



TOGETHER

Christ is risen - he is risen indeed, alleluia!

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

Travelling in hope Article by Revd. Nathan Falla

My sabbatical is just days away and I have been overwhelmed by the good wishes and assurances of prayer that I have already received. May-August may well see some big changes as restrictions are on the horizon of being lifted. One of my jobs in recent days has been to collate an interim preaching plan which sees some form of worship taking place in most churches at least twice a month, all services will require social distancing and face covering to be observed, still with no congregational singing.

Although we may be going in the right direction, we cannot be certain of what the destination will look like and whilst for many life seems to be returning back to normal, we must be aware that some are apprehensive, even fearful. So I would say that cautious optimism is the key but not forgetting the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

As churches and as a Circuit we are undoubtedly in a season of change and opportunity; recognising what we have learnt from the past year, recognising where we are now: what we may need to let go of and we may need to embrace, and through it all listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying as we seek to be the people of God. I was struck by a quote that I discovered only yesterday. This is something that I will be reflecting on and praying through and I invite you to do this too.

"Yearning for a new way will not produce it. Only ending the old way can do that.
You cannot hold onto the old all the while declaring that you want something new.
The old will defy the new; the old will deny the new; the old will decry the new.
There is only one way to bring in the new. You must make room for it."

Neale Donald Walsch via Richard Rohr

As a circuit we are part of a larger body, the Nottingham and Derby District and changes will be taking place there too. Currently the Chair of the District (charged with pastoral and strategic leadership) is Revd Loraine Mellor. Loraine is sitting down (Methodist speak for retiring) in August 2022 and whilst the wider Methodist Church has conversations about what the best structure may be going forward, a Deputy Chair (which will be the full expression of a Chair) has been appointed. Subject to Methodist Conference (the ultimate decision-making body) the Revd Andy Fyall will be appointed Deputy Chair from 2022-2024. Andy is currently Superintendent of the Stamford Circuit, Deputy Chair of the Northampton District, and comes with many gifts.

In the circuit you may remember that in February (Issue 21 on 24th February) I wrote about the coming together of the church families of Barnbygate and Hawtonville into a new church family. Further to a joint church council I can now share that from 1st September the new name of this church family will be Hope Community Methodist Church. Please continue to pray for these churches as they travel this road.

Prayer is the very centre of all that we do and all that we are, and can I encourage you to pray for the life, witness and mission of the Circuit, the ministers, supernumeraries, circuit stewards, local preachers, all that make up your local church. I have shared this prayer before, but it is one that I pray regularly:

God of love, God for all, your purposes are more beautiful than we can possibly imagine.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit. Help us let go of all that holds us back.
Open our lives and our churches to new seasons of humility and faith, of change and growth.
Shake us up with the Good News of Jesus and show us the way. **Amen**



1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday for our online Circuit Service which this week led by Revd Peter Hibberts.

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 - 2nd May 2021

To Have And To Hold

As restrictions slowly ease we reflect on the relationships that have helped us through the past year. Led by Canon Ann Easter, sermon by Dr Krish Kandiah.

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 all this baffles you and you'd like to find new ways to engage with church in these times, please contact your minister.

HOLY SPIRIT - THE PROMISE

Our Sunday Sermon | Reflections from Joel 2:28-32 | Revd. Peter Hibberts

What is your experience of God the Holy Spirit? I call *him* God the Holy Spirit just to start off by asserting that we are studying here God *himself*. I place *himself* in italics just to show that God the Holy Spirit need not be confined to being masculine but shouldn't (in my humble opinion) be referred to as 'it' as we are talking about one of the persons of the Trinity not a thing. I'm excited about this short series (four weeks) leading up to and including pentecost because I've heard many folk in various studies during the last 12 months say that they don't know enough about the Holy Spirit, don't really understand *him* or how *he* works and moves. I must start by saying that I don't know enough about the Holy Spirit or understand enough about *him* either so I hope we're exploring and mining the depths of God's wonder and mystery together. I'd love to hear your thoughts and if you'd like to explore together look for the Zoom groups available below. The material covered here was the focus of 'Cliff Fest' (the celebration weekend of Cliff College) a number of years ago and I've been looking forward to using the published material with churches ever since. I hope you'll be challenged and blessed by it.

To begin with I want to address a potential fear that we may have. We can see the person of Jesus in the gospel, we are perhaps comfortable with God the father/creator and happy that we can imagine *him* as distant but a person of the trinity who is here in my private and personal space, convicting me, transforming me - that can be scary! In the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis, three children are journeying to meet Aslan (the Lion that represents God in the Chronicles of Narnia). Lucy, the youngest, doesn't know what to expect in meeting a Lion and asks, 'Is he safe?' The reply given by Mr Beaver is 'No, he's not safe, but he is good.' This is a beautiful reassurance that does not make the mistake of diminishing the power of God to become some fluffy pet. God the Holy Spirit is not 'safe' in a controlled and contained way but God only does good things, for you, for the church and for the world. If we are able to open ourselves up to the movement of God the Holy Spirit we may need to prepare ourselves for a white knuckle ride (which I know not everyone enjoys) but the ride will end in a place beyond our wildest dreams.

