

TOGETHER

only physically apart

Elston | North Muskham | Southwell | Sutton on Trent



HANDS



FACE



SPACE

Hands, Face and Space.

Reflections on whose hands, whose face and whose space.

It's the new (well maybe not that new anymore) mantra from government in our bid to control the virus and I have to say I personally prefer it to 'Stay alert...etc.' When you see the emblems of this (pictured above), how does it make you feel? Like you're safer because you know we're doing what you can or perhaps tangibly aware of an invisible threat. There is a third option: I'm choosing to see God in it.

When I see **hands**, I of course am reminded to wash my hands regularly (saying the Lord's Prayer, incidentally, provides the correct amount of time to be washing for and is much better than singing happy birthday twice - in my opinion). But at the same time, I chose to remind myself that I am in God's hands. I remind myself that the hands that threw the stars into space extend towards me; I remind myself that the hands that surrendered to cruel nails on the cross did so for me and defeated death so that I need no longer fear. I remind myself that I am in God's hands and there is no better place - be reminded of these things too as you see hands.

When I see **face**, I'm reminded to cover my face in shops, when I visit folk and when I in an indoor space with folk who are not in my household. But I'm also reminded of the beautiful words of the Aaronic Blessing in Numbers chapter 6:24-26:

*"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."*

Be encouraged, when you see face, that the face of God is turned towards you - you have God's full attention, 24-7 and God wants to bless you - and give you peace!

When I see **space**, I am reminded to keep social distance and have lost count of the number of times I've needed to employ my tape measure in church business recently! But I also remind myself that though we are not currently in church, wherever we encounter God is Holy Ground - Sacred Space. In the Bible God met Moses in the wilderness, at the burning bush, and Moses was told that it was Holy Ground. Wherever you are, know that God is with you and you are in Sacred Space - why not take off your shoes now, for a few moments, as Moses did in Exodus, hold out your **hands** to receive God's blessings; allow his **face** to shine upon you and give you peace; then rest in God's sacred **space**.



1. Online Services

A variety of worship opportunities are being hosted on the 'Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit' YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>) Tune in today!

2. The Gathering

Every week over thirty people share an on-line 'Zoom' which allows us to see one another and catch up on how everyone is. If you have a smartphone or tablet or a computer, you are able to access it from your home or from wherever you are. We pray, worship and support each other in a very simple yet God-centred way.

The Gathering meets at 9.45 each Sunday and lasts for about 45 minutes. Many then join with services on Facebook and YouTube across the internet.

If you would like to learn more, please contact either Philip Holmes (philipholmes8100@gmail.com) or Colin Beckett (colin1244@gmail.com).

3. Radio Services

BBC Radio 4 (Also [online](#).)
08:10am - 20th September 2020

Where shall we put our trust?

In a world where many are fearful, Father Brian D'Arcy asks where we can put our trust.

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.)

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

The Church Unleashed as Herald

Reflections from Acts 2:14-41 (Based on study notes by Beki Rogers)

This week's passage will be a challenging one for many I know across my churches. We don't like to talk about the 'E' word (evangelism - sshh!) like a theological version of Lord Voldemort from the Harry Potter novels. Please read on - don't let that word stop you!

I think, from chatting to folk, I have some ideas of why that is. It may not be everyone's reason but for many that word conjures up an over-zealous, bible bashing forcing of Christianity onto people. I'm imagining folk stood in a market place shouting seemingly random bible passages across a crowded city centre whilst shoppers do their best to walk past without catching eye contact. Tracts are passed out (often deposited in the nearest bin). I hope you're still reading!

I think it's time we rescued that word and made the activity of evangelism (literally carrying the good news) something fit for our society, fit for our friends and fit for our families. It's time the church reclaimed its role as 'Herald.' You may already be filled with dread at this idea but relax. Being Herald is not everyone in churches role individually, it's the role of the church family (as a whole). You will remember that we talked about the seven who were chosen to distribute food in the message we focused on two weeks ago, well, some may be chosen for that and others for this. But don't let yourself switch off at that. If we all expect someone else to do it then we're not being collectively responsible any more than if we all expect someone else to be the servant. I believe that we all have a part to play in the church's role as herald and more than that, I believe our local church won't be here for very long if we don't - and therefore they will no longer be a place of service either!

Folk may or may not agree with me, but I think *this* is the central role of the church - to be herald. I'm not devaluing acts of service in any way - if we love God, we will love others and will want to serve them, it's a natural result and if it's not evident then we should question whether we love God. But it's not the church's core mission. The church's core mission is to proclaim as Peter did (though perhaps in more contextually appropriate ways in the 21st century!)

