

# TOGETHER

*only physically apart*

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

## Light & Hope

### Looking for Epiphany Moments | Revd Nathan Falla



*“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.”*

Isaiah 60:1-2

Today we enter the season of Epiphany, yes Epiphany is not just a day but a season that takes us right up to Candlemas (2<sup>nd</sup> February). It is a season that reminds us about the “aha” or eureka moments when the penny drops and we see glimpses of God’s glory. We have a God of surprises who comes to us in Jesus, bringing light and hope, but are we open to those epiphany moments?

It may or may not surprise you that even before the announcement of a third national lockdown on Monday evening the Falla family had decided to keep up the different nativities that we have, the Christmas lights outside and to create an Epiphany tree, a tree of stars, lights, nativity scenes and characters to remind us of the hope and light of Christ. What can you do to remind yourself of the light and hope of the God of surprises at this time?

If I am honest, I am not surprised that we are now in a third national lockdown, and the mantra **Stay at Home** seems to be very wise. What I am surprised about is the government’s guidance on worship. The Methodist Church have stated “despite this government decision, it should be borne in mind that the opening of our church buildings is not mandatory, and it remains the responsibility of each Church Council to make this significant decision – which should not be taken lightly.” The science and SAGE’s advice is to reduce as much as possible all public gatherings to stop the spread of this new Covid variant. Therefore, given the advice to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives, it would be most sensible for the time being that we do not gather to worship in our buildings.

Though the scientists are still researching the evidence, early indications are that this new strain is 70% more infectious and 30% more likely to cause serious illness. Therefore, it would be irresponsible not to take this matter with the utmost seriousness and encourage Managing Trustees to close all church buildings for all church activities including worship and lettings except for those which are for essential activities e.g. Foodbanks, Early Years Provision and Formal Support Groups during this time of national lockdown. There are just too many unknowns at the moment and it is really important that we watch over one another with love, protect the vulnerable and keep each other safe.

In our Circuit Worship from this Sunday we are exploring service, knowing that service can take many forms, but through our service we express the love of God and can bring the light of God into situations of darkness. It may feel that at this time we are severely limited, but we can always pick up the phone, write a letter or send an email to show concern

In this season of Epiphany and lockdown may we be surprised by God’s love and grace, and may we bring God’s love and light into the darkness of our world.

Keep safe, take care & God bless



## 1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January for our Circuit Service brought together with people from Balderton. Revd Peter Bates is the preacher.

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!

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

### 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



## 3. Radio Services

**BBC Radio 4** (Also [online](#).)  
08:10am – 10<sup>th</sup> January

### Our Common Home

Martin Palmer explores how faith can partner with conservation movements in protecting what Pope Francis calls "Our Common Home". The preacher is Lorna Gold, Chair of the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM).

## 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 your minister*



# Jesus is one of us

Our Sunday Sermon | Mark 1:4-10 | Revd Peter Bates

Jesus didn't have to do it. He didn't have to get baptised. He wasn't carried away by the crowd. He made a conscious decision. He wanted to be identified with us, as one of us. Hundreds of people were flocking to John the Baptist to be baptised. They wanted to make a fresh start. They wanted to be made clean by God, and they wanted to live a life that pleased him. Jesus was at the start of his ministry. He had to face forty gruelling days and nights in the wilderness but already he knew he had to be one with the people, so that he could speak clearly to them. At his baptism he identified with his fellow Jews.

As we step into a new year. Are we willing to start again? Are we willing to identify with our community? To immerse ourselves in the life of the community around our church. One of the temptations which Jesus faced was to set himself apart as someone special. But Jesus chose to serve the people. One of the things I am reminded of every so often is, to love the community we serve. As a church congregation we cannot wait for people to drift into our building. We need to be positive in how we can show Christian love to people in our community and how we can serve them. This is a big challenge for us because we are so used to expressing our faith in worship and sharing fellowship with our brothers and sisters in our own church buildings. Jesus chose to go where the people were, whether that was in the synagogue or in the market place. He wanted to communicate his Father's love to the people. He wanted to teach them and also respond to their needs. There are so many stories in the gospels where Jesus is said to show compassion to people. If we are to follow Jesus example then we need to show compassion to people in our community. Can you remember when you felt compassion for people in your community? When you felt their pain, their hurt, their anger and frustration, and it compelled you to do something.