A further background point is that God the Holy Spirit is not a new thing. God the Holy Spirit is eternal as the entire trinity is. *He* can be seen moving at the very beginning of scripture, the Old Testament gives many accounts of 'God's Spirit' or the 'Spirit of the Lord' and today's passage is from around nine hundred years before Christ. The material I'm using for this series came from a book written by Samuel Chadwick around 100 years ago! This is not new but it does point to a change from specific acts of God's Spirit, a pouring out, an enduring presence of God available to ALL!

At the time when the prophet Joel spoke these words, Israel was in the grip of a massive plague - a plague of locusts in this instance. In the

crisis Joel 'laments' (he expresses his deep sorrow for the situation) and calls the people to repent (to turn away from their mistakes) and then voices God's response (what is known as a prophecy or prophetic word). It's in this response from God that we locate ourselves today. In fact the promise of the Holy Spirit is a direct response to the human crisis. God first takes pity, then provides for them (Joel 2) and finally promises a time when 'God's Spirit' will be poured out in a transformative way.

What is your experience of promises? I'm mindful of the promises I made when I was ordained and even reflecting on the last 5 years of ministry I know I've made many mistakes. If I had my time again, I'd do it differently (with a different set of mistakes, no doubt). But God's promises are different. The Bible tells of how God keeps *his* promises; my own story tells me that God keeps *his* promises. You may also have stories of God's promises kept. Here there is a promise that beyond the presence of God's Spirit that we see in the Old Testament, there will be a pouring out!

Samuel Chadwick (former principal of Cliff College) asks, 'Do we believe in the Holy Spirit?' and then, 'If we do, what is the practical proof of our faith?' My friends, have you experienced a pouring out of the Holy Spirit in your life? Do you know the abiding presence of God in your life? If you haven't/don't then Joel is alerting you to a promise that God has made. ***It's your promise and mine!*** 'I will pour out my spirit on all flesh' (v28). ***It's a promise for now!*** 'those days' (v29) are the days we are living in (sometimes called the last days). We are already living post Acts 2 (the first pentecost) when the Holy Spirit was first poured out nearly 2,000 years ago (though we will celebrate it in a few weeks time). ***It's a promise of transformation!*** 'Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message; your old people will dream dreams' (v28) (I'll let you locate yourself in that!) It's a promise that is for us, for the good of the church and for the good of the world. 'But all who ask the LORD for help will be saved.' (v32)

I don't know how that makes you feel but I think that it should be stirring your heart. If you've already known the pouring out of God the Holy Spirit then I think you'll agree that our church really needs more of *him*. If you've never experienced a pouring out then perhaps it's time to claim that promise.

As we look back in the Bible we can see God's spirit at work. As we look forward to Pentecost we can see the potential and power that the Holy Spirit can bring. When we look at our communities and our churches we can see the need for revival. We are uniquely poised in the Christian year between Easter and Pentecost, many of us are uniquely poised between the promise in Joel and the fulfilment in Acts. As we journey towards Pentecost let's make our prayer a simple one for our own lives, for our churches, for our communities, for our nation, for our world: ***'Come Holy Spirit.'***

Prayer Space



Creator God, pour out Your Spirit upon your people and grant us a new vision of Your glory, a new experience of Your power a new faithfulness to Your Word and a new consecration to Your service so that Your love may grow among us and Your kingdom come.

Pour out your spirit: **Come Holy Spirit**

Lord Jesus, let Your Spirit rest upon our churches, schools and homes that they may be places of love and truth where the weak are made strong and the strong learn humility and all of us learn the wisdom that alone comes from You.

Pour out your spirit: **Come Holy Spirit**

Holy Spirit, Comforter and Sanctifier, melt our hearts that we may accept Your love. Renew our minds that we may know Your truth. Strengthen our will that we may follow You faithfully,

Pour out your spirit: **Come Holy Spirit**

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Adapted from the Holy Spirit Novena (<https://www.walsingham.org.uk>)

EMAIL PRAYER CHAIN

If you would like to join a prayer chain and receive prayer requests or to submit a prayer request (with permission of the recipient) please get in touch with Colin Beckett colin1244@gmail.com.
It is for those of any church or none!

Study groups

A four week series of services and small groups intended for anyone who wants to engage with the Holy Spirit on a level that positively impacts their lives, discipleship and ministry.

