



TOGETHER

only physically apart

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

Christ our space

Article written by Revd Neil Richardson, taken from theologyeverywhere.org published on Monday 12th October 2020.

Some years ago a lorry crashed into the Methodist chapel of a village in Lincolnshire. Mercifully, no-one was in it at the time. But the chapel was damaged beyond repair. The circuit meeting urged the society, despite the loss of their building, to stay in fellowship. Sadly, they did not.

Covid 19, you could say, has crashed into church buildings across the world. In our country they were out of use for months; their future use – even perhaps their viability – is fraught with uncertainty. No wonder this crisis has been described as our Babylonian exile, echoing a time when Israel had to learn to survive without its temple in Jerusalem, destroyed as it was by Nebuchadnezzar's armies. It's not easy to get our buildings in proper perspective. In a climate like ours, they are useful, to say the least. But as the house churches in St Paul's day show, they're not essential to worship, fellowship or witness. Comfortable, attractive premises, however, can be important. (I come back to this at the end).

The New Testament starts from the glorious, simple truth: Christ is our Space. The language is unmistakable – especially in the writings of John and Paul. 'Abide in me, I in you'; 'I live, yet not I; Christ lives in me'. Life in Christ, with one another for the world, is the heart of Christian faith. The origin of the conviction that Christ is our fundamental space seems to have been Jesus' explosive remarks about the Jerusalem temple. Even if John's version reflects later faith, its import is unmistakable: 'Destroy this temple... and in three days I will raise it up again'. The temple he was speaking of was his body' (John 2.19 & 21). The geography of the New Testament tells its own story: out from Jerusalem, into the tenements of urban Corinth and Rome. Wherever the Holy Spirit created an *ekklesia*, (an assembly) there was the temple, (1 Corinthians 3.9-17).

Members of that Lincolnshire chapel seemed not to know that they were the temple: Christ in them, they in Christ. In fact, Christ our Space is the key to theology everywhere and always. The locative 'Christ' expressions in the New Testament run into hundreds: life in Christ, growing into Christ, Christ formed in you. But this isn't all. The panorama is cosmic as well as personal, e.g. 'all things created in, through and for Christ, (Colossians 1.15-20).

This isn't primarily a theology of the head and the study, but a theology of heart and life and of the whole world, as Rowan Williams' recent book, *Christ the Heart of Creation* shows. We live it, breathe it and walk it every day of our Christian life. Other verses in Scripture can be re-expressed in Christ language: for example, 'In him we live and move; in him we exist' (Acts 17.28); some Old Testament psalms anticipate the ascended and risen Christ: 'If I climb up to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there' (Psalm 139.8).

This is why Paul teaches 'Pray without ceasing'; the living Christ centres and enables our prayers every passing moment. The same metaphor of space applies supremely to the Atonement: at the cross, God the Father and God the Son moved sufficiently far apart to accommodate the whole world in between. The imagery applies to life both on earth and in heaven: 'In my Father's house are many dwelling-places'; in other words, there is room in the heart of God for all, (John 14.1).

This is where we begin and end. The mystery of Christ – God with us and for us – is our fundamental 'space'. The present crisis prompts searching questions. What are our buildings for? What do they mean? The more fully we inhabit our truest and deepest Space – the living Christ – the better our response will be. And that may include painting the rusty iron railing and the scruffy notice board outside.

The Revd Neil Richardson is a past President of Methodist Conference and a retired supernumerary in Shropshire and Marches. Theology Everywhere is a weekly blog written by different people providing food for thought.



1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday for our Circuit Service which this week is hosted by Revd Nathan Falla

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 – 1st November

A Service for All Saints

In a year of upheaval when the familiar patterns of life have been overturned and so many people have been unexpectedly taken from us, the Rev Dr Alex Wimberly, leader of the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland, reflects on the memory and influence of the love and compassion of those we have lost.

