

Christ Church and People



June 2020

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Christ Church



and People

Please get your contributions for the July magazine to us by 15th June

Cover Picture

Talbot corner

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How to avoid pessimism, by an Apostle in isolation

The Covid19 virus pandemic lockdown is much longer than first expected. It has disrupted life, rather than put it on pause. But we need not be pessimists.

More people than we'd feared have seen family and friends suffer. It has been impressive to see those on the front line of health and care provision.

Many have had immense difficulties with money. This has led to a spike in the demand for foodbanks and also in the number of homeless as house shares suddenly ended due to the need for self-isolation.

For others it has been a time of huge change in expectations. In our house we've been learning a lot in the first month about using what we've got. The second month established new routines. But the third month is more challenging: even with some relaxation of social restrictions; even if video calls are made. We now wonder 'how long this will continue?' Are things getting better, about the same or getting worse?

(continued)

To guard against pessimism the Bible encourages us to pray*, for then we are engaging with the God who is at work in the world. 'Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.' (Philippians 4v4-6). The apostle encourages thankfulness, as it is not our automatic habit. He reminds us of the nearness of God. God is near in terms of being present with His people. He is also near in a second sense because the return of Jesus Christ is also 'near' in time. He is returning for His people to be with Him forever in a new world that has no mourning or crying or pain.

The discipline of prayer enables us to unburden ourselves before God and hand to him the overwhelming situations which cause us anxiety. This is why the consequence is fabulous: 'And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus' (v7). We won't find this peace by another means however many resources we throw at our problems. This peace is a gift from God, who we know is in overall control.

So, let's be those who pray in every situation and discover God's peace.

Paul Kingman



*Note: I have produced a series of talks on 'How to pray' based on the Lord's prayer which can be found on our YouTube channel and also posted on www.christchurchstone.org.

Transformed Home

a spoken word with thanks to Tari Fundira (student, Uni of Manchester).

Read this through and then follow the instruction at the end.

I am part of a broken home
 And I refuse to believe that
 I can change my situation
 I realise this comes as a surprise, but
 "There is no place like home"
 Is a lie and
 "I will never be whole again "
 When I graduate, I will tell freshers
 Their feelings are irrelevant
 The world will know
 I have my priorities right because
 Finding a home in people
 Is More important than
 My home found in Christ
 I tell you this:
 Once upon a time
 God made mankind to be at home with Him, other people and
 themselves
 But this is not true for our generation
 Our society does not value home
 Experts tell me
 I will never be free of anxiety, depression and loneliness
 I do not believe that
 I will receive an eternal home
 In the future
 My scars will be evidence of a longing to belong
 No longer can it be said that
 Forgiveness and redemption is mine
 It will be obvious that
 My heart is lost and
 It is unwise to believe that
 there is hope
 All this is true unless a redeemer can reverse it.

Now read from the bottom line back to the top so that you read:

All this is true unless a redeemer can reverse it.
 there is hope
 It is unwise to believe that
etc.

6 **When you are asked to pray for others**

At this time, people may ask you to pray for their loved ones who are in sickness, danger, or difficulty. It's one thing to say "of course I will pray for them", but how exactly do we do it?

Firstly, if you can, ask for some details about the situation. This will inform your thinking, but more importantly it will give the person an opportunity to show you how they are feeling. They may need your prayers as well, but are unable to ask directly for them. Each week try to find out from them how the person you are praying for is doing, this is a caring action and can mean a lot to the friend who approached you.

It's easy to forget names and details so write them down as soon as you can. You will probably have a list that seems to grow and grow. One way of coping with all the people is to put the individual names in a "prayer pot" taking just a few names out at a time, and transferring them to another pot, until the first one is empty. Then simply reverse the process.

Some of us pray for people simply by using their name together with the name of Jesus. "John, Jesus....John, Jesus". If, in the silence between each phrase, an idea for prayer or action comes into your mind, follow the lead!

Others prefer to talk to God informally as you would to a friend, but then adding a short prayer eg. "Father (or Lord Jesus) please help John at this time" Where people are critically ill you might use the prayer of the penitent thief from the cross simply putting the name of the person you are praying for in the sentence thus: "Jesus remember (add the person's name) when you come into your kingdom. (See Luke23:39-43).

Establish a pattern and way that suits you. It's not easy, but above all "Pray as you can, not as you can't!"

