

our experiences and listen harder to what God is saying to us at this moment in this context. Despite the inevitable tragedies and miseries, in the last quarter we were blessed with some memorable experiences, not least the ability to celebrate the Christmas season more robustly than last year, the opportunity for a Methodist Covenant Service at the beginning of the year and the visit by the President (Rev Sonia Hicks) and Vice President (Barbara Easton) of the Methodist Church in Britain in February (elsewhere we will give a more detailed account of this). All these now feel like a timely summons from the tomb. How have we been inspired?

With regards to the Preaching Plan, I am now fully convinced that this label hardly describes what happens in an act of worship across our circuit. At best it is a clumsy characterisation of services whether on Sunday or any other time of the week, communion, or local arrangement. At worst the label Preaching Plan characterises the congregation as passive recipients of sermons ignoring completely that worship is in fact centred on God through the mutual and corporate actions of God’s people whether in the pew or pulpit. In essence the Preaching Plan is more than a plan for or of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. The pandemic despite its unwanted virulence has shone a light on the desirability of collective approaches to our understanding of being people sharing the gift of the earth.

As we seek to deliver the aspirations coded in the Preaching Plan for this quarter, let us use the Lent Season this year as a time to reflect actively and creatively on how we can best embody God’s mission and ministry bequeathed to us when Jesus of Nazareth first called out his disciples to be fishers of men, breakers of habits and liberators of souls. In the febrile context we find ourselves in let us be kind and gentle with each other. Like Lazarus we may never know the full extent of the impact of our time in the grave. We may not even be sure of how long we were in the tomb. But for all of us and others, may the season of this Lent and the blessing of this Easter be transformative and restorative, proclaiming the love of Christ to all we come across.

With Love from

Vincent

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ash Wednesday** | **2nd March** |  |
| Greens Lane | 10.30am | R Williams |
| Norton | 7.30pm | V Jambawo |
| Yarm | 7.30pm HC | M Ramsden |
| **World Day of Prayer** | **4th March** |  |
| Norton | 2pm | R Williams |
| **Maundy Thursday** | **14th April** |  |
| Greens Lane | 6.30pm | R Williams |
| Norton | 7.30pm HC | V Jambawo |
| Yarm Road at St Peter’s | 7pm |  |
| Yarm | 7.30pm HC | M Ramsden |
| **Good Friday** | **15th April** |  |
| Carlton | 6pm | V Jambawo |
| Eaglescliffe Trinity | 6pm | P Dodd |
| Greens Lane | 9.15am | Walk |
| Greens Lane | 10.30am | R Williams |
| North Billingham | 10am | C Bell |
| Norton | 10am | V Jambawo |
| St Andrew’s | 3pm | R Williams |
| Yarm Road | 9.30am | LA with URC |
| Yarm | 10am | M Ramsden |
| **Holy Saturday** | **16th April** |  |
| Norton | 7pm | V Jambawo |



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 **Stockton Methodist Circuit**

**March – April - May 2022**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Chair of District** | Rev Richard Andrew | richard.andrew@methodist.org.uk  07854 451921 |
| **Superintendent Minister** | Rev Dr. Vincent Jambawo | vincent.jambawo@methodist.org.uk  01642 533379 |
| **Ministers** | Rev Dr. Martin Ramsden | martin.ramsden@icloud.com  07483 863502 |
| Rev Rachel Williams | rachel.williams@methodist.org.uk  01642 508998 |
| Rev Sarah Ramsden |  |
| **Supernumerary Ministers** | Rev Margaret Fleming |  |
| Rev John Howard-Norman |  |
| Rev Eric Mason |  |
| **District Safeguarding Officer** | Carolyn Godfrey | newcastle.darlington@dso.methodist.org.uk  07534 346374 |
| **District Administrator** | Kiera Prior | dmd13office@gmail.com  07484 886006 |
| **Circuit Administrator** | Jenny Prior | stockton.circuit.office@gmail.com  07541 777470 |

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Lent Group at Greens Lane – this will take place on a Tuesday evening, 7pm, in the Church Annex. Starts 8th March and weekly until 12th April. All welcome.

Please email stockton.circuit.office@gmail.com if you would like to receive the Circuit newsletter.



# **The Third Quarter: Ash and Lent Aspirations**

Remarkably … or indeed unbelievably … we are into the third quarter of the Methodist Church year! Lent, once again, seems to creep on us. Now that the humble cross bun is never off the shelves throughout the year as well as the overabundance of, and the overindulgence in, chocolate, Lent and Easter do not announce their arrival with the same tell-tale harbingers of Advent and Christmas. You will notice, however, from the preaching plan you have received that Ash Wednesday is on 2nd March this year … which means that Shrove Tuesday and your beloved pancakes are on the first day of this preaching plan … hurray!

For most Christians around the world and in our circuit, Lent is a season of solemnity and even sobriety, providing much needed space for collective and individual reflection on our faith as well as its impact on others. As we emerge from the clutches of a debilitating pandemic, bruised, wounded, and shattered in all manner of ways, this conceptualisation of Lent will have an even more poignant significance. Many a grief has been experienced during the last 2 years, with the pandemic conjuring up a unique set of circumstances that has given a new meaning to suffering. Many have wrestled ill health from COVID-19 and other ailments. Tragically, many lives have been lost to the virus and to other causes during this time. While some light is shining regarding the pandemic darkness, the viral context is still very dangerous and very vicious for many communities in our country and around the world.

Like the now-fabled brother of Mary and Martha, as a church we are slowly unwrapping the grave bandages of our time in the tomb. Perhaps we are a little bit anxious about our vital organs, wary of opening our eyes, gingerly trying out our biceps, carefully cupping our hands over our ears at the slightest noise, &c &c. Perhaps we are not sure of how long we have been in this moribund state but there is no doubt that the experience has left an indelible mark on our lives. I am sure we have learned many new things and unlearned a few others.

While we are eager and excited to come back to ‘normal’ (whatever that means for you and yours), let’s take the opportunity to consolidate from



Local Preacher on Trial – Stef Robinson Hoyle



Conference encourages every ordained Presbyter to keep one day free from Circuit responsibilities.

Please respect that day, except of course for emergencies:

Rev Dr. Vincent Jambawo – Friday

Rev Dr. Martin Ramsden – Friday

Rev Rachel Williams - Saturday

**Visiting Preachers**

Rev David Hall – West Durham Methodist Circuit

Rev Kenny Newsome – United Methodist Church USA

**We give thanks to all who lead our worship.**