

**April & May 2026**

**Cheadle Hulme Methodist Church**

*MAGAZINE*



**Our Mission**

**Living With Christ**

**Living For Christ**

**Living to Make Christ Known**

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**Circuit website:** [bramhallwythenshawmethodists.org.uk](http://bramhallwythenshawmethodists.org.uk)

**Church Office:** Closed Monday  
Tuesday 12:30- 3:30pm  
Wednesday to Friday 9.00am – 3.30pm

**Minister:**

**Reverend Alistair Jones** (Day off Friday)  
0161 718 5815 07782 376945 [alistairjones@live.co.uk](mailto:alistairjones@live.co.uk)

**Children & Families**  
Susie Metcalfe

**Community & Pastoral Worker**  
Jackie Sims (Day off Saturday)

**Church Treasurer**

Maurice Turnpenney

**Leadership Team:**

Barbara Clark, Dave James, Charles Nevin, Gill Smith

Articles for the **June/July** issue of the magazine need to be submitted to the magazine editor Gill Smith

by **Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May**

If you include your personal contact details in your article it will be assumed that you are giving consent for these to be included in the paper copy of the magazine which will be in the public domain.

**As I write, it's a beautiful early Spring morning and my little 'wildlife garden' is filled with lovely Spring bulbs.**

There are buds on the magnolia and the greengage tree, and two goldcrests are going in and out of the hedge. There are butterflies; one orange, one pale yellow; a pair of blackcaps, blackbirds, sparrows, bluetits, a gorgeous thrush and a host of other birds... I could go on... a frog lives in my grandly named 'pond' (a dustbin lid), a couple of newts have been basking in the sunshine and hedgehogs snuffle at night. Lots of life. Lots of new life – not necessarily what's *expected* in a tiny, shady garden on a 1960s development.



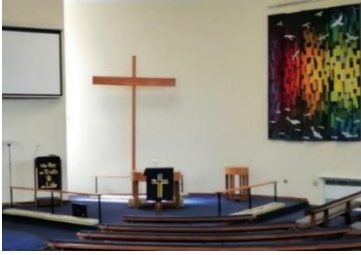
My thoughts turn to church and the new life of church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What is *expected* in the future? What is God planning?

Like the garden, new life in church probably won't look like we *expect* it to look. For many of us that is a challenge - it's difficult to accept that church is changing as culture changes. The likelihood is that future church will happen outside of the buildings, because today's society won't come in to find us. We don't know what God has planned, but watching for opportunities to join in with local events is important as we offer practicality and spirituality - getting out and *being* church, caring for people and embracing God's Kingdom on earth. Someone called it "Seeing what God is doing and joining in". Let's pray for God's blessing as we go out in God's name.

Some words from James chapter 2: "*Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in saying to them, "God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!" - if you don't give them the necessities of life?*" In these uncertain times, we are each called to follow Jesus's example and respond in love as we share the joy of our faith with everyone we meet.

Much love and many blessings. Linda

# Join us for Worship



Services will be held in the Sanctuary and will be simultaneously livestreamed on our YouTube channel.

## **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March 11am**

Easter celebration in Oak Meadow. Do come along and bear witness to God's love for the whole world, as we sing the great Easter hymns. Hot cross buns will be served!

## *Services in April*

### **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April Maundy Thursday**

7.30pm Maundy Thursday service led by Mr Dave James

### **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April Good Friday**

3.30pm Good Friday Service led by Mrs Pat James

### **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April Easter Sunday**

10.30am Morning Worship with Holy Communion led by Rev Charles Nevin



### **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April**

10.30am Morning Worship led by Mr Dave James

### **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April**

10.30am Morning Worship- Local Arrangement

### **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April**

10.30am Morning Worship led by Mr Bob Bartindale

6.30pm Evening Worship (Worship Leader TBC)

# *Services in May*

## **Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May**

10.30am Morning Worship with Holy Communion  
led Rev Charles Nevin



## **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May Church Anniversary**

10.30am Morning worship led by Rev Louise Grosberg

## **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May**

10.30am Morning Worship led by Mr David Allaby

## **Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May Pentecost**

10.30am **Circuit Service at Cheadle Hulme**

## **Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May Trinity Sunday**

10.30am Morning Worship led by Rev Alistair Jones  
(TBC)

6.30pm **Cheadle Hulme Churches Together service**  
at Cheadle Hulme URC, Swann Lane

### **In our prayers**

We are sorry to hear of the death of Anne Jones, on  
Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, and we hold Brian and family  
in our prayers.

