

# TOGETHER

*only physically apart*

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



**Revd Nathan Falla**

There is part of me that cannot quite believe that in just over two weeks time I will be on sabbatical, there seems to be lots to do! If I am honest, I am a little apprehensive – I have never experienced a sabbatical before, there are many things that are beginning to happen and it seems strange to not be “around” to share in developments in the Circuit and the churches. A lot can happen in 3 months, especially at this time! However, I know that sabbatical is a gift from the Methodist Church, I know that I am ready for it (especially after deferring it for a year) and I am looking forward to it!

**So what is a sabbatical?** A sabbatical is a period of release from ordinary ministerial duties, in addition to normal holidays, for the purpose of pursuing an approved programme of study, research, work or experience. It is intended as a time for re-equipping, refreshment and renewal. They can be extremely beneficial both for the individual minister and for the health of the wider Church and can significantly enhance the ministry of the whole people of God.

**So when is my sabbatical and what am I going to do?** I am starting my sabbatical on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> May and finishing it on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August with my first day back being Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> August. My first focus will be on refreshment and renewal and making the transition from ministry 24/7 to being on sabbatical. My focus will then move to re-equipping and I will be exploring leadership. I will be doing this through reading, reflecting and processing, attending a 4 day online course *Leading in anxious times* (that is split into 2 days mid-May and 2 days at the end of June) and talking to others as I consider how my leadership can be developed further. Throughout, I am going to be making sure that I spend quality time with the family, and in addition will do some jogging and walking to help with the processing. I will be largely Newark based so you may well see me around, please do say hello.

I am hoping that this time will help me process all that has happened and understand myself and my leadership better. I am also hoping and praying that the time away will be a place of development and formation as I know that everyone is a work in progress.

I will be especially holding you in my prayers and I ask that you hold me in yours.

*Nathan*



## 1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April where Revd Nathan Falla leads our service with the family from Charles Street for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter.

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 – 18<sup>th</sup> April

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter**  
**Walking Together**

Exploring the rich story of the Road to Emmaus with the Rev Philip Blackledge and Claire Nicholson of Holy Trinity Scottish Episcopal Church, Melrose.

Reading: Luke 24: 13-35

## 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*

# Do you love me?

Our Sunday Sermon | Reflections from John 21:1-19 | Revd Nathan Falla

Picture the scene, you are sat at the cinema, the film has come to a dramatic end, and the credits start to roll, people start to leave but then bonus material begins, not amusing out-takes but gripping drama, and this is exactly what we have in today's reading! At the end of John chapter 20 it sounds like the Gospel is finishing "these are written that you may believe: that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." But there is more. The scene changes, we have moved from the locked room in Jerusalem where Jesus met with the disciples and Thomas declared "my Lord and my God," to the Sea of Galilee where it all began; where Jesus called the first disciples.

Peter has gone back to fishing with the other six disciples who come from Galilee. Were they wanting a taste of the old life, just filling in time, or maybe taking the opportunity to think through all that they had seen and experienced by getting out onto the water and doing something that was familiar. But it was no good! Dawn breaks and they have had the worst night fishing ever they have caught nothing! Some man shouts from the shore, "try the other side." No doubt the disciples thought: What does he know? Who is the fisherman – surely the one in the boat? But they recognised that the voice had authority, there was certainty and hope. And there was certainly no harm in trying. So they did and what a catch – 153 fish!!

It suddenly dawned on them who the man was, it was Jesus and when they returned to shore Jesus invited them to have a BBQ breakfast by the lakeside. Afterwards the focus then turns to Jesus and Peter and the public conversation that they have; that moment of reconciliation and reinstatement as Jesus asks three times: "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Let us look at this question a little bit closer. Firstly it is interesting that Jesus chooses to address Peter formally using the title "Simon son of John" rather than "Peter" the name that Jesus gave him. The commentator Bruce Milne has helpfully suggested the following as an explanation:

"Jesus does not address him as Peter, the rock, for he had failed to live up to that name. Jesus is facing Peter with his own limitations so that he might entrust himself in a new way to Christ's leadership. Simon on his own will always be Simon. He has no capacity to rise beyond that. But Simon trusting Jesus is Peter-the-rock, from whose witness and leadership the church will receive its earliest foundation."

