

TOGETHER

only physically apart

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

Mothering Sunday & God's Care

Originally written for **The Newark Advertiser** | Revd Nathan Falla



This coming weekend cards, flowers and gifts will no doubt be sent to express thanks and gratitude to mothers, or those who have been like a mother to us as Sunday sees Mother's Day or Mothering Sunday. This day can be difficult for those who have lost their Mums (especially in the past year), for those who have never known their Mums, for those whose memory is full of fear or regret, or for those who experience the pain and longing of never being able to be a Mum. This year Mothering Sunday may have the added difficulty of not being able to see family, because they live too far away or they may not be in our bubble.

Mothering Sunday is about more than Mums though. Historically it was about returning to the mother church; or the church where you were baptized and it was a family occasion. Normally this meant a journey, and as part of the journey, often through the countryside, posies of wildflowers would be gathered and then given to Mums on arrival at the family home.

For me, Mothering Sunday is about appreciating my Mum, my mother-in-law and my wife who is a wonderful Mum to our children, but it is also about remembering the love, care and nurture of the Church and ultimately God, who I believe is the source of love, care and compassion.

In the Bible, the book of Isaiah (chapter 66 and verse 13) reminds us that "as a mother tends her tiny child, so God cares for us." This is a beautiful picture of care, protection and comfort, and is in the context of restoration.

It feels that we are in a time of restoration, the signs of Spring all around remind us of new life and we are beginning to rebuild as we head out of lockdown. It is important to recognise the pain of the past year and the deep impact that this will have on us all, not forgetting the injustices that the pandemic has highlighted which we now have the opportunity to address to make lasting changes.

I believe that love, care, concern and compassion are going to continue to be key. During the past year we may have found new ways of expressing love, care and concern; let us continue to love and care and support one another, and let us always remember that we are held in the embrace of God, a God who loves us and cares for us whether we recognise it or not.

This Mothering Sunday may we be thankful for all those who love us and are there for us, those who have nurtured us and cared for us and may we know the love and care of one another (even at a distance), and the love, care, comfort and strength of God who promises to always be with us.



Sharing the Story

Our Sunday Sermon | Reflections from Acts 10 | Revd Nathan Falla

Have you ever received such good news or experienced an amazing event that you have just had to share it with anybody and everybody that you meet who would listen!? Perhaps when you passed your exams, met the love of your life, found out that your family was growing or something else. There may have even been so much joy and happiness that you could not contain it, it could be seen in your face and people may have even asked, why are you so happy?

Maybe when we first decided to follow Jesus we just had to tell people, but how confident are we to share our story now? We have been reflecting on *God's story, Our story* week by week and central to this as we explore this week is the role of the Holy Spirit. We cannot engage in evangelism (share the story of God's transforming love through Jesus Christ) without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible! The Holy Spirit leads us and gives us the boldness and the courage to speak and to share both the story of Jesus and our story.

So why do we tend not to speak out? Are we not listening to God, or not willing to join in what God is doing? From the wealth of books written on evangelism we can deduce that we are not alone, and others struggle with it too. This is not a new phenomenon either, even Jesus' first disciples were not overly keen to share the story, and Acts 10 is a good example of this.

Here we have the story of Peter and Cornelius - Cornelius a Roman Centurion receives a vision and sends some of his men to invite Peter to his home. Peter meanwhile has his own vision of various animals, reptiles and birds (some that the law deemed clean and some unclean) and a voice that said, kill and eat. Peter is surprised as he has never eaten anything unclean, but the voice says "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." Peter is really confused, but the Holy Spirit is at work and he accepts the invitation to Cornelius' house. So how does this relate to us?

I don't think it is about food habits, about what we can and cannot eat but I think it is a powerful reminder of three things when sharing our story: the need to take risks, the need to partner with God and others and the need not to put up any barriers.