Our thoughts and prayers are with those who are going  
through challenging times and those  
coping with tests, treatments, illnesses or bereavement.

**Rev. Louise Grosberg** will lead worship at our Church Anniversary on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May. Some may remember her growing up at CHMC. She has written the following to refresh memories for some and to introduce herself to those who have not met her.

“I am the daughter of Anne and Derek Slade who themselves met at the MAYC, and were married at CHMC where they were members, as were my Grandparents on my father’s side.

I was baptised in the old church building and started Sunday School there.

I was very happy when at 13 ½ I was allowed to attend youth club on a Friday, 6 months earlier than those who did not attend church! I ‘hung out’ on a Sunday evening with other young people, we sat on the back seats of church before we went to the MAYC, and at 14 I became a member of church, through the classes and teaching of the Rev. Bernard Jones. In my teens I started to attend Margaret and Norman’s bible study at their house on a Tuesday night, which was an influential time of faith development for so many of us.

I was married at CHMC in 1985 to Richard having trained to be a nurse at MRI, and then a Midwife in Nottingham. Richard and I have 2 grown up sons.

In 1997 having felt called into the ministry I started training, having been recognised as a Local Preacher in 1992. I entered Circuit Ministry in 2000, and served in Nottingham, both in local churches and as a part time Prison chaplain for 8 years. I then went to Sheffield Circuit and finally completed a circle by going back to work for the NHS as a Hospital Chaplain in York, from where I retired from nearly 2 years ago.

It is a privilege to be asked to come back to preach at the Church Anniversary, and I look forward to being with you.”  
Louise

# *Regular Events at Church*

## **MONDAY**

### **Memory Lane 2:00pm – 4:00pm**

Meets the second and fourth Monday of the month for those with dementia and their carers Contact: Jackie Sims

### **Knit, Craft and Natter 7-9pm**

Meets first Monday of the month Contact: Jackie Sims

### **Take Time Together 8:00pm**

Meets the **second** and **fourth** Monday of the month via Zoom- contact church office for the link

## **TUESDAY**

**CAMEO 10:30am – 1:30pm** Contact: Val Pickwell

**Chelwood Foodbank Collection 11:00 am – 12 noon**

In the Church car park. Contact: Linda Rayner

**Reflective Worship 7:00 - 7:30pm in Room 2**

Contact: Pat James

**MATCH (Men AT Cheadle Hulme) 7:30 – 9:00pm**

A meeting for men every 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday evening on Zoom.

Contact: Ian Porter

## **WEDNESDAY**

**Toddlers 10:30 – 11:45am term time only**

Contact: Susie Metcalfe

## **THURSDAY**

**Baby Chat 10:30 -11:45am term time only**

Contact: Susie Metcalfe

**Network 2pm**

Cuppa and a Chat each week except Thursday April 4th

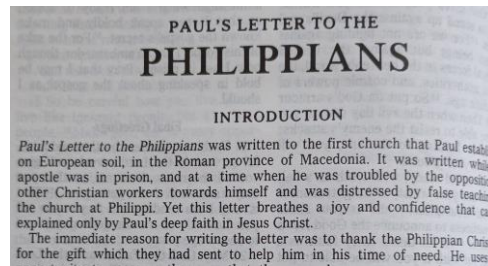
Contact: Margaret Pattie

## **FRIDAY**

**Wobblers 10:30 – 11:45am term time only**

Contact: Susie Metcalfe

## How about trying a Homegroup for the Summer Term?



Homegroups are being encouraged to look at Paul's letter to the Philippians during the summer term.

One group meets in Room 2 on Monday mornings, and you are welcome to join us on the first and third Mondays, beginning April 20th. We are a friendly group, starting with coffee/tea and biscuits at 10.30am and ending at noon. There's no obligation to say anything, and no previous knowledge is necessary. Just turn up or let Margaret Parker or Pam Howie know you are thinking of coming.

There are two other Homegroups, also meeting on the first and third week of the month. One is a Monday evening at 8pm, contact Gez Butterworth and the other group meets on a Friday afternoon at 2pm, contact Val Pickwell.

### Flower Visitors

April Flower Visitor – Joanne Scoltock

May Flower Visitor – Jane Kemp



# Church Family

## 90th Birthday

Peter Crummett thanks all church friends who sent him greetings and cards for his special birthday. They were very much appreciated and have now been entered into the Crummett archives. Also, thanks go to Cheryl for her visit bringing some plants for our garden.

