



# The Methodist Church

Cannock Chase Circuit 28/10

*Here to **worship** God, **serve** our communities and **grow** our churches.*

5<sup>th</sup> of February 2025

Friends in Christ,

As I prepare to go on sabbatical from March until the end of May, it feels strange that I'm not planned to preach for a quarter. This hasn't happened in about 15 years. It's been 15 years of joy, privilege and encounter with God. Sometimes that's felt very natural and others very hard. But, through all the challenges life has presented me with over this time, preaching and my commitment to the word of God has been one of a few constants.

I'm grateful for the rhythm of life that the liturgical year and the plan offer us. It provides a structure and a process through which we can move with God. It's never the same, yet constant. As we approach lent, Holy week and Easter, we're reminded how things changed so radically for Jesus and his followers as they made their way to Jerusalem. At the circuit service to welcome Rev Liz Dunning, Rev Rachel Parkinson mentioned how the phrase "it turns on six pence" offers us a reminder that just when we thought we'd done what we could to make plans, everything can change. I imagine the disciples felt that way, as events unfolded after they'd shared their meal together before Jesus was betrayed, arrested, convicted then crucified. They were anxious and fearful as they waited in the locked upper room, gathered as God's people, mourning the death of their dear friend and Rabbi. Jesus himself asks God to "take this cup from me, yet not my will, but yours be done" (*Luke 22:42*) and later cried out "why have you forsaken me?" (*Matt 27:46*).

Sometimes things change on six pence, sometimes change is slow and gradual. But the story of God and history remind us that even if this is so and we feel anxious and fearful, God is with us. He never leaves us or forsakes us (*Deut. 13:6; Heb. 13:5*). Change has been exponential in the last 30 years. Being robust and well prepared for change means looking back to remember that we are not the first people for whom this is challenging but more importantly, what's ours to do now? Bravely and courageously being part of the change to bring in the Kingdom of God for such a time as this.

Things will always change around us and among us. The one constant is God, the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow (*Malachi 3:6; Heb. 13:8*). A presence, close at hand in times of trouble, our refuge and our strength (*Psalms 46:1*). Rev Liz chose Psalm 46 as one of the readings for her welcome service. I commend it to you for reference and reflection as we journey toward what God is calling us to. "Yet not our will, but his be done".

You're all in my prayers as you gather for worship, serve our communities and grow God's church. May you know the constant love of God in all things.

Every blessing for your journey through lent, Holy week and Easter.

*Rev Sam.*