

TOGETHER

only physically apart

Elston | North Muskham | Southwell | Sutton on Trent

Messrs Canwe, Open and Howe.

A difficult trinity and the question on the lips of every churchgoer?

With the obviously caveat that we've never closed (worship continues every Sunday in ever imaginative ways - online and in our homes as well as in the way we live our lives and support our neighbours) it's a conversation going on in churches all over the country; and even the one's who've already opened, perhaps for private prayer or maybe even for worship, will still be having conversations. In the Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit we've been trying to have two parallel conversations and so I thought I'd bring you up to speed with where we're at so far.

We've tried to make the first conversation a deeper one: What is church? What are our fundamentals? What do we think, if missing, would make our church experience unfulfilling or fruitless? The next Methodist year (beginning September 2020) will be focussed on 'God for All' a new strategy for evangelism and growth. It commits us theologically, culturally, and financially to deepen our mission to be a growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking, and inclusive Church. In short we're reshaping; and our own 'Re-imagining Church' discussions are underway as a circuit. These are open discussions and we welcome you to participate whether you are from any church or none. These discussions are also (or at least will be when it's possible) taking place in our formal structures - Church Councils, Leadership Teams, Circuit Meetings and hopefully all the informal places too! It's about listening to what God is saying to us through this pandemic and taking forward what we are learning from it, into a new world. As the new President of the Methodist Conference said in his inaugural address: "Not a return to the same old same old but a church which has the reputation for transformation, for recreation and for empowerment...in response to a faithful God who redeems history and promises the brightest of futures." I particularly been listening to these conversations, to folks views and observing lockdown forms of worship to try to get to the root of what church needs to be and more importantly discern what God is calling us to be moving forward. **I'd love to hear your views.**

The second conversation is inevitably more practical. When we do reopen our doors, what can we do to mitigate the risks and when will we be able to open in a Covid-Safe manner? I am working with folk at two of our church buildings already (those that already need to re-open for third party groups to return) and it may be sensible to begin to meet in these buildings first. It is my hope that we will be able to have fellowship on our premises in late Summer or early Autumn. This will not be unrestricted worship but will hopefully be a chance to reconnect safely and face-to-face. That said, this will probably not be in all of the churches in my section, as it may not be universally appropriate, and many of you will want to wait longer - especially if you are in a vulnerable group. We are asked, in the connexional guidance, to reflect on whether returning to our buildings is 'practically possible' and 'missionally necessary' at this time. If you would like to know more about where we are up to with your specific church building, do please get in touch. Also, if you feel strongly about whether we should or should not open soon, I'd also like to hear your voice. Remember though, in the words of John Wesley (echoed by the president of conference) throughout all this, in these trying times, **"The best of all is, God is with us."**

In these unprecedented times we believe we're invited by God to be...

Re-imagining Church

...let's join together in this important process with opportunities for...

PRAYER

A series of 'gatherings' for prayer and to seek God's will for our changing church.

Prayer 'Gathering' 2:
Monday 27th July, 7-8pm - Zoom
Meeting ID: 842 4011 0921
Password: Imagine

SHARE

A series of 'gatherings' to share informally and imagine what the church could be.

Share 'Gathering' 2:
Monday 2nd August, 7-8pm - Zoom
Meeting ID: 842 4011 0921
Password: Imagine

A recording of the first 'SHARE' session is available on request (for those who missed it).

Ministry: Rev Nathan Falls
Rev Peter Bates and Rev Peter Hibberts

@NewarkandSouthwellMethodist newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk



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>) Tune in today!

2. Radio Services

BBC Radio 4 (Also [online](#).)

08:10am **Great is Thy Faithfulness:** A service preparing for a "Virtually Keswick" Convention. The theme is hope - at this time of great uncertainty, in the midst of a global pandemic, there is hope in Jesus Christ.

3. Radio Nottingham

Every Sunday, at 8am, you can listen to a live church service on BBC Radio Nottingham. Listen online to BBC Nottingham radio station 95.1-103.8 MHz FM for free.

4. Online Holiday Club!

Southwell Methodist Church will be running (in collaboration with three other churches in Southwell) an online Holiday Club, for children in Reception to Year 6, 3rd-7th August 2020. If you know of anyone who would benefit or can offer to carry this yolk with them, please get in touch! families4SMC@gmail.com



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

Am I a weed or a crop?

Reflections from Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (NRSV)

Last week we examined the parable of the sower and reflected on sowing generously. We acknowledged that weeds grow up around us but that sower doesn't concern themselves with the weeds. Here we are face to face with them and where they come from!

