



MINI MACCLESFIELD MESSENGER

31st Issue: 29 November 2020

Please feel free to distribute 'Mini Messenger' to others who may find it of interest.

A message from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

Dear Friends,

When I was about nine or ten, I received a wonderful birthday present, a personal stereo! It was, in the late 1980s, the height of technology and I was delighted with it! Of course, I didn't have very many tapes to listen to, but I managed to develop the ability to record Star Trek from the television onto a tape and could happily listen to that all day long! The main point of my Personal Stereo was for long journeys in the car, I think my parents thought it was a good idea to occupy me (and my brother who also had one) to stop us fighting, or arguing, or generally messing about! Well it did do that to an extent, but it had other benefits for me; it meant I no longer had to listen to the questionable musical tastes of my parents such as Cliff Richard, George Hamilton IV (don't worry, I have no idea who that is either) or them singing *Waltzing Matilda* at implausible volume. My Personal Stereo did achieve this nicely, but it did some other things too. It disconnected me from the other people in the car, and meant that I didn't really pay attention to things outside the car – any landmarks or interesting events – or even the progress of the journey itself.



This Sunday marks the beginning of Advent for us as we move through December towards Christmas. Advent is a time of preparation, our English word "Advent" comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning "coming," which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia* meaning "presence", "arrival", or "official visit". Advent is time to anticipate the joy of celebrating Christ's birth, but it is more than that. It is through reflecting on life, and faith, and hope, and light, and love, that the miracle of Christmas can be fully understood and appreciated, and it is in light of the incarnation that our Christian life makes sense. Of course, Advent also calls us to think about Christ's return - by making ourselves ready to celebrate Christmas we make ourselves ready for that second coming, whenever that might be. This in-between place between the fulfilled promise of Christ's incarnation and the yet-to-be-fulfilled promise of his return is the heart of Advent. It is often said to be about waiting, and it is, but I think it is also about a journey.

As we move through Advent there are things we do – the lighting of Advent candles, the



telling of stories, the buying of presents, the decorating of our homes and thinking of our loved ones. All these things are important and sometimes a joy, but we need to be paying attention to the work of God as well. What might God be showing us, what might God be saying to us, where might God be calling us? we need to make sure we are not so wrapped up in the other stuff, that we miss

the journey, a bit like listening to my personal stereo on a long car journey!. We need to travel through Advent, taking time to notice things – notice the great story we tell, notice why we long to be with friends and family, notice how it feels to give and receive gifts, notice the difference light makes in the darkness, notice where we encounter the love of God. We need to pay attention to those we are travelling with and what is going on around us, because when we see, and feel, and know the love of God, we will know (or begin to know), what it is to be ready to live with the fulfilled promises of Christ's love, and the hope of the ultimate fulfilment of that love. Only then will we know what it is to hold out the faith we have found to the world around us – that God has done, is doing, and will do something amazing in this world!

Hills of the north, rejoice,
river and mountain-spring,
hark to the advent voice ;
valley and lowland, sing.
Christ comes in righteousness and love,
he brings salvation from above.

Shout, as you journey on ;
songs be in every mouth !
Lo, from the north they come,
from east and west and south :
in Jesus all shall find their rest,
in him the universe be blest.

As we travel through Advent - take off the headphones, clean your glasses, gaze out of the windows, notice the journey, and look for God.

With every blessing,

Graham

We are always pleased to receive articles for mini messenger and these are the words and views/ comments of the authors themselves. They may or may not represent the views of the Macclesfield Circuit of the Methodist Church.

Please keep collecting!

Our doors are closed again but don't forget other ways of giving! Church finances continue to be stretched, so if you haven't already, why not set up a regular Standing Order?

And of course, don't forget to Gift Aid if you can - it's worth an extra 25% from HMRC for your church.

Your church Treasurer can let you know how you can help – they'd be delighted to hear from you!!!.

Children & Families

For those missing Sunday School, or if you know other children who may be interested, this week's focus is **Mark 13: 24-37**. Play and think about how we can watch for signs of God in difficult times.

WATCH THIS SPACE.....



Sunday 13th December 3-4pm

Save the date, more details to follow!

