

# TOGETHER

*only physically apart*

Elston | North Muskham | Southwell | Sutton on Trent

## Easter *could* NOT be cancelled.



*Many thanks to Karen and Paul Birks who transformed the **SMC Christmas Tree** into an **Easter cross** which would have been decorated on Easter Day with flowers brought by the whole congregation. With Easter Day worship being scattered, they instead decorated it from home and posted the pictures on FaceBook ([www.facebook.com/SouthwellMethodist/](http://www.facebook.com/SouthwellMethodist/)) for us all!*

**I**t was the most striking part of the wonderful Easter message from Her Majesty, The Queen, this week. The news, though I hope it wasn't news, that Easter could not be cancelled.

I sit looking out of the study window, this morning, at blues skies and at the blossom on the trees, a sure sign that Spring has sprung! That's another thing that cannot be cancelled by the Coronavirus! Indeed as soon as a seed is planted in moist soil, it is almost inevitable that it will sprout. In a similar way, when Jesus entered the tomb on Good Friday, the conclusion of events was inevitable. A friend at college once stopped me as I walked with my Bible in hand and said, "You don't want to read that, he dies in the end!" I don't think she'd read the end!

I'm praying for serenity for folk, this week. The prayer for **Serenity** (see below) asks for a form of wisdom where we can distinguish between the things that we can change and the things that we cannot. It helps us by focussing us on the things we can change and allowing us to let go of the things we cannot. This isn't easy, but with serenity we can make a difference where possible and cast our other cares on Jesus. We are bombarded at present with the ever unfolding, often bleak, realities of crisis - most of which are far out of our (and possibly anyone's) control. To focus on these could drive us to depression.

As we enter the Easter octave (the eight days of Easter), focus not on the things that you cannot change, the restrictions opposed on us, but instead on something that you can do to make a positive difference to yourself or others and know that all of the rest is in the hands of the God whose hands cannot be tied:

**"But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power."** (Acts 2:24, The Bible, NRSV)

THE CHURCHES MAY BE EMPTY TODAY,  
BUT SO IS THE TOMB!

HAPPY EASTER!

makeameme.org

# The Great Sabbath

John 19:31 (NIV)

The Great Sabbath, in Judaism, is the Sabbath immediately preceding Passover but it is commemorated in the Christian calendar as Holy Saturday, the Saturday before Easter Day. It is known as the great Sabbath since it is on this day that Christ 'rested' in the tomb. In John's gospel it is referred to as a Sabbath that was a 'high day' or a 'special sabbath' (John 19:31, NIV).

## 1. Circuit Services

Like Jesus, our worship is alive and continues this week including 'Worship Wednesday' (led by Revd. Nathan Falla and Sunday worship. They'll all be hosted on the 'Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit' YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF-CBiFzWL81CUJrKjC1Psw>) and details will also be on the 'NewarkandSouthwellMethodist' FaceBook Page (which can be accessed without a FaceBook account - [Click Here](#)).

## 2. Spring Harvest Home

This week (and available to watch back) we have the unique opportunity to visit Spring Harvest at home! Visit [www.youtube.com/SpringHarvest](http://www.youtube.com/SpringHarvest) or click to go now!

## 3. TV Services

**Sunday Worship BBC One**, 10am,  
The Reverend Canon Leigh Richardson leads the service for the second Sunday after Easter from St Davids Cathedral in Pembrokeshire.

## 4. Radio Services

**Sunday 19th April** (Also [online](#).)  
BBC Radio 4: 8:10am, A virtual service from Holy Trinity Platt, Manchester, reflecting on the experience of the disciples after Jesus' resurrection when Jesus came to them in the upper room.

*If all this this baffles you - call me or email: [peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk](mailto:peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk).*

The concept of Sabbath seems to have been lost somewhat. In Judaism is it compulsory to rest on the Sabbath, as God rested on the seventh day, following creation. In Christianity Sunday is often considered as a Sabbath but Sunday, despite some trading restrictions still existing, for many is just another day and yet rest is so incredibly important.

When Jesus was buried in the tomb, on 'The Great Sabbath', the disciples were forced to stop. While Jesus body rested in the tomb, all they could do was wait, grieve and ponder their shattered dreams. Perhaps you feel like that at present.

I wonder if one of the gifts of the Coronavirus (and there are some) is to make many of us stop. (For those who are key workers and particularly those on the front line perhaps the danger right now is that they cannot rest - we must pray for them and do all we can to protect them.) We have built our world as something of a relentless rat-race where if you snooze, you lose! We've lost the concept of Sabbath and rest.

