



The Methodist Church

THE OLDHAM & SADDLEWORTH CIRCUIT

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Dear friends

It has not been many days since the Church celebrated Easter and announced that Christ is risen from the dead. It is, though, a message which in worldly terms is nonsense and challenges the established order of things. It is, however, the message that we have been proclaiming for the past two thousand years. It is the message that has caused the world to deride and despise the people of God over the same period.

Jesus Christ was an itinerant preacher, teacher and healer. He was a challenger of the status quo. He was the thorn in the flesh, the grit in the oyster, the servant-King of the upside-down Kingdom in which the first were the last, the last were the first and the beggar was honoured guest at the feast. The religious leaders and the civic authorities thought it expedient that this one man should die in order to maintain good order in their narrow-minded and tightly controlled society.

He was the Son of God and they sought to put him to death. God allowed that to happen. On the third day after allowing human wickedness its place, God overturned reason and nature and expectation and raised Jesus from the dead.

We have not changed the message and we have not shied away from proclaiming it. The church today continues to challenge people to live lives that are consistent with that message. Such a life is one in which justice prevails, peace is established, liberty is protected and individual well-being is paramount.

The crux of the Christian message is that the world can be turned upside down, the story can be changed, human endeavour and expectation can be confounded. That is not just a message for a primitive society which existed two thousand years ago. It is a message for twenty-first century British society and those who seek to direct our ways.

In a few days' time we shall be going to the poll to make decisions about the way our local council is run. We shall also be choosing those who offer to represent our region as Mayor. When we decide where to put our cross on the ballot paper do we stop and think about those principles of justice, peace, liberty and individual well-being? We do not believe, do we, that it is expedient for one person to lose out for the good of the rest of society.

We honour those who put themselves forward for election to important positions and we challenge them to exercise their power according to the principles of what is right and not to be guided by political expediency.