

TOGETHER

only physically apart

Elston | North Muskham | Southwell | Sutton on Trent

TOGETHER is coming... TOGETHER!

While the world socially distances - we're aiming to spiritually grow together!

Well, we've known for a while, as a staff team (Nathan, Peter B and Peter H), that the way we've been ministering wasn't sustainable and also wanted to involve more people across the circuit in the way we do church during this time so, as of October, we're coming together (not that the staff team have ever been apart - we've been supporting each other and meeting more than ever during this time! - We've also been meeting as a Circuit Leadership Team more than ever and meeting with folk across the circuit in our Re-Imagine meetings.) We've been chatting with many of you about how we can do things better and in a more sustained manner. You've come up with some great ideas, and we've heard them. The headlines are that the churches need to support each other more than ever (we need to grow as a circuit) and we need to work together more as individuals. So here are some of the plans:

An weekly, online **Circuit Service** and a '**virtual**' **circuit Plan** - each Sunday there will be one online service (a YouTube pre-recorded service) and each week a different church across the circuit will 'host'. This needn't be scary it will mean different things for different churches based on resources. We are also looking to put together a circuit production team to support churches in this. We hope that it will involve anyone who is willing and folk will step out of their comfort zone - we need contributors for prayers, readings, thoughts, testimonies, music and whatever else you can think of. This will also include special, occasional, collaborative services and may include some 'live' ones, in our churches!

A Circuit TOGETHER magazine - this will include, each week, a circuit magazine being published on the circuit website with the text of that week's sermon, song choices and prayers as well as questions to take the Bubble Church deeper in each individual church (which they may or may not choose to use!) and news of all of the opportunities across the circuit for us to be church together on and offline - it will also have family activities for those with children. We're looking for contributors and an editorial team for this as well as those willing to distribute them across the circuit by email and to those who are not able to receive electronically.

A one-stop shop landing page (on the circuit website) with all the offerings across the circuit that quickly allows our folk and those who are not yet part of our church families to easily access and join us!

A circuit Bubble Church Strategy, facilitated by lay and ordained folk with a chance to meet face to face for anyone who either needs this or is happy to help facilitate it. These bubbles will meet whenever is convenient, in church and go deeper in discipleship and fellowship.

This is our current plan, and may change. I think it's aspirational for us as a circuit and as a staff team and I hope you'll be gracious to us as we try to deliver it. I also hope you realise that this won't work without you! Your circuit needs you!¹





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 - 13th 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 Disciple

Reflections from Acts 10:9-29, 34-35 (Based on study notes by Beki Rogers)

When I was a primary school teacher a highlight was taking the children on annual outward bounds trips. The place we visited had a 'nightline'. This nighttime was essentially an obstacle course through the woods with a twist - it was navigated blindfold. The children were paired off and sent two at a time round the obstacle course led by a rope (the nightline) and the sighted pupil was not allowed any contact but could communicate to the blindfolded pupil in order to encourage and instruct. It was brilliant to watch the development of trust and bravery (and also quite funny when they got into minor pickles!)

This week we conclude our series on Acts with one that beautifully points to the next series which is focussed on Discipleship. How do you feel in your faith journey? Are you moving or do you feel stagnant. Do you feel close to the leader or somewhat isolated and alone? It's easy to feel that way (especially at the moment), and it's easy to stand still because you can't quite fathom where you should be led (or sometimes because it's more comfortable than taking the risk of pressing forward). I saw many a pair stop moving on the nighttime because the blindfolded person had frozen on the spot, sometimes they had stopped listening to their guide or been distracted by the cacophony of noises from other pairs in the woods and became confused and afraid. (There were also some who just didn't want to do it, didn't see the point or would rather be pursuing other things, but they are not my focus here!)

In this week's reading we see a difficult point in Peter the disciple's journey. He's now known more as Peter the apostle but I deliberately call him Peter the Disciple because this passage shows that he is still learning and still needs to be connected to the rabbi as Jesus takes him out of his comfort zone, into new places and even to tread ground that he previously thought out of bounds.

'At the time of Jesus there were many rabbis who gathered disciples around them to teach them the scriptures and help them to understand what they meant and how they were to live them out. There was a phrase within the Jewish tradition that talked about the disciples being 'covered in the dust from the shoes of the rabbis they followed.' It's a beautiful phrase, the idea that one would follow one's rabbi so closely that the dust from their shoes would settle on you. (No two metre social distance there!) In real terms it's about spending so much time together that you begin to pick up their characteristics.

The word disciple translates the greek word *mathētēs* (μαθητής), which refers to somebody who received instruction from another. An appropriate modern word may be 'apprentice'. (But don't worry no one gets fired in this apprentice!) Does that describe your faith?

In the passage Peter received his instruction in a variety of ways, it begins in a dream (he actually falls asleep whilst praying - so maybe there's hope for us all). The subsequent dream is incredibly significant in the life of the

early church which up until that point was something of a Jewish sect. The contents of the dream surprise Peter and he cries out, 'Surely not!' (It took three goes to get through, so again - there's hope for us all!) His instruction continues in the form of Cornelius. Peter doesn't yet understand the significance of the instruction but understands that he must go with the men sent by Cornelius. (Wouldn't it be great if our direction was revealed in a dream and then accompanied by a working party knocking on our door!) By the next day, when Peter goes to Cornelius' house, the message has certainly sunk in. The gospel is not just for Jews, but for everyone!