Adapted from... **CLIFF RESOURCES**

Week beginning 2nd May 2021
SESSION 1: **THE PROMISE** JOEL 2:28-29
Week beginning 9th May 2021
SESSION 2: **EXPERIENCE** JOHN 16:7-16
Week beginning 16th May 2021
SESSION 3: **THE CHALLENGE** ACTS 2:14-21
Week beginning 23rd May 2021
SESSION 4: **PENTECOST** ACTS 2:1-13

Sundays (watch back at any time) 10:30am on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>)
Monday Evenings (Zoom) from 7:45pm onwards (Zoom details available on request)

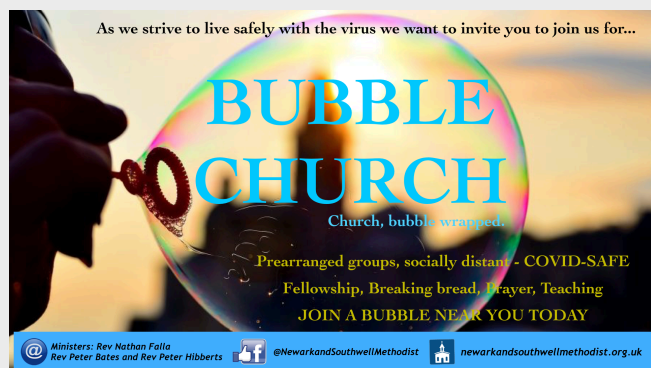
Rev Peter Hibberts peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk @NewarkSouthwellMethodist newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk

During the next four weeks we will be running parallel study groups midweek. These will be led by Rev Peter Hibberts on Monday evenings, 7:45pm onwards via Zoom starting next Monday (2nd May) but more groups may arise if you cannot make Mondays. Do please get in touch if you'd like to know more.

peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk

Holy Spirit, we welcome you (StF 385) [LINK](#)
 Breathe on me, Breath of God (StF 370) [LINK](#)
 Come down, O Love divine (StF 372) [LINK](#)
 Holy Spirit, rain down (StF 384) [LINK](#)
 Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me (StF 395) [LINK](#)
 Down the mountain the river flows (StF 377) [LINK](#)

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.

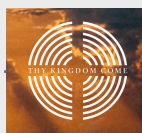
The following questions are designed to get you thinking and, if you're involved in Bubble Church talking about the topic!

1. Has there ever been a time in your life when you have been promised something but the promise wasn't kept?
2. Have you ever experienced a God promise?
3. Do you feel the abiding presence of God in your life?
4. How does God's abiding presence affect decisions you might make?
5. How do you think the Holy Spirit can soften your heart or the heart of your ministry?
6. Pray for an outpouring of God's Spirit on you, your ministry and your community.

For more information checkout the Bubble Church guide with risk assessment on the Circuit Website: <https://www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk/newsroom/bubble-church.html>

Thy Kingdom Come

Ascension and Pentecost are on the horizon and so is the annual 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative. TKC is a call to prayer that this year will happen from 13th - 23rd May. There are many opportunities to get involved in TKC as a church and as an individual. One central way is to follow the Prayer Journal which you can access online at thykingdomcome.global. If you would like a paper copy they are also available. There is also a wonderful 'Novena' which prays daily through the Psalms and encourages us to pray for 11 people specially during TKC. Get in touch for more details and watch this space for more TKC activities.



Families:
families4SMC@gmail.com

by Katie Hibberts

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

In today's reading we've explored God's promise in Joel 2 to pour out his Spirit on all people. When we read the account of Pentecost we see that prophecy fulfilled. WOW!

I wonder how many other promises you can think of as a family that God made in the bible and kept? See if you can make a list. Here are a couple of bible stories you could look at to get you started...

- Noah (Genesis 9:14-15)
- Abram and Sarah (Genesis 12:1-3, 18:1-15 and 21:1-5)

Write on a piece of paper:

"The Lord is faithful to all His promises and loving to all he has made."
 Psalms 145:13

Look at the piece of paper with the bible verse and read it together. Explain that God's promises aren't just for Abraham or Noah. Here is a promise from God that you can keep. Draw something you really love on the paper. You can draw yourself if you want. Thank God for keeping his promises no matter how outrageous. Thank God for loving us and ask God to help us believe in His promises to us.

The Bible is constantly reminding us that when God makes a promise, He is faithful to keep it. How does that make you feel?

Look at the passage in Joel 2: 28-29 again. God promises to pour out His Spirit on ALL people. 'Sons and daughters will prophesy'... you are all someone's son or daughter so you are included in this passage. It doesn't matter if you are old or young - God promised to pour out His Spirit on ALL people so that includes YOU! We will explore what that means and what a spirit-filled life might look like over the coming weeks.

Rainbow Prayer

If you've got paints at home, try saying the words of this prayer as you finger paint a rainbow:

'Thank you God that you keep your promises.'

TOGETHER contributions needed!

As Nathan goes on his sabbatical in the next few months, 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. **Perhaps you can share an experience of God the Holy Spirit that you've had in your life!**

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.