



TOGETHER

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

Why Pray?

Article written by Rev Peter Hibberts, based on 24-7 Prayer Course Materials

What's your experience of prayer? It's been suggested that everyone prays (regardless of belief. In my wife's testimony she talks about the time after she (at the age of nine) lost her mum to cancer. She wasn't a Christian at that point but when in times of need she would speak to her mum (I'm sure that's quite common). She would describe this, looking back, as a prayer life - though she now directs her prayers to God, through Jesus.

Prayer is probably the part of my faith I understand the least (with God generally being a close second!) I know it works, of course I engage in it, but am I prayer full enough? No! Could I benefit from a better prayer life or a better understanding of prayer - definitely!

William Temple, the then Archbishop of Canterbury is credited with saying:

“When I pray, coincidences happen, and when I don't, they don't.”

Over the next 8 weeks or so (we might have a few breaks) I plan to follow the 24-7 prayer course (co-written by Pete Grieg the author of 'How to Pray') with a small Monday evening group on Zoom and will be feeding in some of the teaching into the services I lead. This course is designed for anyone who wants to grow in their relationship with God. You may be new to faith and prayer, you may be very experienced in prayer. I hope there'll be something for everyone and you may even be the one to bring that something to the group. If you'd like to take part, do get in touch and I'll add you to the group list so that you can receive the materials and the Zoom links. If you don't like zoom or are not free to join in, you can study alone or with a friend - the material is easy to access online and each session has a 20 minute video that is really accessible.

As a taster of the first session I ask the question: Why pray? Grieg tells us that the word from prayer comes from the Latin '*precarius*' which has two meanings: 'to entreaty or petition' (as in to pray) and 'to be uncertain or precarious' (as in vulnerable!) I find that beautiful. Human life is indeed precarious - we perhaps know that more now than ever. It's been hard to walk that precarious walk over the last 18 months, the uncertain has left us bereft of our comfort zones, our securities and perhaps that has left a void - we've been lost. We have a choice of how to respond to that, do we wallow in our precarious position or recognise someone bigger, who has a plan for us, and choose to walk precariously (prayerfully) with *him*.

The idea of a prayer *walk*, I think, is a great analogy. It's just really simple journeying with God. Grieg tells us to 'keep it simple, keep it real, keep it going.' It is about building a relationship, which as we know from earthly relationships cannot happen without being together in one form or another. Join me this week, get in touch to join the group, or [CLICK HERE](#) to start the journey with session 1.

the
prayer
course



1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday for our online Circuit Service which this week led by Rev 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. Circuit 'Zoom' Coffee Time is changing!

More and more folk are attending face-to-face services but we're also committed to those who can't yet, so we changing our Zoom coffee time. From July 4th the coffee time will be run by Richard Miller and will not just involve Sunday's but also some midweek sessions. If you'd like more details and to join the distribution list please contact Richard by email: richardjmiller17@sky.com.

There is also 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.

3. Radio Services

BBC Radio 4 (Also [online](#).)
08:10am - 13th June 2021

Exile and Return

A service from Rugby School which explores the parallels between the experience of those in education during the Coronavirus pandemic and themes of exile and return in the bible.

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.)

Strongholds

Online Circuit Service Sermon | 2 Samuel 5:1-10 & Mark 5:1-6 | Rev Peter Bates

When David became king of Israel and Judah, he looked around for a place he could make into a fortress. It didn't take him long to see that Jerusalem would make the ideal place. The problem was that the Jebusites were already lived there, and it seemed that it would be impossible to take it from them. The Jebusites even boasted to David that, "the blind and the lame can ward you off." David knew that they would not capture the city by force alone, but he also knew a weakness that the fortress had. David sent men up the water shaft to take the city by surprise, and he then defeated the Jebusites.

A stronghold gave security to David. From there he could send his armies out to expand his kingdom, and it also gave him stability to build a home, and later, to think about building a temple for God to dwell in. Strongholds and fortresses have many advantages to them. They give us stability and security. In difficult times we can hide behind their walls. In prosperous times they allow us to be more adventurous, and leave our fortress to explore and advance.

In the story in Mark's gospel, we read of Jesus return to his home town of Nazareth. He spends a few days there, perhaps visiting his family. "When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. Where did this man get these things?" they asked. What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles!" The people were amazed at his teaching. They could not believe that it was the same boy who they used to see playing in the streets. But their hearts started to harden against him because they knew who he was. There was no mystery around him. He was a familiar figure in Nazareth. They knew his mother, Mary, and his brothers, James, Joseph, Judas and Simon, and also his sisters. He wasn't like a visiting Rabbi speaking in the synagogue, someone they didn't know, and who had a bit of mystery about them. That created some excitement. But when Jesus came to town, people wanted to see this 'small town boy made good'. They knew all about him. Familiarity breeds contempt, and their hearts were not moved by him or by his teaching.

