



TOGETHER

only physically apart

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

New shoots under blue skies!

Reflecting on these transformative times | Revd. Peter Hibberts

Spring is a wonderful season. If you've had the opportunity to be out and about in the last week or so you will, no doubt, have noticed the signs. After an extremely difficult year for most and particularly the latest lockdown, I have been really encouraged by the sign of new growth in all kinds of ways. In the manse garden too the signs of growth are appearing: the rhubarb is sprouting, the bulbs have put up shoots and there are even a few bulbs that have already flowered. We also managed to get the patio furniture uncovered towards the end of last week and were able to sit outside and enjoy some real sunshine - it was a tonic for body, mind and soul!

Perhaps you can see those signs in our nation too. It's true that there is a long way still to go and we need to remain cautious, but the shoots of growth are there and the potential for fruit is already being seen. The vaccine programme seems to be flourishing here, many of you will have already had your first dose (I have mine booked for this Friday) and some may even be nearing the second dose, and if the experts are right already have a certain level of immunity. Indeed, I was listening to the news this morning where they were celebrating the success of the vaccine not just in terms of roll-out but also its efficacy as they are seeing a good number of the folk testing negative, in community testing, as a result of the vaccination; in short, it's working! I was also greatly encouraged to hear more about the plans for the Oxford vaccine to be made available to folk across the world in some of the poorest communities as part of the COVAX movement (the G20's collaborative framework for worldwide vaccination).

And so too, conversations are happening across our church families to plan for potential returns to face to face gatherings. We rightly remain cautious but we can imagine now, I think, a point where we will be able to gather safely again and a point where we will eventually be able to have closer contact with each other and even sing together again! It was wonderful to read about and hear from Ted, last week, on the theme of transformation - it seems transformation is in the air and as Ted put it we are being called to 'partner in this [transformation] business of which Jesus is the managing director.'

So whilst God is transforming our lives, how is God transforming our church? Well, we heard from Nathan last week about how two church families are coming together in what I hope will be a transformative way for their fellowship and for their mission. The challenge for all of our churches is to follow Jesus into a new chapter and re-gather, I hope in a transformed and transformative way.

We also met together for the first time as a Circuit Vision Team, just under a fortnight ago, and will meet again next Monday to seek God's guidance in transforming our circuit. You may remember the article that Nathan wrote at the end of December inviting folk to be part of what he called a 'blue-sky' thinking group. Well that team is now made up of the some of our Circuit Stewards (Ann Lyne, Jill Meakin and Stephen Dando) three representatives from around the circuit (David Watson, Jan Wright and Jenny Everett) and the three ministers (Peter Bates, Nathan Falla and myself). We will be gathering together on about a three weekly basis to pray, seek God and imagine what God might be saying to our circuit for the future. We ask you to pray for us in this task and when you hear God saying anything to you, do share it with us. I hope as we walk in the Spring sunshine, under blue skies, we will be able to notice the shoots of new growth, where God is in mission and partner with him. **I long for new shoots under blue skies! Come Holy Spirit!**



1. Online Service

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

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
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 - 7th March 2021

Young People In Lockdown

This third Sunday of Lent we focus on young people in lockdown. Led by Jamie Cutteridge from the UK's first bespoke ecumenical Christian community serving young people.

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.

Communicating like Jesus did.

Our Sunday Sermon | Reflections from John 4:1-29 | Revd. Peter Hibberts

I absolutely love this week's passage! Not only is it a passage where Jesus transcends earthly barriers (something that I love to see in modern society too) a Jewish man talking to a Samaritan woman, but it also follows the most wonderful pattern which, especially if you took on the lent challenges to read one of the synoptic gospels in its entirety, you will have seen countless times. Whether it be Zaccheus, Legion, the blind beggar or, in this passage, the woman at the well (to give just four examples without even talking about the disciples) we see the same pattern throughout Jesus' ministry. Folk encounter Jesus, their lives are transformed and they are compelled to share that with others in a transformative way. We've used the analogy before but if the transformation of Jesus were a pandemic, the 'R number' would be huge; the Christian movement, started by one man, now has 2.4 billion adherents worldwide (nearly one third of total population)!

Following Ted's wonderful message last week, and assuming we have experienced that level of transformation, the next inevitable stage is for God's story to spill out of our lives and into others! In the words Ted quoted last week, 'Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you'.

Actually in this week's passage there is no such instruction but there are the wonderful words of verse 28, "Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?'" Sounds easy, doesn't it? But I know from my experience of faith that it's sadly quite rare. Of course if you have not experienced the transformations that we read about in the gospels, then the well may seem dry. If that's you then stop for a moment and ask God for that transformative experience, not for the purpose of evangelism but because the love you'll experience is amazing and you won't regret it. Use those beautifully simple words, 'Come Holy Spirit.' Then give me a shout, I'd love to hear about your experience!