Let's look at the evidence: The last thing that Jesus said before ascending into heaven was, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15 NRSV) Then, fifty days later, the first act of the church following pentecost (the first movement of the Holy Spirit - that is the first thing that the Holy Spirit choses to do) is this passage where the disciples fling open the doors and do just that - they proclaim the Good News! Is this simply a coincidence?

I believe our core mission as individuals is to love God and love others but I also believe that being Herald to the Good News is the core mission of the church and everything else is either a means to an end or a wonderful overflow of God's love as we are doing that. It's not necessarily a single mindedness as in order to be effective Heralds we need to deepen our faith, in order to share the Good News it must be rooted in our lives and if

we love God and others we'll serve, but, I think we've focussed on all of these things for too long as churches (to varying levels of success) and it's like we've ripped the heart out of church. We've stopped as herald and so we're slowly dying out as the limited supply of oxygen is slowly starving each part and asphyxiating us.

Don't panic though! I have some ideas for CPR! Ask God (in prayer) to show you (by his revealing Spirit) where you need to be herald. Perhaps we need to start by being bringers of good news in other ways: call someone up and tell them something good that's happened and simply end the conversation with 'God is Good!' Why not share something of what God has been doing for you in lockdown church with a friend or family member (or just something that God has been doing with you if you've not felt church the source of this - it's God we're heralding, not church). Perhaps share something of your testimony - your story of God breaking through into your life - and share what God means to you. Don't worry about what happens next - God will lead you, it may follow into a great conversation, it may involve an invitation to encounter Church in the way you are (inviting them to join your Zoom Church, your Bubble or your YouTube viewing, perhaps asking if they like to receive the newsletter and get connected with the body of Christ - but don't worry about any of that - just follow it where it goes! And whilst your doing this, remember how important it is - imagine yourself pumping your chest like a paramedic singing 'staying alive, staying alive,' it's our churches spiritual CPR because, my friends, in many places, right now, the church is flatlining - but God is not!

I have one golden rule though - don't talk about church - talk about God. If you're nervous about talking to a non-Christian, talk to a Christian friend - but talk about God. Let's stop talking about church and start heralding the Good News that God loves us all.

How will we know if we're doing this? Well, I and my colleagues will suddenly become very busy with baptisms! You may even be the one to support your friend in that journey and find your faith grows as a result.

If you'd like to know more about sharing your faith, I'd love to hear from you. The study notes unpack a wonderful way of sharing our faith with others - of sharing the Good News which is really down to Earth and I think we could all use. It involves hearing their story (don't we do that anyway when we build friendships?) and then sharing some of our story (don't we also do that when we're building friendships?) culminating in (possibly the tricky bit - but it needn't be) connecting the two with God's story. For example, if the person you are talking to is talking about how isolated and lonely they feel, tell them about times when you've felt that way and how that's natural (especially in times like these) and then talk to them about a time when God's presence has comforted you, a passage in the Bible which encouraged you in those times. That's it! You're a fully fledged herald!

If you'd like to find out more about this, or go deeper into the church as herald, why not join our Zoom group >>>>

Prayer Space

A prayer written by Beki Rogers and featured in the 'Church' bible study notes:

Heavenly Father, we thank you that Jesus came and lived amongst us, hearing the stories of those he met. We thank you that he shared his story with us on the cross, enabling us to understand and engage in your story. Help us this week to do the same, that others may also be amazed and inspired by Your Story.

The Breakthrough Prayer

From: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/year-of-prayer/praying-the-breakthrough-prayer/>

A prayer for God to break through in the life of our churches:

God of love, God for all,
your purposes are more beautiful than
we can possibly imagine.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit.
Help us let go of all that holds us back.
Open our lives and our churches to
new seasons of humility and faith, of
change and growth.
Shake us up with the Good News of
Jesus and show us the way.

EMAIL PRAYER CHAIN

For some time now, Colin Beckett, of Southwell Methodist Church, has been running a prayer chain where folk email prayer requests to him for distribution to others who agree to pray for these situations. During lockdown he's been opening this up to anyone (indeed it was never exclusive) if you would like to join the prayer chain and receive these requests or have a prayer request (with permission of the recipient) please get in touch with Colin...
Colin Beckett colin1244@gmail.com.
It is for those in any church or none!

Zoom Home Groups

Tuesday Zoom Groups are back! Continuing on 22nd September 2pm and 8pm (next Tuesday) we'll be going deeper into Acts and exploring what the early church can tell us about being church in the 21st Century. Get in touch to obtain the Zoom details and join a group

ALL WELCOME - from any church or none.

