



# TOGETHER

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

## *Waiting...*

Revd Nathan Falla

I am very conscious that Advent is a waiting time and a time of preparation. We all wait for things in everyday life whether we are waiting for a bus, waiting in a traffic jam, waiting for that important letter or waiting for a parcel to arrive. Right now, I am waiting for a lateral flow test result, this is not an unusual occurrence as when I know that I am going to be somewhere with lots of people I take a test, I feel it is me doing my 'bit' and being as responsible as I can be. But this test is a little bit different, it has been requested by my children's school so that I can go to Abigail's nativity this afternoon, and this will be the first proper school nativity she has been in, she is one of the angels.

I know that I am not always very good at waiting, I may even get a little bit impatient. Right now, I could be twiddling my thumbs, but instead I am writing this. Our waiting can be productive, the waiting can be helpful as we prepare and we wait expectantly, and then when the moment arrives our hearts can be filled with joy and/or relief.

I remember when Hannah was pregnant with Theo we got everything as prepared as we could, we had planned for a home water birth, Hannah woke me up saying that she thought that the contractions had started, I called the midwife and started filling the birthing pool. The midwife came and said that the pool would not be filled in time, Theo was coming! He was 6 days before his due date but we were just about ready. When Hannah was pregnant with Abigail, we felt super prepared, so much so that when it got to 6 days before the due date we were totally ready! At the first signs of labour beginning I filled the birthing pool not wanting to run out of time again, but labour did not proceed as quickly. The pool was ready in plenty of time but the water was starting to go cold. I remember going backward and forward to empty some of the water out so that it could be topped up again and made warmer.

Advent reminds us that we are to be in a state of expectant waiting, waiting that prepares us so that we are alert and watchful. It is so easy for us to be distracted that we don't stop, we don't notice, we don't prepare.

Watching the clock I see that the time has now elapsed and the good news is my lateral flow test was negative, so school nativity here I come!

*Maybe it is in the waiting for God,  
not in the wandering from store to store,  
that we find our way.*

*Maybe it is in the friendship of God,  
not in the frenzy of the crowds,  
that we are led to the manger.*

*Maybe it is in the steadfast love of God,  
and not in the pile of stuff under the tree,  
that we find what we have been searching  
for all our lives.*

*Maybe, just maybe, God of Advent,  
this year will be different.*

*Maybe, just maybe,  
we will let you lead us to Bethlehem.*

Thom M Shuman



## 1. Online Service

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

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

If you're feeling isolated, are not ready to be face to face yet, or can't, but are happy to meet on Zoom, there is a weekly coffee time at 3pm on a Monday run by Charles Street but open to all, email Mel Watson for more details: [mellwatson42@gmail.com](mailto:mellwatson42@gmail.com).

There is also still a weekly Zoom fellowship called 'The Gathering' which is part of Southwell Methodist Church and run by Philip and Francine Holmes. You'd be most welcome, contact Philip to connect: [philipholmes8100@gmail.com](mailto:philipholmes8100@gmail.com).

## 3. Radio Services

**BBC Radio 4** (Also [online](#).)  
08:10am – 12<sup>th</sup> December

### Jazz Carols

A service of jazz carols from Highfields Church, Cardiff, led by the Rev Dave Gobbett.

With reflections and readings, and music from Highfields' own jazz band featuring Matt Featherstone.

## 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.)

# Preparing the way

Online Circuit Service Sermon | Luke 3:7-18 | Revd Peter Bates

John the Baptist stirred things up. He was strong a strong character who spoke with authority and he was forceful. To the Pharisees who arrogantly stood and listened to his preaching, he was uncompromising. He said. "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come." Not exactly a way to win converts. But John was not messing about, he didn't have time for time-wasters. He was straight to the point. Like a farmer ploughing a field, he was turning over the earth breaking it up, ready for the seeds to be planted. The farmer doesn't have a debate with the soil as to whether to use the plough, he gets on with the job. John was not in a popularity contest he was sent to prepare the way. I think sometimes we feel we need to be popular, and not offend people but that wasn't the way of John or Jesus. They spoke the truth and they both expressed compassion in their own way.

When John saw the Pharisees coming to listen to him, he didn't feel they were serious about repenting. They needed John's harsh words to shake them out of their belief that because they were Abraham's descendants, they would be safe. Sometimes we have to say words which may challenge people's preconceptions of God and Christianity. When we say these words, we need to express them in a loving and compassionate way. If we say them in a defensive way, it may put people off.

John also gave sound advice to people who asked how they could change their lives for the better. People respected what John said and were willing to listen to his teaching. There was a mixed bunch of people who came to listen to him, and these verses reveal that diversity. We know the Pharisees went to listen to him but we do not know their motives, some of them were perhaps genuine but others may have gone to scoff or to learn more about what John was saying so that they could trap him into speaking against the Romans or against their own Jewish traditions.