Actually, for many of us I think God has transformed us and is still in the process of transforming us, day by day. Perhaps then, for some of us, the problem is not the well as much as the bucket! How do we draw from that well for others too? How do we translate that transformative experience into something that we can *all* communicate through our story in a gentle, respectful and invitational way? Well, the answer lies again in the gospel - **we need to communicate like Jesus**. We've recently considered that we could be the only Bible that some people read and the only Jesus that some people meet and I think it follows that our voice may be the only Jesus that some people hear - so let's make sure it's Jesus' voice they hear! (It would be impossible to pick out here all that we can learn from Jesus about sharing transformationally, but here's a few starters and if you manage to get to one of our lent Zoom groups there'll be a chance to explore further.)

Firstly it's about **conversations**. It may surprise you but conversations are the 2nd most common pathway to faith (the first being a Christian upbringing). It's more common than Alpha courses or church events. Have

noticed how many of the responses that Jesus receives in the gospels are one to one? There's Zaccheus, the rich young ruler, Nicodemus, the woman at the well and that's not to mention the disciples themselves! Jesus may be the best preacher ever and yet we read more about his one-to-ones. More than that, he sent out the apostles (Luke 10) with instructions to go into houses (not large venues). Folks, the most powerful way Jesus can connect through us is my second point - it's in the **relationships** we build and the friendships we invest in. It's all about relationships and for point 3, it's actually as much about **listening** as it is talking. Notice the encounters with Bartimaeus (Mark 10), the man at the Bethesda pool (John 5), Nicodemus (John 3) or the Rich Young ruler (Luke 18). They were all two-way and Jesus asks questions. Let that sink in. The man who literally knew it all, ask questions and listens - how much more then should we? In discussions with folk it seems that one of the fears folk have in evangelism is not knowing what to say or how to answer questions - I think we're missing a trick here! My old youth group leader was brilliant at this: when asked a hot question his reply was always, "Why do you ask?" Imagine this: someone asks what happens to babies who sadly pass away. Do you launch into a theological answer (is there one?) or do you respond, "Why do you ask?" If you choose the second you may well get a response that they lost a loved one and are deeply sad. At this point, it's not about theology, it's about relationship and what's needed is a listening ear and to hear that God loves them.

Jesus' way of talking about faith is so varied that we cannot possibly turn it into a formula to follow. Actually, it teaches us that the approaches must be as diverse as the folk we meet. There are some common threads though. Firstly, it always come from **love**. In Hannah Steele's book (p33) she points out that if it comes from anywhere, other than love, it is likely to be coercive. We must draw on God's love for us and our love for God when we reach out - that's the only motivation. (Fear of judgement or worse still a need to keep the church going are not good motivations.) Following on from that, in the case of Jesus, it is always from a point of **humility**. If we share our faith from the perspective of having the answers and our recipient needing to hear us, we place ourselves in a power imbalance and, again, we can quickly become coercive. Jesus begins, at the well, by asking for a drink; he's thirsty and allows his vulnerability to show. In doing so Jesus (the creator of all) places himself in a position of equality. Just think about how mind-blowing this is from a cultural context but also an ultimate context! Consider also what happens next: the woman is open, honest and shows her vulnerability.

In conclusion, what we learn from Jesus about how to share our faith is that (using an analogy coined by the renowned evangelist J. John) when we love others and we love God, our relationship becomes a bridge that Jesus can cross over. It's not about platforms or clever words, it's about being vulnerable human beings, listening and letting the faith we have in God spill out in natural ways amongst our loved ones. J. John also points out a crucial detail, let's not forget that God's got this - God is sovereign and by the Holy Spirit, is already witnessing - we just need to *join him*.

Prayer Space

Written by Sue Smith, Elston Methodist Church

Heavenly Father, you promised to hear us when we pray. During this period of Lent, guide us and help us to prepare for Easter. Bless and sustain us in these difficult times. Help us to keep cheerful despite gloomy news bulletins and (for many) long separation from our families.

We thank you, Lord, for our Circuit Ministers - Nathan, Peter and Peter. We ask your blessing upon them as they continue to guide and care for us all.

We pray for Governments around the World, especially our own, as they continue to deal with the Covid Pandemic. We thank you for the success of the vaccine roll out. We ask that you give confidence to anyone reluctant to take up the offer.

At this season, we notice the beauty and wonders of your World. The days are lengthening and the sun brings warmth and light to us all. Help us to use and care for our world more wisely and to respect all living creatures.

Father God we thank you for our own Church and Community - our neighbours and friends, work colleagues and all who touch us, in our daily lives. As our children anticipate returning fully to our schools next week, we ask your blessing upon them, their teachers and support staff. May they all be surrounded by your love, confident and happy in school.

We pray for any known to us who are sick and suffering. We pray that they may know comfort and peace, through your love. Be near any who might be grieving today. Give them strength to carry on.