A series of online services and follow up small groups based on the Beki Rogers Opening Harvest Bible Studies.

Join us as we explore what the church in Acts can teach us about church today.

The Acts... **Church** ...unleashed

Sundays 30/8; 6/9; 13/9; 20/9; 27/9 - available from 9:45am, YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/c/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>
Zoom groups Tuesdays 2pm and 8pm in September - 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th
(Zoom details available on request)

Minister: Rev Peter Roberts peter.roberts@methodist.org.uk @southwellmethodist southwellmethodist.org.uk 01636 812166

Reflective songs...

Blessed be your name (StF 41) [LINK](#)

As the deer pants for the water (StF 544) [LINK](#)

Faithful one (StF 47) [LINK](#)

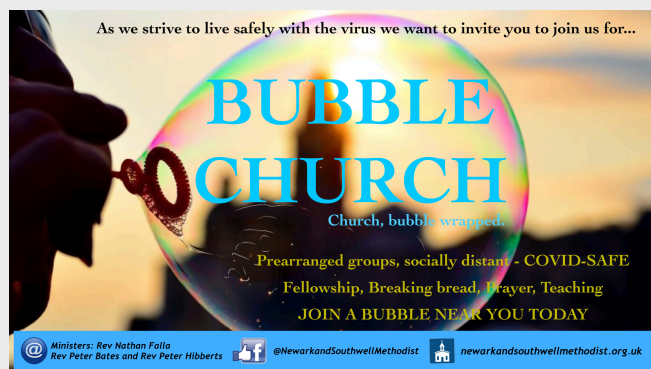
Beyond these walls of worship (StF 547) [LINK](#)

Be thou my vision (StF 545) [LINK](#)

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

Church re-opening!

Whilst we know that not everyone is ready to meet again, face to face, we also realise that many are desperate to find the encouragement of face to face fellowship and so we are delighted to launch our Bubble Church!



These Covid-Safe small groups will meet, in church, and are an opportunity for fellowship, breaking bread, prayer and teaching. Restrictions still apply but do get in touch to find out more!

Frequently asked questions:

Why Bubble Church?

Well, hopefully it communicates a vision of a safe, controlled and risk assessed environment in which to meet face to face. A Bubble would be 10-15 people who meet regularly (weekly or fortnightly) in one of our church buildings (possibly not your usual church as not all buildings will be able to open initially) but not in the home as social distancing is very difficult in the average home. As a small group they would most likely meet in a hall rather than the main church, though where the chairs can easily be moved around (many folk during this time have commented on how the electronic forms of face-to-face church have allowed them to see each other's faces and interact intimately with each other rather than all facing the same way), though the main church may be the best place for the bubble.

What might a Bubble look like?

The easy answer to this is, exactly like the bubble wants it to! Each bubble will differ based on the needs of the group. When it meets will depend on their availability but they cannot possibly all meet on a Sunday, indeed they could meet any day of the week at any time of the day!

What will happen in a bubble?

In keeping with our desire to take the opportunity to rediscover something of the early church or early Methodism, it is envisaged that the focus of the bubbles will be fellowship, prayer and teaching. The hope is also that ministers and supernumerary ministers will also be able to visit a bubble and bring a Covid-Safe communion (breaking bread).

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

16-9-20

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!



Be warned... today's activity might get messy & would be best done on a moppable floor or outdoors!

The Bible says that the feet of those who bring good news are beautiful – in other words, when we evangelise we have beautiful feet!

Remove your shoes and socks. Have a go at painting designs onto your own feet, or paint each other's – which might be easier. The designs can be whatever you want; they can be patterns or pictures.

If you like, you could stand on paper when they have finished and make a print of their picture.

A less messy alternative would be to give members of your family a pedicure to make their feet beautiful (or even decorate an old sock)!!!

Pray together that God would direct your feet to the people who need to hear the good news of Jesus dying for them.

God and the Pandemic Bible Study

Colin Beckett, of Southwell Methodist Church, invites you to take part in a zoom bible study beginning on Wednesday 23rd September for five nights, 23rd, 30th September, 7th, 14th and 21st of October. Philip Holmes, also of Southwell Methodist Church, has kindly offered to manage the zoom, which will start at 7.45 and end at around 9.00pm. Please let Colin (colin1244@gmail.com) or Philip (philipholmes8100@gmail.com) know by 21st so that he can send you joining information. The study is bible based, straight forward and challenging.