



TOGETHER

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The future of TOGETHER 90 not out, not quite yet

Revd Nathan Falla

Well, can you believe that we have reached issue 90 of the Circuit version of TOGETHER which came together in Autumn 2020. It is always good to review why we are doing something, and whether it is still serving its purpose, and sometimes this can take considerable time as the options are weighed up and a decision is eventually made.

At the November Circuit Meeting the question was raised with more people attending face to face church whether it was necessary to continue to produce TOGETHER and to post it to those who were unable to receive it electronically. In early January a reply slip accompanied the sending out of TOGETHER for those who receive it by post, to discover whether people were still wanting to receive it and the invitation for feedback. At the same time an online questionnaire was created so that those receiving TOGETHER by email had the same opportunity to respond.

The responses received were really helpful! Not only did it give the opportunity to review the distribution list, and as result TOGETHER has been posted to fewer people either because they felt that they no longer needed to receive it or because they could receive it in a different format. It also confirmed that for some, TOGETHER is a real lifeline, providing worship material to those who are unable to attend face to face worship. However, there was a realisation among many that it was good whilst it could continue but it was time limited.

The February Circuit Meeting discussed at length whether or not to continue TOGETHER and could not make up a decision, at the June Circuit Meeting the matter was referred to the Circuit Leadership Team. The Circuit Leadership Team have decided from September to only produce TOGETHER on the second and fourth weeks of a month, with the aim of moving to a monthly Circuit Newsletter once ideas have crystalised. Rather than providing the sermon material in advance of the Sunday, the twice-monthly TOGETHER will provide the act of worship that has taken place the week before.

For the month of August, TOGETHER will stop completely, but the weekly *Worship at home* material produced by the Methodist Church will be provided with a bulk mailing sent out with the final weekly TOGETHER at the end of July. This also means that the often specifically produced Circuit YouTube service will stop, with the online offering either being streamed live from Charles Street or using the recorded service produced for Balderton online.

It is hoped that these changes will release the ministers to focus on other priorities whilst also being committed to enabling those who are housebound to feel connected to church but in a different way.

My thanks to all those who have contributed to TOGETHER by writing articles, preparing envelopes, folding and posting out TOGETHER. We will see where the future takes us.

Every blessing

Nathan



Living God'way

Online Circuit Service Sermon | Jennifer Winnington
3 reflections around the three readings

Amos 8:4-7 | Taking time to rest

Listen up, you who walk all over the poor with your designer shoes; you who buy cheap and sell dear, marking the seasons by the rise and fall of the market, not caring about the cost to those who can least afford it; not evading taxes but certainly avoiding them – because 'only poor people pay tax'. Making Britain great again, hate again. Paying peanuts to the poor – after all, they're only slackers and shirkers, even those who make our high-price trainers, or work all hours to make our wheat-free fast food. Remember, pride comes before a fall. And the Lord has a long memory. And a longer arm.

Composed during the eighth century BC, the book of the prophet Amos is among the earliest written texts in the Bible. What stands out in this work is its absolute focus on God's requirement that the people of Israel and Judah show mercy and demonstrate justice.

In short, Amos' people may be 'God's chosen', but that does not free them from the obligation to play fair. Amos warns the people against false dealing, trampling on those in need and ruining the poor. God's justice and covenant is shown in practical ways: it is about giving fair prices and sharing out the goodness of the land with fair measures. Amos' prophecy is a counsel against greed, and – by emphasising the importance of sabbath rest – a direction to place commerce in its proper place. We seem so often to have lost the importance of rest in our busy lives. Amos emphasises the need for Sabbath rest. Where has that gone today?

I am currently well into training for the London marathon, going on runs a maximum of three times a week. Just as the body needs rest to recover, especially at my age, so we need a time of rest so that our spiritual body may recover and become stronger.

Amos suggests that when we take God seriously and take the rest he offers us, we shall live more justly and kindly in the world.

Luke 16:1-13 | Right motivations

A number of years ago, the 'Jesus Seminar' – made up of eminent New Testament scholars – took votes on whether Jesus actually said the words attributed to him in the Gospels. The scholars argued that in the process of passing on Jesus' words some got simplified, or smoothed out, or expanded and explained. In the end they claimed that less than 10 per cent were Jesus' words exactly as they came out of his mouth (not everyone agrees!). However, the one parable they had absolutely no doubt about was the dishonest manager, because if it had not come directly from the mouth of Jesus, the Church would surely have had no qualms about tidying it up or discarding it altogether. Even the most hardened sceptics agreed that it must have had cast-iron credentials as a saying of Jesus. But does that make it any less puzzling? In telling this story, is Jesus taking the dishonest

1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday for our online Circuit Service which this week is led by Jennifer Winnington and newly 'On Note' Local Preacher Jeff Proctor.

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 – 17th July 2022

Festival Manchester

Earlier this month Festival Manchester, described as "the biggest Christian mission in a generation passionately sharing the love of Jesus Christ in words and actions with the hardest-to-reach young people and communities," visited Manchester's Wythenshawe Park. Hosted by the Message Trust and Luis Palau Association in partnership with churches across the North West, the festival line up of Christian artists included the Kingdom Choir, Matt Redman and Guvna B. The event was led by Sammy Jabangue and Lindz West with preacher Andy Hawthorne, OBE.

manager's side or not? Verses 9 and 11 seem to offer opposite interpretations of the story. At least one interpreter sees the story essentially as a warning.

On this basis, the manager is commended not for his dishonesty but for his recognition of the seriousness of the situation in which he finds himself and his determination to do something about it. The manager is about to be sacked. So he takes urgent action designed to protect his future, not so much by cheating the master but more by using part of his – the manager's – commission to remit to some of those who owed debts.

