



TOGETHER

only physically apart

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

“How beautiful...are the feet of those who bring good news.”

The beauty of evangelism | Rev Peter Hibberts

What was the last piece of Good News you received? I am hearing almost daily of folk who have received or arranged their Covid vaccination - it seems to be the good news of the day! When my parents told me they'd organised their job, I was so pleased to hear it. I also remember receiving the news that I was to be accepted as a candidate for Methodist Ministry. I can't tell you who was on the end of the phone when they called but I remember feeling so grateful to them. It's funny because they hadn't made the decision (though they had been involved in it) and my gratitude wasn't so much to them but to God for choosing to use a shabby vessel like me in building his church. Yet the bringer of the good news was beautiful in that moment!

I'm not sure when sharing our faith stopped being about good news. The church has some responsibility for it (that is all of us), I'm sure, having all too often turned a message of love into one of judgementalism and condemnation. It's ironic as the message of the cross is one of being saved from condemnation and judgement through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. **If by reading the Bible you find yourself feeling condemned or led to condemn others, you're not reading it right.** I think perhaps we, all too often, feel our message is one of judgment and therefore we feel like sharing our faith is bad news. We couldn't be more wrong!

At the same time (and probably linked) Evangelism has become a bad word, a word folk don't like to use. In my short time as a minister I've had lots of conversations with people about it and they often follow the same lines: 'It's not really for me; I don't like forcing my opinions on others; I'm not an evangelist; It's not my way of doing things.' (You may be one of the folk I've had such a conversation with.) The word evangelism seems to have got tied up with the person with a megaphone on the street corner who shouts seemingly random bible passages of judgement and condemnation calling people to 'turn or burn' in an altogether crazy fashion whilst people hurry past. I have to tell you, that's not my experience of evangelism and I'd like to rescue this beautiful word.

Evangelism comes from the greek word euangelion (εὐαγγέλιον). It's meaning is tied up in being a messenger (our word angel as messenger from God comes from the same root) of good news (εὖ = "good", ἀγγέλλω = "I bring a message"). It literally means 'the bringer of good news.'

We will be focussing on Evangelism as part of our calling as Methodists (actually as Christians more generally!) for the next few weeks and I encourage you to try to throw off the negative connotations, the baggage that you may carry with that word. It's not something just for *special* evangelists but for all of us and happens in many ways - there will be a way in which God is calling you to be an evangelist! In the Methodist Way of Life (from where our current Discipleship series is derived) we are called to three commitments: to speak of the love of God; to live in a way that draws others to Jesus; and to share our faith with others. Make no mistake, they're all challenging and you may be fearful at the prospect of engaging in these but they are certainly not bad news! May I encourage you to dust off your beautiful feet, be courageous and engage with this three week topic open-mindedly and optimistically. After all, who doesn't like to be the bearer of good news and what better news to share with people than that God loves them and is there for them - we all



1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday 31st January for our Circuit Service which this week is hosted by Revd. Peter Bates of North End (in a change to the advertised plan) and the theme is **Speaking of God's Love**.

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
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 - Sunday 31st January

Belfast, a City Shaped by the Sea

A Service led by the Very Rev Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast.

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 - contact your minister and we can support you!

Speaking of God's Love

Our Sunday Sermon | Reflections from Luke ch 7 v 36 - 50 | Revd. Peter Bates

We all have a story to tell, and that story is of God's love. Love in many forms, in many places, expressed through different people, through sunsets and nature.

A love which goes beyond words but is encapsulated by one man - Jesus. I chose the story of Simon the Pharisee, and the sinful woman, because it has three essential ingredients. Firstly, the woman recognises the sin in her life, and decides to do something about it. Secondly, there is a show of gratitude from the woman, and, thirdly, there is no condemnation expressed by Jesus. There are many stories in the Bible which include these or similar ingredients.

We start the story with Simon, who very generously offers an invitation to Jesus to have a meal at his house. Whether this invitation will give some kudos to Simon among his friends and people in the community, we do not know. What we do know, is that Simon takes Jesus for granted, he feels that he is doing Jesus a favour. Simon does not show any special attention to Jesus, even though this would be expected when an invited guest comes for a meal. When a woman walks in off the streets and goes over to where Jesus is reclining. It proves to Simon that this travelling Rabbi is no-one special. What kind of image must this give to people in our community, if we have the same superior attitude to people and to God as Simon has?

