

TOGETHER

*only physically apart*

# TOGETHER is 10!

I know, I know, ten is not that big but I'm really hoping that we won't still need it at 100, so I thought I'd make a fuss of 10! It's been 10 weeks in lockdown and for some the end may be in sight. This week we heard talk of schools and other public spaces being opened. We approach these with a note of caution though. Schools will have a phased reopening and even with that there is mixed response with some concerned that it's too soon. I suppose for many it can't come soon enough but for others there is still fear.

I had a conversation with one church member this morning who said that they just wanted to know. We all want answers about how we'll get out of this but perhaps this just signals that we are, many of us at least, in a disillusionment phase. Experts are suggesting that this 'trauma' will lead us to respond in three phases (though they are not prescriptive, your experience may be different) firstly the 'heroic' phase (which we've all seen in the way folk are rallying round); the final phase is 'hopeful reimagining' (where we consider a positive future, transformed by the trauma); but perhaps for most we're in the middle phase of 'disillusionment'.

If you are wondering what the exit from lockdown may look like, well, I can't really answer that with any confidence, but know that conversations are happening. One thing that does look extremely likely is that our first experiences of post-lockdown church will not be business as usual. It's unlikely that we can open 11 churches at once (even if the lockdown is lifted for church buildings many of our members and indeed local preachers and worship leaders will still be shielding, possibly myself included). Instead it may be that we can open a couple of buildings and will still maintain an online weekly service. (It's likely that many of you will feel you need to stay home also and shield as you may well have been.) On top of that, some things may not be possible initially - singing for one, as it increases the risk of passing on the virus. The main answer is that it will be church, folks, but not as we know it. All this may contribute to disillusionment rather than hopeful reimagining.

So what are we to make of this? Well, I'm increasingly drawn to the experience of the early church at these times. The first disciples and even the second generation Christians probably wanted to know what church would be like (though they probably didn't even have a name for it!) Of course they didn't have to mourn the loss of some of what they knew church to be, it was all brand new, but they also weren't shackled by convention. It was a brave new world. That said, it was not ground zero, it wasn't a blank canvas, they brought the best of what they knew previously (much of it Jewish) with them but were able to shape church as they, or rather the spirit of God, wanted.

Our challenge in the weeks ahead is not only to seek God for the healing of the wounds that this trauma has no doubt caused, but also to seek God for what we must keep from our spiritual heritage, what we must tweak, what new things God is bringing out of this and what we must stop. Jesus talks in the gospel of new wine needing to be kept in new wine skins (something that would be ringing in the ears of the disciples as they shaped the first 'church'). I believe that God is pouring out new wine in these strange times and we have the exciting task of creating new wine skins to capture and pour out God's blessings on our communities, our nation and our world. May God bless us all in this endeavour.



## 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 One**, [LINK](#)  
11:45am. The Very Rev Kathy Jones leads a service from Bangor Cathedral. This service was filmed before the closure of all church buildings.

## 3. Radio Services

**BBC Radio 4** (Also [online](#).)  
8.10 am. Catherine Fox and the Bishop of Sheffield Pete Wilcox reflect on living well during this time of continued hoping and uncertainty.

## 4. THIS WEEK! - Cliff College Festival at Home

You are invited to 'Festival at Home', a free-to-access online festival taking place from May 22nd (This Friday) to 25th 2020. Events will be live-streamed alongside pre-recorded Bible studies, seminars, workshops, preaching, worship and music straight to your home all weekend. Speakers include Rev Dr Billy Abraham, Professor Evelyn Parker and Dr Miguel A. De La Torre; our worship leaders include Sam Taylor and Josh Gillam. We'll also have some all-age worship and activities every day. For more info visit <https://cliffcollege.ac.uk/cliff-festival/festival-2020>

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



# Together 'as one'.

John 17:1-11 (NRSV)

It's a real challenge to be together with anyone at present but interestingly enough, when Christ prays to the Father in John 17, of all the things he could ask for, he asks him for protection, that we may be 'as one.'

If you've been able to tune into the online services that I've presented via YouTube in the last two weeks you'll have seen an excellent embodiment of this togetherness. For the last two online services I have concluded with the UK Blessing. This blessing uses the words of the Aaronic Blessing from around 4,500 years ago where Moses is given the words for Aaron to use in blessing the Israelites:

*"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen."* Numbers 6:24-26.

In the case of the UK Blessing worship leaders from all across the UK church, across all denominations, have recorded a special musical arrangement of these words and by clever editing these recordings have been pieced together to produce a patchwork of voices and images. Each of these offerings represent an individual, a separate church, a person or family locked down in their own home and yet the collection is definitely a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Each time I watch this blessing I feel moved to tears and feel the warmth of those words that have been a blessing over God's people for over 4 millennia.

It's an interesting thing that Jesus says, in verse 10 too: that he (Jesus) has been glorified in his followers. Wow! The glory of Jesus is seen in the disciples and the way that they have faith in Jesus. I wonder how this is true now? It's certainly true in that I have seen some amazing things emerging recently in the work of the church on Earth (not least in the UK blessing). I have seen folk from the church reaching out to those in need, showing great care and love and glorifying Jesus in doing so.

My Olivia was recently asked by her ballet school to produce a dance to a piece of music of her choice and she chose to dance to the UK blessing. In her dance she sought to share the words of the amazing blessing with others and glorify Jesus - indeed I think she did!

The challenge here is that we all find our own way to glorify Jesus, even in lockdown. The contributions can seem small, but our part is a unique part of the patchwork of the church that will glorify Jesus on Earth as it is in heaven. What is your part?