Roger

Covid-19 pandemic is reshaping our lives in so many different ways. Enforced isolation and the pressures of lockdown have raised many questions and made a lot of people think more deeply about the value and purpose of life. There is a 'perfect storm' of information, false news, and encouraging words bombarding us every day.

Here are a few extracts and quotes that made me think about God's purpose for our lives during the current pandemic:

The year without a Summer

A blizzard comes on very quickly and it's quite intense. The only real option is to "shelter in place," to stay home. But it also passes relatively quickly, the snow stops falling, and you go outside... But winter is different. We need to consider that we haven't just experienced a blizzard, but the onset of winter. Winter is longer and harder than a blizzard. You can go out, but not for long. You have to wear protective clothing. A lot of activities that are normal at other times are not possible in winter. And maybe most of all, you're always thinking about and aware of the possibility of another storm. You're checking the forecast, having to plan around that...

The year 1816 was called "the year without a summer." A volcanic eruption in 1815, in what is now Indonesia, caused winter-like conditions, especially in the Northern Hemisphere, the entire following year. There were frosts in every month of summer in North America and Europe. Just as the "year without a summer" started with a volcano but ended up with massive agricultural and economic effects, so our current pandemic may lead to massive effects long after the pandemic itself is addressed, effects that will take us a long time to recover from. (Andy Crouch: https://andy-crouch.com/extras/the_year_without_a_summer)

The opposite of faith is not doubt, it is fear.

Fear is more widespread and contagious than the virus itself...' (Idea magazine (Evangelical Alliance) May/June 2020 <https://www.eauk.org/news-and-views/idea>)

Time to think...

Thought for the Day: Sam Wells, Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields. April 27th 2020

God's future is made out of our past. Nothing is wasted. The mistakes we've made become moments of learning and growth. Our disappointments and regrets turn into wisdom and insight. Our failures are no longer the end of the story but the beginning of a better story. Strangers and enemies become comrades and companions. It's what the Bible calls God's kingdom.

The Bible isn't interested in going back to normal. Setback, dejection and despair provoke us to see what was wrong in what we'd become accustomed to – and realise there's no going back. We may feel bewildered and powerless, but we'll never get a better chance to consider how we can make a future bigger than the past. If all we aspire to in the face of months of lockdown is to go back to normal, we'll have squandered a once-in-a-century invitation to imagine something richer, truer and deeper than normal ever was.

After the war people didn't aspire to go back to the hungry thirties. They wanted to build a land fit for heroes to live in. This isn't a time for looking back. It's for imagining the future: and starting to live that future now.

(Rev. Sam Wells: <https://yourneighbour.org/news/samwells2>)

Trust

Trust is the greatest resource in human society. Without trust, we relate as competitors and in a mindset of scarcity. With trust, we discover creative pathways that unlock abundance we could never have found on our own. All worthwhile human work and life takes place under an umbrella of trust or, to use the **stronger biblical word, covenant – the shelter of mutual respect and love that forms a kind of canopy protecting us from the wild and dangerous world, making room for great acts of sacrifice and beauty.**

So, if you can: Take time to think... and remember:

'God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.'

2 Timothy 1:7

(Extracts compiled by Elizabeth)

Mission Prayer Diary	
	<i>Scripture Union—Pray for the 95</i>
1st	Please do continue to pray for the 95% of children and young people who aren't part of a church:
2nd	Pray for their physical and emotional wellbeing as they struggle with the restrictions of social distancing.
3rd	Pray for the impact of school closures on children and young people socially, mentally and academically.
4th	Pray for new opportunities for them to encounter Jesus and learn more about who he is and the life-changing difference he can make.
	<i>Stephen and Tabita Bell are planting churches in Croatia</i>
5th	On Sunday 22nd March, Zagreb was struck by an earthquake at 6:24 am, 5.4 on the Richter Scale.. Pray for the 27,500 people whose homes were damaged, that repairs might be possible at this difficult time.
6th	Croatia is in a “lockdown” much stricter than we have in the UK. Pray for the church as everyone is confined to their house.
7th	Varaždin – We are moving Sept 2021 to this town 50 miles north of Zagreb and we already have a great relationship with Pastor Jonatan (Tabita's cousin)
8th	There are 2 small churchplants in Varaždin and the aim is to open 3 other towns for the Gospel
	<i>The Salvation Army is working to help people at this difficult time</i>
9th	Our foodbanks are expanding and we are using our local networks to reach people who can no longer feed themselves or their families and are cut off from other sources of help.