Secondly Simon's response when he hears for the third time Jesus' question "Simon son of John, do you love me?" is also interesting. We have the comment that Peter was hurt and this is understandable because by the third time surely Jesus knew what the answer would be and this was done in public so the other disciples would have heard it all, but also Peter would have no doubt realised and remembered another time when he had warmed himself in front of a charcoal fire when he had denied Jesus three times. It is almost as if Peter's three public denials of Jesus are

undone by Peter's three public reaffirmations of his love and loyalty. Until that had been done Peter is not ready to be a follower of Jesus; the barrier of failure and sin has not been removed.

From the question, do you love me, we have the commission: feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, feed my lambs. Peter is re-commissioned as a shepherd who will ultimately lay down his life as Jesus foretells of Peter's death by crucifixion following the way of the Good Shepherd standing before him. And then Peter hears the familiar words of Jesus "Follow me."

Words that Peter heard for the first time three years earlier, words that now have a new and much deeper meaning after witnessing the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the one he was called to follow, words that cost, financially, physically. Words that were and still are a call to discipleship; of following the one who called Peter and who calls us to follow today. But first there is a question, like Simon son of John, Jesus asks you and he asks me, 'Do you love me?'

Jesus loves you there is no doubt, no matter who you are, Jesus loves you because there is nothing that you can do to make Jesus love you any more and there is nothing that you can do to make Jesus love you any less. God's love revealed in Jesus Christ is unconditional, it is for all, love that defeated sin and death on the cross, love that transforms people's lives bringing hope for the future.

Like Peter, Jesus' question "Do you love me" may bring to mind times when we have let Jesus down, we may have denied him through our words, thoughts and actions we may have wandered from the path, we may feel that there are barriers preventing us from fully following and serving God.

Jesus died for me and for you so that anything that may get in the way of our relationship with God may be stripped away. We can come before the throne of grace and surrender to our loving God all that may inhibit us.

How will you respond to Jesus' question "Do you love me?"

*Not ... 'Do you promise to be good, Peter?'*

*Not ... 'Will you never let me down, Mary?'*

*Not ... 'Do you understand everything, Gordon?'*

*Not ... 'Will you never make a mistake, Sandra?'*

*Not even ... 'Can I trust you, Peter?'*

*but ... 'Do you love me?' and 'Do you love me?' and 'Do you love me?'*

*And to us ... whether we are long-time disciples, or just curious, Jesus comes with the same question.*

*Because love is the rock on which you build your church; there is nothing stronger.*

*So, Jesus, let us, with Peter, say, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you,' and then, with him, follow you, today and tomorrow, and for ever.\**

## Prayer Space

### *Prayer of Confession*

Jesus said: 'Do you love me?'

Lord, there are times when we forget to love you.

Help us to set aside those things that we place before you and give us the heart to worship you alone.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Jesus said: 'Do you love me?'

Lord, there are times when we forget to love our neighbours. Help us to remember that we are called to serve our sisters and brothers, and give us the mind to be open to the cries of those in need.

Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

Jesus said: 'Do you love me?'

Lord, there are times when we forget to love ourselves. Help us to remember that we are made in your image and give us your Spirit to be temples of your holiness.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Christ our friend,  
you ask for our love in spite of our betrayal.  
Give us courage to embrace forgiveness,  
know you again, and trust ourselves in you;  
we pray in your name. 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

**01636 552255**

Listen to the circuit sermon  
each week.

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



\* from *Present on Earth*, 2002, WGRG, p.199

## Hymns and worship songs

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service:

[Come people of the risen King](#) SOF 2249

[Have you heard God's voice](#) StF 662

[Christ has risen while earth slumbers](#) StF 296

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

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES!

Here are the family activities that are based on the Bible reading for this week:

