



TOGETHER

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

What is unity?

Revd Nathan Falla

I don't believe that unity means uniformity! As people we are all different; we look different, we like different things and we will have different gifts; some will be practical, others will be creative, some will be thinkers, others will be doers. It would be a very boring world, if we were all the same! Our differences are what make us special, and are not a reason why we cannot get along.

If we translate this to the Church, our local churches, our Circuit, our national denominations and the global Church then we are not the same either, however there can be unity in our diversity, and diversity in our unity. The week of 18th-25th January is set aside as The Week of Prayer for Christian unity, but what should we be praying about?

Paul writes in his first letter to the church in Corinth, chapter 12, giving the illustration of the body; the body made of many parts each with a part to play, and if we were all the same, then the body would look very strange indeed and the body just could not function! We need one another, the rich tapestry of diversity that we may truly be the body of Christ! Yes, we may do things slightly differently, we may not agree about everything, but we are one, we can learn from one another and appreciate one another, because we are family!

I had the privilege of training to be a Methodist minister in Cambridge and to be part of the Theological Federation. The Cambridge Theological Federation includes Anglican, Methodist, Orthodox, Roman Catholic and United Reformed institutions as members and both the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide and the Woolf Institute for the study of relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims as associate members.

The federation motto is: *Roots Down, Walls down* and for me this was best evidenced in the fortnightly Federation Worship and helped me to understand both how broad the church family is, but also how similar we are and our shared heritage. It helped me to more fully appreciate why I had chosen to be a part of the Methodist Church.

I greatly value being part of the Methodist Church which is a diverse family, that can hold different interpretations of the Bible in tension. I also believe that the wider church is all the richer because of the presence of the Methodist Church.

When I think of unity I think that there is more that holds us together than that drives us apart. The important thing is that we always listen with respect and acknowledge that although we may not all agree, we can all love God and love one another. We need to be authentic, recognising our diversity yet we are all one in Jesus Christ.

I hope we will never say, I don't need you.



Hard pressed on every side

Online Circuit Service Sermon | Reading 2 Corinthians 4:5-12
Revd Peter Hibberts

1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday for our online Circuit Service which this week is 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. 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 – 23rd January

Transformational Friendship

Rev Steve Stockman is a Presbyterian minister in Belfast; Father Martin Magill is a Roman Catholic Parish Priest in the city. They have been close friends and colleagues for several years. In this service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, they reflect on what they have learnt from each other, what they have achieved together and how friendship can be the beginning of transformation for individuals and communities.

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.)

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised with the way the last two years has gone but I'm encountering a lot more folk in crisis at the moment. In the past week I've found myself alongside three different folk in end of life care and many more folk who are struggling with work, health or relationships. It's a privilege to journey alongside folk in difficult times. St Paul describes the folk he wrote to in the first century AD (and us) as 'hard pressed on every side' and I have to say that's how it seems right now.

How do you feel right now? Are you 'hard pressed on every side'? If you are then I believe God wants you to hear the words of the bible passage above.

In this passage Paul describe his readers as 'Jars of Clay'. In Paul's time everyone would have had many 'jars of clay' in their houses as they were inexpensive and very versatile. A jar of clay could be used for anything from a kitchen utensil to a receptacle for the toilet. (Though I hope they had two separate ones for those varying functions!)

The analogy is beautiful. Firstly the way these jars were so widespread speaks of how many of us are in the same situation. You know, you're not alone in your struggles. Paul wrote to a church persecuted, challenged, finding life difficult. He wrote to human beings for whom life was tough. He could be writing these words to us. He captures our fragility beautifully. Being Christians doesn't make us suddenly superhuman, made of different materials that somehow withstand the world better. We may be in different boats and our contexts and experiences are unique, but remember: we're all in the same storm.

Sometimes I feel that fragile, like the smallest thing could tip me over the edge. I'd had a particularly difficult week leading up to a week last Thursday. I'd been slightly behind the pace for days, not keeping up with the workload or family life particularly well. I jumped in the car and rushed, having left a little late, for a school assembly in one of my villages, worried that I might not make it in time. I didn't speed, I hasten to add. (That journey doesn't allow speeding because there's always someone on your route who you're following, invariably below the speed limit!)

I got to a roundabout and it was busy, very few chances to go. Then there was large chance - enough for the person in front and, if I was quick, me too! I kept close and as they pulled away I followed. Except they didn't pull away. They had obviously been distracted or thought better of it

but they moved and then stopped and I inevitably didn't, well - I did when I ran into the back of them. I have to say that was the last straw - I audibly screamed in the car (at myself - totally my fault). I looked up to see if I could see the damage to the car in front and it looked like nothing had happened. Then they pulled off and carried on their journey as if nothing had happened. When I eventually got my space on the roundabout I continued but never caught up with the car I hit. It hadn't stopped anywhere ahead despite turning the same way as me. A minor miracle (as was the fact that our car was undamaged - save for a cracked licence plate which is easily replaced!!) Fortunately neither my car nor their's was made of clay!! (I'm contemplating whether the lack of damage may even be a miracle!)

We're all only ever a few circumstances away from crisis, tragedy, even breakdown. We manage to create a thin veneer, while we can, to show the world we're okay and at times we do thrive and it's not just a veneer, but actually we're all made of clay, we're all fragile. It's okay to be fragile, vulnerable, weak. In fact, the place where you should most be able to recognise your fragility, open up about your weakness, bring your vulnerability is church. This is not the place for strong, together, all sorted world beaters any more than a hospital is a place for well people.

