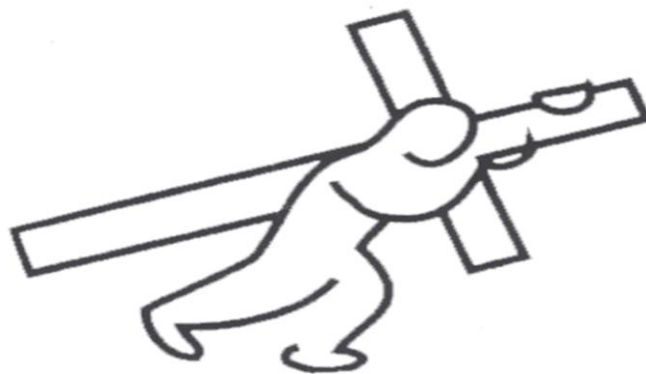
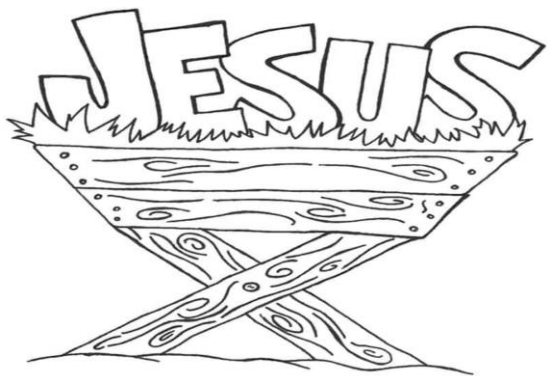


TOGETHER

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk



Bethlehem to Calvary

Revd Peter Bates

If Christmas is about Jesus' birth at Bethlehem, what is the new year about? If we think of all the excitement and buzz over Christ's birth, then a new baby would continue to bring laughter and love in the first few weeks of his or her life. I am sure there would be a mixture of awe and wonder mixed in as well. Let's not walk away from the crib too soon, there is a baby to help to grow and to develop. When we get back into the rush and routine of church life do we forget the excitement of what has just happened or does it linger in our hearts? Some people want to live as if every day is Christmas, what is wrong with that as long as we think of the true meaning of Christmas and not the tinsel and trimmings. Every day then Christ could be born anew in our hearts, bringing gladness and joy, what a way to live our Christian life.

We are told by some preachers that we should live as Easter People, always being reminded of Jesus resurrection and his victory over death and sin. Again, it is a sense of living our lives reminding ourselves of how disciples felt when they met their risen Lord. Is there somewhere in between we should be at this time of year in between Christmas and Easter? I think the common factors are the sense of struggle, despair and overwhelming joy. The Christian life is not always easy, there are Calvary roads we must tread but then there are also great revelations of faith where we see God at work in our life, the lives of others, or God's revelation in our church or in the world. How we tread the road to Bethlehem and Calvary is the important thing.

For Mary and Joseph, and for Jesus, it was an uphill struggle. I don't imagine there was a great deal of joy for the young couple travelling to David's city and for Jesus, as he wrestled with the thought of crucifixion. There was real grit and determination as they fulfilled their tasks. But they carried on with the thought of what was before them. For Mary, it would be the joy of her first child, and for Jesus it would be the redemption of the world and being back in heaven with his Father.

As we journey on let us walk in the victory of Christ's work on the cross, and let us walk in expectation of new birth and all that that brings. Happy New Year God Bless Peter Bates



Fear not, for I have redeemed you

Online Circuit Service Sermon | Isaiah 43:1-7 | Revd Peter Bates

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. Zoom Opportunities

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.

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.

3. Radio Services

BBC Radio 4 (Also [online](#).)
08:10am – 9th January

Wonder

To mark the season of Epiphany the Reverend Canon Ann Easter leads a service reflecting on the theme of Wonder. Readings and testimonies describe both the journey of the Magi following a star to meet the new-born Messiah, and the faith journeys of Christians today experiencing wonder in different ways when walking with God.

With a sermon from author and theologian Dr Amy Orr-Ewing, and music ranging from traditional Epiphany hymns to festive worship songs.

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.)