It was all a very touching experience.

Many thanks again,

**Peter**

## A Message of thanks from Val

I would like to thank so much all my friends at church who have supported and cared for me, with love and prayers, over the last 5 months.

Thank you also to my pastoral visitor, Barbara Clarke, and the flower visitors who brought me flowers and plants.

It has truly been a blessing to belong to our Church family.

**Val Pickwell**

## Praise Tea

Our next Praise Tea is on  
**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April from 2:30 - 5pm.**

If you would like to receive an invitation to join us to sing your favourite hymns and enjoy afternoon tea please contact Jenni Hardman by Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April.



**Jottings from Church Council Meeting**  
**held 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026** (chaired by Revd. Ian Smart)

**Resources** – the Team report was received with no questions. It was agreed that charges for rooms etc. would be increased by 5%. It was reported that the “Greening Up” Group in Cheadle Hulme would like to place flower boxes on the grassed area in front of the church. It was agreed that if a definite and clear proposal was submitted, then this would be considered.

The **Finance** report was shared. Accounts for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025 have been independently examined. The accounts were duly signed and returned to the examining company.

**Leadership Team** reported that Linda Rayner plans to retire at Easter 2026. Plans to deal with Linda’s departure are currently being discussed.

It was agreed that the Circuit Leadership Team would be asked to consider employment of a Youth Worker using the Peter Halliwell bequest.

It was also agreed that Jenni Hardman should become Chair of the Caring Team. Hazel Crummett was thanked for all her work in the 12 years that she had been Chair of the Team.

Concerning establishment of a Boys Brigade Company at the church, it was unanimously agreed that an application should be made to allow this to happen.

A proposal was formally passed such that a list of Pastoral Visitors will be shown in next edition of the church directory, together with coding to allow each Church Member listed to be identified with their Pastoral Visitor.

It was agreed that the Leadership Team should institute a review of the Church's Vision document.

It was reported that a new package for **Safeguarding** training is being introduced.

The **Fresh Expressions** report and **Community and Pastoral Care Worker** report were shared.

As part of Churches Together in Cheadle Hulme report, the meeting was reminded about the forthcoming Lent Lunch and Easter Service in Oak Meadow.

It was noted under **Discipleship – Worship** that Revd. Louise Grosberg will be the Speaker at the Church Anniversary service on 10<sup>th</sup> May.

Under **Discipleship – Caring** it was reported that Cameo is working well.

The **Pastoral** Report was shared. It was stated that a Membership Class is being planned.

The **WNAT** report was shared. Work continues to take place on many fronts.

Under **Circuit/District/Connexional Matters**, the meeting was reminded that with the Circuit currently operating with 2 full time Presbyters and 1 part time Probationer Deacon, churches should try to look after themselves as much as possible and only trouble Members of Staff when really necessary.

And finally, the meeting was reminded that new material is being prepared for **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** training.

**John Galbraith Church Council Secretary**

**Praying for the work of the church**  
**Monthly meeting now on the 2nd Sunday**  
**Starting Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 11.45 to 12.15**

In 2017, monthly prayer mornings were started because it was felt that this church needed focussed prayers so that we could determine God's vision for us and the work here in Cheadle Hulme. For over 8 years, people have been gathering at church (apart from during lockdown), on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday morning of each month to pray for the church and to receive a vision for it.

I wrote in the magazine a couple of months ago that, for various reasons, the people that organise these prayer mornings felt that we needed to try something different but recognising that we continue to need to pray for the church. In fact, we cannot stop praying for the church.

We have therefore decided to have a time of prayer for the work of the church on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month, following the morning service. We will meet in Room 2 for 30 minutes from 11.45 to 12.15. The first of these will be on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April. Please come and join us.

You may have seen the sheets with prayer requests from the church staff and the leadership team which are available after the prayer meeting. These will continue to be available, and I invite other groups or individuals within the church to offer their prayer requests that concern the work of the church.

There will be an email address for these requests, or they can be left in the box at church. (Please note that this is NOT for prayer requests for individuals or situations external to the church. Please use the prayer book for those)

The email address is [prayerschmc@gmail.com](mailto:prayerschmc@gmail.com)

If you have any questions, please let me know.  
Dave James

## Church Directory

Editions of the church directory prior to 2018 contained a list of pastoral visitors (PV) and recorded, for each member, who their PV was.