Mark's gospel reports that, "He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people." And Jesus, "was amazed at their lack of faith." The fortress that the people of Nazareth hid behind was their belief that because they were descendants of Abraham, they were Ok. But Jesus had come to challenge them to repent and get right with God.

Sometimes our fortress can be a prison, which holds us in, and holds us back. Some Christians can be like this with their church

buildings. Nothing can be done to alter the building because it needs to stay the same as when it was built, and this may be true of some churches. Other Christians can be the same with worship. Their stronghold is the style of worship, and no other style should be introduced to the church. Many Christians have hymns as their stronghold. Some people like traditional hymns and there are many which are tremendous worship songs, with inspiring words and stirring music. And there are new worship songs which can move us just as much as the old hymns. Some congregations will only sing the new songs while other churches will only sing the traditional hymns. Songs and worship styles can become a fortress and a prison when we are not open to try something new.

There are all kinds of strongholds that we can have as Christians but we need to allow the Spirit to move us when our fortress becomes a prison. It is not easy to change. The people of Israel faced a dilemma. Jesus was preaching about repentance and teaching about God's love. To some Jews this was amazing teaching which brought the Scriptures alive, but to others, it was an attack on the traditions that they held so dear. Many Jews responded to Jesus' teaching and later became disciples but others refused to budge. They were not going to change their way of life or the way they worshipped. But Jesus could see the consequences of their hardness of heart. Less than forty years after his death the Jews rebelled against the Romans, and the Romans responded by destroying the city and the temple. The Jews had to find another way of worshipping God, and develop a way of life without the sacrificial system of the temple.

God has challenged us in the last eighteen months, as to what is important to us, as Christians, about our buildings, our worship, and our way of life. Jesus couldn't believe the lack of faith among the people of Nazareth. Are there strongholds that we need to relinquish so that we can move on in our faith? What is God challenging us to take up, and what is he challenging us to lay down? We need to come before God to ask him to guide us in the way forward.

There is a tremendous contrast in chapter six of Mark's gospel. We read how the people of Nazareth were overfamiliar with Jesus because they thought they knew him. And a few verses later we read how the disciples did amazing things because they believed in Jesus. In a way the disciples knew Jesus far better than the people of Nazareth. The people had seen Jesus grow up from being a boy to a man, some twenty plus years. The disciples had only known Jesus a couple of years, and yet it was the disciples who were willing to give up their strongholds to follow Jesus. The people of Nazareth clung onto their strongholds, and they didn't grow, they stagnated in their traditions. The disciples flourished because their stronghold was Jesus – the Rock, and they knew whatever they faced Jesus would be there for them, their stronghold and

Prayer Space

Lord, you are a God of miracles, of power and might, and you are also a God of love and compassion. We read so many wonderful stories of you in the Bible and our hearts are encouraged and lifted by the way you changed peoples lives. Although these are stories from long ago, we know they are true today. We join with the angels in worshipping you. Thank you that your Spirit is with us in our churches and communities

Forgive us Lord, when sometimes we are like the people of Nazareth with our overfamiliarity of you. When you can do little for us or through us because of our selfishness or our unbelief. Lord, renew us by your Spirit, give us a fresh vision of who you are, and what you want to do in our churches and our communities. **Amen**

We pray for protection for people around the world from Covid-19. We pray that you will guide the authorities in the decisions they make about their response to the virus, and enable them to have the resources to combat the disease.

We pray about the economic situation in each country. We ask that as we come out of the Pandemic you will enable these countries to grow in a safe and environmentally friendly way, especially to encourage young people to train and be meaningfully employed.

We pray for all those who face racism on a regular basis, that you will help them to respond in a positive and constructive way. We pray for organisations and authorities that they may deal with racism within the workforce at every level, and that they will promote equality in all situations. **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!*

24-7 Prayer Course

As you may have read above (or in the last newsletter) we're running a study group focussed on prayer. It's evolved slightly and will now cover the 24-7 Prayer Course.

I (Rev Peter Hibberts) will be running a study group on Mondays from July 5th onwards, on Zoom (details available on request). There will be eight sessions (though it may not run for 8 weeks in a row.) and will focus generally on teaching from the Lord's Prayer, though not exclusively. For more information, contact me: Peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk.

Songs...