I wonder if we are close enough to Jesus for his dust to settle on us? Close enough for God to communicate with us and for us to trust even when the direction seems to change and we find ourselves in uncharted territory. Do you feel close enough to God? If not, it's time for us all to go deeper in discipleship. We are in uncharted territory as a church and must look for God's instruction even more. We do this together but (as with the nightline) it's important to cling on to Jesus our guide and not latch onto the voice others around us (unless that's the method by which Jesus reaches us).

In Acts 16:1-5 we meet Timothy, who is described as a disciple. Timothy's discipleship is very much like an apprentice. (Verse three says Paul takes him along on the journey.) Perhaps, if you're worried and not ready to be a Peter, you need to be a Timothy and just come along for the journey that the church is embarking on. Fortunately our next steps in the journey are going to be focussed on discipleship. This is the final week of my writing and preaching on 'The Church Unleashed' but the next series we will embark on as a circuit. Next week will be our circuit harvest festival and the service will be led by folks from Balderton (writing in our first united TOGETHER - next week's - and producing the first of our collaborative services - 4th October) but following that we begin a series entitled, '*A way of life*' which is based on work being done by the Methodist Church on discipleship. There will be other services interspersed (including separate remembrance and advent/Christmas services) but the main theme of our services right into the spring will be this way of life. We'll explain the four elements of our call: Worship, Service Learning and Caring, and Evangelism; spending three weeks on each and asking how this looks for our discipleship.

It's time we rediscovered our purpose as a church, not as a society but as a church! A group of disciples taking our lead from the rabbi and following him wherever he takes us. Like the nightline, we may not know where every twist and turn will take us, but we each individually and also collectively (we're in this together) need to screw our courage to the sticking point, focus on the voice of Jesus and trust in him. Like Peter with Cornelius, I think the church is about to be turned inside out - opened up to new folk - making new spaces for new faces, but like Peter, God needs the old guard to play their part and he's calling us all to take up our place at the feet of the rabbi and step out. My prayer for us all is that we embrace the nightline and enjoy the ride!

Prayer Space

Discipleship Prayer

Thank you, God, for all those people who have shared their lives with mine, in a little or major way. Thank you for the example of Peter and Timothy in how to become a church that is a group of disciples learning and growing. Father please help us to continue to grow closer to you in what we think, what we do and what we say. Father we pray for those whose lives we influence and speak into; help us to model love, grace, forgiveness and perseverance that they may see you in us and grow in relationship with you themselves. Lord help us to be a church unleashed as disciple and be discipled. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Breakthrough Prayer

From: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism->

EMAIL PRAYER CHAIN

If you would like to join the prayer chain and receive prayer 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 conclude this series on 29th 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 even if you've missed the others! ALL WELCOME!

A series of online services and follow up small groups based on the Beki Rogers Spring 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](https://www.facebook.com/southwellmethodist) 01636 812166

Reflective songs...

Lord I come to you (StF 471) [LINK](#)

Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart (StF 477) [LINK](#)

One more step along the world I go (StF 476) [LINK](#)

The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want (StF 481) [LINK](#)

Guide me O thou great Jehovah (StF 465) [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!

It's important to say that Bubble Church is for everyone - it's not just for those who are not connected to Zoom or YouTube - it's for everyone that feels able to get to church at the allotted time. It also has the advantage of not needing to take turns - you needn't hold back in case you take someone else's place, because we meet in small groups, when the groups are full, we just start another one and if the groups grow (because you invite a friend or neighbour) they can form two groups like a growing cell divides into two cells! Don't let anything hold you back!

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

Feeling isolated?

I was reminded, this week, as we developed our pastoral care systems, that the telephone is a two way thing. One of our pastoral team wanted me to throw out the challenge for all of us to be pastoral workers and I think it was a wonderful challenge. The challenge is that, if you feel isolated, rather than wait for someone from the team or from your church family to telephone you - pick up the phone and call them! God may well use you to bless someone else and tackle your feelings of isolation too!



23-9-20

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!

This week we are thinking about following Jesus and trusting him as our guide. It brought to mind this famous song from Peter Pan...



How easy is it to follow? Sometimes I try to take the lead and go my own way. I wonder if you do that too? Maybe you, like me, need to keep asking God to help you follow him, even when it feels hard to?

Unlike John in Peter Pan, who was just a person like the rest of them, Jesus is well qualified to be our guide through life. He is God and knows what is best for us!

Game

This week, have a go at playing the nightline game yourselves at home. Use a scarf to make a blindfold and take turns leading each other around your house or garden.

You can make it harder by creating an obstacle course to lead your partner round if you fancy a challenge!

As you play, think about what it means to truly follow Jesus in all aspects of your life.

Thanks for journeying with me...

I want to thank those folk who've been really supportive of the TOGETHER magazine for the last 28 weeks. I've really appreciate the messages (from around the world!) from folk who have appreciated it. I also was to thank those who have distributed it within the community and beyond!

This isn't the end of TOGETHER, it's the next phase! I hope you'll continue following and distributing. It will not be exactly the same - the team contributing will vary in styles (it's going to be a rich diversity that excites me!) Do please keep in touch as we'd love to hear your feedback as we move forward...TOGETHER!