'Throughout the Bible, the Sabbath is much more than a day off. It's more of a pause to rest and refocus on what life is truly about.'<sup>1</sup> The concept of Jubilee in the Bible is part of the Sabbath concept. Every seventh year was a Jubilee year - a kind of sabbath year - in which rest was not just for people, it was a rest for the environment. In a jubilee year the people we instructed to let the land rest and not to plant or harvest anything (Exodus 32:11, the Bible). It follows the same concept as leaving fields 'fallow' to rest them and it can bring a greater yield in the long run.

Paul Williams, Chief Executive of the Bible society sees our current environmental state, brought about by Coronavirus, as the world 'being given a Sabbath without asking for one'. Folk around the world are noticing nature's response to the drastic reduction in aviation, road, rail and sea travel. As much of industry is forced to halt, the skies in places have been visibly freer from pollution. The world seems to be breathing differently.

<sup>1</sup> Material taken from 'Is Coronavirus the end of the world' a message by Paul Williams, Chief Executive of the Bible Society.

Perhaps many of us are also enjoying the chance to reconnect with family and spend quality time together. At the very least families with children not at school are spending more time at home! Folk I've spoken to have got to grips with many things that they've wanted to do for a while but not had time - gardens everywhere must also be in their best state for a while! We are also noticing neighbours and connecting with them in different ways (albeit at a safe distance!) People, in their daily exercise, seem to be discovering their local environment through walks and cycle rides.

During this time we've also been forced to reflect and re-evaluate our priorities (an important Sabbath act). What are essential journeys, what are essential, 'key', roles in our society? Being forced to stop has the effect of re-focussing us. Actually, sometimes we don't like it - which is precisely why we like to keep busy! I plan, this week, to take three 'quarterly days'. I'm lucky enough to work in an organisation that values this reflection time and builds it in to the role of a minister. We take sabbaticals at regular intervals and are required to take a smaller, three day, sabbatical every three months. (If you can't get hold of me between Wednesday and Friday this week, you'll know why!)

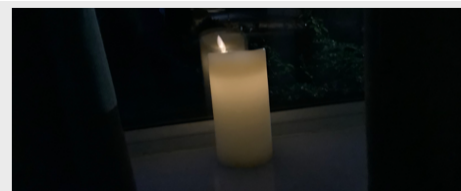
I encourage you, even if you're a key worker or a parent with children at home, to build in some sabbath rest. The busier we are, the more important it is - in fact we'll give more if we can because, like the fallowed fields, we'll have more to give.

The late John O'Donohue, the Irish poet, author and priest captured the idea of Sabbath in a time of crisis in this poem:

This is the time to be slow, Lie low to the wall Until the bitter weather passes. Try, as best you can, not to let The wire brush of doubt Scrape from your heart All sense of yourself And your hesitant light. If you remain generous, Time will come good; And you will find your feet Again on fresh pastures of promise, Where the air will be kind And blushed with beginning.

*John O'Donohue*

As we lie low to the wall, may God bless you with a time of Sabbath, with blessings where you least expect them. May you wait, not like the fearful confused disciples on the Great Sabbath, but with eager expectation of the fresh pastures of promise.



## Prayer space

This space is designed to unite us in prayer. Why not spend a little time in prayer at 7pm each evening and light a candle in a prominent window to show the community that you are praying.

Specific prayer requests (or requests to join the SMC prayer chain) can be sent to Colin Beckett [colin1244@gmail.com](mailto:colin1244@gmail.com).

## The prayer for serenity

More prayers at: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus/prayers-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time;  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
taking, as He did, this sinful world  
as it is, not as I would have it;  
trusting that He will make all things right  
if I surrender to His Will;  
that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with Him  
forever in the next.

**Amen.**

*Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)*

## Prayer points:

1. Pray for those ill with Coronavirus, especially those alone and isolated and their loved ones who cannot visit.
2. Pray for all as we continue to live with the requirement to remain isolated in our homes.
3. Pray particularly for the police who, at this time, are taking on the role of enforcing the restrictions. May God guide them in this important role.
4. Pray for the NHS, for much needed supplies and protection over front line staff and their families.
5. Pray for all key-workers and their families as they continue to serve us and keep much needed infrastructures going.
6. Pray for church leaders as they try to find ways to connect folk and provide spiritual support.



## Hymns and songs to reflect on...

Be still and know that I am God (StF 18) [LINK](#)

My soul finds rest in God alone (StF 633) [LINK](#)

You give rest to the weary (StF 657) [LINK](#)

Will your anchor hold (StF 645) [LINK](#)

God to enfold you (StF 648) (No link available)

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

## Help for the isolated

The Sutton-on-Trent Buddies Corona Virus Helpline is up and running - please pass the word around and do not hesitate to call if you need help with shopping, prescriptions or other errands. There are thirty volunteers, all ready and keen to help. The number to ring is 01636 351615. or email [suttonbuddy@outlook.com](mailto:suttonbuddy@outlook.com)

Southwell Town Council can provide support by calling 07874780931, 07874780932 or 01636816103.