10th	We are opening our buildings to become safe night shelters for homeless people, with space for healthy separation. (the government may end their scheme using empty hotels)
11th	Homeless day centres are now offering doorstep health advice and offering food parcels while night time soup runs are delivering hot food at a safe distance from our emergency response vehicles.
12th	At a time when thousands have lost their job overnight, our Employability service, Employment Plus continues to offer telephone and online support. Our Debt Advice Service is helping people work out how to pay their next bill.
	<i>Our CMS Link Missionaries Tim and Kate Lee helped to set up JigSaw Kids Ministries in Manila (Philippines).</i>
13th	Please pray for Jigsaw's feeding program that we may find a way to provide the hot meals that the children need even in these difficult challenges and that we may find a way to resource hand wash and sanitizer for the staff and children.
14th	We are living in very difficult times with so much fear and worry of Coronavirus which is especially true in Manila where the population is so dense and poverty means families and children don't have the soap, cleaning materials and hand sanitiser needed to protect themselves and as many rely on going through rubbish and live in the dirt of the slums they are at high risk.
15th	Praise God for the Mathew project in Manila which is providing hot meals for 5000 children each day, some of them Jigsaw children
16th	Poverty also means that if the children and families get sick their access to medical care is limited or non-existent due to lack of money to pay, therefore many are afraid

	<i>Jonathan and Robinah Beesigomwe live in Gabarone, Botswana. Their organisation is “Bows and Arrows Ministry”, and they work with older schoolchildren and young adults.</i>
17th	A farming project has begun, multiplying seed of Safflower. Petals have been harvested for tea. Pray for this project as 2 Hectares of seed planting was lost in the drought
18th	We now have a proper partnership with Scripture Union and need more space to start trainings. Things are moving really fast and we thank God
19th	Pray for the new pastor in Jonathan’s local church, as the church tries to reach people despite “Lockdown”
20th	As Botswana is in “Lockdown”, work can proceed only via the internet. But some work is possible on the farming project with each person in a separate area of the field.
	<i>Mission Aviation Fellowship fly medical personnel, supplies and missionaries to far-flung, often inaccessible settlements</i>
21st	In the Covid19 crisis, MAF flights in Africa have been reduced to 20% of normal. Pray that essential medical rescues and church support can continue
22nd	MAF are no longer permitted to fly across some borders. Flights into DRC from Uganda have stopped. Pray that help can reach people in DRC
23rd	Pray for MAF engineers, who must work separately and wear masks when servicing engines. This makes work more difficult.
24th	MAF are flying Corona virus test kits into Liberia. Pray for remote regions of Liberia, where there are no ICU facilities or ventilators.

	<i>The Bible Society's Bible-a-month club is delivering Bible resources in Burkino Faso (population 20.8 million). About 30% of the population are Christians but churches have been subject to terrorist attacks so severely that Bible Society has not been able to visit their staff in the country</i>
25th	Bible-a-month is funding a translation into Lyélé. Thank the Lord for the hard work of the translators. Pray that they will be blessed with wisdom
26th	Pray for real and constant involvement of all denominations so that new translations will reach as many believers as possible
27th	Ask the Lord to give strength and courage to Christians in Burkina Faso, especially to those in the north who are in grave danger of terrorist attacks
28th	Pray that the whole nation will soon return to a peaceful and stable condition
	<i>Tearfund works with poor people across the world, combining the Gospel with practical help. We pray for Burundi, where there was an election on May 18th</i>
29th	Praise God that faith leaders in Burundi have come together to share a message of peace, and that the result will be respected with no outbreaks of violence.
30th	Everytime we have elections in Burundi, unfortunately there is violence. We created spaces for church leaders to gather and discuss what could be done. I was amazed to see – for the first time in Burundi – the most influential faith leaders, including Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical and Muslim, sitting together to engage on what actions could be taken to maintain peace. We thank God that he enabled us to organise this work.' Desire Majambere Tearfund Country Director in Burundi

We all have our own ways of trying to understand the Bible, some start from the beginning, and as the song says, it's a very good place to start!! Others will let the Bible fall open at a page and take a verse or passage from there, some stick with the Psalms, while many prefer a more structured approach, choosing to use reading notes. There are quite a few different guides available to suit all tastes, and many years ago I used to distribute them to church members, then subscriptions became easier to set up so there was no need for a personal involvement. I've probably waved the flag for reading notes before, in particular Daily Bread from Scripture Union. These are produced quarterly and cover several books of the Bible in small blocks over the 3 months, mixing Old and New Testament. For each section there is an introduction and each day a verse of preparation, a passage to read followed by a commentary and finally a response, applicable to the passage read, which is either a verse or a comment. Diana and I have used Daily Bread for a long time and we're often amazed at the relevance for current situations, considering that they have been put together many months in advance. I'd like to quote some of the responses from the past few days in April's Daily Bread.

