amalgamating some of the roles. Some chapels are already working with other chapels.

It won't happen overnight but throughout our aim has been to lay good foundations for the future.

These last few months haven't been totally negative.

There are those that are now able to worship at home using the worship sheets and ZOOM and YouTube services that weren't able to worship at all before. Some people have found not having to go out for meetings in the winter weather a definite bonus, and I'm one of them! Plus being able to arrange a time when you are going to be still and be with God, which is right for you as an individual, has also brought its benefits.

There are online Bible Study courses, and meetings to develop a deeper internal faith are happening across the circuit, between people from different chapels, and they are a great joy. And also a lot of fun. There's 'So to Pray' and coffee mornings online and communications are flying across the circuit at the touch of a button. Not that it's without its problems, especially if we get our wires crossed.

Overall technology has brought considerable benefit to the circuit and as we go forward we want to retain some of these good things and take them forward into our new church life. A major benefit is that all of us have, through ZOOM and other platforms, got to know each other much better and can look forward to being with each other 'in real life' in the future no matter which chapel we are affiliated to.

This re-forming of churches has also taken place alongside a stationing process covering all three of our presbyters. Stationing without 'real time' visits is a very odd experience. But we have been blessed by God and He has provided us with three outstanding candidates who, we believe, will bring a positive energy to our circuit and be able to keep the best of the old, and mix it with the best of the new. We have the opportunity going forward to redesign our circuit into an efficient and more dynamic church for Our Lord, which I think is very exciting.

Of course there will be discussions and disagreements along the way and sometimes we will have to do what Paul and Barnabus did and agree to differ, but we are a pilgrim people and – though the way may not always be smooth – if we keep our eye on the goal, which is to increase our life in God and welcome others into our fellowship, we will get there in the end. I would like to think that through this process we will be able to reflect, and be happy to have created a healthy church movement within the Aire valley for the good of all its people.

So as we all attend our individual chapel meetings throughout the spring and summer months please pray that we will do right by Our Lord who has sacrificed so much for us. And with the help of the Holy Spirit we will build a little Jerusalem in Yorkshire.

Jeremiah 31 v 3-4

I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. Again I will build you, and you shall be built.

God Bless

Patricia