It's not secret that I've been exploring the garden more in lockdown and cultivating it in a new way. We now have four raised beds in the Manse garden and this week I repurposed an old pallet into a cold frame (which I'm quite proud of!) I have, in this process had to come face to face with the weeds! (Though I'm hoping that they weren't sown there by my enemies!) I enlisted the help of one of my children in one of these battles and inevitably come across the question, 'Daddy, what is a weed?' An interesting question! As I have been tackling the garden (which had become unruly and overgrown) I've come across many plants and had to decide are they weed or not?

Actually, I'm blessed with several horticulturalists in my congregations and one in particular has been offering (maybe offering is the wrong word) a wonderful text-message based plant identification service. He's helped me to identify a wild turnip in my radish crop, an unimportant bush where I wanted to locate my cold frame and even the presence of deadly nightshade (which has now been removed!) I've come to realise that the only difference between a weed and a crop, in my gardening, is the fruit. If the fruit is good (and that could be something edible or something visual) it's not a weed. I have also in sowing my crops come across some rogue crops - I'm not sure how it happened but I have three carrot plants in with my rocket bed and a tomato plant grew in with my sunflowers. It really is to do with context but then there are some weeds that will always be weed - the dandelion is perhaps the best example! What does it do? In my opinion it's a tatty plant with a rather unattractive leaf, an unimaginative flower and a dangerous seed head (though I must confess my kids love blowing the clocks!). I don't find it attractive and I have no intention of making dandelion and burdock - it's a weed!

But *in the parable* what are the weeds? And what should we do? This is another parable that had a rather helpful explanation. We're told in the later verses that the crops and weeds are 'children'. There's no escaping this, it's a tough passage and none of us can really get away from the message that we (humanity) are not all 'good' and there will, one day, be a separating of the 'good' from the 'bad'. It's often called judgement - the judgement day even - when God will separate the good from the bad and we also cannot escape the reference here to the fire - a reference most often interpreted as the fires of hell. (I wasn't looking forward to this passage for just this reason - but who am I to 'sanitise' the gospel and only include what I find easy or pleasant? Jesus chose to tell this passage, so please don't shoot the messenger as I try to remain faithful to him.) How you envisage this judgement day or concepts of heaven and hell may vary widely. As a year six teacher I led a topic called 'Big Questions' in which I tried to

get them asking 'ultimate' questions. I always found it interesting that my pupils were happy to believe in heaven but not in hell. I think I can understand that and never sought to sway them other than exploring different religious responses to the question.

So what should we take from this? Well, I take comfort from the fact that the weeds are not immediately removed. Why? Because it gives me a chance not to be a weed! Perhaps when we see something horrible happen in the world we'd like to see the perpetrator zapped with a heavenly lightening bolt, but I think the result would be obedience out of fear. Instead the gardener gives the plants a chance and watches them grow. When I'm weeding I often need to wait a bit to see what the seedling is and have at times been so keen to remove a weed that I've damaged a good plant - so this part of the analogy works for me (that is waiting until the harvest). But what will the plants do in the meantime? The biggest difficulty is that we sometimes extend this analogy to mean that the weeds will always be weeds and the crops will always be crops (like we have no control over our ultimate destiny; no free will). Let me tell you, I don't believe that for a minute. The Bible is a holistic story and parts should not be interpreted in contradiction to others, so where the Bible talks about choosing which way we will go, that applies here. Whether or not you are a child of the kingdom (and therefore a crop not a weed) is your choice; for me, it's my choice. When will the harvest come? We don't know but of course the longer we wait to make our choice, the riskier it becomes!

After writing last week that I think there is one main point in each parable you may be wondering what I think the central point is here. The central point is the certainty of a day of separation. So how will the gardener know which are the crops and which are weeds at this point? (Well, he won't need to text a member of his church to ask which is which.) Like any *good* gardener, they know what the crop is supposed to look like and what a weed looks like. If we are children of God, taking after our heavenly father, we will look like *he* does. The Bible calls these traits fruits of the spirit. As I said earlier, the crops bear fruit, the weeds do not. So why not have a look at Galatians chapter 5, in the Bible and investigate what a good crop looks like. (There is also a good description of what a weed looks like just before the list of fruits!) Which best describes you? If you focus on God, follow Christ and ask for God's Holy Spirit to fill your life, these are what you *will* see. If you don't see them then you need to ask yourself if you are a child of God. It's not essentially about the fruit, it's about our faith born identity, but it's by the fruit that our identity is known.

Don't worry about the day of judgement, real though the Bible may say it is, God simply wants us all to be part of *his* kingdom and invites you too. Spend some time in prayer asking God to adopt you as a child of *his* and then choose to turn your eyes towards *him* daily, pray daily for fresh filling of *his* spirit and then, tended by the best

gardener ever, you'll see the fruit in your life and eventually

3 get to shine like the sun in the kingdom of [your] Father.

