Stockport and High Peak Missional Partnership
(United Reformed Church)

The United Reformed Church

Faith – Hope – Love – Since 1972

THE LINK



DECEMBER/JANUARY 2026/27

"The Stockport and High Peak Missional Partnership is a Christian Church, living out the love of God by reaching into the heart of each community and responding to its need

Dear Friends,

In Tolstoy's story, Papa Panov, a shoemaker has a dream. Jesus appears to him, saying that he will be visiting him in his shop the next day. The dream was vivid and Papa Panov awakes excited. Perhaps Jesus really had appeared in his dream was coming to his shop. The next day goes by. Several people come to the shop: a road sweeper, a poor woman carrying a baby and a small child with no shoes. Each time Papa Panov helps them, giving them food, warmth and clothing. As evening goes by, Papa Panov is disappointed. It looks like Jesus wasn't coming after-all. That night, once again Jesus comes to him in his dream. "Yes," says Jesus, "I did come to your shop. I came as a road sweeper, a woman with a baby and a small child. For whatever you do for the least of your sisters and brothers, you do for me."

One day very soon, Christ will once again be born amongst us. If we look closely, we will see him. Perhaps in the queue at the food bank, amongst the refugees or the homeless.

"The word made flesh and dwelled among us" John 1: 14. Christ moved into the neighbourhood. Let's, in each of our neighbourhoods, notice and celebrate the many ways that Christ walks with us.

Have a blessed advent, Christmas and new year,

Liz Delafield

Steering Group Convenor
Mission and Discipleship Mentor

Our Link editor, Barbara has unfortunately fallen and suffered a fractured femur at the end of her holiday cruise. She is unable to complete this Link so she's handed it to me to complete at the last limit. We all wish her a speedy recovery.
It's likely that I've made some mistakes and not up to Barbara's high standard as it's at the last minute before the deadline so I apologise in advance. Also, I may have omitted some items due to the lack of time.
Terry

If you would like to get an early copy of The Link by email contact Terry Lomax at terry.lomax@gmail.com

From Barbara Northover (MB)

1st Corinthians 13 (A Christmas Version)

If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another decorator.
If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another cook.
If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family, it profits me nothing.
If I trim the spruce, with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties and sing in the choir's cantata, but do not focus on those I love the most, I have missed the point.
In other words ….

Love stops the cooking to hug a child
Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the spouse
Love is kind, though harried and tired
Love doesn't envy another's home that has co-ordinated Christmas china and table linens.
Love doesn't shout at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way.
Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return but rejoices in giving to those who can't.
Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.
Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust.
BUT THE GIFT OF LOVE WILL ENDURE.



From Phil Taylor (Hatherlow & George Lane)
IF I COULD VISIT BETHLEHEM

If I could visit Bethlehem,
What presents would I bring?
If I could see what happened then,
What would I say or sing?
I wouldn't take a modern toy,
But gold to pay for bread,
Some wine to give his parents joy,
And wool to warm his bed.

I'd learn some simple words to speak
In Aramaic tongue.
I'd cradle him, and kiss his cheek,
And say, "I'm glad you've come."

If Mary asked me who I was
And what her child would do,
I wouldn't talk about the cross,
Or tell her all I knew.

I'd say, "He'll never hurt or kill,
And joy will follow tears.
We'll know his name and love him still,
In twenty hundred years."

I cannot visit Bethlehem,
But what I can, I'll do:
I'll love you, Jesus, as my friend,
And give my life to you.
Brian Wren.

The Names of Jesus: Advent Bible Study 2026
Join others from the Missional partnership, as we join The Greater Manchester South Missional Partnership this Advent for a three-week Bible discussion series,
The Names of Jesus.
Explore the rich names and titles given to Jesus in Scripture and reflect on what they reveal about his character, his mission, and the hope he brings to our lives and world.
Each gathering will offer space to read the Bible, share insights, ask questions, and listen to one another in a welcoming and informal setting. Whether you are familiar with the Bible, or approaching it with fresh curiosity, you are warmly invited to take part.
In-Person Gatherings:
Tuesday afternoons 1.30-2.30pm - 1st, 8th and 15th December 2026
Cheadle Hulme United Reformed Church, 65 Swann Ln, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle SK8 7HU.

