

TOGETHER

only physically apart

Elston | North Muskham | Southwell | Sutton on Trent



Reflections on post-lockdown church 2. A call to prayer!

We're having lengthy discussions at present about both reopening our buildings and, more deeply, what the church fit for post Covid-19 might look like. I hope you're also reflecting on this and I really hope you're praying too!

According to a recent article from hope1531.com, "a principle of spiritual renewal is that it always follows periods of crisis, change, and transition." We can see the closure of our buildings and our inability to get back to public gathering as a crisis in itself, or as an invitation. Perhaps crisis provides the fertile ground for us to see God's face and to hear God's voice.

Interestingly enough, the first permissible opening of churches is for private prayer and, whilst Methodist Churches are not usually accustomed to being places of private prayer, I think that this is an invitation to make prayer *our* first move. 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face...then I will hear from heaven...and heal their land." We desperately need to, "pray and seek [God's] face." You see, it's also true that revivals are born out of prayer. (I was recently reading about the Fulton Street revival of 1857-58 which came around the time of one of the worst financial panics in American history. At a time of crisis, prayer filled the void and many turned to God. It began with one person offering to meet folk for prayer and quickly grew to 3,000 folk meeting each week.)

I need to repent of my lack of prayer, personally and be honest with you that I have never been one for organising many prayer meetings - in fact, perhaps we all need to repent of our lack of prayer - we've perhaps made ourselves too busy to pray when in fact we are too busy *not* to pray. So **let me call you, the church, to prayer. I'm calling you to turn to God, and ask God what God is saying to us at this time.** I've been praying at 8:20pm (20:20) on the 20th of each month during 2020 and invite you to join me this Saturday for the next. I'll be on Zoom from 8pm on 20th and begin praying at 8:20pm as I believe we need to get 'together' on this. I'll also be organising more Zoom gatherings (as this is, I think, our best platform to do this 'together' at present) and I'd love you to join me. That's not to say you can't participate if you're not on Zoom as we all need to spend time in individual, private prayer seeking God's will. **What I'm calling you to is regular, intentional prayer time** and please get in touch with what you feel God is saying. Also, look out for some conversation opportunities for us to seek God together and take this opportunity to STOP, LOOK and LISTEN to God.

Saturday
20th
June

Prayer
2020

20:20

zoom.us Meeting ID
831 7770 9380
Password: 987028

Ruth is for Ruth!

Ruth chapter 3 (NRSV) (For background and chapter 1-2 see TOGETHER 12-13)

This month we focus on Ruth and not only is R for Ruth but also **Resisting, Redeeming** and **Restoring**. We left the last chapter with Ruth at breaking point, at some risk, gleaning (gathering leftover harvest) in the fields; finding the blessing of the protection of Boaz and starting to belong. The problem, at this point, is that though Ruth has some protection in Boaz, they are still widows (Naomi and Ruth) and this chapter continues the journey of Naomi, through Ruth, to finding full security.

It's hard for me to imagine what it must have been like to be on the outside of society, without security or protection, not knowing where the next meal will come from or how we will provide for our daily needs. A question: what length would we go to to gain that security? How far would we travel? Who and what would we get involved in? For many on the fringes of society, even today, these are real moral and practical dilemmas that result in folk getting involved in crime and prostitution. These were real dilemmas for Naomi and Ruth.

I love the character of Naomi in this story. She is so determined (and quite cunning actually!) Ruth, in chapter 2, has the idea to glean, but in observing (albeit second hand) Boaz's attentions, Naomi knows exactly what to do. It's unclear what Naomi's motives are - is she thinking of Ruth or about her own security and the security of their property, which is at risk without an heir? Either way, who can judge Naomi for taking this opportunity? In the Bible notes I'm reading, Rachel Starr invites us to see this chapter from many angles. Naomi could be 'concerned' or 'careless' with Ruth's reputation (her approach to Boaz was far from above board) Is Ruth a willing participant or an exploited victim? Is Boaz a righteous redeemer or a hapless fool? We can't know, but it's an A-grade Hollywood story and I warn you - it's an 18+! (I must confess, when I got to the end of chapter 3 I had to read on - I couldn't put it down!) Naomi's proposition for Ruth involves an illicit liaison at the dead of night, in a place infamous for illicit liaisons, with a man who was under the influence of alcohol. Ruth was instructed to bathe, anoint and put on her best clothes (which was a sign of a widow being ready for remarriage - but also possibly a sign that a seduction was planned!) Make no mistake, this was a very vulnerable position for Ruth to be in. She comes 'stealthily' (says verse 7, at midnight!) which shows her caution - she knows how risky this is - it's so dark that Boaz doesn't even recognise her! What happens next is anyone's guess but know that in biblical terms to 'lie down' when a woman is present almost always implies sex, to 'uncover' tends to be in relation to nakedness and 'legs' (which is a more accurate translation of feet) is used elsewhere as a euphemism for genitalia (you were warned!) What happens between midnight and morning is left to the reader's imagination but the pouring of grain into Ruth's cloak until it 'fills out' could well be referring to the result being a child! Phew!



