



NEWARK & SOUTHWELL  
Methodist Circuit

TOGETHER  
*only physically apart*

[NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk](http://NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk)

# Signs of hope

**Perseverance, re-orientation and challenge | Revd Nathan Falla**

**W**elcome to the new and collaborative *Together* as the ministers (myself, Peter H and Peter B) pool our resources so that we can work more effectively and efficiently across the circuit whilst encouraging and utilising the gifts of others, that together, we may develop a more sustainable pattern of mission and ministry across our communities at this time of living through the pandemic.

The past six months have not been easy for any of us, and it does not look like there is going to be much improvement. We are all experiencing the pandemic, but we are not experiencing it all in the same way. At this time, I encourage us to take notice of our feelings and to be concerned with each other's wellbeing. We cannot argue with how we are feeling; no-one can turn around and say "you are not feeling like that" but we can take the time to listen to ourselves, to others and to God.

Over the past couple of days, I have had the gift of quarter days. Quarter days are designed so that a minister can take three days away, ideally from the manse; this might be time with the family, time to read, relax, rest or reflect and its purpose is to be restorative. I was very aware (with the pressures and strains of all that September has held) that I needed some space to stop, think and reflect. I was aware that my anxiety was rising and my fear level was increasing.

I had started to read [Finding God in a Culture of Fear](#) by Revd Joanne Cox-Darling at some point in lockdown but really had not got very far (not unusual with me and books). However, I had decided that quarter days were the perfect time for some reading! As I read the book, I felt the encouragement to keep going, a sense of re-orientation and the challenge to be signs of hope.

You may know that I go jogging, and sometimes going for a jog is a real effort; 5k can seem like an uphill struggle, whereas other times I can surprise myself, get in the right rhythm and manage to complete 10k. No matter whether life is easy or hard, the call is to keep on going, to **persevere**. We need to keep hoping; to recognise that our hope in Christ is secure. Jo writes "Jesus offers a hope which declares that however frightening and hopeless the present situation appears, the worst thing is never the last thing. Not even death is the end of the story."

In a time of disorientation I felt that I had begun the process of **re-orientation** as through my fears the power of Christian hope was once again breaking through. "Hope is not something to be discovered despite our experience, but within it and through it. Hope does not mean that we avoid pain and trauma... hope means that we meet God in the midst of these challenging circumstances." God is there for us, but we can only know the true joy of hope in the midst of despair, that we may know the transforming and renewing power of God through the Holy Spirit. Which leads to the challenge.

**How are we signs of hope?** As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to perseverance and we are called to transformation but this is worked out in action. So two questions for us to continue to think about, what does it mean for our churches to be a sign of hope? What specific sign of hope can your church be in your community?



## 1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday for our Circuit Service which this week is hosted by Balderton Methodist Church and is our Harvest Service.

Find it on the 'Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit' YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>)

why not invite a friend to watch it with you and share the link with them on your social media or by email!

## 2. Circuit 'Zoom' Coffee Time

Join folk from across the circuit from 11:30am each Sunday morning - you provide the coffee - we'll provide the fellowship! pop in for 5 minutes or half an hour - we'd love to see you!

### Please join us afterwards

Come with a drink and a biscuit to share in conversation after the service.

[www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us)  
Meeting ID: 885 3100 7185  
Password: Tog3ther

Phone: 0131 460 1196  
Meeting ID: 885 3100 7185  
Password: 48647472



If you'd like help to 'Zoom', please get in touch!

## 3. Radio Services

**BBC Radio 4** (Also [online](#).)  
08:10am - 4th October 2020

### Song of the Prophets

Marking Black History Month, exploring the theme that Black Lives Matter everywhere through the lens of climate injustice, poverty and inequality around the world.

## 4. Radio Nottingham

Listen every Sunday, at 8am, to a live church service on BBC Radio Nottingham. (Online or on 95.1-103.8 MHz FM for free.)

If any of this baffles you - call me or us:  
[peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk](mailto:peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk).

# GOD'S ABUNDANCE

Our Sunday Sermon | Reflections from Matthew 6:25-34 | Revd Peter Bates

**W**e have struggled to keep in touch with our families from Messy Church and Playgroup during 'lock-down'. Since the restrictions have been

eased, we have been able to communicate with them, and recently we asked them to draw pictures depicting harvest scenes and fruit and vegetables (see the pictures!) We have displayed them on a slide-show at the beginning of the service, and we very much appreciate their



efforts. It illustrates the colour and shapes and tastes that we are so used to in our meals that we have every day. It also illustrates how we can be detached from the origins of our food unless we make an effort to think about the journey



our food makes to land on our tables. In the same way we can be oblivious to God's contribution to our daily existence.