I saw a film recently about a very self-centred young woman. When everyone was fed up with her, an angel came into her life. The woman thought he was a human being. They became friends, but she realised that he wasn't like her, he thought of other people, he volunteered at a homeless centre. He talked to her about her life, and he was always positive. Gradually, the young woman began to look at herself, and her attitude to other people. She started doing little acts of kindness, and she apologised to people she had hurt in the past. Her boss at work and her family started to notice a difference in her. They were suspicious at first and then they realised that she had genuinely changed

When we do or say something which makes a person feel loved and valued, we do God's work. When we do or say something which makes a person feel small, insignificant or worthless, we make God's task harder. The secret is to genuinely love and care about people. We should be doing

acts of kindness, but more importantly we should ask ourselves what the person really needs. We need a fresh awakening of how we live our lives. After Jesus baptism he went off into the wilderness to think and pray about how best he could serve his Father. Perhaps we have had an opportunity during this time that we have spent in the wilderness to reassess how we serve people in our church and in our community. How best are we able to serve God? It starts with us making a choice. Are we willing to listen to God and respond to what he wants us to do?

The Ffald y Brenin community learned that God wanted them to bless the people who lived near their retreat. It is a lesson we need to learn if we are to share the gospel with the people in our community. We need to stop asking the question, 'What can we do to draw people into our church?' And need to we start asking the question, 'What do we need to do to serve our community?' If this desire is born out of real love for people then God will quickly show us the way, and he will equip us with what we need. But we have to be careful because our love and patience will soon be tested. Satan doesn't want us to be effective in sharing God's love, he will do all he can to stop us or trip us up. So, we need to be prepared for a rough ride at some point.

If we look at Jesus ministry, we see that he lived a life expressing genuine love for everyone. He had time for people, he treated them as individuals and he was moved emotionally by their suffering. He was involved. If we are to follow the example of Christ, we will need to be involved, and not sit on the side-lines. Amen

*Lord God, we come before you at the start of a new year to ask that you will prepare us for what lays ahead.  
We pray that this year will be a time of turning back to you as a nation.  
Many people have been anxious and fearful for their lives.  
We ask that they may know your peace, and trust you for the future.  
Now we can see a way forward out of the Pandemic  
let us not be complacent, either physically or spiritually.*

*We pray for those working for the Health Service,  
that you will protect them and give them strength to carry on  
in extremely difficult conditions,  
we also ask that you will protect their families.  
We bring before you all those who have essential jobs  
which keep our country going, protect them and strengthen them  
as they serve others.*

*We pray for those who have lost loved ones through the virus  
that you will comfort them, we pray for those who are ill with the virus,  
that you will bring healing and wholeness to their lives,  
and we ask for those who are supporting people at home with the virus,  
that you will enable them to have the time and energy  
to be there for them.*

*We bring before you all who feel alone and isolated  
because of the Pandemic, we pray for your presence to be with them.*

Amen

## Prayer Space

Lord God, we thank you that you revealed yourself through your Son, born in human form. We marvel at this miracle of incarnation, and we are so grateful that you became one of us.

You allowed yourself to be limited as we are, and yet you did not sin.

Lord, we worship you because you are Almighty God, you are the creator of the heavens and the earth.

We marvel at the universe, the stars you put in place, the sun which you created to sustain us.

We can look at the vastness of space and wonder at your great power and we can also gaze at a small flower and be amazed at the intricacy of design.

We thank you for our own bodies which you created and breathed life into them.

We marvel at the complexity of the human body as we find out more about it.

Lord, we look to a new year, a strange awakening from the virus, as more and more people are vaccinated. We thank you for the wonders of science, and the willingness of people to work together for the greater good.

We pray that we will learn important lessons from this last year.

Not to take things for granted, to be more caring to our neighbours, and to be more aware of you in our everyday lives.