Angela

Prayer– in our Circuit Prayer Cycle we remember Green Close this week. This prayer has been provided by Stephan Rudolfer.

Let's pray

Glorious Father, King of the universe, reigning on high surrounded by myriads of worshipping angels, we humbly come to You as Your creatures who totally depend on You.

These last few months have been tense, terrifying and tedious, as we have seen restrictions on personal freedom applied, then loosened, then applied again. All the while, the COVID pandemic was pursuing its grim progress. As its second wave gains momentum, we see thousands more at risk, and a second lockdown beginning to bite. As the NHS gears up to cope with the second COVID wave, we see the collateral damage: many elective operations cancelled and the treatment of many potentially fatal conditions, postponed. On the other hand, we rejoice and give You thanks and praise for the progress made in developing COVID vaccines.

Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world, look down from Your cross on the suffering world, particularly the poorest and least able to look after themselves. Echoing the prophet Isaiah, *You were wounded for our transgressions, You were bruised for our iniquity; surely You bore our sorrows, and by Your stripes we are healed.* We thank You for the outpouring of love which has taken place amongst neighbours keen to help the most vulnerable in their midst. Lord Jesus, may many more people become aware of Your presence moving among them.

Mighty Holy Spirit, we worship You together with the Father and the Son. You hover over the face of the earth, and enkindle the fire of Your love among Your people. Come again, and again, and again, to refresh, encourage, and sustain suffering humanity.

To You, Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we give all honour, power, glory and praise.

Amen.

Members' voice - by Chris Hawkyard, Poynton

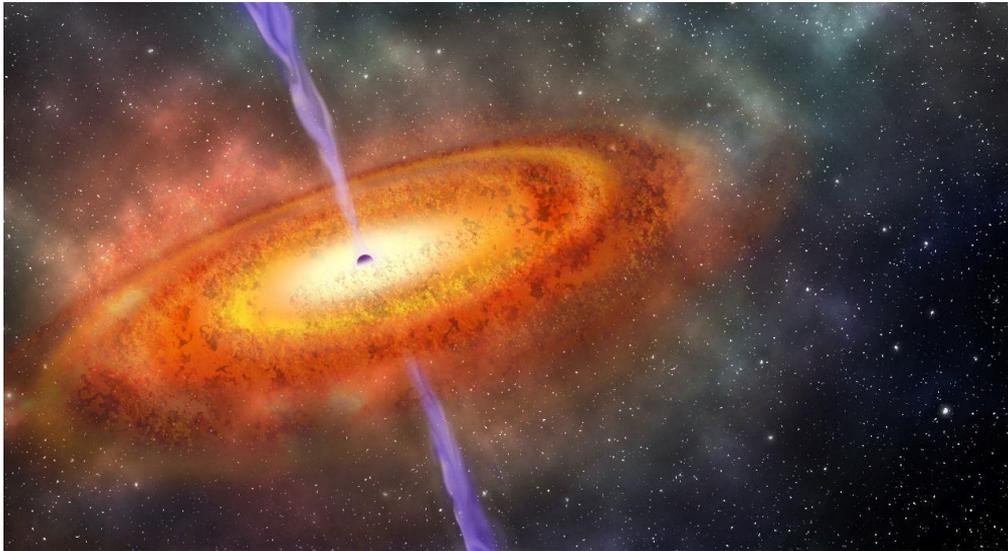
Eternal Maker

That God is eternal is one of the many amazing characteristics of our god. God was, is and will be, so when the steady state universe lost out to the Big Bang theory I was upset. Why wasn't there anything before the Big Bang? Did God exist before the Big Bang? On reading about the work and theories of our recent Nobel Prize winner, Sir Roger Penrose, I am a happier man.

Sir Roger helped to prove the existence of black holes. They exist at the centre of galaxies including our own Milky Way. They were first theorized by English country parson John Mitchell in 1783, who speculated that if an object became extremely dense, its massive gravitational pull would stop even light escaping. Sir Roger, along with two others, proved the existence of a black hole at the centre of our galaxy by studying its effect on stars around it.