Merciful Father, accept these our prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

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.

It is for those in any church or none!

Living His Story

'Revealing the extraordinary love of God in ordinary ways.'
2021 Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book by Hannah Steele
From SPCK: <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/living-his-story>

A number of folk have asked about the companion book that runs alongside the Live series that we are following and I would heartily recommend it. It's a beautifully written, down to Earth and accessible which is described as reminding us of things we already know, reinforcing things that we may know and providing new insights into sharing God's Story with others.



Reflective songs...

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service...

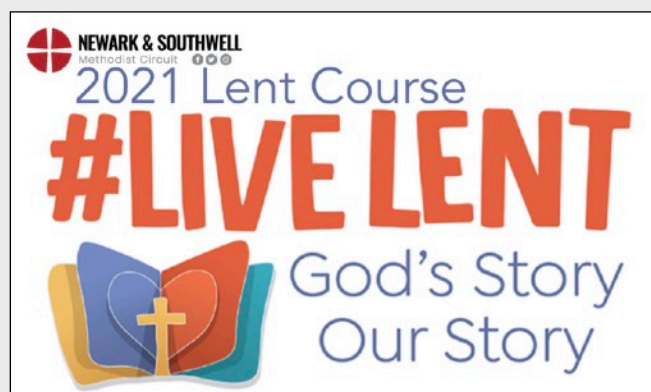
Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult (StF 250) [LINK](#)

- If you fancy an off the wall version... [LINK](#)

A new commandment I give unto you (StF 242) [LINK](#)

Great is the darkness (StF 405) [LINK](#)

Click [LINK](#)'s to access YouTube clips of each song.



Zoom groups are meeting throughout lent (with opportunities to join group on any night of the week) and you'd be welcome to join a group if you'd like - it's not too late!

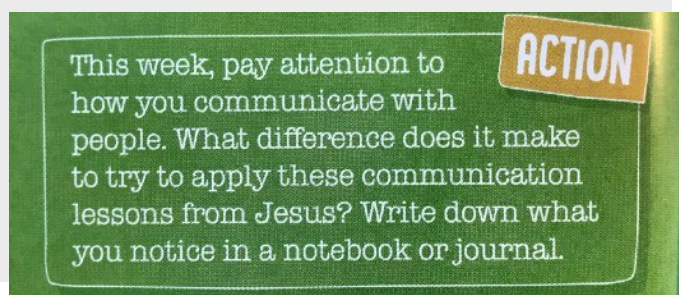
World Day of Prayer 2021



This Friday (March 5th) will be the World Day of Prayer. Local face-to-face gatherings were not possible this year for obvious reasons but instead the International Committee have posted a Worship Service on YouTube. The service was prepared by the Vanuatu Committee, all the way from the South Pacific! The service will be celebrated in over 140 countries and in wide variety of languages! If you'd like to share in it (in English!) you can access it using this link: <https://youtu.be/edQMgNFdRdo>.

This week's Lent Action:

Each week, during lent, we will be presented with a challenge, an action for the week. This week's challenge is...



Families: by **Katie Hibberts**
families4SMC@gmail.com

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

The following activities accompany the Live Lent course that the circuit are following over Lent. We hope you find them helpful as you journey through Lent as a family.

Monday 8th March - All sorts of people - Matthew 11.16-19

Look at your phone. Who were the last five people to send you messages? Write their names on a sheet of paper. Pin it to your fridge or door and pray for one of them each day this week. Put a tick by their name after you have prayed.

Tuesday 9th March - Different People, Different Approach - Mark 5.21-43

Our fingerprints are unique – no one else has the same fingerprints as you! Use some paint to turn your fingerprints into people and creatures. Underneath your pictures write "God makes each of us unique".

Wednesday 10th March - Allowing Interruptions - Mark 5.21-43

Make a listening cube. Do an online search for a template and print it off. Before you assemble the cube, write something different on each face (e.g. your day, something you want to pray about, something good that happened, someone you met, your favourite Bible story, something you would like to do). Take it in turns to throw the cube and say "Tell me about...". Make sure everyone gets a turn.

Thursday 11th March - A Place of Love - Matthew 9.35-38

Have a family huddle with your favourite hot drinks. As your drinks cool, see how many Bible stories about shepherds or sheep you can remember.

Friday 12th March - Being Vulnerable - John 4.1-42

Find somewhere comfortable to sit. Close your eyes and imagine Jesus is sitting beside you. What might you say to each other?

Weekend 13-14 March - Good Questions - Mark 10.46-52

Create a family "Good Question" box from an old cereal packet or tissue box. Cut a hole in the box and stick a label to it that says "Good Questions". When you have a question about God or Jesus or church, write it down and post it in the box. Next weekend, have a family huddle and talk about one or two of the questions.

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