



TOGETHER

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

Reimagining Life?

Article by Rev Peter Hibberts

New Year is traditionally a good time to take a step back and take stock. All of my school assemblies have been concerned with goals, resolutions and targets for the New Year. Have you made a New Year's Resolution? Perhaps, like many, you're reticent to make too many new plans for 2022 after 2020 and 2021 have been so unpredictable! The challenge in these times is to be optimistic enough to look forward to what lies ahead and creative enough to imagine how it might be different despite all of our fears and anxieties.

This week I heard some markedly different conversations about COVID. Omicron, it seems, has given a new dimension. I'm no expert so please go to a more reliable source if you want to know more but it seems that early indications show it to spread more but be less serious for most folk. I heard one so called 'expert' talking about it, for us at least, as becoming more like an 'endemic' or 'epidemic' than a 'pandemic' (which is all about how it spreads, how prevalent it is and how widespread it is) and that the time may be coming for it to be dealt with differently, perhaps alongside flu (annual vaccinations and protections for the most vulnerable) with some extra long-term precautions (masks in crowded, enclosed places such as public transport). Perhaps, like me, you folks are watching with baited breath to know how to proceed. We obviously need to keep all the precautions at present and follow all guidance, but I think we also need to start imagining, and planning for, some next steps as individuals, as churches and as a circuit. To simply sit in this liminal space until it's gone, without at least thinking about what we could be doing next, is having many negative effects and will not help us to be ready for the future, whatever it holds.

In my garden I have an old pot which still has last year's bulbs planted in it. I've left it, neglected it, tucked it away. This morning, as I passed it, I noticed green shoots poking out. The earth on top was frozen, the position is not ideal, but new growth is happening! I think, knowing the God we follow, we have every reason to be optimistic and hopeful, in faith. God is not done with us yet!

The Circuit Vision Team meet in two weeks time to ask God where God might be leading us as a circuit and I'm also excited by some of the conversations that are happening in my churches. God is doing new things! Please pray!

A passage that keeps coming to mind at present is Jeremiah 29:11:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Where is God challenging you this year? Where is God leading you, your church, our circuit, this year? What is the plan that God has for you? Whatever it is, and whatever challenges lie ahead, may God Bless you as you seek his face and seek that plan for your life.



1. Online Service

This week (16th January) our online circuit service will be led by Rev 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! (Also available to watch back at any time).

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:



Surprise!

Weekly Circuit Service Message | John 2:1-12 | Rev Nathan Falla

There is nothing like a good wedding! The opportunity for friends and family to come together to celebrate the marriage of two people who love each other, an opportunity for food, stories and a great celebration. In some cultures, weddings last for days and there are various traditions with wedding ceremonies



and celebrations; from who sits where in a ceremony, the bride having something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue, what order the speeches should be in, breaking a glass or a plate or even spitting at a new couple (certainly not encouraged at the moment).

In our Gospel reading today, there is a great wedding celebration held in Cana of Galilee, and the whole village seem to have been invited. It is thought that the wedding may have been of a relative of Jesus' mother Mary, as she seems to be the main reason why Jesus and some of the disciples had also been invited-almost as tag-alongs.

Jewish wedding celebrations could last as long as a week and it was the bridegroom's responsibility beforehand to ensure that there were sufficient supplies of food and wine. To get it wrong would be a serious social faux pas; it would reflect badly on the bridegroom and could even lead to legal proceedings!

In this wedding celebration a serious miscalculation had been made, and they ran out of wine. The bridegroom was in serious hot water, but somehow Mary finds out and comes to the rescue! She immediately thinks that Jesus can help, although he appears reluctant at first. It seems like Jesus really could not be bothered, maybe he just didn't want the attention, maybe he just wanted to enjoy the party.

What made Jesus change his mind, we do not know. His mother Mary may have given him one of those looks that says "son, you need to do something and do it now". What we do know is that Jesus instructs the steward to fill the six stone water-jars. These jars would have been substantial and would have been available so that the many guests could perform the necessary ceremonial washing rites before sharing in food.

