

BIRMINGHAM METHODIST DISTRICT – 2024 NEW YEAR PRAYER

Sisters and Brothers,

New Year's Greetings to all – in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We enter into a New Year, always with hope and trust in the Living God. 2023 was filled with many things to be thankful for – our District **Re-Plant** Conference in March this year, where we focussed upon being a re-imagined church ministering to those on the economic margins of society. I especially enjoyed being part of the joint Districts youth event **Amplify** co-ordinated by a dedicated team of young leaders in our District, and our joint Districts' **pilgrimage across the Golden Valley** in Herefordshire lead by Revd Rachel Parkinson – Chair of the Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury District and a team of experienced walkers in Easter week. The District affirmed our District Eco-Policy with our Spring Synod focussing on the Care of our Environment and the presence of the Joint Public Issues Team. We rejoiced in the launch of the **Peckwood Forest Church** supported by *New Places for New People* funding, and the appointment of our **District Rural Officer** ministering to the farming communities within our District.



A number of Circuits have seen an increase in church membership, even as we have sadly seen some churches close. Some Circuits have prioritised the **God For All** Strategy – Everyone An Evangelist – to empower people to notice and speak about Jesus in church and beyond. Many churches within our District are making use of **A Methodist Way Of Life** to develop the spiritual life of their members, and people are being called into the ministry of leading worship and as local preachers.

Another highlight of this past year for the District has been the opportunity make a return visit to our link overseas church, the **Kadoma District of the Zimbabwe Methodist Church**. A group of seven of us, lay and ordained had the privilege of visiting the Kadoma District, celebrating the opening of new residential facilities in Methodist schools, sharing in worship and prayer meetings, meeting students of the Theological College and joining in with the great District choir festival that took place whilst we were there.

We are encouraging churches and circuits in the Birmingham District to make links with churches and Circuits in the Kadoma District – perhaps through joint on-line Bible study groups, connecting with the schools, fund-raising initiatives or simply learning about each other – so that this link will become something that truly builds relationships of faith, equity and understanding. Just get in touch with the District office at – office@birminghammethodist.org.uk - to find out how you can do this.



The Birmingham District is located in a population that spans the globe. The richness of the global majority amongst us empowers our churches with people from the global east, south, north and west. We want to encourage everyone to offer their expertise and skills as the Lord prompts you, to serve your local church and community. When God has blessed us so immensely, we are bound to remember those who struggle with life. We have a message of hope, through our Lord Jesus Christ who invites us to exchange the burden we carry, for the light one he offers – that in losing our life to Christ, we actually find our true life!

I acknowledge those churches in our District that are forging relationships with asylum seekers and supporting refugee communities. We give thanks for those who support the **Street Banquet** ministry amongst the homeless in Birmingham city centre. Individuals are supporting people from Ukraine with visits, accommodation and friendship. In the latest devastation taking place in Gaza, I acknowledge those

who are praying, writing to their MPs and marching for peace in Palestine. As the church of Christ, we hear Jesus' words, "When you did it to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me." When our media is so silent about the situation in Israel-Palestine, let not the church abandon the birth-place of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God will give us courage, wisdom and integrity to live Christ in the world and not lose our humanity. For more prayers for Israel-Palestine, please see the Methodist Church website – [Israel-Palestine \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)



May God's grace and mercy be with you all for 2024.

Revd. Novette Headley – Chair, Birmingham District