Take risks

Peter took a risk to go to Cornelius' house. Jews and Gentiles just did not mix, in fact it was against Jewish law. However, the revelation that Peter had in his dream and by the work of the Holy Spirit in his life, Peter knew that nothing was impure, and this ensured that the Church was opened up for all. Peter was prepared to take a risk, to step out of his comfort zone, what risks are we being called to take? Are we being encouraged to step out of our comfort zone? Mark Ireland and Mike Booker in *Making New Disciples* prompt the question, *how far are we willing to go to reach the lonely, the lost and broken with the good news of God's grace?* We need to recognise that in this, risk is not without cost, it will mean that we won't get it right all the time, it will ask us to be vulnerable, however, if we don't

1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday 14th March where Revd Nathan Falla leads our service with the family from Hawtonville for the fourth Sunday of Lent.

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 – 14th March

Lent 4

On the Fourth Sunday in Lent, Revd Cheryl Meban, the Presbyterian Chaplain to Ulster University and Helen Warnock, the Principal of Belfast Bible College consider how Jesus reached out to the thirsty at the Wedding Feast in Cana and how he reaches out today.

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 – please contact your minister

take risks to build relationship and share our story then we are missing the greatest opportunity and we are not being followers of Jesus Christ who calls us to be and make disciples, to share the story!

Partner with God and others

The good news is that we are not on our own! We cannot share the story on our own, we must partner with God and have the support of others. It cannot be overemphasised enough, the Holy Spirit is absolutely crucial, sharing God's story without the Holy Spirit is like trying to drive a car without any fuel, it is impossible. As Peter reminded us last week, the prayer is very simple "Come, Holy Spirit." It is a prayer that should be said daily, as we all need more of God's Holy Spirit so that we can become more like Jesus. It is also the case that we are not doing our work, we are doing God's work, we are being invited to look and listen to hear and see what God is doing and join in. We don't need to know all the answers, we certainly don't have to be the most eloquent of speakers, but we do need to rely on God and be open to the Holy Spirit. We need to be disciples, learning and growing in the way of Jesus and this is where others have a really important role in supporting and encouraging us. One of the best ways to do this is through a small group where you can encourage each other and be accountable to one another.

No barriers to God's love

Hannah Steele has written "the story of Cornelius reminds us that the love of God and the reach of the gospel is always bigger than we imagine. In this encounter, the Spirit is at work not only in Cornelius and his family but in Peter also, enabling him to grasp that with God there are no favourites." We serve a God who loves generously, extravagantly and outrageously, and we must not put limits on God's love, God's love is for all! I love the inclusive nature of the Methodist Church and the emphasis on *For all*: all can be saved, all need to be saved, all can know that they are saved, and all can be saved to the uttermost.

So often we can put limits on God's love or think I cannot possibly talk to that person, but God loves that person and wants everyone to know that they are loved, everyone is invited to be part of the story. We have been reminded over the past weeks that we may be the only Jesus that people see or hear, let us not miss the opportunity of making God's love known to all we meet.

Like Peter who goes to Cornelius - let our horizons be expanded that we may see where and who the Spirit is drawing us to. Let us boldly tell the story, being prepared to take risks. Let us be open to the Holy Spirit equipping and enabling us that we may share the story. Let us be a Church that is truly open to be renewed and revived by the Spirit of God, that we may grow in knowledge, love and accountable discipleship.

*Come Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful people,
and kindle in us the fire of your love. Amen.*

Prayer Space

Opening Prayer

Gracious and loving God,
as we gather together in our own homes
and form a worshipping community,
dispersed yet united by your love,
Help us to know the story.

We come with all that we are facing,
with all our hope and uncertainty
with our joy and sorrow
Help us to know you in our story.

You speak love, hope
peace, comfort and strength
Help us to live the story.

Continue by your Holy Spirit
to work in our lives
that we may boldly proclaim your love
by our words and actions
Help us to share the story.

The story of your saving love,
the story of your amazing grace
the story that you weaved through history
and the story that you are writing
in our lives. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

God of love and grace,
we hear the challenge once again
to share the story.

We know that too often our words
and our actions do not tell the story,
so we come to say that we are sorry.

For those times when we have been silent
and have not shared the hope we have in
you.

Lord forgive and help us.

For those times when we have failed to
speak of love in word and action.

Lord forgive and help us.

For those times when we have relied on
what we can do and been full of fear,
rather than relying on what you can do.

Lord forgive and help us.

Merciful and loving God,
thank you that when we say sorry
because of Jesus we can be assured
of your forgiveness.