Within the crowd were tax collectors, these were men who wanted to know what they could do to live faithfully before God. It is interesting to note that John does not tell them to stop being tax collectors but he does instruct them not to collect any more money than they are supposed to. We have an inkling of this practice from the story of Zacchaeus, and it is possibly why the tax collectors were hated so much by the Jews. Another unlikely group of people that were present when John the Baptist preached were the soldiers. It could be that these men were Jews who were conscripted into the army by the Romans, or men who willingly joined just so that they could earn money. Again, John tells them to treat people fairly.

It is obvious from Luke's telling of the story that John was respected by the people. He had no airs and graces, he was blunt and to the point, and people could see that he was genuine. People could also see that John was a candidate to be the Messiah. He was like the Old Testament prophet's; he spoke with authority and he didn't compromise. There was a growing interest in the crowd to see if John really was the Messiah.

John the Baptist flatly crushed any idea that he could be the Messiah, and whether he knew it or not he was preparing the way for the Messiah and was also warning people of God's judgement on a disobedient nation. Like a true prophet John pointed people to God. He would not have any acclaim for himself. He sets out how unworthy he will be in comparison to the Messiah. There must have been a temptation there to soak up all the attention and begin to believe what the crowd said about him. But John had a strong relationship with God and his austere life made him see through the clamour of the crowd to elevate him to be the Messiah.

John did what every good friend would do, and that is to support his friends, to help them achieve their goals in life. He down played his own position and spoke glowingly about the One who was to come. There was no false modesty in his words, he meant everything he said because his very life and ministry depended on it. If the Messiah didn't live up to the billing which John had described, then could he really be the chosen one. John knew the Messiah would have to be head and shoulders above everybody else. He would have to be outstanding. For this reason, John was willing to take the lowly part of a servant. It wasn't just that he was obeying God, he believed with all his heart that the one to follow him was going to be the deliverer of Israel, not necessarily in a physical sense but certainly a spiritual one.

The good friends that we have experienced in our life are an illustration of what John was like for Jesus. These people have our best interest at heart, they will be truthful to us, they will encourage us, give us confidence and bring out the gifts in us that other people may not see. When they look at us, it will not be to judge us, they will see the real person within because they have spent time getting to know us. Jesus and John didn't have this friendship but John prepared the way for Jesus, and he encouraged himself that though less and less people were coming to hear him they were going to the man that he had pointed out to be the Messiah, at Jesus baptism. How much do we rejoice when one of our friends does well? Are we willing to stand in the shadows while the spotlight is on someone else? John was an amazing man because he knew what it was like to have crowds hanging on his every word but he also accepted his place in a cold dark prison cell, because he was willing to be faithful in all circumstances.

## Prayer Space

### *Prayer of Praise*

Lord, we worship you, the God of creation.  
You set our world in motion,  
you gave us time and the seasons,  
day time and night time.  
You regulate our world through nature.  
And so, we thank you for this time of year  
when the days are getting colder  
and the nights are drawing in.  
We have your light burning brightly in our  
lives. We can look back to your birth at  
Bethlehem, your life among the Jews, and  
we can also look forward to your return  
in glory and power.

Let this be a time of preparation and  
reflection as we wait to celebrate your  
birth in a stable. You were willing to take  
the form a baby, a helpless bundle of life  
cared for by loving parents. You were  
willing to serve others and you died for our  
sins. Help us to care for others as you did.  
Forgive us Lord, when our life is all about  
ourselves and we have little thought for  
others. Thank you, Lord that in your loving  
mercy, you forgive us. Amen

### *Prayers for others*

God, as we journey on in our Christian life  
help us to follow the example of John the  
Baptist. To enjoy the times when things are  
going well for us and point people to you  
when we are blessed. But also help us in  
the difficult times to be faithful to you and  
your calling on our life.

We pray for people who find this time of  
year a struggle. People who have lost loved  
ones. People who have to work long hours  
to make ends meet. We pray for families  
who are in debt who are tempted to spend  
more than they can afford. We also pray  
for those who are ill at this time, those  
waiting for treatment and those recovering  
from operations.