Online Gatherings:
Wednesday evenings 7-8pm - 2nd, 9th, and 16th December 2026
Zoom Meeting ID: 854 4443 1264
Passcode: 894183
For more information and the Zoom link please contact
Revd. Steph Atkins: stephanie.atkins@nwsynod.org.uk

Missional Partnership Faith Lunch

Saturday 16th January 2027

Windlehurst Methodist church: 12 noon start.

- Sharing food
- Telling stories

Numbers coming from each church to Liz.delafield@nwsynod.org.uk by 9th January

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Churches Together
Marple Area

From Chris Davies (The Ridge Methodist Church)

We will be holding an Afternoon Tea on 12th December 1-3pm in aid of Oliver's Dragons. All welcome.

Articles from Members of the Missional Partnership…….
NB: last date for the FEBRUARY Link is Saturday 23rd January 2027.



From Margaret Bailey (MB)

The recorder group

The next meetings will be on Thursday at 2p.m. at my house.

From Phil Taylor

In preparation for Christmas, the Rainbow Band invite you to join them in their Preparation for Christmas at St. Chad's Church, Romiley, SK6 4BN on Sunday 6th December at the new time of 4 p.m. There is no charge to come but if you would like to make a donation to our chosen charity there will be a box at the back of the church. This year our chosen Charity is the Moya Cole Hospice (previously known as St. Anne's Hospice). Light refreshments will be served after the event. We would love to see you there.

From Sue Ardern (Marple)

HANDBELLS CONCERTS

On Wednesday December 2nd Festive tunes will likely be included at Strictly Come Together at Marple URC, 11a.m. – another occasion for audience participation!

New ringers are welcome to come to our practices on Tuesday evenings, 7–9 pm. at Marple URC. The first evening will be free!

Please contact Sue Ardern, or any member of the team, if you'd like to join us.

Marple URC Handbells Coffee and Concert

On Saturday 14th November Marple URC handbell group held a coffee morning in aid of The Wellspring in Stockport. Along with refreshments, which included delicious cakes, tea and coffee, the bell group entertained us with some lovely music, some familiar tunes and some new ones. Some were quite difficult and a lot of hard work had gone into getting them to performance level. We look forward to hearing them play again on Wednesday 2nd December at Strictly come together at Marple URC.

The newly formed church recorder group performed a short set of well-known melodies and were grateful to be offered the opportunity to give their first public performance. In spite of beginners nerves their commitment over the last year paid off and they were appreciated by those enjoying refreshments.

Both groups were well received by the audience and donations

totalling £278.49 were given to The Wellspring.
Margaret Bailey MB

Missional Partnership Faith Lunch
Saturday 16 th January 2027
Windlehurst Methodist church: 12 noon start.

- Sharing food.
- Telling stories.

Numbers coming from each church to
Liz.delafield@nwsynod.org.uk by 9th January
Looking forward to seeing you there.

From Margaret M Jones (Short St)

A lovely Christmas present

15 years ago, one of my closest friends gave me a 'Friendship Book' for Christmas. I loved it and have bought several more since then. Here is a short poem that I recently found in it and thought it would be appropriate for the Link.



'Autumn'
I looked upon my garden and I couldn't help but frown - to see the sad autumnal leaves so swiftly whirling down.
I thought of all the sweeping up and grumbled loud and long, and then, I paused a moment, for I realised I was wrong!

For, should the trees <u>not</u> shed their leaves that surely would deny,
the sight of graceful winter boughs, beneath a frosty sky.
And oh, I'd miss the Spring-time buds in every winter glade,
And in the heat of Summer how I'd miss their dappled shade!
So let the leaves keep drifting down, *my* grumbles you won't hear,
for leaves are things of beauty, yes – whatever time of year!

From Ian Kenna (M)

GOOD NEWS

Maternal deaths dropped by more than a third worldwide during the first two decades of the 21st century. Between 2000 and 2020 the annual number of women dying while pregnant or within 42 days of giving birth fell from 451,000to 287,000, and the lifetime risk of a 15-year-old girl dying from maternal causes almost halved. Sunday Times Magazine



From Keith Whiting (T&G)

BITS AND PIECES

What does one say that's new and profound for the Christmas /New year newsletter? Nothing, it's all been said a thousand times, I then had a dose of nostalgia - remembering the times, in my case a long time ago when it was bedtime and story time for children of a certain age. You invited them to pick a book and you are surprised it's the same one and the same story required again. No you are not surprised it's the one they liked the best (probably the longest). So you read and eyes begin to close so keep the voice low and skip a couple of papers, eyes are open and you are informed you have missed some out - would you please go back; yes we can.