Our attitude to food is probably one of expectancy. We expect to have food in our house, we expect it to be of good quality and if we do need something, we can always call at the local shops to get what we want. It was different in Jesus day. The food supply was dependent on the local farmers and the market place. There was more dependence on nature and what was available at the time. And so, Jesus says, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat and drink." Jesus is asking his disciples to trust God for the very basic things in life. It was a real challenge to the people who followed him. They had started to trust Jesus for the very food they ate because they relied on other people providing for them. They didn't know where their next meal would come from. We are challenged to God to provide for us, perhaps we find that a lot easier with a fridge full of food, but it goes deeper than that, we need to trust God with our very lives, and that is far harder. To put our lives in God's hands whatever happens to us. trust

When we do trust God, we find contentment in our life, because we accept what we have, and we are not endlessly striving for something more. Jesus uses the illustration of, "the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns and yet your heavenly Father feeds them." We seem to have far

more control of the food supply than birds do, and so we should be able to be content with what we have. This contentment leads to appreciation. If we can appreciate what we already have; will we want more? Again, Jesus says to the disciples, "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was not dressed like one of these." Perhaps we need to spend more time getting ourselves right with God than choosing an expensive outfit that will make us look good on the outside but doesn't change the person we are on the inside. What a contrast it is, when we meet someone who is content with who they are and what they have, compared to those who are always striving for the next best thing.

I am sometimes amazed when I ask God for something and what I receive is far more than what I ever imagined. God does not scrimp when he is handing out his provisions, God is generous. If we think about parents giving gifts to their children. They don't think to themselves 'what is the minimum that I can give them? If it's a child's birthday, they will shower them with presents because they love them and giving gifts is one of the ways of showing their love. I think if we want to receive from God we need to be in the right place, by that I don't mean we have to be perfect or a saint. I mean we have to be ready and expectant to receive. If a child is taken to a toy shop there will be an expectancy that they may get a toy, the same if you take a child to a sweet shop, they will expect to receive sweets. Do we have that same expectancy with God when we come into his house?

If we have asked God for something, do we expect to receive, do we hold our hands out expectantly. Do we just cup our hands together to receive God's meagre provisions, or do we hold a big container between our hands ready to receive from God's abundance? God wants to give us far more than we can ever imagine. God wants to bless us personally, to give us something that we can enjoy ourselves, as well as the times he blesses us to do his work. I have been amazed in my life when God has answered a prayer, and it's been for my benefit. And I think God does it to show his love to us, to remind us of how precious we are to him.

Harvest time is when we can say thank you to God for all his provisions to us, as individuals and as a group of Christians. Amen.

## Prayer Space

### Harvest Prayers

*Revd. Peter Bates*

Lord, you are creator God and we thank you for the world we live in. Lord we are grateful for your abundance, in the food that you provide, in the way you sustain us spiritually, and the rich experiences of life we encounter every day. We marvel at the way you give us such variety in your provisions.

You are a God who is always creating something new for us to discover, to taste, to see, to hear, to experience. We thank you that you reveal yourself to us in so many different ways. We thank you for the people who use their skills to provide for our needs, especially the food we eat, the water we drink. We do not always realise how basic these needs are and yet we acknowledge that many people around the world do not easy access to them. Thank you. God.

**Amen**

We must change our ways, the world is suffering because of our excesses, the air pollution, the plastic which is an ever-present reminder of our throw away society. Help us Lord, to mean business when we say we want to tackle climate change. Raise up, men women and children to lead the way. To have the focus of returning this planet to a sustainable resource not just for our lifetime but for generations and generations to come. Let us leave a legacy to those who follow us that we can be proud of. At the moment we are ashamed of the piles of rubbish that we contribute to each week. We ask forgiveness for the missed opportunities to make a difference, and we pray for a better world for the future. **Amen**

#### EMAIL PRAYER CHAIN

*If you would like to join the prayer chain and receive prayer requests or have a prayer request (with permission of the recipient) please get in touch with Colin...*

*Colin Beckett [colin1244@gmail.com](mailto:colin1244@gmail.com).*

## Coming soon!

Spread across our TOGETHER newsletter, the Sunday services via YouTube and also for Bubble Churches to build on, we are about to embark on a new series entitled - 'A Way of Life.' We hope to explore discipleship in detail, using the themes that are included in 'Our Calling' and 'The Methodist Way of Life' (though it's certainly not exclusively Methodist!) Join us across the circuit from 11th October...