With all of these parts, under the prayer that Jesus prays here, we will be protected from isolation and be as one, 'TOGETHER.' When I was younger I spent a wonderful week on holiday with a group of friends (it was at a Christian conference called Easter People). At the end of the trip, as we prepared to return home, I burst into tears and was comforted by a wise, older Christian. I explained that the close time we'd had as friends was over and didn't want to return home where I would be isolated from them (they attended different schools to me). The older, wiser Christian sat me down and drew a circle of dots on a piece of paper. She then added a dot in the centre of the circle. She explained to me that we often try to get closer to other people for friendship much like the dots may move around the perimeter of the circle to be closer to each other. She then explained that the best way for all the dots to be closer was to get closer to the centre, at which point all of the dots are closer and indeed ultimately one.

If Jesus is at the centre of our lives and we focus on him, have faith in him and glorify him, then all those who also draw near to him will draw closer to one another and ultimately, one day we will all be one.

This oneness is certainly not easy - especially when we are separated from one another, as indeed we are. There are also many ways in which the world draws our attention away from Jesus and we find ourselves doing things that do not glorify Jesus, or missing things that we could do to glorify Jesus. It's at this point that I'm grateful for the rest of Jesus' prayer for us, where he prays for our protection. Jesus knew it would be hard to be as one in a world of division. The words Jesus uses should be a source of encouragement though. In his prayer Jesus call us *his*, he calls us *God's*. I'm reminded here of the words of that Aaronic blessing. 'The Lord Bless You and *keep* you.' 'Keep you' is an interesting phrase, it speaks of provision and protection but we often think of keep as in possession. As a child I would swap things with other children and the question we always asked was, 'is this for *keeps*?' That meant forever, no going back, no letting go.

Please hear the words of that blessing and of Jesus' prayer during this time. You are God's and he is yours - and it's for keeps. Though we may be isolated from one another, all who are God's are 'for keeps' and are one. We are apart only physically. My prayer this week is that you will know God's presence and in doing so know each other's presence as we all seek to glorify Jesus. Amen.

**#TOGETHER**  
Let's fight COVID-19

## Thy Kingdom Come

[thykingdomcome.global](http://thykingdomcome.global)



This Thursday (21st May) is Ascension Day which marks the beginning of the Thy Kingdom Come initiative - ten days of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost (31st May).

As a circuit, we'd like to invite you to 'Join the global wave of prayer' in four different ways as we aim to 'light up the world in prayer.'

- 1. PRAYER PAIRS** - Join up with one friend, nearby for a 'socially distanced' prayer walk around your neighbourhood. Offer to pray for neighbours and local businesses.
- 2. PRAYER ZOOM ROOM** - Thursday 28th May 8:15pm - Join others in our circuit to pray together via 'Zoom'. All you need is an internet connected computer or telephone (webcam optional). Contact Jill for details: [nsmccircuit@gmail.com](mailto:nsmccircuit@gmail.com). If you would like to 'phone in' to the Zoom Room call Jill beforehand (07768 525086) to get details.
- 3. LIGHT UP THE WORLD** - Commit to regular prayer and register your commitment as part of the global wave of prayer at [thykingdomcome.global](http://thykingdomcome.global).
- 4. PRAYER JOURNAL** - 21st-31st May 7am daily - Follow daily prayer updates along the theme of 'Jesus Loves All' on our circuit website and FaceBook Page (like and follow on FaceBook to get them to your own news feed). If you know someone who would benefit from a paper copy of the journal, we have limited copies but please do get in touch.

Please get involved in whatever way you can as we aim to hold our world in prayer. More details can be found on the Circuit Website ([newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk](http://newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk)) or on the Thy Kingdom Come website ([thykingdomcome.global](http://thykingdomcome.global)).

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](mailto:colin1244@gmail.com).

There is also a specific page, dedicated to prayers written for this time on the Methodist Church website: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus/prayers-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/> If you are lost for words to pray, you may find these helpful.

## Hymns and songs to reflect on...

20-5-20

Great is the darkness (StF 405) [LINK](#)

In Christ there is no East or West (StF 685) [LINK](#)

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

Beauty for brokenness (StF 693) [LINK](#)

Your hand O God has guided (StF 692) [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](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.

## Can you help?

**Video contributions:** Could you contribute to our YouTube channel? The staff team are keen involve folk in the online church experience and would love to hear from you if you have something to say. This could be a testimony, a short homily (a thought for the day style contribution based on a Bible passage or circumstance) a prayer or a poem/reflection. If you can record something and send it to me, then I will try to include it somehow (it may be featured in Sunday worship or added to the YouTube channel as a 'stand alone' item.) For more information, do get in touch.

### Giving:



Could you make a donation to the Newark FoodBank via your local collection point? Or perhaps you could make a financial donation online at: [newark.foodbank.org.uk](http://newark.foodbank.org.uk).

Or could you donate to the Christian Aid Week collection at [justgiving.com/campaign/CAWeek2020](http://justgiving.com/campaign/CAWeek2020).



### Families:

[families4SMC@gmail.com](mailto: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 and some colouring pens and to print off the sheets before the service starts. Enjoy!



## Can you find the 16 books of the Bible?

Do you fancy getting those brain cells working with a bit of cerebral stimulation? If so, here's a passage with the names of 16 books of the Bible hidden within it. It may be more difficult than it sounds ....

I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible. It was a lulu. Kept people looking so hard for facts and for others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam, especially since the names of the books were not capitalised. But the truth finally struck home to numbers of readers. To others, it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you. Yes, there will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a minister to find one of them, and there will be loud lamentations when it is found. One lady says she brews a cup of tea, so she can concentrate better. See how well you can compete. Relax now, for there are really sixteen names of books of the Bible in this story.

If you find yourself really stuck and would like the solution - get in touch and I can tell you what the 16 books are or even I'll reveal the locations to you!

## 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://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.