We Christians have a story to tell and it's worth telling again and again. There is a painting by Raphael which you have seen many times and it has been copied hundreds of times. It's 15th century Florence - Botticelli, Michael Angelo and Leonardo to name just three of many great Renaissance artists

operating at the same time. It is said he is the perfect Renaissance artist, the embodiment of the Renaissance ideal, a gracious and charming man, a painter of great skill. I have read that he went into great detail in preparing for the final painting producing dozens of sketches of hands, heads, the drapery and much more. He did paint many pictures of the Madonna. They are characterized by their grace, sweetness and modesty This painting is of the Madonna and Child. No background no fancy clothes, nothing to take your eye from the beautiful young woman with her precious child (who looks about six months old!!) and looks like all those other babies you have read to and played with over the years. It was sad that Raphael died of a fever on his birthday 6th April 1520 - he was 37 years old.

Happy Christmas to all, Keith

(Thanks to Barbara for editing our Link Keith) *

Events and Services in Marple and Marple Bridge

SATURDAY 5th DECEMBER 2026
11am – 5 pm Christmas Tree Festival and Craft Fair St Martin's church
1-4 pm Winter Wonderland Town Street
Marple Bridge UR Church open for hot drinks.
SUNDAY DECEMBER 6th
1 – 4 pm St Martin's church open to view Christmas Trees
3 pm Christmas celebration party with crafts and food at Ridge Methodist followed by
4 pm Nativity, Christingle and Carol service
4 pm Taizé Advent Prayer Holy Spirit Marple

SATURDAY 13th
4 pm Café Carols in the Mellor Centre

SUNDAY 14 th
4 pm Carol Service Holy Spirit Marple followed by refreshments

SATURDAY 19th
10.30 am - 12 noon Join Churches Together singing carols with Hawk Green Band in Market Street, Marple

SUNDAY 20th
5 pm Carol service St Paul's Compstall
10.30am Carol Service at Marple URC, joining with Marple Methodists and Marple Bridge URC
6:30 pm Carols by Candlelight St Martin's
6.30 pm Christmas candle-lit carol service St Thomas Mellor
MONDAY 21st
7 pm Blue Christmas service: For those who find Christmas a difficult time Marple Methodist

CHRISTMAS EVE 24 th
4 pm Crib and Christingle St Martin's Low Marple
4 pm and 5.30 pm Crib services St Thomas, Mellor
8 pm Vigil Mass for Christmas Holy Spirit Marple
8 pm Christmas Eve Mass St Mary's Marple Bridge
9.30pm 'Bethlehem midnight' Mass St Paul's Compstall
11.30 pm Midnight service Marple Bridge URC Jointly with Marple URC and Marple Methodist
11.30 pm Midnight Mass St Martin's Low Marple

11.30 pm Midnight Mass St Thomas Mellor

CHRISTMAS DAY 25th
9.30 am Holy Communion St Paul's Compstall
9.30 am Mass for Christmas morning with children's nativity play Holy Spirit Marple
10.00am Christmas Day Joint service at Marple Methodist joined by the Ridge, Marple URC and Marple Bridge URC
10 am Christmas Day Family Communion St Thomas Mellor
delete10.30 am Christmas Service Marple URC
11.15 am Holy Communion St Martin's
11.30 am Christmas Day Mass St Mary's Marple Bridge

MARPLE URC, MARPLE BRIDGE URC AND MARPLE METHODIST SERVICES IN DECEMBER/JANUARY

December 2026 - Please note Services start at 10.30am (except Christmas Day which is 10am)

6th Revd. David Jenkins (Communion) AT MARPLE METHODIST CHURCH.
13th Revd. Jude Laycock AT MARPLE BRIDGE URC.
20th Revd. David Jenkins – Carol Service AT MARPLE URC **
25th CHRISTMAS DAY – 10 am Revd. Jude Laycock AT MARPLE METHODIST CHURCH
27th Revd. Margaret Dexter-Brown AT MARPLE METHODIST CHURCH

**** Followed by meal - please contact Ian Kenna if you would like to stay.**

January 2027 – Please note Services start at 10.30am

3rd Revd. Mike Aspinall
AT MARPLE BRIDGE URC
10th Revd. David Jenkins
AT MARPLE URC
17th Wilde
AT MARPLE METHODIST CHURCH
24th Christian Unity – Revd. Mike Aspinall (Communion)
AT MARPLE BRIDGE URC
31st Revd. Margaret Dexter-Brown
AT MARPLE URC