Colours of Day (StF 167) [LINK](#)

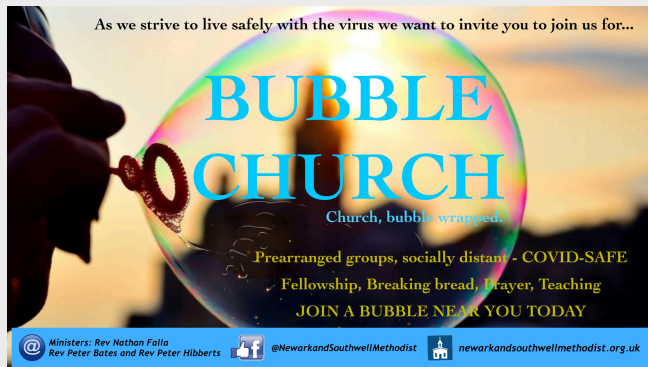
There's a light upon the mountains (StF 188) [LINK](#)

When I survey the wondrous cross (StF 287) [LINK](#)

O Praise the name (Anastasis) [LINK](#)

Click 'LINK's to access YouTube clips of each song.

Bubble Church Questions



**Would you like to be part of Covid-Safe face-to-face church?
Join a bubble today by getting in touch with your minister.**

1. What are your fortresses? When you feel threatened or insecure, where do you turn?
2. Where do you find security?
3. Where do you call home? Is it where you live now or perhaps your generational family home.
4. Are you the kind of person who likes to leave your comfort zone and be adventurous, or are you someone who would prefer to stay in the safety of your fortress?
5. In what ways can fortresses and comfort zones hold us back?
6. How can we build strength to be more adventurous?
7. How can we make Jesus our stronghold and be willing to give up our earthly strongholds? Make this the focus of your prayer time.

For more information checkout the Bubble Church guide with risk assessment on the Circuit Website: <https://www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk/newsroom/bubble-church.html>

Global Hunger Appeal

More than 41 million people in 43 countries are teetering on the brink of famine. Without immediate action, women, men and children will lose their lives.

This is a global hunger emergency. The Covid-19 pandemic, violent conflict and the climate crisis have all increased global hunger. Now, people in countries including South Sudan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Burkina Faso are facing the very real threat of starvation.

Families desperately need food and clean water to survive. If we act now, we can prevent unnecessary deaths.

[CLICK HERE TO TAKE ACTION](#) or visit ChristianAid.org.uk

30-6-21

Families activities...

AS WE BECOME MORE FACE-TO-FACE AGAIN WE'RE REFLECTING ON WHAT THE NEW NORMAL WILL LOOK LIKE, PART OF WHICH IS HOW WE USE THIS NEWSLETTER. IF YOU VALUE THE FAMILIES' ACTIVITIES IN THIS FORMAT, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH SO THAT WE KNOW WHETHER OR NOT TO CONTINUE THIS PROVISION.

The weather has been a little unpredictable lately, so this week I want to encourage you to 'pray the weather' with your family!

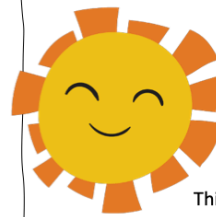
Maybe you could try making a weather chart to keep a record of the weather each day, and also keep a record of your prayers so that you can see how God answers them over the coming days and months.

Weather prayer hunt

Pray the prayer that best matches the weather or draw your own weather symbols to hide around the house, search for them and then pray a prayer that matches the symbol.

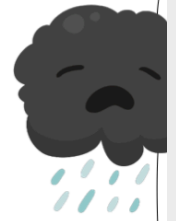
A sunny prayer

Think of something that makes you feel happy and sunny inside – turn it into a **sunshine** thank you prayer for God.



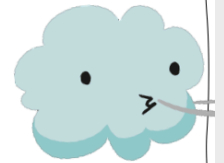
A rainy prayer

Think of something that makes you feel sad inside – bring it to God and ask God to help, remember no problem is too small or big for God.



A windy prayer

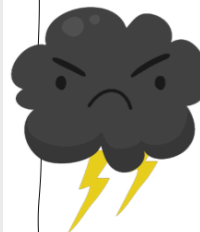
What is something that makes you excited and energised? Pray and ask God to fill you with the **Holy Spirit** to give you even more energy and enthusiasm to use for Him.



A stormy prayer

Think of something that makes you feel stormy and angry inside.

If it is something that makes God angry too - Pray a Justice **thunder** prayer asking God to make things right.



If it is something that God would not want you to be angry about – Pray a make things brighter **lightning** prayer asking God to help those involved to forgive each other and make things right.

A rainbow prayer

The rainbow is a symbol of God's promises of **hope** – pray for all those in the world who need hope and comfort at the moment.



The future of TOGETHER...

As we move forward to a new normal, we are taking some time to reflect on what that new normal will look like and listening to the views of folk from around the circuit.

As part of this, we are evaluating the TOGETHER newsletter from September onwards. If you have a view on the future of the newsletter, please do get in touch (email Rev Peter at peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk).

If it is to continue, we need to find a way for it to be sustainable. This may well include having a circuit editorial team who can put the newsletter together. Without this, it may not be possible to continue. If you can volunteer, please do get in touch.