

Rev Tim Perkins  
8 December 2021

“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.’

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God’s people; no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Isaiah 35)

Dear Friends,

This passage from Isaiah 35 is one of the Old Testament prophecies that forms part of our lectionary for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent. It provides a wonderful image of hope, restoration and flourishing. It reminds us that amid dark and difficult times (and it was written at just such a time in the history of the people of Israel) God can and will work for transformation until all things are ultimately made new! It is a passage which offers encouragement to us as our society and our world continues to struggle with the Covid pandemic and its consequences and it offers us a picture of concern, compassion and transformation through the Way of Holiness that lies in stark contrast to the lack of integrity and decline in moral or ethical standards that we see at the very heart of our nation’s life.

It is also one of three significant texts which we are offering to the Circuit through our “Flourish” initiative which will take place in the New Year. This will provide opportunity for congregations, small groups, and individuals to encourage and celebrate: our flourishing in God’s world; our own personal flourishing; and our flourishing as God’s people. Our prayer is that this initiative will help us to grow in hope, to be restored in our faith and to flourish in our discipleship. We believe that God is making a way for us to live life fully aware of his presence with us, his love for us, and his power available to us as we seek the new things God wants to do in our midst and our lives. Allow me to encourage you to make use of the resources that will be available and to participate in the opportunities that will be offered for the flourishing of your faith, your church, and the world we inhabit.

Speaking of new things and opportunities I want to update you on a few issues:

### **Ministerial Appointment**

I am delighted to be able to announce that the Circuit has been successfully matched with a Minister in what we call our “Stationing Process”. Rev Cameron Stirk will be joining us (subject to the approval of Methodist Conference) in September 2022 to take up a role including pastoral charge of our Otley and Pool churches and a newly developed role as Circuit Mission Enabler. Cameron will bring with him stacks of experience and enthusiasm and has expressed his delight at the appointment. Cameron currently serves in the Barnsley Circuit and has had previous appointments in the York North and Liverpool North Circuits. Please pray for Cameron, his wife Lucy and their three boys as they prepare to say their farewells and look to a new future with us.

### **Circuit Manses**

We have agreed the date of December 16<sup>th</sup> for completion of the sale of the Manse in Bramhope and are actively engaged in the process of identifying and purchasing a new Manse in Otley ready for Cameron’s arrival and in advance of the sale of the current Otley Manse and the Yeadon Manse. This programme of renewing our Manse provision is aimed at enabling our Ministers to flourish in their own lives as well as their ministries, and to be more strategic in our missional thinking. Once complete, it will also release into Circuit funds significant resource for developing new and exciting missional projects.

### **Lay Employment Panel**

As part of our ongoing commitment to enable all our Circuit employees to flourish in their roles we are seeking to establish a “Lay Employment Panel” as a matter of urgency. This panel will have oversight of all lay appointment processes across the circuit, from developing appointments for the circuit to reviewing and approving appointments for local churches and overseeing the ongoing development and wellbeing of our lay staff. If this is something which you feel you have enthusiasm for and gifts in, then I would love to hear from you. It is a matter of urgency because we need to have this team in place before we can progress the plans we have for our Circuit Lay Support Staff Team or agree any new local church appointments.

### **Circuit Teams**

The pandemic has made it very difficult for us to implement some of the ideas from the Circuit’s “Planning for Growth” strategy but our intention in the New Year is to focus on developing the work of our Circuit Teams to enable the flourishing of our work in the following areas:

- Children, Young People and Schools Team
- Learning and Development Team
- Mission and Evangelism Team

The aims of these teams are to bring together enthusiastic and gifted people in these areas of work to develop circuit-wide opportunities for growth and to offer expertise and resources to individual congregations who might be seeking to focus on a specific project or area. The nature of our Methodist structure is such that our Churches cannot flourish without the support and input of the Circuit but neither can the Circuit flourish without the support and input of the local Churches. It is all too easy for us to focus on our own small part of the picture but if the picture is to become clear we do need people to serve at a Circuit level not just a local one. Again, if this appeals to you, please contact me at the earliest opportunity.

### **Circuit Secretary (volunteer)**

In order to provide a clearer missional focus for some of Circuit Lay Support roles we are actively seeking a volunteer with secretarial skills to act as our Circuit Secretary. The role would be to provide secretarial support to our Circuit Meeting, Circuit Leadership Team and Circuit Invitations Committee. It will involve attendance at roughly 12 meetings a year plus the work to distribute papers in advance and to take minutes. If you feel you could help in this way, please contact either Rev Tim or Mike Fawcett.

I would like to finish by offering to you a prayer which will be part of the resources for our Flourish programme:

Joyful God, we adore you for the astonishing hope you offer, that even the dry desert shall rejoice and blossom.

We delight in your exuberant and ever-shining glory, which cannot be contained.

We praise you for your extravagant and priceless gifts, gifts of strength, peace and salvation.

We celebrate your merciful and miraculous healing, as eyes are opened and ears unstopped, as the lame leap like deer and the speechless speak.

We sing of your fresh, life-giving water, flowing in the wilderness, transforming each one of us for your glory.

As we look to all that you have done and all that you will do, right now, here in this moment, you offer us life in all its fullness, calling us to walk your way of holiness, a road that leads to the flourishing of all creation. Amen.

Adapted from a prayer by Matt Stone in the URC Prayer Handbook 2019

Every blessing,  
Rev Tim

### **Christmas Services**

Sun 12<sup>th</sup> Dec 10.30am Holy Communion led by Rev Tim

Sun 19<sup>th</sup> Dec 4pm Carol Service led by the Choir and Rev Tim

**There will be no morning service on the 19<sup>th</sup> but a warm welcome is extended to join our friends at Burley either at 9am for their Shift Christmas Celebration or at 10.45am for their all-age Carol Service led by Deacon Liz Day.**

Fri 24<sup>th</sup> Dec 4pm – 5pm Christingle Giveaway Event

Sat 25<sup>th</sup> Dec 10.30am Christmas Day Celebration led by Rev Tim

**Sun 26<sup>th</sup> Dec No Service**

Sun 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan 10.30am United Covenant Service with St John's led by Revs Tim & Steve

### **Wharfedale Refugee Response Reverse Advent Calendar Appeal**

Hopefully you are all busy putting aside items for your box of goodies for the Advent appeal. The drop of day is Monday 3 January from 9am – 6pm in the Welcome Area at Burley Methodist Church. If you don't want to make up a full box, individual items can be dropped off at Cornerstone.

### **Cornerstone Community Café**

Cornerstone will be open with a limited menu from Christmas Eve through to the New Year. As a way to offer hospitality to the village we will be open on Boxing Day but will not be trading (there will be no Sunday morning service in church). We will be giving away free hot drinks and soup and any further items can be paid for in cash by a donation to Homeless Hampers. Cornerstone will be open as usual up until Christmas Eve:

Friday 24 December	10.30am to 1.30pm	Christmas Eve
Saturday 25 December	CLOSED	Christmas Day
Sunday 26 December	10.30am to 1.30pm	Boxing Day
Monday 27 December	10.30am to 1.30pm	
Tuesday 28 December	10.30am to 1.30pm	
Wednesday 29 December	CLOSED	
Thursday 30 December	10.30am to 1.30pm	
Friday 31 December	10.30am to 1.30pm	New Year's Eve
Saturday 1 January	10.30am to 1.30pm	New Year's Day