Perhaps indeed, the manager had been charging beyond the normal interest rate, so that the reduction suggested by the manager is actually redressing this, whilst still appearing to be generous. One might almost say that the central character was attempting a record, one of a level of dishonesty. To be dishonest, there has to be an element of persuasion.

In our current political situation, it is difficult to know who to believe. Currently, how do we know for sure that we can trust what the politicians say? Is dishonesty just an acceptable part of our society? Surely not. Are there circumstances in which what we sometimes call 'white lies' are appropriate? Are we required to 'speak the truth in love' absolutely always?

What about cases where we are required, at least for a time, to maintain confidentiality? For example, my husband John, as a former civil servant remains bound by the Official Secrets Act not to reveal some things which he learned. After over 20 years there is little important that he still remembers, but nevertheless he remains aware of the obligation.

Are our motives always pure? This Gospel passage certainly raises issues about all our motives. How often do we do things because they suit us? Or because we think (like the manager in the story) they will make our life in the future easier? What makes motives Christian?

1 Timothy 2:1-7 | Speaking truth to power

There is evidence in the letter to Timothy that it was written at a time when the Church was coming to terms with being in a new relationship with the Roman Empire and the wider civic world.

Today, we live in an era where secular humanism and multiculturalism mean that the Church is not so firmly 'established' at the core of civic society. And society as a whole – and the Church with it – is fractured over a range of issues. How should that affect our attitude to, engagement with and prayer for, those in positions of political power and civic influence?

In the UK we sing in our national anthem, 'God save our gracious Queen'. What about those in positions of power who are not so gracious?

Or those, within a democracy, that we do not see as 'our' leaders? Does the description of Jesus as 'a ransom for all' influence our thinking here?

Prayer Space

Prayer after reflecting on Amos

Lord God,
you give us time for work and time for rest,
time for activity and time for relaxation,
time for noise and time for quiet.
Help us to use our time aright,
to balance what we do for our own sake
and the sake of others,
and to offer our use of time
to your greater glory. Amen.

Prayer after reflecting on Luke

Forgive us, loving God:
when we trumpet our good deeds,
and show off to impress others;
when we sacrifice integrity for popularity;
when we seek attention
more than we seek you.
Give us a quiet confidence
that has no need to boast,
and that puts integrity before success,
so that we may be people of depth and
honesty, to your glory. Amen.

Prayer after reflecting on 1 Timothy

Creator God, when we face hard decisions
help us to do so with integrity and with
courage,
neither ducking the issues
nor causing unnecessary offence.
Help us always both to discern honestly
what you are doing in the world
and to join in joyfully. Amen.

Prayers for others

Lord, we pray for a world
where money talks and money acts;
for politicians who set out with high ideals,
but may have been compromised;
for nations and their leaders
where money for weapons is found,
but not for the needs of hungry people.
And yet, we realise that money is
necessary, and we pray:
for the services that care for people,
while having to work with diminishing
budgets;
for the financial services that place profit
above customer care; and, for ourselves,
for guidance in making careful choices.
Help us in our dealings to be just and fair;
to be true to our ethical values even when
we make small purchases; to think of how
our gains may be losses to others.
Money is not evil – it is the love of it.
Let us not love it for its own sake;
let it be an agent for good in the world,
used to promote just and equal
community.
We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

Hymns and worship songs

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service:

God in his love for us – StF 727, H&P 343

Beauty for brokenness – StF 693, SOF 664

All I once held dear – StF 489, SOF 646

For the healing of the nations - StF 696, SOF 1235,
H&P 402

Hear the call of the kingdom – StF 407, SOF 1819

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. Having read the articles, how best can you live God's way?
2. How easy do you find it to rest?
3. What is the place of truth? Is it OK to lie at any time?
4. What makes our motives "Christian"?
5. How can we more effectively pray for those in authority?

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

June-August 2022		17th July Rural Mission Sunday	24th July	31st July	7th Aug
Balderton	10.30am	Winnington	A Trowbridge	Beech	Hucknall T
	Other				LA 4pm
Charles Street	10.30am	Pailing	West	N Falla HC	K Trowbridge
	6pm	Hardy	Sulston	Hart	at North End
Collingham	10.45am	N Falla	K Trowbridge	Hall HC / US	Morley
Elston	10.45am		Hucknall HC / T	Pearce	
Hope Community	10.30am	Gibson at B'gate / HC	Hardy at H'ville	N Falla SoP / at H'ville / 3pm	Dalby at B'gate
Long Bennington	10.30am	Dalby T	N Falla HC	Winnington	Gibson
North End	6pm	Mathews	N Falla HC	LA	Hibberts
North Muskham	10.30am		Hibberts	Hart	
	2pm	Hall Café			Hibberts Café / HC
Southwell	10am	Hibberts HC	Ward	C Falla	Hibberts HC
	Other	Hart 4pm	Hibberts Fringe		Gibson 4pm
Sutton-on-Trent	10.30am	Hucknall HC / US / T	United Service at Parish Church HC / 10am	LA at Tuxford Cafe / 2pm	Winnington US

Pray for the President & Vice-president

The Revd Canon Graham Thompson and Mr Anthony Boateng took office on June 25th at the Methodist Conference. You can follow their year on the Methodist Church website (just the diary for July-September is currently available).

Graham has asked that people uphold them in prayer and if you would like to join an email prayer support and be informed of particular concerns and areas for prayer then please email Colin Beckett on colin1244@gmail.com and he will keep you informed.

Graham has already hit the road running and has had engagements at Southlands College, London and Hartlip Methodist Church, Kent. Graham's Facebook page is also well worth a follow.