Stephen Hawking proposed that black holes gradually leak energy and eventually evaporate away and Sir Roger, aged 89, has recently published a paper claiming there is now enough evidence of the existence of decaying black holes that were still in existence before the Big Bang. Apparently many scientists believe that the universe operates in a perpetual cycle in which it expands before contracting back in a "Big Crunch" followed by a new Big Bang.

All this goes to show that our eternal God, and the ever-expanding created universe, are completely beyond most humans' understanding, including myself, but I find them awe-inspiring nevertheless. Do you?



Could you write the next article?

We are looking to feature a contribution each week from a member of the congregation who would be willing to tell us what they are doing during these strange times – what are you watching/reading/making? Any tips to share with others? It would be lovely to hear from you!

email: macclesfieldcircuit@gmail.com

Year of Testimony: Sharing Our Story

It has been good to share the story of God in our lives with each other during our services this year. We all benefit from hearing each other's testimonies and so we would like to continue this during our online services. So, if you would like to share your experiences of God during this time please make a recording and send it to Graham. Or, if you would prefer, contact Graham and he will record you via Zoom.

Do you watch us on YouTube?

If you use YouTube, we'd be really grateful if you could subscribe to our channel.....
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCh1PS5ox80YSZj71WMDHVMQ?fbclid=IwAR2kh47mQQ5ZdZHpVnLvSFqemJ3TwyIalezVvSsywnvucNS569sb1tDhsnl> Just click on the red 'Subscribe' button on the top left of the screen and click 'sign in'.

Or from the TV, on the YouTube page, under 'Subscriptions' click 'sign in'. This will help us get a 'proper' url. (That's the link to the morning service that we include each week.) Subscribing doesn't cost anything as this is a free channel. You can find a Subscribe button under any YouTube video or on a channel's page. Once you subscribe to a channel, any new videos it publishes will show up in your Subscriptions feed. You may also start getting Notifications when a channel you subscribe to publishes new content.

Quest for Spirituality

Updates from Helen's Sabbatical: A BOAT TRIP TO THE ISLE OF STAFFA

A few years ago, we ran 'Creation Experience' weeks in some of our churches here, opportunities for primary aged children to come and explore the vast wonders of creation through various interactive (and often messy!) activities. One year we took them on a journey from the beginning of time, through the Big Bang, the evolving of life in the oceans, the volcanos and life moving from seas to dry land, the era of dinosaurs, then on into the forests and eventually to the arrival of human beings. The children loved it and we loved hosting it. We gave them each a bookmark at the end of their 90 mins Creation Experience as a keepsake, with the timeline on it from over 15 billion years ago to present day. Staggering to think of the journey creation has taken since the beginning of time.

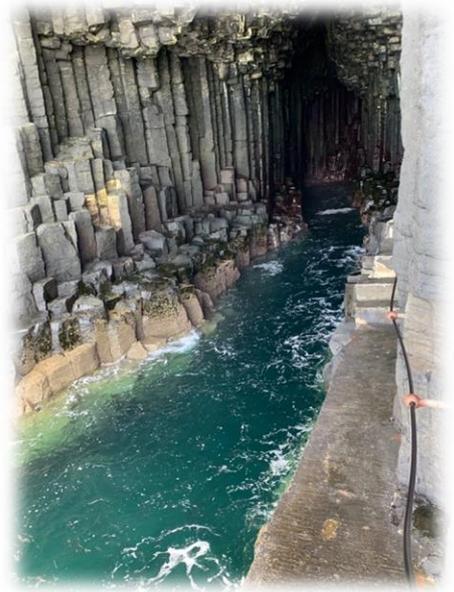


Well, Dave and I were fortunate to step back in time 50 million years and experience first hand a part of that historic journey our planet has taken. We got on a boat with Staffa Boat Tours and set off to visit Fingal's Cave, located on the island of Staffa, off the coast of Mull. The cave came to be from a lava flow over 50 million years ago, that lay down basalt columns of layered rock. Whilst the columns were being laid down a tilt occurred,



pressure was applied above the cave, forcing a crack to open up below, which was further shaped from the crashing of waves at the island during storms. This created the stunning structure we were able to step onto and see for ourselves.