It couldn't have been easy for the woman to walk into the room, her reputation went before her, she was known by many to be a sinful person. But she had changed, she wanted to turn her life around, and the reason for this was, that she had met Jesus. Whether Jesus had spoken to her, or she had heard him preach, or seen him perform a miracle. She had a sense that here was a man who accepted her for who she was. A sense of being loved and valued. I think all of us have experienced that in our life, that we feel loved and valued by God. The encounter with God may have changed our life in a dramatic way, or we may have had an inner change of heart. A recognition that God is real and he loves us.

The sinful woman had a change of heart, but this was also expressed in her lifestyle, people would notice straight away that there was something different about her. But people would still judge her for her past. But she had changed, and with great thankfulness, she enters the room and weeps at Jesus feet. This is a show of utter extravagance, emotionally she is pouring out her soul to Jesus, she is oblivious to anyone else in the room, her full attention is on her Saviour. She dries Jesus feet with her hair, and if that wasn't bad enough, she then breaks the jar of perfume and pours it on his feet. The Pharisees are disgusted that she has gate-crashed their party, and now they are indignant at the waste of this expensive perfume.

The woman has done what she felt compelled to do, she has expressed her total and complete gratitude to Jesus for what he has done for her. That is witness, that is evangelism at its very purist. That is our motive, our desire to worship and to serve God, to be a witness in even the most difficult of circumstances. To proclaim our gratitude and our love for what God has done for us. I'm certainly not saying we gate-crash every party, like this woman did, but we have a story to tell and gratitude in our hearts. Perhaps part of the problem is that we have forgotten what God has done for us, or, we have never thought about it too deeply.

In this story, who do we most identify with? Simon the Pharisee, or the sinful woman? Often, I flit between the two of them. On occasions, I find myself condemning the sinner, and I feel so superior. And at other times I see my sin, and come before God in repentance. Both situations are uncomfortable because in one we realise we have pride in our hearts and in the other we are sorry for offending God.

You may be thinking, what has this to do with 'Speaking of God's Love'? Our actions need to back up our words, and our words need to back up our actions. In my late teens and early twenties, I had plenty of opportunities to talk about my faith, because sometimes I made choices which were counter cultural. My colleagues at work would ask me why I went to church or why had I given up drinking alcohol. I was able to talk about my faith because of the way I lived my life. God had done a wonderful transforming work in my life and I wanted to tell people about it, and live in a way that pointed people to God

Every so often I am reminded of my youth, and I wonder whether I have lost the fire I had in my teens, or is it that I have got used to God's grace. In the gospel story we heard Jesus say to Simon. "Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." Simon was obviously a good man but he was blind to the sin in his life, he was reliant on his own good deeds, but the woman knew that she owed everything to Jesus.

Speaking of God's love comes from our heart and our experience of God. There are so many ways we can talk about how God is involved in our everyday life. Most of the time there will be little events that happen to us where we know that God was there with us, and at other times there will be real answers to prayer which lift our faith and encourage us along the way. People are interested in our story, and God is part of that story and so we just need to take courage and tell people of what God has done for us in our day-to-day life.

Prayer Space by Revd Peter Bates

All gracious God, by your creative word, you brought the world to birth. In your generous love, you made the human family, that we might see your glory, and live for ever in your presence. We thank you for the world you created, the beauty that you breathed into it, and into us. Help us to look through your eyes at all around us. That we may see the uniqueness of each individual, and the splendour of your creation. We praise you with our hearts, which are full of appreciation of you, and the wonderful world that we live in. We thank you that we are loved by you, and sustained by you. Help us Lord when our faith is shaken by events in our own country or abroad. Help us to remember that your suffering was not just on the cross, but that you also suffer with us in our darkest moments. Forgive us for our sins, help us to recognise the sin in our life and have the desire to do something about it. We thank you Lord, that you have died for us, help us to show our gratitude in the way we live our life and the way we tell people of your great love for us and all the world. **Amen**

Lord, as we think of the many people today who are following a calling to care for those in need, we pray that you will renew that calling within them, let your love and compassion burn brightly in their lives. Strengthen them, so that they can continue to care for patients, even though they may be physically exhausted and mentally fatigued. We thank you that so many people have risen to the challenge in these traumatic times. We pray that the workers in the Health Service will be rewarded for their dedication with more than just praise from the public and politicians. We pray for those who are suffering from the effects of the virus, that you will bring healing and wholeness to them. We ask that you will sustain those who are feeling the long-term effects of the virus. And minister to those who have lost loved ones.

