



2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings to you all.

We are at the beginning of the new Methodist Connexional Year. It is a very different September to previous ones as we continue to navigate what is entailed in this Covid-19 environment. We begin the year at a time when we are continuing to discern when and how we are able to open churches for worship and other activities. Please remember all who are involved in this process in your prayers.

This week I have been reflecting on the opening words of Psalm 149:

**Praise the Lord!**

**Sing to the Lord a new song;**

**sing to God's praise in the assembly of the faithful.**

The encouragement is to learn a new song for the new times in which we find ourselves. The Israelites had been very familiar with sorrow and oppression. Now they were emerging into freedom, and everything was new. They remember God's goodness and faithfulness – they rejoice.

We too are gradually emerging from lockdown into this post-lockdown world, with much that is still different. As a church we have been doing much to keep in touch with everyone - the majority via email, Zoom meetings, on-line worship, etc. There has also been an increase in shared phone calls and sending cards and letters. We have learned to live together but apart. We are not singing the way we used to – we are learning new songs.

New songs, though, are not always easy to learn, as we seek to express our life of faith in ways which we are not used to. Things work best when the accompaniment is strong, and we are supported as we journey. We discover the Holy Spirit graciously keeping the vision of the Lord, and the kingdom of God before us – a vision of God's continual faithfulness that frees us from all that could oppress us. When filled with this joy we sing the new songs full of praise for God.

I encourage all of us to pray about how we discover and then to act in response with new songs for these new times that we are experiencing – be it in worship, mission, care and service. We are, I believe, being encouraged by God to respond in new ways in these new circumstances as disciples of Jesus. When we worship, we praise God together, sharing what it is we are learning by God's grace and guidance.

We also begin this new year by welcoming Rev James Patron Bell to the Circuit ministry team, as well as his wife Joanna, and daughters Rebekah and Esther. We are glad they are with us and pray for them as they settle in. James is assigned to work alongside Rev. Hilda Warwick at CEMC, and to be the Methodist student chaplaincy contact in Edinburgh.

New times, new songs, new opportunities, exciting times ahead!

Be encouraged - live in hope.

Grace and peace,

*Eddie*