As forgiven people fill us afresh with the
power of your Spirit that we may boldly
proclaim the story. **Amen,**

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 and worship songs

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service:

We have a gospel to proclaim StF 418, H&P 465, SOF 1583

There must be more than this SOF 1547

Lord, your Church on earth is seeking StF 410, H&P 774

Please click on the song title to access YouTube clips of each song.

Christian Aid

Christian Aid Lenten Lunch via Zoom

On Tuesday 23rd March at 12.30pm bring your soup and roll to the computer and share a lunch in aid of Christian Aid. Free food but a donation to support Christian Aid needed!

Please email michaelwilson5465@gmail.com for further details and the invite.

Planning for May but act now!

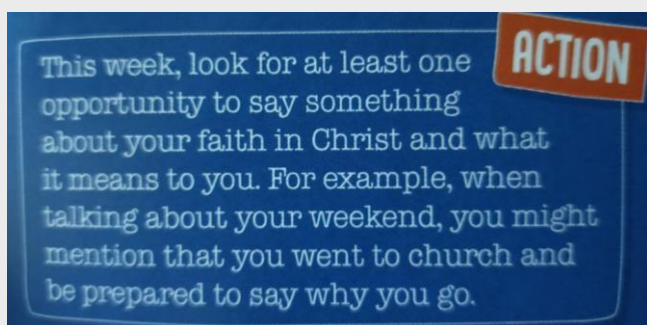
House to House collecting during Christian Aid Week has always been daunting for many people for a variety of reasons. It is unlikely to be practical again this year, a huge potential loss.

The Churches Together Christian Aid Group in Newark is therefore proposing a different strategy. Christian Aid has produced a Delivery Only envelope which simply needs posting through people's doors. The envelope includes a space for distributors to give a name and address where people can drop off envelopes if they wish to use cash. We propose attaching an A5 flyer giving details of a variety of options for giving online. The address given could either be that of the distributor or their church (if a suitable letter box is available). If people target their neighbourhood it keeps it personal. We see this as an open act of Christian Witness. We just need people to do it!

If you feel you can help please contact either Andrew Ayre (strewb@phonecoop.coop 07901616262 or 01636 673923) or your church Christian Aid representative. We can then give you more details. We will need to know how many envelopes/flyers you think you could distribute **by 26th March** to order materials in time.

This week's Lent Action:

As part of the Live Lent series that we are following we are all encouraged each week to take up an action, this week it is:



FAMILY ACTIVITIES!

Here are the family activities as part of Live Lent for you to explore this week's theme *Sharing the Story* more:

Monday 15 March | God's Story Our Story - Matthew 1.1-17:

People can be baptised when they are babies or children or grown up. Find out what happens at a baptism at your church. If you have been baptised, remember together what happened on that day.

Tuesday 16 March | Many Tongues - Acts 2.1-2, 4-6:

God's family can be found all over the world. Does your family or your church have links with Christians overseas? Find or download a map and mark where they live. Find out a little about the country they are in and then pray for them and the people of that country.

Wednesday 17 March | Telling the Story - Acts 8.26-39:

Imagine someone came to your home and they had never heard about Jesus. What would you tell them? What stories would you share?

What would you tell them about followers of Jesus? Create a poster (on paper or online) with your ideas and call it "Meet Jesus".

Thursday 18 March | Good News for Everyone - Acts 10.1-48:

Blow some bubbles to help you pray. As you chase them, call out "God's love is for..." and name someone you know before you burst the bubble. Finish by calling out "God's love is for everyone. Amen."

Friday 19 March | Out There - Acts 19.8-10:

Cut some cards to the size of a bank card. On one side write "God is with me". On the other side write, "Everywhere, all the time". Decorate the cards. Give one to each member of your family to keep in their wallet or phone.

Weekend 20-21 March | Never Alone - Matthew 28.16-20:

Draw round your hand. On the palm write "Jesus said". On the fingers write "I am with you always" – one word on each finger. Keep the hand by your bed as a reminder that whatever happens or however you feel, Jesus is always with you.

Are you finding TOGETHER helpful?

We really do hope that you find TOGETHER helpful but if for any reason you would prefer not to receive it please do let us know. If you receive a copy in the post and are able to have it emailed, please email Nick our Circuit Administrator nsmcircuit@outlook.com

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.