



TOGETHER

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

Ding dong, the committee structure is dead!

Reflections on Laura Stephens-Reed's article of the same name ([FULL ARTICLE](#)) | by Rev Peter Hibberts

These days I find online articles about church growth and development really helpful. We live in such fast moving times that getting something immediately relevant into print would be a challenge; the internet is more agile. I'm grateful to those forward thinking Christians I know who post engaging and challenging articles on social media. This week I came across a very interesting one posted by a member of the Learning Network which not only really chimed with my experience of church at the moment but also provided challenging thoughts about how we run our Churches.

In Methodism we love our committees, or perhaps we *did* love them. I've lost track of how much time I've spent at church and circuit level in the past five years firefighting the job of getting people into roles. Most of the roles have been historical, some are outlined in CPD and therefore we're told are necessary but actually I'm left wondering if we spend so much time trying to get people into roles in the mission of the church that we don't actually have any time left *for* the mission of the church. Stephens-Reed (SR) suggests that we compound this by gearing up to filling roles rather than discerning, 'how folks gifts might help the church live into its purpose.'

What is the problem with filling roles on committees? Well, times have changed. SR puts the difficulties down to a mixture of increased societal time constraints, difficulties in finding common availability (older folks not wanting to come out in the evenings and working families not available in the day - plus those with young families can't always find childcare). She says that people cannot and don't want to step into a role that could saddle them for 3-5 years with monthly meetings. Whilst these are all true, I think it's much simpler - we're bored of them! We've fallen out of love with them and we're voting with our feet.

What SR thinks we are doing is burning out our current leaders whilst failing to identify and develop the emerging ones (of every age). I certainly feel burnt out with the mechanics. I often feel like my arm is stuck in the machine and I can't seem to free it. The time sucked into keeping the machine going leaves me with no time to actually spend with folk, building up relationships, hearing where people are at and discerning where God is moving. At the same time I hear criticisms from folk who think our inability to adequately maintain the crushing machine is tantamount to negligence - like we're not doing it very well (which is true - the machine is crumbling). So what's the answer? SR makes some bold suggestions:

Send the structure on sabbatical: Sadly I think we had this opportunity with COVID but we've already picked them back up again - too quickly. What if we paused the business and stepped back for a while? Would it all really crumble? Sure we need to keep making key decisions and caring for our congregation but beyond that? Perhaps it's time for what she calls a 'proactive break' (one not forced by a pandemic).

Note where the energy is: After a pause, reconvene and talk values and missions. What has come to light? What is God saying?

Consider short term projects: I find this one interesting. What if instead of inviting folk to fulfil a place on a nondescript committee we invited them to help lead a short-term project? (Planning for a one-off event or specific transformation. Sounds more exciting to me and no 3-5 year commitment either!)

Make meetings worth participants time: Make time for meaningful discussion and open participation, smaller group discussions promoting voices; open questions that lead somewhere valuable.

SR concludes by saying '**So let's do it. Let's call time of death on the committee structure, bury it, and see what new life results.**'

¹ (If you want to know more, I suggest you read the whole article.) I'd love to hear your response to it!



Way maker

Circuit Service Message | John 14:1-14 | Rev Peter Hibberts

1. Online Service

This week (3rd July) our online circuit service will be led by Rev Peter Hibberts and will be broadcast 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 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 - 3rd July

SUNDAY WORSHIP 3rd July 2022

Father Brian D'Arcy considers what changes the Church might make in a post pandemic situation

I make this the penultimate in my series of eight where I've followed the I am statements of Jesus. This is really three in one (how very god-like!) This is actually a passage I've spent a lot of time in, not from the perspective of church but it's a passage which is often chosen for funerals. It's a passage that comes in the context of the disciples being troubled and so fits beautifully as a gentle encouragement to those troubled by grief.

As always, context is paramount. Jesus has just dropped the bombshell (John 13:33) that he is only going to be with them for a little while longer. It begins with Peter and then no doubt spreads to the other disciples - where is Jesus going? What's he talking about? Can't they come too? The disciples have left everything and had their lives turned upside down during the previous three years, I can understand their consternation!

When I was training as a local preacher, I had the privilege of being mentored by possibly the best preacher I have ever experienced. He was the kind of person that brought the best out of everyone he came across, he certainly made me feel several inches taller and strive to be a better person, a better disciples and a better preacher. I could have spent all day, every day with him and I don't think I was the only one to feel that way. He was also instrumental in me answering my call to ordained ministry. (It will be the four year anniversary of my ordination this weekend!) But things rarely last forever and God's calling on his life took him to an incredible ministry in the USA (his native country). The blow here was softened by the fact that I was being called to leave Stoke anyway, so even if he'd been staying, I'd have been going! But I would have loved to have followed him to where he was going - to continue to be his disciple as well as Jesus'. Have you ever had someone you've relied on leave you? Have you ever wanted to go with them but been told you can't? The disciples are 'troubled' at the thought of being left behind.