Prayer Space

In the Zoom Bible study group this week we were challenged to pray daily for God to reveal to us those to whom we need to be sowing seed (following last week's parable) and then to pray daily for the names of our friends and family that God reveals to us. I challenge you to ask God to reveal this to you and I challenge you to be courageous in sharing your story with them and inviting them to encounter God for themselves.

Lord our God, may each of us in our calling be faithful in our discipleship and loving in our encounters with your children. Help us to talk of you passionately and meaningfully and awaken us to every opportunity to share your good news. We ask for your blessing as we work to bring about your kingdom. Amen.

Lorraine Mellor, Nottingham and Derby District Chair

Please also keep your eyes open for opportunities for prayer and to share together for the way we **Re-imagine Church** post lockdown - the **second** Zoom session for prayer is this Thursday - 16th July - between 2pm and 3pm. Please make it a priority if you can! Zoom Details:

Meeting ID: 842 4011 0921

Password: Imag1ne

(Capital I at the beginning and number 1 in place of the second i.)

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A series of 'gatherings' to share informally and imagine what the church could be.

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Monday 30th August, 7-8pm - Zoom
Meeting ID: 842 4011 0921
Password: Imag1ne

A recording of the first 'SHARE' session is available on request (for those who missed it).

Ministers: Rev Nathan Fells, Rev Peter Bates and Rev Peter Hibberts
@NewarkSouthwellMethodist newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk

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



FREE phone lines for prayers and news from the Methodist Church

Listen to a **prayer**: 0808 281 2514

Listen to **news**: 0808 281 2478

Content is updated weekly on Thursday afternoon

Zoom Home Groups

Our Tuesday Home Groups will be restarted this week with a new four week teaching series on the parables of Jesus - 'Once Upon a Time.' You may have missed the first one but it's not too late to join! The theme will begin each Sunday as a focus for the service and offer deeper discussion each following Tuesday, via Zoom. Tune into our YouTube Channel for the services - Zoom details available on request.

ALL WELCOME - from any church or none.



Reflective songs...

You're calling us (StF 37)

Tell me the stories of Jesus [LINK](#)

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name (StF 424) [LINK](#)

I'm accepted, I'm forgiven (StF 427) [LINK](#)

Hear the call of the kingdom [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.

Dial-a-sermon service now live!

Dial a Sermon

To listen to this week's sermon from Revd. Peter Hibberts please call this number. (Calls cost the same as a local call.)

01636 558871

Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit helping you stay connected whilst we're apart.



We now have a telephone sermon service. If you have no access to the internet but would like to hear the reading and sermon from the previous Sunday, you can dial up the number above and hear it from the minister's voice! Calls cost the same as a local call and recordings should be around 15 minutes each - you can access them at any time of the day or night! We endeavour to upload the new sermon each weekend so it may be a few days behind this newsletter - don't worry, that's normal!

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

22-7-20

Families:

by Katie Hibberts

families4SMC@gmail.com

CHILDREN'S CHURCH AT HOME!

We are providing a 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.



Family activities

Today's parable reminds us that God wants to grow good fruit in our lives - we shouldn't be like the weeds! Have a look in Galatians Chapter 5 at the kind of fruit we should be demonstrating... the fruit of the Spirit. I wonder what life would look like if our lives were full of these fruits.

Craft

You will need: paper cups (an egg box would work too), cotton wool, cress seeds

Decorate the paper cup to reflect your personality. Wet some cotton wool and wring it out so it is damp but not dripping. Put it in the bottom of the paper cup. Sprinkle on some cress seeds. Keep the cup in sunlight. Make sure the cotton wool is kept moist and watch the cress grow. As it grows, pray that God will grow the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

Prayer Time

Collect some twigs and put them in a vase to make a 'tree'. Spend time asking God, which fruit you should ask for more of in your life. When you think you know, write or draw it on a slip of paper, attach it to a paper clip and hang it on the tree as a sign of your prayer.



WE STILL HAVE SPACE ON THIS YEAR'S VIRTUAL SUMMER HOLIDAY CLUB!!! FOR MORE INFO & TO BOOK, FOLLOW THIS LINK:

<https://www.southwellmethodist.org.uk/phizz-whizzholidayclub.htm>

How are we doing? How could we help?

We're nearly 20 weeks into lockdown now and we'd like to know how we are doing in support and whether we can do better! Please take the time to let me know:

How have you been encountering church during lockdown?

What have you found most helpful (from this church or any other) in your faith?

What has been missing that would have really helped you?

What has been unhelpful during this time?

What elements of our provision could you live without (where might we be wasting our resources)?

Contact me on peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk and help shape out support of you.