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 your minister

Are we wearing a mask?

care for ourselves & those around us

Our Sunday Sermon | Mark 5:25-34 | Revd Nathan Falla

Face coverings have certainly become part of everyday life, for me there is the routine before I leave the house of checking that I have my face covering and hand gel! I will admit that masks are not ideal; as someone who wears glasses and as the temperature drops I am finding that I am misting up and they do not always make communication easy. However, I fully recognise the value of wearing a face covering to protect myself and those around me, and so I will continue to wear one! At a time when we wear physical face coverings to protect ourselves and others, I wonder if we may be more aware of the metaphorical masks that we sometimes wear? Those things that give a different impression to how we really are, or at least do not communicate the full picture either because we are afraid that people will not like what they see, because we or they will feel uncomfortable or because we are not prepared to be completely open, honest and vulnerable with people.

This week we move from explicitly exploring *Worship as a way of life* to looking at *learning and caring as a way of life*. We specifically focus on care for ourselves and those around us as part of our life of discipleship. We have as our reading the woman with a haemorrhage, this is an incident that is recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke (the synoptic gospels) and I would like to look at the story from two main viewpoints; the woman and the crowd as we consider care for ourselves and care for others.

What immediately strikes me is that the woman is not in a good place! She has been living with a chronic condition for 12 years which would ostracise her from society because New Testament society would label her unclean. She has seen many doctors but nothing has made the situation any better, in fact it is worse. But the woman has heard about Jesus and I dare say that she has travelled to see him, so she is not known and is not recognised. Without doubt the woman is trying to remain in the background, she is desperate not to be noticed or to be found out, and is fearful of the consequences if she were to be discovered. She is wearing a mask, and making every attempt to conceal her identity.

The woman reaches out to Jesus, thinking if only I can touch the hem of the garment then I will be healed. The woman makes that connection with Jesus and knows that something has changed but is no doubt shocked when Jesus stops the crowd to ask "who touched me." The woman's worst nightmare begins to unfold as she realises that she needs to remove her mask. She comes in fear and trembling and tells Jesus the whole truth. She can hide no longer but in Jesus she is safe to be open and vulnerable, and she is healed.

The crowd in all this are very much secondary, at the start of this they are completely oblivious to the woman, and when they are caught up in the commotion of the mystery person who touched Jesus, they no doubt share the disciples dismay that this is a big crowd and anyone could have touched Jesus. At the conclusion of the story we are not told how the

crowd responds to the woman, but I would hope that their eyes were opened and they grew in understanding as a result of the encounter.

I think our reading highlights three things:

Removing the Mask ~ Part of what it means to care for ourselves and those around us is to remove the metaphorical masks so that we can be fully seen and can fully see. This calls for openness and involves vulnerability as we remove the mask so that we can either be truly seen or truly see. The amazing thing with God, is that God sees us knows us. Psalm 139 reminds us that we cannot hide anything from God, God sees those parts of our lives that we are proud of and those parts that we are ashamed of and still God loves us. But we still need to remove that mask.

We also need to remove the mask so that we can truly see; God invites us to see the world and people through heavens eyes, that we may see with God's eyes of love and respond with God's compassion. We cannot ignore the needs that are all around us, our eyes need to be open to see.

Facing the reality ~ By removing a mask we strip away the pretence and are truly seen. We cannot ignore what we are thinking and feeling, it is OK to not be OK but it is important that we talk about and face the reality. It is OK to say that I need to stop, that I need a break, that I cannot take on any more.

The truth is we are all made in the image of God and God's desire is for us to flourish, for us to know life and life in all its fullness. God's desire is for us to be whole to be complete, to fully know and to experience God's love and grace. But this does not mean that we will always be OK, that we will not struggle, that we will not feel overwhelmed. It does mean however, that God is always with us and we can be open and honest with God.

To care for others you need to care for yourself ~ I am passionate about wellbeing and know that you cannot give if you are running on empty. Eating properly, rest and exercise are all a part of caring for ourselves that we may be in position to care for those around us. We all need space to think and reflect, we need to be aware of our own wellbeing as we seek to care for those around us. In September the Nottingham and Derby District issued a Mental Health Manifesto, this is something that we need to talk about.