MARPLE NEWS & NOTICES

Birthday wishes in December & January go to:



December
Heather Spreckley (3rd),
Margie Jenkins (4th),
Gladys Berry will be 100 on the 10th
Chris Taylor (26th), Ian Wakefield (26th)

January
Jenny Austen (14th), Pauline Harrison (26th),
George Kynaston (29th)

9th December Rhymes and Reason (Lesley Walker)
17th December Celebrating Christmas
24th December No SCT
23rd December No SCT
6th January Opportunity to chat
13th January Game of Beetle
20th January 'Memories Part 2' (Jenny Austen)
27th January Chair Exercises; (Jill Kenna)

STRICTLY COME CRAFT
(Messy Church)
For children and their families
Saturday 5th December 4pm -6pm
At Marple United Reformed Church

STRICTLY COME TOGETHER
Wednesday Mornings at Marple URC 10.30am–12.00
- All are welcome

MARPLE BRIDGE NEWS & NOTICES



Best wishes in December & January to …

December
Sue Bolderson (21st),
Gerda Menzies (27th)

January
Barbara Northover will be 80 on the 4th
Alison Rudder (5th), Greg Pass (9th)

BOOK SWAP …

There is a box at the back of Marple Bridge Church containing people's favourite books. Please help yourselves – donations please to Lend with Care. When you have finished reading the book please return it to the box. Thank you

Thank You
It's the time of year again when we celebrate the gift of Christmas by bringing toys for Wood Street Mission and goods for the Christmas shop at the Oasis Centre in Gorton.

Our special service on November 22nd with Marple URC and Marple Methodist where generous folk brought their gifts was very successful and their donations will be very appreciated.
Providence URC at New Mills always amaze me with their generosity for Wood Street too.
Many thanks to everyone who supported our appeals
We hope you all have a wonderful Christmas
Chris Lomax and Cath Brown (MB)

PROVIDENCE NEWS & NOTICES

Services in December/ January

December

6th Richard Britton (Communion)
13th Quiet Service 6.30 pm Carol Service
20t Michael Brueck
25th Richard Britton
28th Revd Mike Aspinall

January

3rd Gordon Stewart
10th Revd Mike Aspinall
17th Revd Peter Sharp
24th Revd Julian Cam
31st Michael Brueck

Evening Talks at Providence

Chatty Cafe at Providence

All are welcome to drop in to our weekly chatty cafe on Wednesdays from 2pm-4pm. Good company, and home-made cakes on offer!

SHORT STREET NEWS

Best wishes in December and January go to:



Dec. 9th. Christine Barker
13th. Ken Addy
29th. Ronnie. Bariek
Jan 22nd. Jake Ijima
29th. Margaret Harrop

Services at Short Street December and January at 10.30am

December
6th. Service at Hazel Grove Methodist Clhurch
20th. Carol Service
25th. CHRISTMAS DAY. **10am** Mr. E. Allman
27th. Worship Group
January
3rd. Rev. P. Frampton
10th. Service at Hazel Grove Methodist Church
17th. Mrs. B. Cowan
24th. Mr. K. Tonge
31st. Rev. M. Aspinall. (C)

TINTWISTLE & GLOSSOP NEWS

Services in December/ January

6th Steve Howcroft (Communion - Keith Brierley)
13th Barbara Aspinall
20th Carols – Elders
25th Christmas Day – Keith Whiting
27th Keith Whiting

HATHERLOW & GEORGE LANE NEWS

Services in December and January 10.45a.m. start

December
6th Margaret Dexter-Brown
13th Margaret Dexter-Brown
20th Elders

January
3rd TBC
10th TBC
17th Margaret Dexter-Brown
20th TBC
27th Marilyn Gregory
Please note 13 December is our Carol Service and we have a special Christmas Service on 20th December.

***** On the 15 Nov Marple Methodists, Marple URC and Marple Bridge URC voted to become an LEP (Local Ecumenical Partnership).**
This will be celebrated in May but discussion and decisions about details/buildings will continue to be made with meetings as necessary.
Alison Hunter (Marple Bridge)

Finding God in Scripture



GO ON A COMPLAINING FAST
Do not complain. James 5 v9 NCV
Whatever you keep doing becomes a habit. That's why James says, Do not complain. Author John Gordon says, A complaining fast won't just make everyone around you happier… you'll experience more joy, peace, success and positive relationships. So instead of complaining when things go wrong:
1. Practise gratitude. Giving thanks for three blessings every day energises you and makes you feel happier. It's impossible to be grateful and negative at the same time.