Worship Opportunities

1. Circuit Services

A variety of worship opportunities will 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](#)). Tune in today!

2. TV Services

Sunday Worship BBC 1 (also ONLINE)

A service for Father's Day from Holy Trinity Platt Church in Manchester led by the Rector, Rev Dr Paul Mathole, filmed before the closure of all church buildings was announced. With songs and hymns recorded by Songs of Praise in 2017.

3. Radio Services

BBC Radio 4 (Also online.)

A service exploring fatherhood and God as Father, with Ben Lindsay, Guvna B and Lord Hastings on Father's Day.

4. Zoom Coffee Time!

Our Zoom Coffee Time 'gathering' is now a weekly thing and is quite a circuit gathering with folk from various churches meeting each other for the first time in some cases! I'm really excited that after participating in a wide variety of services we can all converge together! Therefore we'd like to invite you (regardless of which service you've tuned into - or even if you haven't!) to join us for coffee on Zoom. You'll need to provide your own tea/coffee and biscuits but we'll provide the welcome. Zoom details are given in our services or available on request.

If all this this baffles you - call me or email: peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk.

So what are we to make of all this? This is after all the Bible, in Bible month and we're trying to hear God speak through it. Our first R is **'resisting'**. We need as we read this to see the lengths that folk still go to in resisting ruin and in search of security and belonging. We need to read this, says Rachel Starr, 'with attentiveness to gender-based violence'. We need to hold in prayer all those victims of a cruel world that leads to many desperate folk turning to desperate measures. It's refugee week, this week, and who knows the journey of a refugee before they reach our shores. In study group last week we heard the story of an Eritrean refugee who left Eritrea an asylum seeker and arrived in the UK with a child born along the way and possibly conceived along the way. Please pray. May God have mercy.

But the next R is **'redeeming'**. There is irony that Boaz lies down 'at the end of the heap of grain' - this is after all a story about hunger to harvest. The story is incomplete but she asks Boaz to spread his cloak over her (a reference to protection - like a wing?) and she receives, from Boaz, a blessing. I want to believe that Boaz doesn't take advantage here; actually he seems to behave very lawfully, indicating that there is a closer relative but promises that if they will not act - he will. The threshing floor was a place of gathering, distributing, transactions and thanksgiving and this symbolism is full! She is not yet redeemed but in the process of being redeemed. The job is not complete but Ruth does go home with an abundance of grain. We can see also the process of our final R, **restoration**.

Personally, let me ask you some questions on which to reflect. Are you at home spiritually? Do you know the protection and provision of the God that created you or are you still in need of redemption? Do you need a saviour? Sexual references aside, what lengths would you go to, to find yourself under the cloak or wing of the God who created the heavens and the Earth? Let me tell you, you need not conspire, or go in the dead of night, you are not at risk because God is good and before God you can make yourself totally vulnerable. Sit at the feet of God (that is spend time in God's presence and ask God's Holy Spirit to fill you). Allow the God of all to spread 'his' wing over you and measure out six lengths of blessing for you. When Christ died on the cross for each one of us, it was for the 'soul' purpose of redeeming us, of becoming our kinsman redeemer and making a way for us to be under his wing. The redemption is not complete in that we still live in a broken world (Ruth's redemption will come in the next chapter which is equally enthralling!) but even now whilst we wait for the pie in the sky when we die, we can enjoy God's blessings as the cake on the plate whilst we wait. We can know the peace that passes understanding, even in these incredibly difficult times, which will guard our hearts and minds in the love of God and the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

If you want to know more about faith in Christ or have chosen, prompted by Ruth chapter 3, to place yourself under the God's wing, please call me - I'd love to talk and pray with you!