Renowned for its natural acoustics, eerie sounds produced by the waves, and naturally arched roof, the cave evokes a cathedral-like atmosphere. This has allowed for the cave to earn its Gaelic name 'Uamh-Binn', meaning 'cave of melody'. The cave has attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors over the centuries, including Romantic composer Felix Mendelssohn who visited in 1829 and wrote his Hebrides overture in ode to the acoustics of the cave. Past visitors have also included Sir Walter Scott, Keats, Turner, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, Prince William of Orange, William Wordsworth, Jules Verne and Robert Louis Stevenson.



The name 'Fingal' originally comes from an Irish myth, where the hero Fionn MacCumhaill's (shortened to 'Fingal', meaning 'white stranger') and his faithful warriors migrated into Scotland from Ireland. The legend is that Fionn built the Giant's Causeway, which has identical columns to Fingal's Cave, after a challenge to fight. He soon became famous across Scotland, making his name the obvious choice.

If you have time, visit my blog and take your time looking at the photos and video clips posted there, savouring the calmness of the waters, the contentment of seals resting on the rocks, the cormorants fishing in the waters and the breathtaking awesome Isle of Staffa with Fingal's Cave as it's centrepiece.

Perhaps listen to Mendelson's Hebrides (Fingal's Cave) Overture (<https://youtu.be/a3MiETaBSnc>) as you join Dave and I stepping back 50 million years, thankful for such a beautiful world. I am forever mindful that the story of Planet Earth is older than we can imagine and more precious than any silver or gold. May we count our blessings for being able to be part of it all. This was a creation experience we will never forget!

God be with you all till we meet again,
Helen

[Next week we're off to the Isle of Skye]

To view lots of photos and videos on my blog: www.questforspirituality.com



Community....

The Big Neighbourhood Winter Wonderland Trail in Macclesfield.

Message from HOPE in NE Cheshire group....

My attention has been brought to a Macclesfield-wide Facebook group with over 1,500 members called *The Big Neighbourhood Winter Wonderland Trail in Macclesfield* - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/329699051652449/?ref=share>. The Group's aim is to encourage people to decorate their windows this Christmas to spread some Christmas cheer. Lots of homes will no doubt have santas, reindeer and snowmen! Perhaps we could encourage our Churches to join in and help LIGHT up Macclesfield with God's HOPE and LOVE!

The members of your Churches could use lights, silhouettes, candles, Bible verses or anything else to share the story of Jesus' birth and God's LIGHT, HOPE and LOVE in the world. If they would like to join the Facebook group, they will then be able to upload their photos and spread the true meaning of Christmas. It would be great if our Churches join in with this town-wide venture and show God's LIGHT, HOPE and LOVE this Christmas.

Action for Children

Thank you

Christmas is not far away! Even though it's been a really challenging year, the unwavering support of the Methodist Church starkly stands out in our memory.

We weren't able to meet up with our Methodist friends during the Conference, MWIB Residential and Action for Children Sunday, but we still felt the impact of your prayers, friendship and gifts. We can't thank you enough but at every opportunity, we will. Our Chief Executive, Trustees and the children we support recorded a video message for you: <https://youtu.be/6DxI9OLhdLo>

Secret Santa is back!



This festive season, Action for Children is looking for a sleighful of Secret Santas to support our Christmas campaign. For most of us, the festive season is a happy time. But there are children all over the UK who face a Christmas without food, warmth or love; Coronavirus has had a devastating impact on their lives. We are working hard to change this – and we need your help more than ever. To become a Secret Santa visit iamsanta.org.uk/methodist

Starry Night – virtual Christmas carol concert

On Tuesday 8th December, join us and families across the UK for an evening of Christmas carols, fun and festive cheer hosted by Channel 4 News' Jon Snow. Tickets are £10 per household and will give you access to exclusive entertainment, readings, and performances from celebrities including Angellica Bell and Call the Midwife's Jenny Agutter. All this from the comfort of your own home.

