



March 2024 Newsletter for the Peak Circuit

HATHERSAGE METHODIST CHURCH

'INCLUSIVE CHURCH'

Inclusive Church is a network of churches and people that want to state publicly that they affirm and celebrate each person, value diversity and do not discriminate. It was founded in 2003 in recognition that some people and groups had been or were being excluded from church life. *Inclusive Church* aims to encourage and provide resources to help churches to respond to different needs and take a stand against prejudice and discrimination.



Hathersage Methodist Church joined *Inclusive Church* in 2023. It was a way of sending a clear message that everyone is welcome in our church. (Of course we try to be really welcoming to everyone, but we recognise that people might not even come through the door because of their past experiences in the church, or because of the messages that churches have given over the years.) We know that Jesus demonstrated radical welcome. He sought out those who were ostracised, excluded, 'unclean', or were considered to be unacceptable to God. He got into trouble with those who were respectable because of the people he reached out to and spent time with. Even his disciples were baffled by how inclusive he was.

We made the decision to become an *Inclusive Church* at a Church Council meeting during 2023, agreeing that we signed up to the *Inclusive Church* 'Statement of belief'. We are now listed on their online map of inclusive churches (www.inclusive-church.org) alongside over 800 other churches across the country. This is not an indication that we have 'arrived', but rather our commitment to a journey of learning and growing.

Some of the things we have done:

- put up a giant rainbow display in the church hall celebrating diversity
- switched to gluten free bread in communion so everyone can take part on the same basis
- tried some more child-friendly approaches in our services, leading to our current Sunday Club
- a display on our 'prayer cross' outside the church, thanking God for diversity
- removed some pews to create more space for wheelchairs in the service
- upgraded our microphone to address some problems for the hard-of-hearing.

We're looking forward to learning and growing in this area over the coming years.



Inclusive Church statement of belief

We believe in **inclusive church** – a church which **celebrates and affirms every person** and does not discriminate.

We will continue to challenge the church where it continues to discriminate against people on grounds of **disability, economic power, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality.**

We believe in a Church which **welcomes and serves all people** in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ.

www.inclusive-church.org



A STATEMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT ON THE SITUATION IN GAZA

We are deeply disappointed that the headlines today are about a parliamentary process and not the horrors of what is happening in Gaza. Such a vote should be above party politics and we urge the UK government to denounce actions that epitomise a collective punishment of the population of Gaza.

The scale of the destruction and tragic loss of life in so short a space of time is incomparable to any other conflict in recent times. We grieve for all lives lost on 7 October and in the subsequent fighting. There is no justification for such widespread killing of tens of thousands of innocent people and we are gravely concerned for the entire population of the Gaza Strip. One and a half million people currently shelter in crowded conditions with little food and water in the city of Rafah. The horrific strikes on southern Gaza have killed many in recent days and those injured are unable to get treatment because of Israel's attacks on hospitals.



We were alarmed to hear reports that the Nasser Hospital in Gaza has been shelled, killing patients, staff and others sheltering there. The protection of hospitals during a war is a basic and inescapable requirement in international law.

The International Court of Justice has called on Israel to ensure that its forces do not commit any of the acts covered by the Genocide Convention. Yet attacks on Gaza have continued with inadequate regard to the protection of civilians. For those crowded into Rafah there is nowhere left to go. It is disturbing to hear that some in the Israeli government are discussing the possibility of creating settlements across the Gaza Strip. Time will tell whether what we witness in Gaza today is an ethnic cleansing of the present population.

Meanwhile, for those sheltering without food and water the situation is critical. To meet the basic human needs of such a large population there is no alternative to an immediate ceasefire. We urge our Government to demand an immediate halt to the shelling for the preservation of innocent life and require that Israel abide by the provisional ruling of the International Court of Justice.

We call on Hamas to immediately release the remaining hostages and urge all governments to work with Israeli and Palestinian parties to achieve an agreement that ensures protection, support and a viable future for innocent victims of this conflict and security for all in the region.

In prayer we stand alongside all those in the region whose heart breaks with ours as we witness the unfathomable suffering. With the psalmist we pray:

You are my help and my deliverer; you are my God, do not delay. (Psalm 40:17)



Items for the **April Newsletter** need to be with Joan by **28th March** please.

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or phone in on **01629 826 776** or send to:

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