This is the analogy I often use when I meet a bereaved family, as we prepare for the service to celebrate the life of their loved one. We may fear death but I think many of us fear losing a loved one more - being left behind. Wouldn't it be great if we could all just be together forever?

Jesus' response to the troubled disciples is now one of the most famous passages from the Bible: "I am the way, the truth and the life." The whole of the Christian faith is encapsulated in those nine words. Jesus is not just the signpost, but is literally **The Way!** He is not just truthful but is actually **The Truth**, he is not just a life giver but actually **The Life!**

What better three antidotes to the human condition and they've been relevant antidotes to every situation, at every time, in every age.

First of all, **The Life**. This was partly covered by the previous I am statement, the resurrection and the life, but I don't think this is limited to resurrection. This is about Jesus as the life we live as well as an antidote to death. Look at how many of the I am statements include life: the bread of **life** (6:35); the light of **life** (8:12); the door by whom we might have **life** (10:10); the Good Shepherd; who lays down his **life** (10:11); the resurrection and the **life** (11:25); the way the truth and the **life** (14:6) and arguably (though not explicitly) the vine is about being connected for **life**-giving nutrition! (15:1). It's all about life. God the son is the source of all life, the saviour of life and the well-spring that allows us to live life to the fullest! Every which way you look at it, **Jesus is life!** When you feel lacklustre, tired, **life-less** the antidote is Jesus! Like the mentor I talked about, Jesus will help you to live your best life, to get the best out of life, to have abundant life and to be a life-giving influence with those around you. The more

time you spend with Jesus in prayer, study and reflection on him and his teachings, the more you will be able to live and give **life!**

There's **The Truth**. Boy do we need that right now. If you're anything like me, you don't know where to look in the news or in society to find reliable sources of truth. Possibly never before have we seen such an erosion of truth. We are bombarded with information like never before and can never be sure if it is information or disinformation. We live in the age of fake news, subjective 'truth' and manipulative media. I grew up with three siblings and there was many a time when something had been taken, broken or done that my parents wanted to get to the bottom of. We would each be taken (usually into the front/dining room) to be questioned. The phrase that was often used was, "Jesus knows." Of course my parents were right, Jesus did know. The problem was, *they* didn't! (When you have four children who close ranks, the parents don't stand a chance!) Let me tell you, if you are finding yourself in a truth drought, are not sure who or what to believe, you can do a lot worse than getting on your knees and asking Jesus for guidance. When surrounded by many voices, we need to tune into Jesus' voice (just like we heard about when we studied the good shepherd - the sheep recognise his voice and listen only to him). I know that's not easy - I don't hear an audible voice either but trust that God is with you, leading and guiding you and if you're not sure - keep praying.

Finally, there's **The Way**. It's the first in this trio but in the context of the passage it's actually central. Jesus talks about going ahead, preparing a place so that the disciples can follow on. He is literally the Waymaker! Have you ever found it difficult to follow directions? I'm terrible at giving them but have seen many hilarious attempts at giving directions on how to do things. Migratory birds in the U.S. were once tagged with metal strips reading "Wash. Biol. Surv."--for Washington Biological Survey until a farmer from Arkansas wrote to the department: "Dear Sirs, I shot one of your crows, My wife followed the cooking instructions attached--she washed it, boiled it and served it. It was the worst thing we ever ate." We look in so many places for a steer on how to get by (sometimes in places that were never intended to be the way). Where do you go for direction when you don't know how to do something or get somewhere? SatNav? YouTube? A book? A trusted friend? I suppose when choosing who to follow we would all plumb for someone who has been where we are trying to get to or understands what it is that we're struggling with. If you want to know how to get somewhere, you would surely call someone who has been there. If you're struggling with an appliance or gadget, you'd sure go to the manufacturer for the best advice on how to get it to work. Jesus is literacy both! Jesus, God the Son, was present at creation, by him all things were made (Colossians 1:15) he knits us together our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13), he is literally the manufacturer! Not just that, but if the place we are going is to God the father (ultimately through death) Jesus has already made that journey. Just a few chapters after this wonderful passage John documents the walk to the cross and in John 20 we have documented Jesus' arrival at destination **life!** Having made the full journey into the grave, Jesus emerges triumphant having blazed a trail that we can all now follow.