Jesus instructs the jars to be filled with water, and then for some to be drawn out and taken to the steward. The result is amazing, water has been turned into wine, and not just any wine but the best wine. The steward remarks to the bridegroom "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now" (v.10). The wedding has been saved and John in his account records that this was the first of his signs and revealed his glory. We are in the season of Epiphany when we are reminded to be open to the God of surprises. God can surprise us at any time of the year, it does not

need to be a particular season in the church calendar. Nevertheless, the Gospel readings set by the lectionary week by week reveal a growing understanding of who Jesus is. Last week it was the baptism of Jesus and the announcement from heaven “this is my son, whom I love”, this week God’s glory has been revealed by the transformation of something very ordinary into something extraordinary.

The season of Epiphany is about those moments when we see something in a new way, they might be described as eureka or aha moments. If it was depicted in a cartoon, it would be one of those moments when a light bulb is turned on. John’s closing comments of this passage say that Jesus’ “disciples believed in him,” the miracle at the Wedding Feast in Cana seems to be a moment when the penny drops for the disciples and they begin to believe who Jesus is.

The light bulb moments for me as I read the Wedding at Cana is firstly Mary’s faith in asking Jesus to help in the situation and secondly the amazing transformation that takes place when Jesus does get involved. It is obvious that Mary trusts her son, she knows that she can go to him whether for something big or something little, and it is the same with Jesus. We are invited to share the whole of our lives with Jesus, that is what it means to be a disciple, a follower, a learner of Jesus but so often we hold back.

We can fall into the trap of either thinking that God could not possibly be concerned about me or even what can God do in this situation? But God is concerned about us, and in the big things and in the little things we can trust God, for God is faithful. We need to remember that we don’t need to try and do things on our own, we can ask for help. We can invite Jesus to be in every part of our lives.

We also serve the most amazing God of transformation, and our reading reminds us that there is nothing half-hearted about the transformation that God offers us both in the quantity and the quality. In the wedding of Cana the jars would have contained in total 150 gallons, or 680 litres of water -so when the miracle took place the equivalent of 906, 750ml bottles would have been produced. This was sufficient for the wedding to continue for some time. The comments from the steward also enforce that this was of superior quality, there was nothing inferior with the wine that Jesus provided.

God can do the most extraordinary things with our very ordinary lives, the really important thing is that we put our trust in God, and are truly open to shaping, moulding and transformation of the Holy Spirit that we may be even more beautiful. Let us not try and limit God, or put God in a box, but let God be God in our lives and in the life of the church.

Are we going to be open to God doing extraordinary things in our everyday ordinary lives? Are we going to be open to the everyday miracles that reveal God to us, that through them our lives may be transformed and we may be even more beautiful? I pray that we would.

Prayers

From Roots

Loving God, as we meet to worship you, may our eyes be open to see your glory. Your glory in both the expected and unexpected places; in your creation, in Jesus, in friends and strangers and in us. Forgive us when our eyes have been half shut, when we have been blind or unprepared to see you in others.

As your forgiven people, help us to live out your love that in our words and actions people may see you and may glimpse your glory. **Amen.**

Lord, we pray that your transforming power will be released, into places where people live in fear of the bullet and the bomb, where basic human rights are ignored, where people are trafficked or treated as slaves. As you turned water into wine, transform hatred into love. Lord, we pray that your transforming power will be released, into places where women and men are bitter because of perceived wrongs of the past, where jobs are hard to find even when sentences have been served, where there is no such thing as a fresh start.

As you turned water into wine, transform injury through pardon. Lord, we pray that your transforming power will be released, into situations of mistrust and insecurity, where people do not know who or what to believe, where fake news is rife and lying is an acceptable norm.

As you turned water into wine, transform doubt into truth.

Lord, we pray that your transforming power will be released, where people see no way of paying off their debts, where queueing at the food bank is all the future seems to hold, where homes or jobs seem nothing more than a distant dream.