God's message through Isaiah the prophet, is one of encouragement. On several levels Isaiah makes it known to the people that their exile is over and they will be led back to the Promised Land. In the dark, difficult times of defeat and exile, Isaiah's message is one of hope. How much do we need this message of hope for ourselves and our nation at this time? Not just a return to 'normal' but a reconciliation with God, allowing God to be in a prominent place in our lives, our churches and our country. The Israelites would return to their homeland but it would not be the same as before. The world situation had changed and the people of Israel would have to come to terms with the new political and economic reality. As we come out of the Pandemic, we will need to realise that the outside world has changed, and we have changed as well. It will take a long time for us to find a 'new normal', if we ever do.

In all this uncertainty, God is with us, and the message from Isaiah speaks to us today as it did to his first hearers. Firstly, God reminds the people that he created them, not just individually but he was also involved in forming them as a nation. The people of Israel are special to God because he chose them, of all the nations in the world. Through Abraham he promised a son and a great nation, through Moses he communicated his Law, and through the various kings and prophets he made them into the people they are. Despite their disobedience and their worship of other gods, the God of Israel has been faithful to them and now calls them out of their misery back to the land that he promised them.

God now calls them by name to return to worship him. I always find it reassuring when people call me by my name. If you are in a crowded room and you hardly know anyone, you are on edge, not knowing what to say, and figuring out how you can communicate with someone you have never met before. But then someone calls your name, you are put at ease because there is a link with the person you are talking to. The people of Israel knew that they belonged to God, but in exile they began to wonder whether God had forgotten about them. Isaiah reminds them that they are still God's people.

God says to the people, "Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you." What tremendous words these are, where God is expressing why he is releasing them from exile. The people of Israel did not deserve to be treated like this. They had rebelled against God, they had worshipped other gods, and even when they were at the temple, they 'paid lip service' to him. God sent them prophets to warn them but the people rejected their messages and ignored their

words. God could so easily have abandoned his people but he didn't. He gave them back their dignity and pride. He expresses his love for them in these beautiful words from Isaiah.

We need to remember that the words that God spoke to the people of Israel, he speaks to us today. We need reminding every so often that God loves us, we are precious to him. When someone says those words to us, it makes us feel special, it warms our heart and lifts our spirit, it gives us encouragement, confidence and a sense of security God is saying those words to each one of us today. We should know that we are precious to him, he allowed his Son to die for us, each one of us. He expressed his love to us in a way that no one else could.

The other part of the phrase from verse four is, "Since you are precious and honoured in my sight," just think of all the people who have been honoured in the Queens' Honours List. These individuals are so happy that they have been chosen, that their goods deeds have been recognized, but most of all, they will have a chance to meet the Queen. The Queen will speak to them and give them their badge of honour. I wonder how you would feel to be one of those people? This is what God says to us, he wants to honour us, he wants to tell the world how much he loves us, and the way we have served him faithfully for so many years.

The people of Israel were going back to the Promised Land, and as they entered Jerusalem it would be like a victory parade. God's victory over the mighty nations who tried to destroy his people. It was a clean start again for the Jews, God had forgiven their sin and now he wanted to build them up again so that they could be a light to the gentiles. And so, God says to his people, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you." And "Do not be afraid, for I am with you." Again, these are words which we can hold to our hearts today, as we go into the unknown of a new year. We do not know what to expect. Who knew as we entered 2020 what turmoil would come upon us over the last two years? There are always shocks and surprises for us individually, as a family, as a nation, and on the world stage. What we do know is that God is with us throughout this year. He will hold our hand and lead us, and sometimes when the going gets really tough he will carry us.

We need to be a people who acknowledge God's love for us in our lives. We need to live in that peace and security of knowing that God is always with us, and in the joyous knowledge that we are precious to him and that when we honour God with our lives, he honours us. I would like to leave you with some thoughts from Erwin McManus. "Be the human surprise. People expect you to be judgemental, selfish and condemning. What they don't expect is for you to be joyful, caring, gracious, selfless, and to give to those in need. When you wake up in the morning, choose to see beauty and walk in God's purpose for your life. If you do, you'll surprise the world."

Prayer Space

Prayer of Praise

Lord, as we embrace this New Year, with all the challenges and possibilities, help us to keep you at the centre of our lives, our worship and our activities. You are worthy of our devotion; you sustain us and you set a path for us so that we can fulfil the potential that you gave us at the beginning of our life. We are well on in our journey of life, and we thank you for this fresh opportunity of a new year. We thank you for the way you have guided us in the past, the way you have encouraged us to step out in faith, knowing that you are with us in all the uncertainty of life.