Folks, the implications of this three-in-one 'I am' are huge, monumental and they should be life-changing as well as life giving. How much do they impact your life? How do you live in the light of the saviour who is **The Way, The Truth and The Life?** When in your life do you need to see Jesus' **Life-giving** impact? Where do you need to hear words of **Truth?** Where do you need directions, to find the **Way?**

3 I don't know what your question is, but Jesus is the answer!

Prayer

Adapted from Waymaker by Leeland

Jesus, you are, moving in our midst,
we worship You, we worship You.

Jesus, You are Way maker, miracle
worker, promise keeper, light in the
darkness My God, that is who You
are, that is who You are.

And even when we don't see it,
You're working, even when we don't
feel it, You're working. You never
stop, You never stop working.

You are here, touching every heart,
we worship You, we worship You.

You are here, healing every heart,
Healing every heart, we worship You,
we worship You.

You are here, oh, turning lives
around, we worship You, we worship
You.

You are here, mending every heart,
we worship You, we worship You.

Jesus, You are Way maker, miracle
worker, promise keeper, light in the
darkness My God, that is who You
are, that is who You are.

God as we journey, may you be to us
the life we live; may you be to use the
truth we need to hear, may you be to
us the way for us to go.

In every area of our lives, in the
struggles, the confusion and grind,
be the way, the truth and the life.

Jesus, You are Way maker, miracle
worker, promise keeper, light in the
darkness My God, that is who You
are, that is who You are.

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!

Songs included in this week's online worship

Holy Spirit you are welcome here [LINK](#)

Amazing Grace (My chains are gone) [LINK](#)

Waymaker [LINK](#)

I stand amazed at the presence [LINK](#)

For YouTube songs click the LINK

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. Have you ever had someone you've relied on leave you? Have you ever wanted to go with them but been told you can't?
2. How much do these attributes of Jesus (way, truth, life) impact your life? How do you live in the light of the saviour who is The Way, The Truth and The Life?
3. When in your life do you need to see Jesus' Life-giving impact?
4. Where do you need to hear words of Truth?
5. Where do you need directions, to find the Way?

In-person worship across the circuit for the next five weeks...

June-August 2022		3rd July	10th July Action for Children	17th July Rural Mission Sunday	24th July	31st July
Balderton	10.30am	Hart	Morley HC	Winnington	A Trowbridge	Beech
	Other	LA 4pm				
Charles Street	10.30am	N Falla HC	LA	Palling	West	N Falla HC
	6pm	Hart	N Falla HC	Hardy	Sulston	Hart
Collingham	10.45am	L Blatherwick	LA	N Falla	K Trowbridge	Hall HC / US
Elston	10.45am		Breakfast at Hope Hawtonville 9am		Hucknall HC / T	Pearce
Hope Community	10.30am	Beech at B'gate	N Falla Breakfast / at H'ville / 9am	Gibson at B'gate / HC	Hardy at H'ville	N Falla SoP / at H'ville / 3pm
Long Bennington	10.30am	Ward T	A Trowbridge	Dalby T	N Falla HC	Winnington
North End	6pm	Ward	Beech	Mathews	N Falla HC	LA
North Muskham	10.30am		Dalby		Hibberts	Hart
	2pm	Hibberts Café / HC		Hall Café		
Southwell	10am	Hibberts	Pearce	Hibberts HC	Ward	C Falla
	Other	N Falla 4pm		Hart 4pm	Hibberts Fringe	
Sutton-on-Trent	10.30am	Hibberts SoP / 6.30pm	LA Breakfast / 9am	Hucknall HC / US / T	United Service at Parish Church HC / 10am	LA at Tuxford Café / 2pm

The new Circuit Preaching Plan is now available from the circuit website (where you will find all service details):

*www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk
or contact your local church.*

If you haven't been in-person for a while, maybe it's time.

Kintsugi Hope - 'discovering treasure in life's scars'

Following on from the Bouncing Forward event on 16th June (if you missed it you can watch it via Charles Street you tube channel via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPu6RAJg32c>) we are going to be hosting an open house at Charles Street on the 9th July at 10.30am. This will be a relaxed chat over coffee to find out more about Kintsugi Hope Wellbeing groups with a view to a new group starting this September. Rachel Kenward of Charles Street Methodist Church will be there and will have the kettle on ready to chat over tea or coffee. You're welcome whichever church you are from (or even if you have no church to call home!)