The key difference for Christians is the light. Paul not only talks of the fragility of these jars but he points out that it is in these jars of clay that God places his light. He chooses fragile vessels to transport his blessings and light up the world. (Imagine small, hand-made pots with a tea light inside.) They are nothing special in and of themselves and yet are beautiful because of the light that emanates from them. That's our challenge.

Paul says that these jars of clay are 'hard pressed on every side'. They get battered and cracked but they are not crushed and certainly not abandoned. You may feel crushed at times and when we forget that God is alongside us we can feel abandoned but actually these cracks simply allow the light (God's blessings) to flood out in more places. Just take a moment to look at the picture below. This particular pot is battered and cracked but the light still floods out and it's beautiful!



Life is throwing a lot at us at present and if you feel 'hard pressed on every side', know that you are not alone. God is with you. It's okay to have cracks and not be okay. You are not abandoned and will not be crushed, God's presence is with you like the tea light. And we're praying for you too.

Prayer Space

Lord,
you have exalted your name
above the heavens.
Your name means grace and peace
and wonder to all who speak it
in faith and love.
You have chosen to use
weak and broken vessels
to be your eyes and hands and feet
in this world.
It seems, Lord,
that you often pass your glory
through the ordinary, the fragile,
the imperfect.
In this, Lord, we are honoured –
but humbled.

You ask us to mirror
grace, love and faithfulness to the world –
the very grace, love and faithfulness
eloquently displayed in Jesus Christ.
Through him, you promise to give us
all we need to live rich and holy lives
in our communities, our families
and in this world.

Mysterious God, what a great salvation.
We sinned, you forgave.
We turned away, you gave chase.
We rebelled, you paid for it.
We forgot, you remembered.
We are often faithless,
you are ever faithful.
We complain, you are patient!

Lord, do not allow us
to make excuses for ourselves,
hiding as we do
in the limits of our humanness.
Although we are perfectly aware
of how inadequate we are to the task,
help us to see ourselves as you do,
as reconcilers, as peacemakers,
as redeemed kingdom builders.
If we are dull, make us shine.
Lord, take these imperfect jars of clay and
make them to be holy cups of pure grace,
forged in your desires for us.

Make it so.

Amen.

by Robert Alan Rife
<https://innerwoven.me/>

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:

Lord, I come before your throne – SOF 894, StF 58

Praise is rising – SOF 2007, StF 64

O love that wilt not let me go – SOF 434, StF 636

Even though I walk – SOF 1753, StF 626

Over all the earth – SOF 1498, StF 63

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. What challenges are you facing right now?
2. What challenges are folk that you know of facing right now?
3. Where do you turn in the face of challenges?
4. When do you turn to God? How do you turn to God?
5. When have you turned to God and found him to be a strong tower?
6. How is God's light shining through you (through the cracks in your jar of clay)?

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Thank you to all those who have completed either the online form or sent in the reply slip, your responses are really helpful.

It is not too late for you to still post your reply slip to Nick or to fill in the online survey

<https://forms.gle/69unmLxQuVQJ9asM9>

Thank you.

In person worship across the Circuit during the next four weeks...

December 2021 - February 2022		23rd Jan Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	30th Jan Holocaust Memorial	6th Feb	13th Feb Racial Justice
Balderton	10:30 am	Ward T	Bates	K Trowbridge	Bates HC
Charles Street	10:30 am	Bates	Falla HC	Winnington	Mathews
	6:00 pm	Falla	Hart	Hardy	Falla HC
Collingham	10:45 am	Hucknall T	United Service at Parish Church HC /	Castle	Hall
Elston	10:45 am	Hibberts CS / HC			Hibberts
Hope Community	10:30 am	Winnington at H'ville	Dalby at B'gate	Falla at H'ville / HC	Beech at B'gate
Long Bennington	10:30 am	Gibson	Pearce	Bates HC	Hart
North End	6:00 pm	LA	Bates	Falla	Bates
North Muskham	10:30 am	A Trowbridge	Pailing		West
	2:00 pm			Hibberts Café	
Southwell	10:30 am	Falla	Cozens	Hibberts	Ward T
	Other	Hibberts Fringe		Hucknall HC / 4pm	Hibberts PicC / 2pm
Sutton-on-Trent	10:30 am	United at All Saints HC / 10am		A Trowbridge	Falla Breakfast / 9am
	Other		LA Tuxford 2pm		
Lectionary Readings (Year C)		Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10 Psalm 119 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	Jeremiah 17:5-10 Psalm 1 1 Corinthians 15:12- 20 Luke 6:17-26

For full plan, visit the Circuit Website:

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

Lord, when it is so easy to criticize, help me to encourage; when it is so easy to grumble, help me to be thankful; when it is so easy to hold back, help me to volunteer; when it is so easy to complain, help me to appreciate; when it is so easy to hold a grudge, help me to forgive; when it is so easy to put down, help me to build up; when it is so easy to be negative, help me to be positive; when it is so easy to be despondent, help me to be hopeful; and give me the will and strength to do all these things. Amen.

by Dick Arnold

Local Preacher in the Crewkerne & South Petherton Circuit
Methodist Prayer Handbook 2021/22