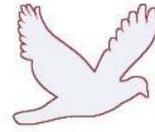




Borders Mission Circuit

Part of the Methodist Church of Great Britain



The **Methodist** Church 

Dear Friends in the Borders Mission Circuit

Ministers Weekly message for 10th May

Choose Life!

Choose Life! That may seem an odd thing to write in the context of a society where death and sickness stares us in the face in a way that it has not done for a considerable period of time. However, the decision of whether we choose life comes to us in a variety of ways. It came to the people of Israel at the end of their time in the wilderness.

In Deuteronomy 30 the Israelites were in Moab, east of the Dead Sea. They have spent forty years wandering in the wilderness with Moses. Now just as they were to enter the Promised Land Moses was soon to die. As Moses shared some of his wisdom he included this, *This day I call upon the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him*" (verses 19-20). Choose life!

Friends, we are confronted with a choice in our individual, church and circuit lives of whether to choose life in our relationship with God as we resolve to continue our walk with him.

I have been privileged to share in an exercise, together with the Circuit Vision Team and Cori Clevenger, which involved consulting all churches in the circuit about their missional lives. Some of you will have been kind enough to have engaged with that exercise and I thank you very much. I have drawn up a report which was due to go to the Circuit Meeting before lockdown happened but have discussed the contents of the report with the Circuit Leadership Team (for which Rev'd Robert Hurley was present) and provided details of the feedback from churches to Ministers.

That exercise raised many themes, including concern about worship and preaching and its organisation, the need for evangelism training, a desire to see more regular Bible studies, Prayer and Fellowship groups, the importance of reaching out to missing generations from our churches, all set in the context of continuing decline in Circuit Membership.

I suggest this is a moment where we are invited to choose life, and I am excited by that. To choose life will mean challenge and change. It will mean leaving the familiarity of the wilderness to enter a new land and it might look and feel vastly different, but there is no middle way. Our inclination within Church Life is often to tinker around the edges and make gradual change, but the time for that has long gone in my view.

We are at a crisis point in Methodism and that is reflected in many of our circuits including Borders Mission. In sharing in the exercise with churches it was clear that churches and individuals find it deeply challenging to leave things behind – old ways of doing things, favourite meetings, forms of worship. Yet there is new life waiting should we choose it. To seize that new life under God's guiding Spirit will take courageous, bold leadership and decisions under a united vision. It will require steps to be taken quickly so as not to lose momentum. The other option is to stay in the Wilderness. That is not what the Church is built for.

Given the difficulty in getting the report out to people because of the cancelled Circuit Meeting I am very happy to arrange for a copy to be forwarded to those who request it. Please let Patrick Dawson, Circuit Administrator, or me know so we can provide one. You can also read the report on the Circuit website: <https://bordersmissioncircuit.org.uk/mission/page2/>.

Even in lockdown we can choose life. The circuit can choose to leave the wilderness behind and enter a new future and land under God. Your church can choose to leave the wilderness behind and enter a new future and land under God. You can choose to leave the wilderness behind and enter a new future and land under God. I pray that we may have the courage to do so.

Blessings

Chris

Rev Chris Briggs on behalf of the Borders Mission Circuit Staff Team