We pray for our government that they will have the resources to meet the needs of those in hospital, we also pray for the vaccines to be rolled out efficiently throughout our nation. We think of other countries who are struggling to contain the virus, help them to have the resources they need to combat the disease.

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.

2021 Lent Course

Join us from 17th February in our Lent course - order your daily study book from your minister now to avoid

NEWARK & SOUTHWELL
Diocese of Lincoln

2021 Lent Course
Daily, individual study guide; small groups; Sunday worship.
For more info search #LiveLent

#LIVE LENT
God's Story
Our Story

From Ash Wednesday (17 February) to Easter Sunday (4 April), there will be six reflections for each week, written by Stephen Hance (CoLE National Lead for Evangelism and Witness). Each reflection will include a short passage from the Bible, a brief exploration of the reading, and a prayer. Additionally, each week's Sunday service (YouTube) will have a unifying theme and an action to be taken during the week.

Order the study guide through your minister.

Online Services:
Run up to Lent - The Greatest Story of All Time
21st February - 1 - Catching up with God
28th February - 2 - Stories of transformation
7th March - 3 - Communicating like Jesus
14th March - 4 - Sharing the story
21st March - 5 - Listening for Echoes
28th March - 6 - Being Found by Jesus
4th April - 7 - Have seen the Lord!

Dial a Sermon
zoom
facebook
YouTube

ORDERS FOR STUDY BOOKS ARE NOW BEING TAKEN - Contact your minister ASAP to get a copy of the study book for £2*
*including a small fee in lieu of possible delivery costs, all surplus funds will be used to provide books to anyone who cannot afford and then channelled into church funds.

Reflective songs...

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service...

In Christ alone (StF 351) [LINK](#)

Gracefully Broken (online only) [LINK](#)

And can it be (StF 345) [LINK](#)

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

Bubble Church Resources



Our face-to-face Bubble Churches have had to close again, with the second lockdown (for the entirety of November) but some have made the transition to Zoom. If you would like to join a Zoom bubble (online) then contact your minister or why not telephone another church member and have your own mini telephone bubble using these discussion questions...

1. How did you come to faith?
2. Were there particular people who helped you? In what ways?
3. What do you need to be thankful to God for? How do you express that thankfulness? Who have you told about it?
4. When do you get opportunities to talk about God in church or in other situations? With whom do you talk about God?
5. What does your church do already to reach out to others with the good news? What other possibilities are there in your community?
6. Are there any particular people you should pray for or invite to consider Christian faith? Make a short list and pray for each person for a week. At the end of the week, reflect on whether there is anything you feel prompted to do?

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...

We continue our mini series entitled 'Evangelism... a way of life' (under the banner of Discipleship). The service theme will be 'Living for Jesus' and it will be hosted by the folks from Charles Street and Tracey West will be preaching - do join us!



Families:

by Katie Hibberts

families4SMC@gmail.com

FAMILY ACTIVITIES!

The idea of sharing the Good News with others can be daunting. Older children might worry what friends will think of them if they openly share their faith. Others might be concerned about the idea of public speaking. Our own choices and the way we live and share God's love can be the starting point for a conversation. Why not pray that friends would see something different in you and begin to ask questions? Those nervous about having the right words or speaking publicly might be encouraged by the story of Moses – God equipped him and gave him a friend in Aaron who could help him speak when he needed to. (Read about it in Exodus - near the start of the Bible.)



Hopeful Hopscotch

As we think about sharing God's love with others, this prayer activity from the 'Prayer Spaces in schools' team is a simple way to share some encouraging bible passages with your family, friends and neighbours.

Find some short promises in the Bible (e.g. 'I am with you always.' Matthew 28:20 or 'Peace be with you!' John 20:21) and write each one in a hopscotch square. (Ask an adult if you need some help).

Play hopscotch, reading aloud the promises that your stone lands on. As you think about what each of these promises means for you, you might like to thank God too.

If you draw your hopscotch onto a pavement outside your house or your driveway, it will encourage others who pass by too and share the good news with them. Why not send some chalk to a friend with some encouraging bible passages and invite them to make their own Hopeful Hopscotch too?



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) or telephone (01636812166).

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