After the introduction of the GDPR regulations, the decision was taken to omit these details. There have been numerous requests over the subsequent years for this information to be made available.

The leadership team therefore agreed to consult Trustees for Methodist Purposes (TMCP), who are our data controller under the GDPR legislation. Following their opinion, it is felt that the information can be put into the church directory once again, with the safeguard that any member or any pastoral visitor can ask for these details not to be shown. TMCP's advice is that church council formalise this by means of a resolution.

Therefore, at its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026, Church Council passed the following:

**That, in the next edition of the church directory, that a list of pastoral visitors be shown, and that, alongside the entry for each member, a code denoting the pastoral visitor for that member. Any member or pastoral visitor not wishing to have such information published should notify the Church Council Secretary (via the Church Administrator).**

Dave James

## **Resourceful person required Could it be you?**

Andrew Hardman is currently chair of the Resources team, but is coming to the end of his term of office. The leadership team are thus looking for a replacement. Could it be you?

The Resources team has the task of looking after the property and finances of the church and, whilst the chair plays an important role, they don't have to "do everything". An important part of the job is liaising with other people such as the treasurer, the church administrator and contractors. If this is something where you feel that you could help the church, please have a conversation with Andrew.

Andrew has prepared a list of the parts of his role.

### **Major responsibilities**

- Convene, compile agendas for and chair the 3 Resources Team meetings per year.
- Provide reports to Church Council and the General Church Meeting and attend these meetings as much as is possible.
- Liaise with the Church Administrator and/or secretary over the minutes of the Resources Team.
- Meet with outside contractors, when necessary, over work in and outside of the building.
- Do an annual property inspection, working with others.
- With each meeting review the recommendations of the Quinquennial report and engage a programme of necessary repairs and maintenance

## **Lesser responsibilities**

- Being a point of contact with room hirers as needed along with the Church Administrator.
- Being a point of contact with the cleaner, troubleshoot, oversee problems and appraise when needed. (An official or formal appraisal has not been necessary with our current cleaner).
- Review the Health and Safety Manual annually.
- Check with the Administrator that the monthly Fire safety checks have been made, as well as the annual extinguisher checks by an external contractor.
- Double check with the person responsible for the Defibrillator that the battery and pads are in good order.
- Regular checks for defects or building/equipment problems along with the Administrator.
- Ensure an annual asbestos inspection and report are completed by a competent person.

**Dave James**

(on behalf of the Leadership Team)

## **Fundraising for The Christie in memory of Kieran Metcalfe**



Toby and I will be running Manchester marathon for the Christie charity on 19th April. I surprised Toby by buying him a marathon place that he didn't ask for, so for the past months we have both been training to endure 42 gradually less pleasant kilometres around Manchester.

However, we are both doing it for the same reason. Our incredible dad, Kieran, passed away in July last year after a very tough two-year battle with cancer. Even during the most difficult days, he never stopped thinking of others. He kept finding joy in small things. He kept showing love. He gave his everything and went to hell and back to hold on for as long as he could just to be with us. So, in relativity the marathon is going to be a piece of cake. The Christie hospital and staff did an incredible job of looking after dad for over two years and making life as comfortable as possible in his last 3 months. So, we are looking forward to giving as much back as we can.

Neither of us have a particularly strong running background, I ran the Manchester marathon 2 years ago and it appears I had forgotten how awful it was when entering Toby and myself. So, it will be a challenge for the both of us but for a very worthy cause. Any donations big or small are greatly appreciated.

If you would like to make a donation, please go to [https://www.justgiving.com/page/kieranmetcalfe?utm\\_medium=FR&utm\\_source=CL&utm\\_campaign=020](https://www.justgiving.com/page/kieranmetcalfe?utm_medium=FR&utm_source=CL&utm_campaign=020)

Alternatively any cash donations can be handed to Susie or Laura in the church office.

Thank you

Ben & Toby



### **Shoeboxes**

We are supporting the Link to Hope project again this year. Please can you donate any empty shoeboxes you have to be filled?

### **Candle tins for Shoeboxes**

We are looking forward to filling shoeboxes again this year for Link to Hope – for the elderly and families, to send abroad ready for Christmas.

As part of this, as we did last year, we have got some empty candle tins to use to collect any money in for the charity throughout the year. These can then be added to the shoeboxes on completion, to be used with tealights as candle tins. Plus, the money collected can be used to spend on contents to fill the boxes.