As you turned water into wine, transform despair into hope. Lord, we pray that your transforming power will be released, to those who stroke the hands of loved ones nearing the end, to those who wait anxiously for the phone to ring, fearing the worst, to those who weep for loved ones now at rest.

As you turned water into wine, transform sadness into peace by your comforting presence.

Lord, we pray that your transforming power will be released, Use us, Lord, to bring understanding, consolation and love, strong in the assurance that it is in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are pardoned, and in dying that we are born to eternal life.

As you turned water into wine, transform us into your disciples, agents of change in a broken world. **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!

Circuit Plan

NEWARK & SOUTHWELL
Methodist Circuit

NEWS CHURCHES BUBBLE CHURCH WHO'S WHO CONTACT

NEWS - CIRCUIT PLAN DEC 21 - JAN 22

Circuit Plan Dec 21 – Jan 22

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Believe it or not we will soon be in the season of Advent, counting down the Sundays by lighting the Advent wreath. The observant amongst you will have noticed that the first Sunday of Advent was actually on the September-November plan as Advent is nearly as early as it can be!

Looking at the plan you can see the various services that will take place to help us in our Advent preparation, and the details for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services are on the back page. The first Sunday of Christmas this year falls on Boxing Day and the vast majority of churches have chosen not to have services. There will however be a service at Charles Street at 10.30am, and this will also be live streamed via YouTube.

Also looking at the plan you will see that Hope Community is now included as the church families at Broomsgate and Houghtonville have merged to form a new church family effective from 1st November. The plan clearly indicates where the services take place Sunday by Sunday as both buildings continue to be used for the time being. Southwell have also moved their morning service time to 10.30am.

January will see Covenant Services taking place throughout the circuit, with the invitation to once more renew or make for the first time the commitment to follow God revealed in Jesus Christ. Covenant reminds us of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and to truly be open to God calling us, leading us and transforming us. The plan concludes just before the start of Lent, before we prepare to remember

The Circuit Plan, detailing the Sunday services across the circuit and more, is now available at your church or online:

newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org

Songs included in this week's online worship

Be still, for the presence of the Lord (StF20/SOF40) [LINK](#)
 The Lord's my shepherd (StF481/SOF1030) [LINK](#)
 Lord, I come to you (StF471/SOF895) [LINK](#)
 Best of all is God is with us (StF 610) [LINK](#)
 Click [LINK's](#) to access YouTube clips 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 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. Do you have a wedding story to share?
2. What eureka moments have you experienced, when the penny has dropped?
3. What has surprised you in the reading and the message?
4. Where do we see God doing extraordinary things in our everyday ordinary lives?
5. Where are the everyday miracles and how is God transforming you into something beautiful through them?

In-person worship across the circuit during the next four weeks...

December 2021 - February 2022		16th Jan	23rd Jan Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	30th Jan Holocaust Memorial	6th Feb
Balderton	10:30 am	LA	Ward T	Bates	K Trowbridge
Charles Street	10:30 am	Mathews	Bates	Falla HC	Winnington
	6:00 pm	Bates HC	Falla	Hart	Hardy
Collingham	10:45 am	Bates CS / US	Hucknall T	United Service at Parish Church HC /	Castle
Elston	10:45 am		Hibberts CS / HC		
Hope Community	10:30 am	Falla at B'gate	Winnington at H'ville	Dalby at B'gate	Falla at H'ville / HC
Long Bennington	10:30 am	West	Gibson	Pearce	Bates HC
North End	6:00 pm	Winnington	LA	Bates	Falla
North Muskham	10:30 am		A Trowbridge	Pailing	
	2:00 pm	Hardy Café			Hibberts Café
Southwell	10:30 am	Hibberts	Falla	Cozens	Hibberts
	Other	Falla 4pm	Hibberts Fringe		Hucknall HC / 4pm
Sutton-on-Trent	10:30 am		United at All Saints HC / 10am		A Trowbridge
	Other	Hibberts CS / HC 2pm		LA Tuxford 2pm	
Lectionary Readings (Year C)		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	Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-13) Psalm 138 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Luke 5:1-11

For full plan, visit the Circuit Website:

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

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.