North Muskham's Buddy Scheme can be reached by contacting Andy Willey on 07967138724 or [muskhambuddyscheme@yahoo.com](mailto:muskhambuddyscheme@yahoo.com).

If you would like to volunteer you should also make contact using the above details.

## Giving

A number of folk have enquired about how they can give to the work of the church in these times. Of course for those who give by standing order or bank transfer, giving will continue but for this who give using the offertory plate or envelope, this is not possible at present. Your giving is still greatly needed and appreciated (and remain part of your act of worship) so may I encourage you to continue to give, perhaps by putting the envelopes on one side until such as time as we are able to present them in our next gathering of worship.

## Keep in Touch

There will be lots of opportunities to keep in touch during this time, not least by picking up the phone, to each other, or giving me a call (Rev Peter: 01636812166) or sending an email ([peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk](mailto:peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk)). Can I recommend the Newark and Southwell Methodist Church FaceBook page to you in particular. It's an open page so it's available to all and [you needn't be on FaceBook to view it](#). You can access it at [facebook.com/NewarkandSouthwellMethodist/](https://www.facebook.com/NewarkandSouthwellMethodist/). Don't worry if you're not a member of Southwell Methodist Church, we're all in this together!

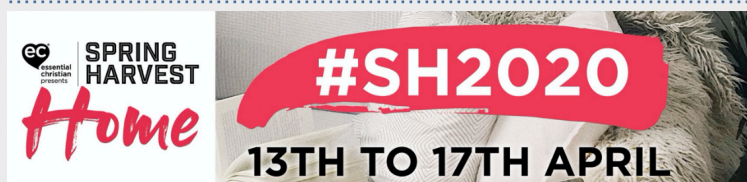
Also, spread the word to anyone you think would appreciate receiving this newsletter. Let them know of our FaceBook pages and if you come across someone who might benefit from receiving it please get in touch.



15-4-20

## Families:

[families4SMC@gmail.com](mailto:families4SMC@gmail.com)



If you have access to YouTube, you can access a wealth of online videos from Spring Harvest (a Christian festival that would normally happen this week but has gone online following the lockdown). These are wonderful resources for all ages and all free! Their YouTube Channel "SPRING HARVEST" can be found by clicking [HERE](#), and there is a full schedule available [HERE](#). The schedule refers to 'live' premieres but all of the videos can be watched back at any time. The Hibberts family are opting to start each day (9:30am) with the 'BIG START' which has music, drama and ideas for families. To find the kids activities you will need to scroll down on the YouTube channel, but the resources for all ages are clearly listed - enjoy!

### All age activity:

Last weekend we celebrated Easter and I've been thinking about the disciples on Easter Saturday. They had just seen their friend Jesus die and would have been really really sad. They didn't want Jesus to die, they wanted him to stay with them for a long time. They were scared and sad, but something happened to cheer them up! On Easter Sunday Jesus came back to life and saw his friends again to tell them he was OK and was going to live with his Father in heaven. WOW! When we are sad or worried, it is good to remember that story from the Bible... Jesus is always with us even though we can't see him, and we can talk to him when we feel worried, lonely or afraid. He is always with us.

### Prayer idea:

If your child is feeling sad or afraid, this activity gives them the chance to give their worries to God and makes the point that when we have given our worries over we should leave them there!

**You will need:** Wool, paper and pens, scissors and a bin or bin bag.

Using wool, string or ribbon make a "web" on the floor - spread the wool out so that it criss-crosses over the floor. The children can all help with this - it doesn't have to be neat! Look at the web and comment that it looks a bit of a jumble! Say that when we are worried about things our thoughts can look a bit like this web - all tangled up with worries which make it hard to think straight. Ask the children to find a place to sit on the web. Give out scraps of paper and ask them to write on them the things that they worry about. (Children who aren't worried about anything can write "thank you God that you give me confidence!") They can fold their papers over if they don't want them to be read by anyone else. The papers should be put on the web around the children.

Give the children a minute to pray quietly, telling God the things that worry them. Say that when we have told God our worries we should leave them with him and trust him to deal with them. The Bible says all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28), so we can trust God to work things out and use our energy on other things!

Ask the children to pick up their "worries" from the web. Then they should cut the web up using scissors or pick up the individual bits of wool/string/paper that make the web. When the floor is clear each child should make what they have picked up into a ball. They should take the balls and throw them to the opposite side of the room, and as they do so everyone should shout, "Thank you God that you take our worries away from us!" Explain to the children that often we take back worries that we have given to God - but we don't have to! We can trust God with our worries.