

9th January 2022


The **Methodist Church**

South Warwickshire Circuit

Registered charity no. 1154830

Superintendent Minister: Rev Dr Iain Ballard

Dear Friends,

I am writing this letter a few days before Christmas Day, when, with daily news on the spread of the Omicron variant and the cases rising, the newly announced 'Plan B' restrictions to prevent the spread of Covid have disheartened many. There is yet another challenging Christmas in front of us. The rising anxiety over Covid makes us feel devastated and hopeless again, making our future look uncertain and fragile.

In tough times, it can be really hard to speak with confidence and hope. The stress can be overwhelming. However, this week's passage from Isaiah, written when the Jewish people were in exile in Babylon, is therefore even more powerful. And Isaiah's message to the people from God is stunning: *Israel, the Lord who created you says, do not be afraid – I will save you. I have called you by name -- you are mine. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you. Your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burnt; the hard trials that come will not hurt you.* . . (GNB, Isaiah 43: 1-2).

The promises spoken in Isaiah 43:1-7 give assurance and comfort amid uncertainty to the people of Israel when they have been exiled and driven away from their homes, and do not know what is coming next. They have been waiting for a *really* long time. This has probably led to feelings of anxiety and deep disappointment.

Their time of captivity in Babylon would have been challenging in any number of ways. There would have been a temptation to abandon a god who had not protected them from captivity. In short, there would have been temptations to give up on the covenant that God had established with his people long ago.

Remember the words from Isaiah when you are far from home, when you've lost your way, or when you are afraid. In loss, in grief, in hope, God will be with you. The divine presence might just be enough to give you the courage and strength you need for whatever lies ahead.

A Happy and Blessed New Year to you All !

Rev Jeongsook Kim

Reminder: Dial – a – Prayer, Methodist Church

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514

Listen to news: 0808 281 2478

Sunday Worship and Daily Prayers

There are plenty of opportunities to join in worship if you have the internet, eg Methodist Central Hall (London) streams worship each Sunday at 11:00 am (<https://mchw.live/>)

Circuit Service

The Circuit continues to provide a pre-recorded service each week, via YouTube, Facebook and our website – see below for details:

Please access the YouTube video by clicking the following link or typing it into your browser:

[tinyurl.com/SWCplaylist](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLzyDSCOYMtQvpCroUvvxjE93MqkTWQomY)

or if this doesn't work, try the long version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PLzyDSCOYMtQvpCroUvvxjE93MqkTWQomY>

If you regularly watch the Circuit Service, do consider subscribing to the Channel.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SW.Methodist/>

Website: www.methodist-swc.org.uk

A full text of this service is available on the website, and is being sent by post to all those people who do not use the Internet so they can join in too. These worship opportunities will be available and sent to you every Sunday. We will be offering worship in a similar way each Sunday as the health crisis continues.

District Messages: The Birmingham District puts out a message each week on their YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC65eOm7QtM4Wu1R6jTI7frw> or you can search on YouTube for *Birmingham Methodist District*. We also have it up on our website.

TV & radio opportunities for worship:

Radio 4, Sunday Worship, Sunday 8:10am,
Radio 4 Long Wave, Daily Service, 9.45am Mon-Fri,
Radio 3, Choral Evensong, Sunday 3pm.

BBC 1, Songs of Praise, Sunday 1:15pm
(The times of the TV services can alter, please check the times)

Daily prayers at 10am are led by members of the circuit via zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/328494818> - all zoom meetings are now protected by password – please contact Michael Sharman (see below) for the password. All members of the Circuit are invited to join, **you do not need a zoom account to join**. You can also join by **telephone**. Please contact Michael Sharman on 07412 401988 if you'd like help getting in.

Pastoral Support

A reminder that if you are in pastoral need of any kind please contact your own Minister direct by email or phone. We may also be able to arrange practical help with shopping and so on. Our details are below.

If in any doubt, please contact Rev Dr Iain Ballard and he will link you up with help locally to you.

Rev Dr Iain Ballard <i>(Day off – Friday)</i>	07368 875790	iain.ballard@methodist.org.uk
Rev Sally Jones <i>(Day off – Monday; Study day – Friday)</i>	01926 740846	sally.jones@methodist.org.uk
Rev. Jeongsook Kim <i>(Day off – Tuesday)</i>	01926 426084	revjeongsook@gmail.com
Rev. Audrey Simpson <i>(Day off – Friday)</i>	<i>Rev Audrey is on Sabbatical</i>	
Rev. Jemima Strain <i>(Part-time)</i>	07969 345389	jemima.strain@methodist.org.uk
Rev. Richard Wilde <i>(Part-time)</i>	07971 218356	revrichardwilde@gmail.com ,

Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying. With every blessing to you and yours.
The Ministers and Stewards of the South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit of Churches