'Lord, in our darkest moments help us to hold to the faith that will see us through the darkness to the light of your love'.

'How challenging are your circumstances? Can you discern that God is testing you to trust him more?'

'We hold our breath when we don't know what will happen next! Hold your breath now and pray for anyone you know who is being tested'

'We have a stake in this life on earth, but what about your stake in eternity? Pray for those who are currently mourning'.

(continued)

And on the day our neighbour died from the Corona virus and a close member of our family was having a rough time the response was 'Pray that you will detect God's goodness whatever your life is like, being grateful to him. Ask God to reveal his goodness to anyone you know for whom life is particularly tough.'

During the current situation, copies, either one offs or subscriptions, can be arranged online at www.scriptureunion.org/DailyBread or contact me for further details
Phil Tunstall

Scripture Union Daily Bread study notes in lockdown!

Just about the time the Lent course started I decided I was going to try out some new Bible study notes. I had tried Daily Bread years ago and found they were not quite right for me at the time. Having had them recommended by several people, more recently, I decided to give them a try. At the time the only ones I found were January to March so I bought them and decided the dates didn't really matter and I would start them at Easter.

Then came the lockdown and the Lent course stopped so I decided to start the Daily Bread notes. The studies began with Jonah followed by the beginning of Genesis then the early chapters of Mark and currently Joshua. Every day has been so relevant to the current situation in one way or another. Sometimes just a verse or the final thought but often the whole study speaks of the situation in which we find ourselves. The Sunday reading is always a Psalm. I haven't even been reading them on the correct day of the week never mind the correct month and I occasionally miss a day so the Psalm usually comes mid week but always at a time when I need a bit more encouragement.

I will be buying these study notes again and eventually I might get to do the right study on the right day!!

Estella Woodhead

There is a lot on the church website! But where to find it? Here are some links. If you are reading the website version of the magazine, you can click on these links. First, the website home page!

<http://christchurchstone.org/>

Here you will find "Ebenezer" for children

<http://christchurchstone.org/ebenezer/>

Next, Latest news

<http://christchurchstone.org/latest-news/>

Video services that have been recorded

<http://christchurchstone.org/video-services/>

Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/ChristChurchStone/>

Twitter

[@CChurchStone](https://twitter.com/CChurchStone)

Where to find the magazine

<http://christchurchstone.org/category/latest-magazine/page/2/>

This was the link for the April magazine. Probably, future editions will be at a similar address

<http://christchurchstone.org/april-2020-magazine-for-downloading/>

Paul's series on prayer

<http://christchurchstone.org/how-to-pray-video-series/>

Alternative Realities

In his pastoral letter, Bishop Clive is transported to Saturday nights and Thursday evenings, toasting the arrival of a different future

I have never been the greatest Sci-Fi fan, but have always loved Dr Who, and through that portal I have been transported into other worlds, parallel universes. It has probably been healthy for my instinctively rational mind to have to suspend disbelief and embrace the seemingly impossible, if only for 40 minutes on a Saturday night.

Perhaps it has been good training for living in a pandemic? For the last few weeks it has felt as if the settled, familiar reality to which we are conformed and accustomed, has been shattered, and all we have left is fragments of how things used to be, alongside strange new experiences – perhaps horrific, or alarming or rather wonderful..

That sense of different realities converging, comes into sharp focus for me every Thursday at 8 p.m. We spill out of our front door and look out on the suburban street we have known so well for 13 years. But as the houses empty, we see people who we never knew were our neighbours, clapping as enthusiastically as us. And then the care workers from the residential homes opposite come out too, in their masks and gloves. Our new heroines. No doubt as poorly paid as ever, but along with key workers everywhere, freshly valued and celebrated.