Buy tickets here: www.starry-night.co.uk



Just for fun! - Wordsearch on St Andrew (Feast Day 30th November)

St Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland, though his only connection with the country is that some of his bones were reputedly transported in the 8th century to Fife and preserved at a church in a place now named St Andrews. Andrew was one of the first disciples of Jesus, and the very first to bring someone else to Christ - his own brother. Like many fervent Jews at the time Andrew and an unnamed companion had been drawn to the prophet John the Baptist. When one day John pointed out Jesus to Andrew and his friend, and described him as the 'Lamb of God', the two young men assumed that the next stage of their spiritual search was about to unfold. So as Jesus made off, they followed him. When Jesus turned and asked them what they were 'seeking', all they could come up with was a lame enquiry about his current place of residence: 'where are you staying?'

The reply of Jesus was the most straight-forward invitation anyone can receive: 'Come and see'. So they did, and the results of their response were life-changing. For Andrew brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus, and soon the little apostolic band who would carry the message of Jesus to the whole world was formed. And right at the front of the column, as it were, was Andrew, the first disciple of Jesus.

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| N | A | D | E | I | E | J | M | E | P | D |
| J | S | M | W | I | R | E | E | S | W | N |
| P | O | I | R | R | D | S | I | S | O | I |
| C | R | H | E | O | N | U | T | A | R | L |
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Andrew
Patron
Saint
Scotland
Fife

First
Disciple
John
Baptist
Lamb

God
followed
Jesus
Come
See

Peter
Apostolic
Band
Message
World

Fancy baking? **St Andrews Day**

The scots are renowned for their love of a good knees up, so the day is marked with hearty good cheer. It's an official bank holiday and is celebrated with pagentry, dining and celtic dancing. Crisp, buttery shortbread is a Scotch national treasure, while some of Britains best and most flavoursome raspberries are grown in the country's cool climate. It seems fitting to celebrate St Andrew's Day in bounteous style by baking this cake made from the best of Scotland's larder.

Buttermilk Raspberry Shortcake

125g unsalted butter, softened
125g caster sugar
1 medium egg, lightly beaten
120g self raising flour
30g ground almonds
100ml buttermilk

Shortbread

175g plain flour
125g unsalted butter, softened
60g golden caster sugar plus a little extra to dust

Crème patissiere

60g caster sugar
2 medium egg yolks
30g cornflour
200ml milk + 2 tbsp
1 vanilla pod, seeds scraped
60g unsalted butter

Topping

250g raspberries
Icing sugar to dust

Start by making the crème patissiere. In a large bowl, whisk together the sugar and egg yolks until lighter in colour and creamy. Mix the cornflour with the 2 tablespoons of cold milk until combined. Add to the egg mixture and give it a good mix.

Pour 200ml of the milk into a pan and add the vanilla pod and seeds. Heat gently over a low heat until bubbles appear at the side of the pan. Take off the heat and pour the milk through a sieve into the egg mixture whisking all the time.

Pour the mixture back into the pan and cook gently over a low heat whisking constantly to avoid lumps. The mixture will soon begin to thicken. Once thick enough to coat the back of a spoon take off the heat, add the butter and give it a good whisk until smooth and all the butter has melted. Pour into a bowl, cover the surface with cling film to avoid a skin forming and cook in the fridge.

Make the shortbread. Preheat the oven to 200c/180 fan/gas 6. Draw a 20cm square on a piece of baking parchment, turn it over and place the paper on a greased baking tray. Put the flour, butter and sugar into a bowl and beat until the consistency is like breadcrumbs. Beat a little more until everything comes together into a ball. Press the mixture on to the baking parchment within the marked square and bake for 12-15 minutes or until pale in colour and firm to the touch. Leave the oven at this temperature. Leave on the tray for 3-4 minutes the square off the four edges and cut the shortbread into 32 even triangles. Do this by cutting out a square grid of 4x4 squares then cutting lines diagonally across the square until you have enough triangle shapes. Dust with caster sugar and leave on the tray to cool completely. It is essential to slice the shortbread while still warm, once it's cold it will crumble. For sharper edges, score the shortbread before you put it in the oven.

Grease and line the base of a 20cm loose bottomed cake tin. Beat the butter and sugar together with a wooden spoon or electric whisk until light and creamy. Gradually add the egg, beating well and adding a tablespoon of flour to prevent curdling. Fold in the remaining flour and ground almonds and buttermilk. Gently mix until well combined.