Lord, as we come before you at the start of a new year, we ask that you will forgive our waywardness and selfishness. Help us to start afresh in service to you, to feel your free and full forgiveness, so that we may have joy in our hearts, peace in our souls and your love expressed through our lives. Amen

Prayers for others

Lord, we come before you now to ask that you will deliver us from the Pandemic which we have experienced for nearly two years.

We pray for those who have lost loved ones, those with long term effects of Covid-19 and their carers.

We are so grateful for the vaccines which have been produced which have given us more freedom.

We pray that the vaccines will be available to the poorer countries so that everyone can be immunized.

We thank you for our Health Service staff who have worked so hard during the last two years and we pray that you will continue to protect them.

God of creation we pray that you will help us to save our planet from further harm.

We realise that drastic action is called for, and sacrifices will have to be made to our way of life, but we pray that you will enable individuals, communities and countries to make the right decisions when looking at the resources they use. Amen.

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!

Hymns and worship songs

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service:

Go forth and tell – SOF 738

Lord of all hopefulness – SOF 902, StF 526

How deep the Father’s love for us – SOF 780

Lord for the years – SOF 892, StF 470

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

Discussion Questions

Church is best done together but we know that this isn’t always possible - particularly if you’re housebound, isolated or even shielding. But why not contact a friend and arrange to watch the church service online or read the newsletter simultaneously and get in touch by telephone afterwards to talk about it. Below are some questions that might help you to reflect together!

1. How would you describe your overall feeling of last year?
2. What are you looking forward to this year?
3. What are you worried about this year?
4. Do you really believe that God is there for you?
5. What encouragement do you take from this passage?

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

January is often a time when we can take stock of the past, some people make new year’s resolutions when they recognise that some permanent change for the better is needed. In January we are reassessing the need for TOGETHER.

For those receiving TOGETHER in the post, you will have also received a reply slip and a self-addressed envelope for Nick at the Circuit Office. Please take the time to fill the form in and post it back so that we can ensure that TOGETHER continues to be relevant and is sent to the people who find it helpful.

For those receiving TOGETHER by email please fill in the online form
<https://forms.gle/69unmLxQuVQJ9asM9>

Thank you.

Face-to-face opportunities for worship across the Circuit

	December 2021 - February 2022	9th Jan 1st in Ordinary Time	16th Jan	23rd Jan Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	30th Jan Holocaust Memorial
Balderton	10:30 am	A Trowbridge	LA	Ward T	Bates
Charles Street	10:30 am	Falla CS / HC	Mathews	Bates	Falla HC
	6:00 pm	Adams	Bates HC	Falla	Hart
Collingham	10:45 am	K Trowbridge	Bates CS / US	Hucknall T	United Service at Parish Church HC /
Elston	10:45 am	Castle		Hibberts CS / HC	
Hope Community	10:30 am	Ward at H'ville	Falla at B'gate	Winnington at H'ville	Dalby at B'gate
Long Bennington	10:30 am	Bates CS / US	West	Gibson	Pearce
North End	6:00 pm	Bates CS	Winnington	LA	Bates
North Muskham	10:30 am	Hibberts CS / HC		A Trowbridge	Pailing
	2:00 pm		Hardy Café		
Southwell	10:30 am	LA	Hibberts	Falla	Cozens
	Other	Hibberts PicC / 2pm	Falla 4pm	Hibberts Fringe	
Sutton-on-Trent	10:30 am	LA Breakfast 9am		United at All Saints HC / 10am	
	Other		Hibberts CS / HC 2pm		LA Tuxford 2pm
Lectionary Readings (Year C)		Isaiah 43:1-7 Psalm 29 Acts 8:14-17 Luke 3:15-17, 21-22	Isaiah 62:1-5 Psalm 36:5-10 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 John 2:1-11	Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10 Psalm 19 1 Corinthians 12:12- 31a Luke 4:14-21	Jeremiah 1:4-10 Psalm 71:1-6 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 Luke 4:21-30

For full plan, visit the Circuit Website:
<https://www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk/newsroom/circuit-plan-dec-21-jan-22.html>

The Work of Christmas

by Howard Thurman

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
 When the star in the sky is gone,
 When the kings and princes are home,
 When the shepherds are back with their flock,
 The work of Christmas begins:
 To find the lost,
 To heal the broken,
 To feed the hungry,
 To release the prisoner,
 To rebuild the nations,
 To bring peace among others,
 To make music in the heart.*