**Discipleship...  
...a way of life.**

A series of 12 looking at discipleship of Jesus as a way of life.

access for all... facebook, youtube, zoom

Part 1: Worship  
Part 2: Learning and Caring → Autumn 2020  
Part 3: Service → Spring 2021  
Part 4: Evangelism

[wayoflifetnsma@gmail.com](mailto:wayoflifetnsma@gmail.com)  
[NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org](http://NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org)

## Reflective songs...

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service...

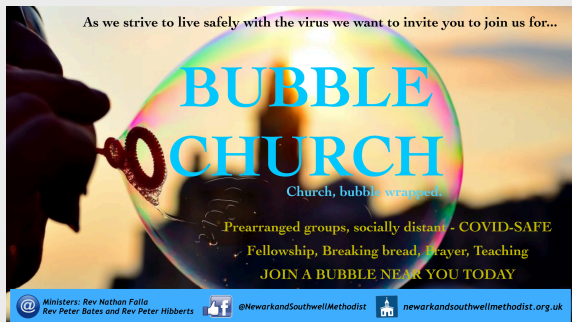
All Things Bright & Beautiful (StF 100/HP 330) [LINK](#)

For The Beauty Of The Earth (StF 102/HP 333) [LINK](#)

We Plough The Fields & Scatter (StF 130/HP 352) [LINK](#)

Click 'LINK's to access YouTube clips of each song.

## Bubble Church Resources



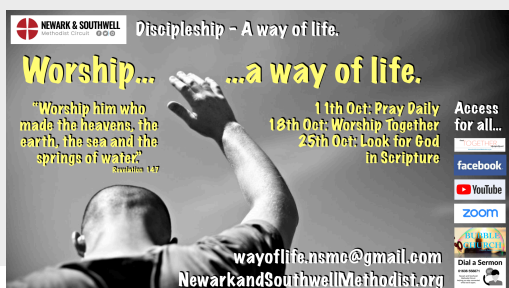
**If you're part of Bubble Church, your gathering this week may well build on and go deeper into the theme explored by Peter Bates in the main article above and the Sunday Service he leads on YouTube. The following are questions that your Bubble may wish to use to develop the theme and go deeper...**

1. What struck you about this week's sermon?
2. What questions do you have after reading or hearing it?
3. Was there anything that surprised you in the passage or the sermon?
4. What did you agree with in the sermon? What did you disagree with, find difficult or not like about it?
5. Have you heard something like this before or does it bring to mind a different Bible passage?
6. Can you describe something from your own experience that seems particularly relevant?
7. What are you going to do as a result of what you've read and heard?
8. What can you share with someone from this week's service?

For more information checkout the Bubble Church guide with risk assessment on the Circuit Website: <https://www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk/newsroom/bubble-church.html>

## Next time...

Join us next time for the first part of our 'Discipleship' series where we explore Worship and challenge ourselves to 'Pray Daily' - week beginning 11th October across the circuit. With the Sunday service led by North Muskham MC.



### Families:

by Katie Hibberts

families4SMC@gmail.com

### FAMILY ACTIVITIES!

Activities linked to the main message of the sermon for each week.

### Game:

Arrange some food items on a tray and cover them with a tea towel. Take turns to uncover the items and look at them for 1 minute and try to remember what's there. Cover the items again. Now list as many things as you can remember. The winner is the person with the most correct items. You can adapt this game by having one person remove an item from the tray each round and the other players have to work out which item is missing.

### Craft:

Read this passage together:

**"All living things look hopefully to you, and you give them food when they need it. You give them enough and satisfy the needs of all"**  
**Psalm 145:15- 16**

Write it in the centre of a piece of paper and create a harvest collage by sticking photos or drawings of food all around it. You could do some fruit or vegetable printing instead if you prefer.

### Prayer:

As a family, think of all the things God has given us. This week we are thinking especially about the harvest, but you may want to think of other blessings too! Write a family prayer, thanking God for his generosity to us.



## Can you contribute to TOGETHER?

We're looking to produce this Newsletter as a Circuit and would like to widen the team as far as possible. Perhaps you could contribute a prayer, a short article, an encouraging piece. Maybe you would be willing to be part of the editorial team? Perhaps you'd like us to advertise something in your church.

If you would like to join the team or make a one-off contribution, please get in touch with Revd. Peter Hibberts by email ([peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk](mailto:peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk)) or telephone (01636812166).

Contributions must be received by Monday of each week for Tuesday editorial and Wednesday distribution.