We did this last year, and it proved very successful. Please, if you can again, support this by taking a candle tin home to fill with cash. Once filled, pass back to Jacqui Sarbutts or Lesley Peacock who will bank the money ready to use.

Thanks  
Jacqui and Lesley

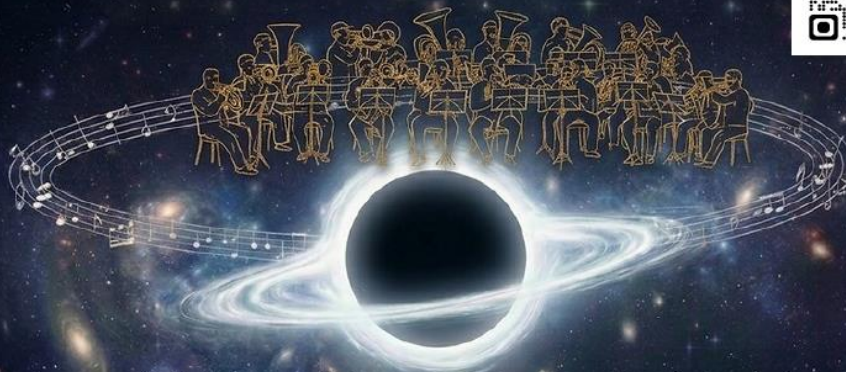
Churches Together in Cheadle Hulme present

In association with Christian Aid



# Vernon

Building Society  
(Poynton) Brass Band



## ECHOES OF THE COSMOS

**Come, Listen to the Band!**

**Saturday 9 May 2026 19:30**

Tickets available from [www.poyntonband.co.uk](http://www.poyntonband.co.uk) or via the QR code



Cheadle Hulme Methodist Church  
Ramillies Avenue  
Cheadle Hulme  
SK8 7AL  
Tel: 0161 485 1605  
Tues: 12:30 - 15:30, Wed - Fri 9:00—15:30

A small number of tickets are available via the Church Office  
Net ticket proceeds split equally between PBB & Christian Aid



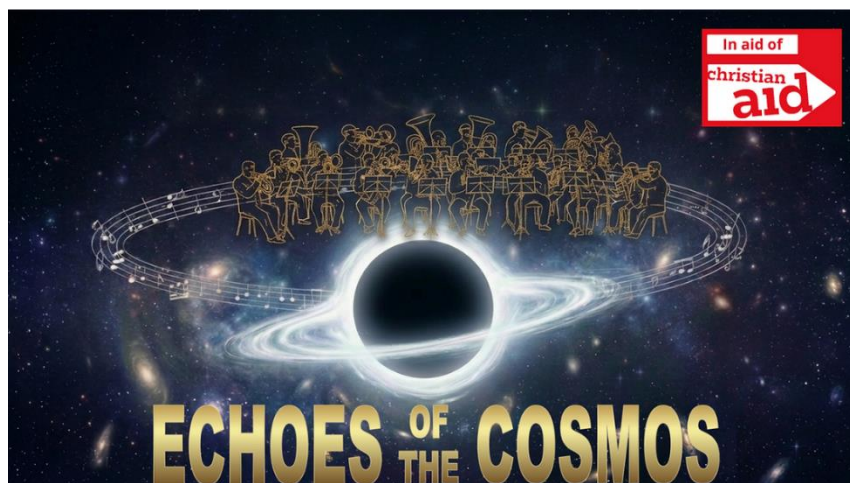
Tickets:

£10 Adults

Free for U16's

**The Vernon Building Society Poynton Brass Band  
presents an evening of music on a symphonic scale:  
'Echoes of the Cosmos'.**

This concert is designed as a curated musical narrative, charting a course from the familiar atmosphere of Earth into the vast, star-dense clusters of the deep Milky Way, eventually arriving at the paradoxical edge of a black hole - the Event Horizon.



The programme captures the awe of the infinite through some of the most powerful works in the classical and brass catalogues. Audience members will experience the "Echoes of the Spheres" through selections from Holst's *The Planets*, alongside the prehistoric weight of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and the expansive, cinematic energy of Carl Davis's *Galaxies*. The journey concludes with the modern brilliance of Paul Lovatt-Cooper's *Horizons*, a work that explores the intersection of human spirit and the unknown.