**Watch:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulRPKXet8n4>

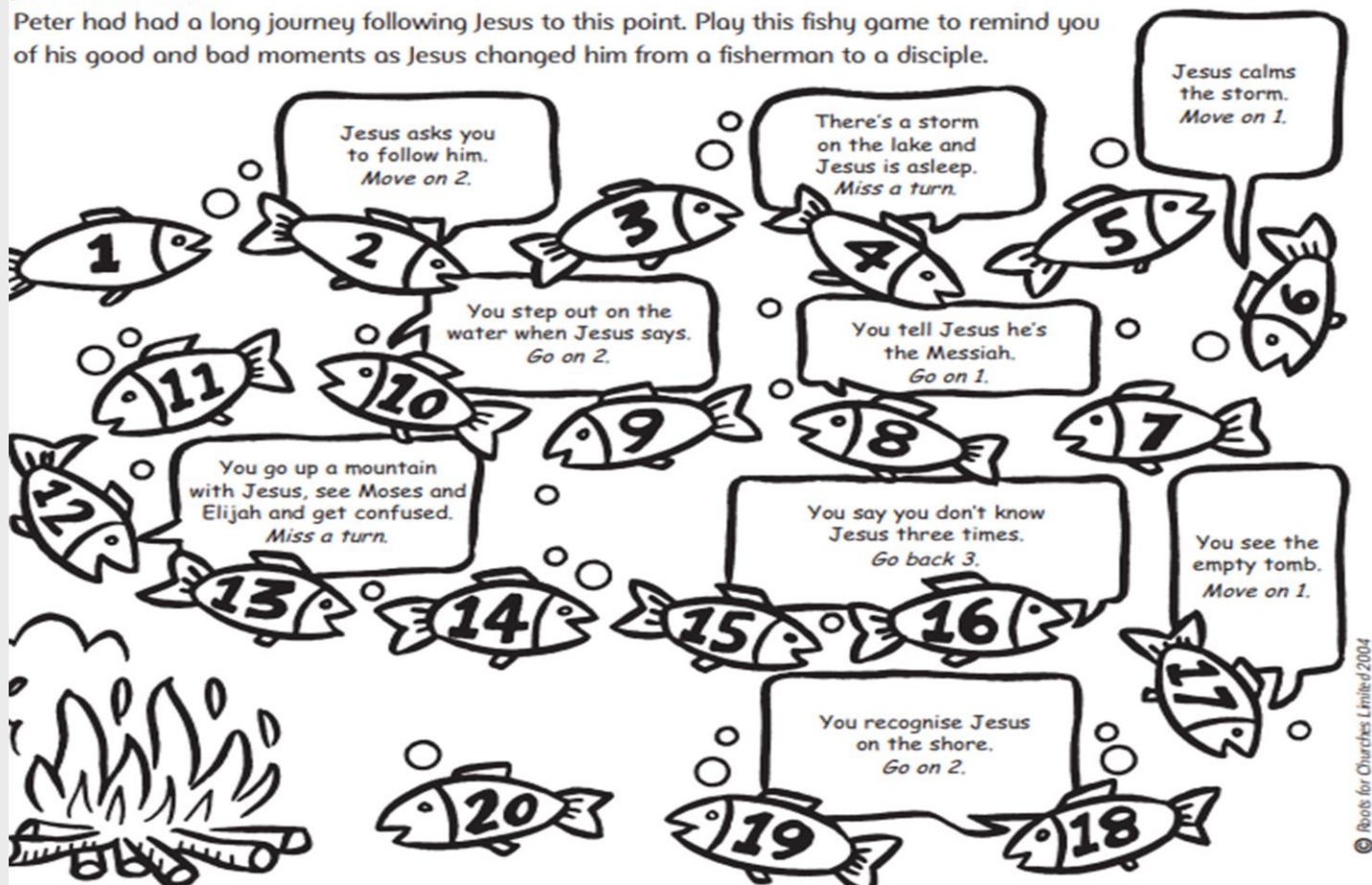
John 21:1-19 is based around two events the amazing catch of fish and the conversation that Peter and Jesus have. Peter was a follower of Jesus but like us did not get everything right.

### Game:

This game is a good reminder of some of the journey that Peter went through.

### Just a fisherman.

Peter had had a long journey following Jesus to this point. Play this fishy game to remind you of his good and bad moments as Jesus changed him from a fisherman to a disciple.



## Bubble Church Resources

*As things become safer, many of our Bubbles will be reopening. Would you like to be part of Covid-Safe face-to-face church? Join a bubble today by getting in touch with your minister.*

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

1. What does it mean to you that Jesus loves you, no matter what?
2. Do you love Jesus?  
How has your love for Jesus changed?
3. What does it mean for you to follow him?  
What is God calling you to be and / or do?

### Think:

Take time to think about those things that you do that are not right, remember that it is really important to say sorry.

### Pray:

Sorry God for those things that I do wrong, thank you that you always love me, help me to do what is right. Amen.

## TOGETHER contributions needed!

As Nathan goes on his sabbatical in the next few months (May-July), we need your input into TOGETHER more than ever. Could you write a front page article (around 500 words) for one of our editions? Perhaps you could contribute a prayer, an encouraging or even a challenging piece. Maybe you would be willing to be part of the editorial team? Perhaps you'd like us to advertise something in your church or across the circuit.

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).