2. Encourage others. Instead of complaining about what people do wrong, focus on what they are doing right. Encourage the people who are afraid. Help those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. (1
Thessalonians 5 V14). It's OK to criticise people's weaknesses as long as
you balance it with three times more praise.
3. Focus on your success. Start a success journal. Every night before yougo to bed, write down something great about your day. It could be an uplifting conversation… or an accomplishment you're proud of. There's truth in the old saying, "Nothing succeeds like success". When you focus on success you set the stage for more to follow.
4. Learn to let go. Instead of obsessing about what you can't change, focus on what you can influence. When you stop trying to control everything and place your life in God's hands, things have a way of working out.
5. Use the power of prayer. Paul says, Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. (Ephesians 6 v19 NIV).
Prayer reduces stress boosts positive energy, and promotes health.
When you're under pressure, instead of complaining, plug in to God's power and recharge your batteries.

Taken from the UCB Word For Today, written by Bob and Debby Gass. Free copies are available in the UK from Unit d Christian Broadcasters, UCB Operations Centre, Westport Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4JF or at ucb.co.uk. Used with permission.


Hatherlow & George Lane URC
Christmas Tree Festival
12th & 13th December
11am – 4pm
Theme:
SUPERHEROES and VILLANS
Saturday Entertainment
12 noon – Varivocals Choir
2pm – Romiley Community Choir
Carols amongst the trees on Sunday 3.30pm
A delightful display of decorated Christmas trees for all to enjoy!



A BIG thankyou to Barbara for all the years she has compiled The Link magazine. We all miss you so get well soon.



And finally ….



There was a card on the floor by my front door this morning with 'Please Don't Bend' written on it. I thought "how am I going to pick that up!"

What did Rudolph say to his wife when the sky got dark and cloudy? "Looks like it is going to reindeer!"

Please could you send all items for the FEBRUARY edition of the Link to Barbara Northover – (email:northoverfamily@gmail.com) .. Thank you .

NO LATER THAN <u>SATURDAY JANUARY 23RD</u>
(earlier if possible, thank you)

Please check the Pastorate website for any events, which are happening in all churches:
www.shpurc.wordpress.com and scroll down the page. The website is frequently updated

Stockport and High Peak Missional Partnership:
Web: www.shpurc.wordpress.com

NSM Minister. Rev'd Mike Aspinall 07929 525909
Email mike54.ma@gmail.com

NSM Minister: Rev'd Margaret Dexter-Brown
07974 651754
Email: margaretdexterbrown@icloud.com

Mission Mentor: Liz Delafield 07740 112628
Email liz.Delafield@nwsynod.org.uk

Moderator: Moderator Mike Thomason
Email moderator@nwsynod.org.uk
Phone: 08000 903 903

Stockport and High Peak Missional Partnership

Hatherlow and George Lane
Otterspool Road, Romiley, Stockport. SK6 3DR
Secretary: Christine Corris: 07929628723.

Marple
Hibbert Lane, Marple, Stockport. SK6 7NN
Secretary: Mrs Jill Kenna 01663 810088

Marple Bridge
Hollins Lane, Marple Bridge, Stockport. SK6 5BB
Secretary: Mrs Alison Hunter 0161 427 7462

Providence, New Mills
Mellor Road, New Mills, High Peak. SK22 4DP
Secretary: Penny Noon
Email: providenceurc@nwsynod.org.uk

Tintwistle and Glossop
Old Road, Tintwistle, Glossop. SK13 1JY
Secretary: Mr Keith Brierley 01457 862032

Short Street
Short Street, Hazel Grove SK7 4AD
Secretary. Jo Moores 0161 285 5229

Heaton Moor United Church
Stanley Road, Stockport, SK4 4HL
Admin: Sharon Heginbotham, 0161 431 0262
Office Open: Mon, Wed, Fri.

The Missional Partnership also includes **Whaley Bridge (Uniting Church).** To find out more about each church and its activities, please see the new website



AND WISHING YOU HEALTH AND HAPPINESS IN 2027 ....