Tickets £10, on sale soon, either from Gill Smith, Hazel Crummett, the Church office or online

<https://www.poyntonband.co.uk/event-details-registration/echoes-of-the-cosmos>

Net ticket proceeds will be split equally between Poynton Brass Band Association (1212953) and Christian Aid (1105851)

## **BIBLE MONTH 2026 – PHILIPPIANS**

This year the book chosen for Bible Month is Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. The book will be preached in June/July, and this article has been written to introduce the Epistle and discover its origin and some of the themes explored in the Epistle.

### **The Church at Philippi**

The Church at Philippi was the first Christian church planted in Europe. It was planted by Paul on his second missionary journey. The city of Philippi was located in ancient Greece on the eastern border of the Roman province of Macedonia. It was situated on a fertile plain through which passed the Via Egnatia (Egnatian Way), a trade route linking the Aegean and Adriatic seas, hence many travellers passed through the city.

The account of the origins of the church at Philippi can be found in Acts 16. Paul had a clear plan for this second journey until God intervened. He received a vision to change his route and travel to Macedonia. It was in the form of a man pleading for help. Recognising this as a call from God, Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke travelled to Philippi. It was Paul's custom to visit the synagogue when he arrived at a new place, but as there was no synagogue so he went to the river where he knew Jews would be worshipping. Here he found a group of women worshipping and amongst them was a woman named Lydia.

Paul spoke about Jesus, and Lydia, a Gentile, became the first Christian convert in Europe. Lydia was a wealthy woman who dealt in the expensive purple cloth. She invited Paul and his companions to her home and her whole household were baptised. (Acts 16 vv 11-15).

Whilst in Philippi the conversion of Lydia was one of three key events. The second was where Paul exorcised a demon from a slave girl and as a result found himself in prison. (Acts 16 vv 16-24). The third was the conversion of the Philippian jailer and his family (Acts 16 vv 25-40).

From its inception the church at Philippi was strong, healthy and generous to the whole Christian community, and apart from some minor problems with disunity became a model for early church growth.

## **The Epistle**

Paul wrote his Epistle whilst in prison (probably in Rome), and a likely date is AD 61-63, but some have argued for a date some ten years earlier. Written from Paul and his companion Timothy it is a 'thank you' letter sent by Epaphroditus to thank the church for their generous gift. It is a letter which resonates with Paul's confidence in Jesus and is vibrant with a joyful faith.

## **Chapter Summaries**

### ***Chapter 1 -Thanksgiving and joy (A Harvest of joy)***

Paul begins by thanking God for the Philippian's partnership in the gospel and also expresses confidence that God will complete His good work in them.

Even in the midst of his imprisonment Paul finds immense joy in the Philippians steadfast dedication and how that their steadfast love has inspired others. His imprisonment has enabled others to be encouraged to spread the gospel.

Paul's ultimate desire is to honour Christ whether that is through his life or his death, finding joy in the knowledge that Christ is glorified regardless of the circumstances.

***Key lesson: Joy does not come from perfect circumstances but from knowing Christ and trusting God's purposes in all things.***

## ***Chapter 2 – Humility and the example of Christ (Shine humbly)***

Paul addresses the need for unity and humility amongst the Philippians but also acknowledging the potential for division in any community. He urges them to turn aside from selfish ambition and rivalry but take on the selfless mindset of Christ.

Verses 5 – 11 are a moving and poetic description of the nature of Christ (*please stop here and read those verses and stop again to reflect on the words*). They describe Jesus, who though equal with God, emptied himself and took on the form of a servant humbling himself to the point of death on the cross. Paul calls the Philippians to shine as lights in the world and to work out their faith in fear and trembling, knowing it is God who works in them.

(Verses 12 – 13).

***Key lesson: True greatness is found in humility – Jesus though equal with God made himself nothing to serve and save us.***

## ***Chapter 3 – Pressing on towards the goal (Press on)***

Paul shares his own compelling story as a zealous Pharisee who clung to the law as the very foundation of his life and conduct. Yet when he encountered Christ all this changed. He now sees these things as loss because righteousness comes through faith and not through adherence to the law. Paul presses on to the heavenly goal of knowing Christ more fully in recognising his own imperfections while urging the Philippians to follow his example and strive to grow in knowledge and understanding of Christ's love.

