



“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” 1 John 4:7-8

30th August 2024

Dear friends,

My warm greetings to you as we begin a new Church Year. I am immensely grateful for all the work you do in your local churches, communities, circuit and, of course, the district. I write in the aftermath of a difficult summer in the North-East with rioting and disruption in some of our communities. The aftermath of this disruption is a reminder of our responsibility as Methodists to work for the common good and to work alongside all people of good will who seek the peace and flourishing of our neighbourhoods.

This approach to our communities should not surprise us. The Wesley brothers were, above all, interested in a practical divinity which manifested itself in acts of mercy and love. In recent years the Methodist Church has emphasised *A Methodist Way of Life* as one way in which as disciples we can develop rhythms of life which open us to the gift of grace and to ways of living which inspire our worship, our learning and caring and our love of neighbour as we reach out with works of service and justice and words and acts of good news.

This approach is, of course, something that belongs to us as a community not just as individuals. People will know we are disciples of Jesus by the ways in which we live out the pattern of his life and as we authenticate that in communities of love. It is an obvious insight, but it is no good talking about Jesus but not living him; talking about love but not living love; talking about hope but not embodying it.

The Christian faith is a deeply incarnational faith and that implies something tangible, physical and practical about the way we exercise love in and alongside our communities. Thank you for all that you do to make this a reality in the places where God has set you and my encouragement to you to grow in your calling to be communities of love.

Yours in Christ,

Richard Andrew

District Chair