Prayer Space



This week we have another 20th of the month and so I'll be praying again at 8:20pm, this time on Zoom so please join me if you can or let me know that you'll be praying privately at that time:

Zoom.US Meeting ID

831 7770 9380

Password: 987028

I feel strongly that we need to pray for revival in our land at the moment. You could structure your prayers in the model of 2 Chronicles 7:14:

1. Humble yourself before God. sometimes this means physically kneeling or bowing. It can simply be a time of quiet to focus on God.
2. Seek God's face. Ask God to reveal Godself to you by the power of the Holy Spirit - the prayer 'Come Holy Spirit' is simple and powerful.
3. Repent. Bring before God the state of our world, the state of our church, the state of our lives and say sorry. Resolve to follow God's will and ask God to reveal it to us.

If you have specific prayer requests, do get in touch. If you would like requests to be shared around the SMC prayer chain contact Colin Beckett colin1244@gmail.com.

For more prayers visit the [Methodist Church Website prayers for the Pandemic Page](#).

A poster for '30 Days with Ruth' Bible Month. The top half has an orange background with the text '30 DAYS WITH RUTH' in white. Below this is a black silhouette of a woman's head in profile, facing left. Inside the silhouette, the text reads: 'Sundays: 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th 10:00am onwards Newark & Southwell Methodist Circuit YouTube Channel'. Below the silhouette, on a dark background, it says: 'Zoom Home Groups: Tuesdays: 9th, 16th, 23rd and 20th 2:00pm and 8:00pm All Welcome. For Zoom login details contact Rev Hibberts'.

All hail power of Jesu's name! (StF 342) [LINK](#)

All my days I will sing (StF 343) [LINK](#)

Beyond these walls of worship (StF 547) [LINK](#)

And can it be (StF 345) [LINK](#)

The UK Blessing (online only) [LINK](#)

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

Help for the isolated

Elston residents, if you need support during the lockdown please contact the Good Neighbourhood Group through Sandra Wright on 07773 689736 or Linda Fitzgerald on 0798937115.

The Sutton-on-Trent Buddies Corona Virus Helpline is up and running - for help of any kind the number to ring is 01636 351615. or email 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.

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

Looking over one another with love

As part of my on-going reflections on Church during lockdown, this week I have been reflecting on our pastoral care for on another. The best pastoral care comes as a family, 'looking over one another with love' and I'm so grateful for all the folk who have been looking over fellow church family members with a phone call, an email, a letter or practical support. That said, it's easy when we are out of each other's sight to also be momentarily out of each other's minds. With that in mind I want to invite you, if you feel isolated to call me and we can chat and pray. Also, if you suspect that someone else would benefit from a call from myself as their minister, please do give me a gentle nudge! There are many times I've had a nudge from someone (and even from God) and the subsequent call has been a timely one! Perhaps God is even nudging you to call a church family member and ask how they are!

Do get in touch if you need to on (01636) 812166 or peter.hibberts@methodistorg.uk.

I am involved in home school at times and Friday is my rest day but if you call when I'm not available the machine will take a message and if you give me a couple of good times to get back to you. I promise I will!

Families:

families4SMC@gmail.com

CHILDREN'S CHURCH AT HOME!

During social distancing we are providing full children's church session for our younger church family members each week. You will be able to download the plan every week here:

<https://www.southwellmethodist.org.uk/childrenschurchathome.htm> so that you can do it at home as a family to help your children explore the theme that Rev. Peter preaches on in his service.

These activities may require some resources but they should be things you can gather up from your homes. There is also a PDF of activity sheets which children can complete during the service. All you'll need for this is a pen/pencil/colouring pens and to print off the sheets before the service starts. Enjoy!



A 4th 'R'... REFUGEE

When Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, she was a foreigner, a stranger and people didn't think highly of Moabites. She must have felt scared and lonely... we don't know what her accommodation was like, but we do know that she ended up 'gleaning' in fields which was hard work and put her in a dangerous position.

This week it is 'Refugee Week' which seems fitting as we study the book of Ruth. I encourage you as a family to explore the Red Cross resources on their website: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/teaching-resources> Exploring the stories of refugees can help us to empathise with Ruth's story in a modern day context.

This short video from Sesame Street may help you explain the concept of empathy to younger children: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_1Rt1R4xbM

Here is an activity you can try from the Red Cross website (it is aimed at ages 7+):

- Imagine that empathy is a seed. That seed can grow into a tree. It has roots and also branches.
- Draw this seed on a piece of paper. Underneath draw the roots. Write five kind things we can do to build empathy and understanding with others inside or underneath each root.
- Now draw the tree. Draw branches and leaves. On each leaf write a positive thing that can come from understanding people. Think about how it can be positive for you, for the other person, the community and the wider world.

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). 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/. 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.