Forgive us for our selfishness, our pride and greed.

We ask for your free and full forgiveness, wash us clean by your blood shed on the cross, that we may know your holy presence in our lives and live to your glory. 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).*

*It is for those in any church or none!*

## Dial-a-sermon

Can't get onto the YouTube Service? Want to hear the Sunday sermon? Dial up at any time of the day or night at the cost of a local call.

Press option 3 for the Sunday Sermon (Sermons go live each Sunday.)

### Dial a Sermon

**01636 552255**

Listen to the circuit sermon each week.

Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit helping you stay connected whilst we're apart.





## Hymns for the service

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service...

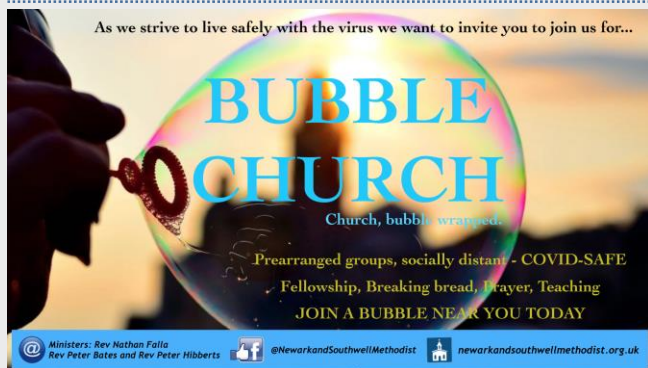
*Great is thy faithfulness* (StF 51, SOF 147, H&P 66)

*Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us* (StF 238, SOF 321, H&P 68)

*Lord, I come before your throne of grace* (StF 58, SOF 894)

Click hymn / song title to access YouTube clips of each song.

## Bubble Church Resources



**Would you like to join a Zoom bubble (online or on the phone) then please get in touch with your minister. Or why not telephone a friend and discuss these questions:**

*The following questions are designed to get you thinking and, if you're involved in Bubble Church talking about the topic!*

- 1) Have you thought about a way of recognising a new start to your life?
- 2) What does it mean to immerse yourself in your community?
- 3) Does your church congregation reflect the community around it?  
If not, what can you do to help the church to be more relevant?
- 4) Is doing little act of kindness enough? If not, what do you suggest?
- 5) Look at ways you can bless your community a) individuals b) shops c) organisations d) the community as a whole

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 week...

We continue to explore *Service... a way of life* with Revd Nathan looking at how we care for God's creation.

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES by Katie Hibberts families4SMC@gmail.com

It is difficult for any of us to understand why God loves us so much and is so kind. Throughout history, God has sought to fill our lives to overflowing with his blessings. Throughout the Bible there are endless accounts of God's people being utterly amazed at the way God had blessed them! What is clear is that just as God is kind to us, He expects us to be kind to others.

In Luke 6:37 – 38 Jesus tells us that there is a connection between the way that we treat others and the way that God treats us:

“Don't judge other people, and you will not be judged. Don't accuse others of being guilty, and you will not be accused of being guilty. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and you will receive. You will be given much. Pressed down, shaken together and running over, it will spill into your lap. The way you give to others is the way God will give to you.”

You could demonstrate this by placing a jug into a washing up bowl and then continuing to pour water so that the jug overflows. Describe the connection between the overflowing water and God's amazing blessings in our life, that go well beyond our needs.

Dry the jug and, as a family, try filling your jug with examples of either God's kindness to us, or, ways in which we can be kind to others. You can do this by writing ways in which we can be kind to others, or in which God shows kindness to us, on a slip of paper (one example per slip). Then fill the jug with the strips. You might find that your jug overflows!

Make the connection between the level of kindness that we show to others and the level of kindness which God shows to us. God sees what we do and always blesses us for kindness to others. We should be kind to others because God is kind to us.



As we enter another lockdown with schools closed, why not think of some ways in which you can safely show God's love and kindness in the community where you live? What needs do you see around you that you could fulfil? Have fun surprising people with your random acts of kindness!

## 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 (01636 812166).

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