***Key lesson: The Christian life is a forward journey – letting go of the past and pressing on to know Christ more deeply.***

## ***Chapter 4 – Peace, contentment and gratitude (Grace be with you)***

Paul shares some final encouraging words. Focusing on the essential ingredients of a joyful Christian life: rejoicing always in the Lord, experiencing God's profound peace which is beyond human understanding and intentionally dwelling on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and praiseworthy. He calls on them to be content in all circumstances through the strength of Christ.

In expressing gratitude for the generosity of the Philippian church, he emphasises that God will meet all their needs according to his glorious riches.

***Key lesson: Peace and contentment come not from circumstances but from trusting God and being rooted in gratitude.***

### **Final thoughts**

Philippians is a glorious letter of encouragement, written from a place of immense difficulty but still resonating with overflowing joy.

Paul demonstrates that last peace, purpose and confidence come not from what we achieve or avoid – but from knowing and walking in Christ's way. Whether in abundance or need, free or imprisoned, the call is unchanging – rejoice in the world always.

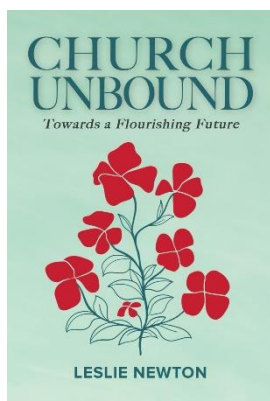
### **Further study**

- The Methodist Church has produced a prayer manual, and these will be available in Church later.
- Bramhall Methodist Church Web site under Resources – *The Ultimate Book Club*.
- Book of Philippians – You Tube Project

**Charles Nevin**

## Book Review

CHURCH UNBOUND *Towards a Flourishing Future*  
by Leslie Newton. PublishU



Leslie Newton's previous book, *Revive us Again*, considered our history and calling as a Methodist Church. This follow-up book of just over 100 pages indicates how the Methodist Church in Britain can rediscover itself as a transformative movement of grace.

Grace is a recurring theme; Leslie states that we are '*a community of grace, shaped by Christ and sent in the Spirit for the transformation of the world.*' His passion for and belief in God's Church spills out, and each chapter closes with helpful questions to ask ourselves, further questions for discussion, and a prayer. I have read the book twice and different gems of wisdom and inspiration have emerged for me each time.

Leslie believes that our preoccupation with falling numbers and keeping the show on the road blind us to the bigger picture of the adventure of God's mission; that while structures and order are important, they are not the purpose of Church, but rather the means to an end; that this preoccupation with structure and numbers results in anxiety and a debilitating sense of burden which cause us to lose sight of who we are and what we are for.

Structures are in danger of becoming – or have become? – our masters, when they should be our servants.

**The remedy?** To change our mindset and release ourselves from some of the old ways which are killing us. In other words, he is seeking a *Church Unbound*. Probably the biggest change of mindset for many readers will come from Leslie's concept of what the circuit is for. He sees it as a *protective canopy and a safety net for its component churches*, holding everything together so that each church will thrive with its different emphases relevant to its local community. Local churches could be Fresh Expressions, short-term seasonal projects, or small fellowships; digital versions of church would be seen as a different, valid expression of church; a model where all forms of church are supported with (possibly professional) resourcing from the circuit. In this way God's church would/will be released to thrive within a blended ecology where one size does not fit all and small is not seen as failure.

I have not done justice to the wisdom packed into this little book, but I end with Leslie's questions which he suggests can keep God's people *unbound* and flourishing:

**1. Identity** – *How are we developing our life together so that we make real our convictions about the essence of church as a movement of grace, not primarily a building or a charity?*

**2. Purpose** – *How are we ensuring that our decisions serve God's mission amongst us, rather than merely preserving our institution?*

**3. Resources** – *How are we ensuring that the systems in place release energy for mission, rather than drain it?*

4. **Diversity** – *How are we making space for the whole range of God's people to flourish?*

5. **Collaboration** – *How are we enabling ourselves to joyfully bear one another's burdens across the whole life of the circuit?*

6. **Prayer** – *How are we ensuring that we are truly open to and dependent upon the Spirit's leading, rather than managing anxieties?*

7. **Story** – *How are we noticing and sharing testimonies of grace, so that hope, faith and imagination are rekindled?*

Maybe these would be useful questions to ask at a General Church Meeting, or a Church Council?

I will gladly lend the book to anyone who has an hour to spare to read it.

**Margaret Parker**

Listen to Lesley talking about the book

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YOyDucf34E>