Today in the loving embrace of God and in the safety of family as we recognise that caring for ourselves and those around is part of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, what masks may we need to remove that we may be truly seen and truly see, how may we need to face reality, how may we show God's love and care to those around us?

May we be open to God's Holy Spirit that we may changed and renewed in our caring of ourselves and others that we may truly be the people that God has called us to be. Amen.

Prayer Space

A Gathering prayer

Eternal God, source of a love and care, as I come to worship today help me to be open and honest with you, help me to remove any masks for you see all of me and love me. May I know your love, your peace, your strength and your comfort. This day and always. Amen.

A meditation

O Lord Jesus, If I could but touch the hem of your garment that you might make me whole and free me from all that is within, tormenting me inside.

I come with fear and trembling, kneeling at your feet, how can I look up to your face, when all I see is my ugliness and bitterness.

Jesus, you see within me, my hurt so deep inside, but what I see before me is love not judging eyes.

I hear your words so sweetly, you welcome me by name, and say... "your faith has healed you, you are restored, go in peace my precious child."

I am forgiven, I am free, oh how my Lord has saved me, he comforts me with loving arms, I can but dry my tears.

The emotion is overwhelming oh how my Lord loves me, I know that I am accepted, forgiven and restored.

Dial-a-sermon

Can't get onto the YouTube Service? Want to hear the Sunday sermon? Dial up at any time of the day or night at the cost of a local call.

Press option 3 for the Sunday Sermon
(Sermons go live each Sunday.)

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.



Reflective songs...

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service...

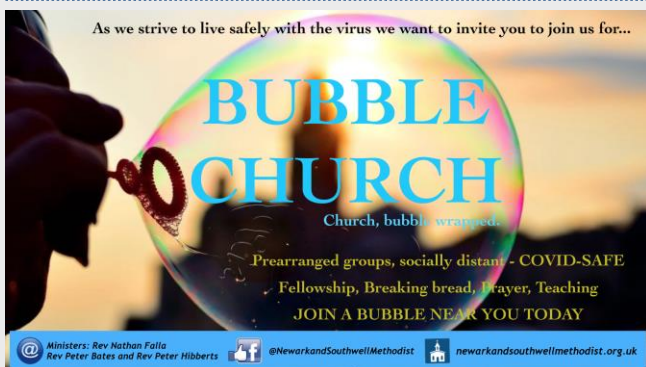
Song 1 *God is Love: let heaven adore him* – StF 103 [LINK](#)

Song 2 *Take this moment, sign and space* - StF 513 [LINK](#)

Song 3 *Let love be real* – StF 615 [LINK](#)

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

Bubble Church Resources



**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. How are you caring for yourself?
2. Who do you find you can be honest with about how you are?
3. How easy do you find it to ask for, to receive or to give help?
4. Is there anything that you need to stop, or lay aside at this time?
5. How are you able to care for those around you?

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

The next few weeks...



November seems to be a month of remembering and next week we focus specifically on Remembrance as we mark Remembrance Sunday on 8th November.

We will carry on our exploration of *Discipleship as a Way of Life* the following week as we continue to look at learning and caring and specifically learning more about our faith.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES!

Craft:

Make a card for someone you know who you care about, they may be particularly sad or going through a difficult time. A card can show them that you care about them.

Talking about it:

It can be great fun dressing up and pretending to be your favourite character from a book or a film but some people do this all the time and forget who they truly are.

It is really important to be honest about your feelings, and to look after yourself and those around you.



On a piece of paper draw a happy face and a sad face, then think about those things that make you and those around you happy and sad. Talk about them.

Think about the different ways that you can look after yourself and those around you.

Prayer:

Spend some time thanking God for those who care for you. Pray for your friends and your family, especially those you know who are sad or going through a difficult time. Always remember that God is with you at all times whether you are happy or sad.

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. Nathan Falla by email (Nathan.Falla@methodist.org.uk) or telephone (01636 702154).

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