We pray also for all those who have to  
work over the Christmas period, doctors,  
nurses, ambulance staff, fire fighters and  
people working in retail. We ask that they  
may all experience your love, joy and peace  
as they go about their work. Amen

## Blue Christmas *for when Christmas hurts*

Music | Prayers | Space  
Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December at 7pm  
Hope Community Methodist Church  
Barnby Gate, NG24 IPX

## Hymns and worship songs

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service:

*Hills of the north, rejoice* – H&P 237, StF 172

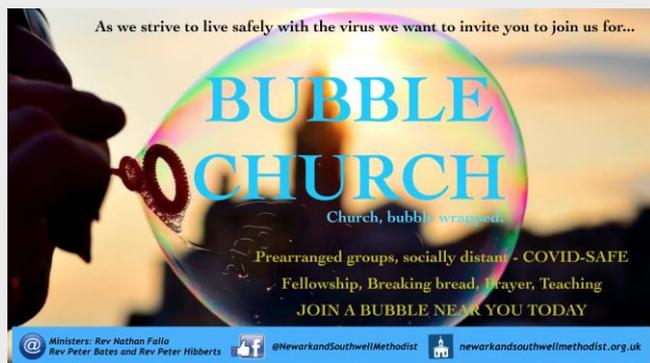
*Come thou long expected Jesus* – H&P 81, StF 169

*O come, O come, Immanuel* – H&P 85, StF 180

*Lo, he comes with clouds* – H&P 241, StF 177

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

## Bubble Church Questions



Would you like to be part of Covid-Safe face-to-face church? Join a bubble today by getting in touch with your minister.

1. How would you describe John the Baptist in your own words?
2. Why did God have to send John to prepare the way for Jesus?
3. In what way have you moulded your life to be obedient to God? Give examples
4. Is there a place for someone like John today?
5. In what ways are you individually, and your church, preparing the way for people to encounter Jesus this Christmas?

## Face-to-face opportunities for worship across the Circuit

December 2021 - February 2022		12th Dec 3rd of Advent	19th Dec 4th of Advent	26th Dec 1st of Christmas	2nd Jan 2nd of Christmas Covenant
Balderton	10:30 am	Bates	Bates Carols / 3pm		Bates CS / HC
Charles Street	10:30 am	West	Hardy	Falla JS	LA
	6:00 pm	Falla	Falla Carols		Hibberts
Collingham	10:45 am	Ward T	Bates Carols / 4.30pm	United Service at Parish Church	Hart
Elston	10:45 am	Hibberts Carols			
Hope Community	10:30 am	Falla at B'gate	Falla at H'ville / Ch / 3.30pm	At Charles Street JS	Falla CS / at B'gate
Long Bennington	10:30 am	Bates Carols / 3pm	Bates		Hardy
North End	6:00 pm	Mathews	Bates Carols		Morley
North Muskham	10:30 am	Hucknall HC / T			
	2:00 pm		Hart Café		Falla Café
Southwell	10:30 am	K Trowbridge	Hibberts		Hibberts CS / HC
	Other	Hibberts Ch / 4pm	Adams Carols / 4pm		Bates 4pm
Sutton-on-Trent	10:30 am	LA Breakfast 9am			Morley US
	Other		United at All Saints Carols / 4pm		
Lectionary Readings (Year C)		Zephaniah 3:14-20 C: Isaiah 12:3-6 Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 3:7-18	Micah 5:2-5a C: Luke 1:46-55 or Psalm 80:1-7 Hebrews 10:5-30 Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)	1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26 Psalm 148 Colossians 3:12-17 Luke 2:41-52	Jeremiah 31:7-14 Psalm 147:12-20 Ephesians 1:3-14 John 1:(1-9) 10-18 or Sirach Ecclesiasticus 24:1-12 C: Wisdom of Solomon 10:15-21

For full plan, visit the Circuit Website:

<https://www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk/newsroom/circuit-plan-dec-21-jan-22.html>

## Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Services across the Circuit

### Christmas Eve | Friday 24<sup>th</sup> December

- 3pm Sutton-on-Trent United Crib Service at All Saints
- 3pm Elston Christingle led by Revd Peter Hibberts
- 4pm Southwell Christmas Celebration (Local Arrangement)
- 5.30pm North Muskham Christingle led by Revd Peter Hibberts
- 7pm Hope Community Christmas Eve Communion at Barnbygate (joint with Charles Street) led by Revd Nathan Falla
- 7.30pm Balderton Christmas Eve Communion led by Revd Peter Bates

### Christmas Day | Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> December

- 9.30am Charles Street Christmas Celebration led by Revd Nathan Falla
- 9.30am Collingham Christmas Service led by Revd Peter Bates
- 10am Balderton Christmas Day Service led by Andrew Trowbridge
- 10.30am Hope Community Christmas Celebration at Hawtonville led by Revd Nathan Falla
- 10.30am North End Christmas Celebration led by Revd Peter Bates
- 11am Carlton Parish Church United Christmas Service

We are always looking for people to contribute articles for TOGETHER, please contact Revd Nathan or Revd Peter Hibberts if you have something that you would like to include:

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