Pour the mix into the tin and bake for 20 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean. Leave in the tin for 10 minutes to cool a little before carefully turning out on to a wire rack to cool completely (it's quite fragile so handle it carefully).

To assemble put the crème patissiere into a piping bag and pipe even lines over the top of the cake alternating with lines of the shortbread biscuits pointing up. Dot the raspberries over the crème patissiere and dust with icing sugar.



Tell us about your bakes & share your favourite recipes

Please send us your photos of your finished bakes!

email: macclesfieldcircuit@gmail.com

Advent Group events



Join in one of the Advent Groups for 2020

| When | Where | What | How Do I Join? |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| MONDAYS 7-8pm (starts 30 th Nov) | Online via zoom (by Gawsforth) | Reflects on the film Elf | Link will be provided - contact Graham |
| TUESDAYS 3-4.30pm (starts 1 st Dec) | Online via zoom (by Poynton & Green Close) | Studying 'At Home in Advent' book by Gordon Giles | Contact Ros for details |
| TUESDAYS 1-2pm (starts 1 st Dec) | Online via zoom (by Macclesfield) | Reflects on the film Elf | Link will be provided - contact Graham |
| WEDNESDAYS 10-11.30am (starts 2 nd Dec) | Online via zoom (by Broken Cross) | Studying 'In the Bleak Midwinter' book by Rachel Mann | Access via Meeting ID: 856-0990-1813 Helen |
| WEDNESDAYS 7.30-9pm (starts 1 st Dec) | Online via zoom (by Poynton & Green Close) | Studying 'At Home in Advent' book by Gordon Giles | Contact Ros for details |
| THURSDAYS 10-11.30am (starts 26 th Nov) | Online via zoom (by Prestbury & St Peters) | 4 Characters from the Christmas Story | Access via Meeting ID: 847-6270-8696 Helen |

We hope that you will be able to take the opportunity to join a group and reflect together on the meaning of Advent.

Please let the relevant Minister know if you are planning to attend, thank you.

OTHER EVENTS COMING UP....

Virtual Nativity Play



More details to follow!

Christingle



SERVICE LINKS & CONTACTS

Sunday 29 November

AM – Morning worship led by Helen

WATCH ONLINE : <http://tiny.cc/advent-1>

The Reading is Isaiah 9: 2-6. (NRSV)

LISTEN.....DIAL IN - 01625 786346 (Available from 10am Sun)

FACEBOOK..... : <https://www.facebook.com/MacclefieldCircuit/>

YOUTUBE..... : <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCh1PS5ox80YSZj71WMDHVmQ>

PM – Live Evening Prayer Service at 6.30pm

JOIN ONLINE.... Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88677436411>

Meeting ID: 886 7743 6411

Dial by your location

+44 203 051 2874 United Kingdom

+44 203 481 5240 United Kingdom

+44 203 481 5237 United Kingdom

+44 131 460 1196 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: 886 7743 6411

LISTEN.....DIAL IN - 0203 051 2874 or 0203 481 5237 & and when asked, input the Meeting ID: 886 7743 6411

Services coming up.....

6 December AM – led by Ros

13 December AM – led by Graham

A [FREE phone service](#) to hear prayers and news from the **Methodist Church** has been launched.

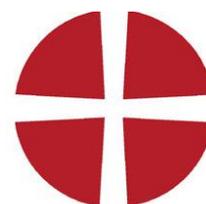


FREE phone lines for prayers and news from the Methodist Church

Listen to a **prayer**: 0808 281 2514

Listen to **news**: 0808 281 2478

Content is updated weekly on Thursday afternoon



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

Are you in need of some daily hope during this lockdown? The **Church of England** have a new FREE telephone line for you to ring to hear comforting hymns, daily prayers and reflections.

Circuit Facebook page

For the latest information on what is happening within the circuit, follow...

<https://www.facebook.com/MacclefieldCircuit/>

Other important links

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus-guidance/>

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.methodistchurch.org.uk/MWoL>

Contact Details

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Email: ros.watson@methodist.org.uk