As Christians, we often forget that the most important, urgent, theme of Jesus' preaching was the Kingdom of God. Perhaps we forget because the Kingdom is itself such a difficult concept to fully grasp or comprehend. But there are enough pointers in Jesus' words and actions for us to understand that the Kingdom is both present and future, it is a kind of alternative reality that can break in in the present moment but the full glory of which is reserved for the future.

Jesus' preached the Kingdom of God in a context where life for many was nasty, brutish and short. There was not a pandemic but life was lived under Roman occupation, and as Albert Camus observed in his novel, *The Plague*, there are many similarities between living with a plague and living under totalitarianism. *(continued)*

Jesus' antidote to the fear and insecurity he experienced growing up in the Judea of his time, was to preach a message of hope that was rooted in the good news of God's love for his Creation. The message caught fire because it was lived out by Jesus and his followers in ways that transformed lives, often miraculously. Glimpses of a parallel world, a Kingdom based on the principles of love and acceptance, healing and forgiveness, lifted people out of their grim, fearful, present reality, Faith was the portal through which the Kingdom was accessed.

Our churches may be shut, for the present, and many of us feel that deprivation acutely. But the lack of functioning religious buildings need be no hindrance to the effective proclamation of God's Kingdom. People may be the carriers of Covid-19, but people too are the torchbearers of the Kingdom, and every altruistic deed, every lovingly motivated prayer or action, bears witness to a different reality.

Apparently people are drinking considerably more alcohol during lockdown. It's understandable, but it's no substitute for what Jesus described as the new wine of the Kingdom. The sort that we drink freely of when we step into a different reality on Thursday evenings. Imagine if, as we clap, we are toasting the arrival of a different future to that we may have envisaged just a month or so ago. One which is kinder, more thankful, more connected to one another and to nature, less enslaved to wealth and more appreciative of goodness. One where Jesus would feel more at home and the Kingdom much nearer at hand.

+Clive

Bishop of Wolverhampton

In the fight against coronavirus, 'lockdown', 'self-isolation' and 'social distancing' have become the global norm in recent weeks. As this unprecedented disease plagues the planet, we explore how Mission Aviation Fellowship's work has been impacted across Africa..

In its 75-year history, MAF has been serving many isolated communities across Africa including South Sudan, DRC, Kenya, Chad, Uganda, Liberia, Tanzania, South Africa, Madagascar and Ethiopia. During this pandemic however, the word 'isolation' takes on new meaning.

As borders close and many MAF partners leave the continent, serving the earth's most far flung people has never been more difficult. As Africa comes to terms with this unknown disease, MAF has been quick to offer its support.

Unsurprisingly, lockdowns across Africa and around the world are currently limiting the number of MAF flights to around 20%. Regardless of the challenges that lie ahead, every MAF staff member and volunteer continues to play their part.

South Sudan's Prime Minister praises MAF

Henk-Jan Muusse is MAF's Regional Director for Africa. Part of his role is to oversee how MAF operations can support African governments during the current crisis.

South Sudan's Prime Minister, Salva Kiir Mayardit, publicly thanked MAF for their support so far, but lots of red tape hinders flying and makes it harder for MAF to reach the most vulnerable people. Obtaining permissions to fly can be a particularly lengthy process. Henk-Jan explains:

'We're trying to get an aircraft serviced, which is currently based in South Sudan, but we need permission from the Kenyan authorities to fly it to Kenya where the hangar is located. That's step one. Step two is to get permission from the Sudanese government to fly it out of South Sudan for maintenance services. We've now been waiting for more than a week.'

A lack of reliable data is also proving a problem. At the time of writing, coronavirus cases across Africa are reportedly a lot lower than Europe, but according to Henk-Jan, the reality might be very different. *(continued)*

'The West does a lot of testing, but in most of the countries where we operate, there's a shortage of testing kits. In South Sudan we have one reported case officially, but the health facilities are unable to report on the actual number of cases. It's hard to determine how high the infection rate actually is.'

Due to Ebola, Africa took coronavirus seriously

Although testing in Africa is an issue, Henk-Jan says most governments reacted swiftly to restricting movement, unlike their western counterparts who were arguably slower to respond and did not grasp the gravity of this highly infectious disease:

'We recently had an Ebola outbreak in DRC, so African governments are more attuned to fighting viruses. They enforced very strict measures to restrict people's movements including airport checks. They took it very seriously because of their experience with Ebola. That could be another reason why the spread of the disease appears to be slower in Africa.'

MAF makes its first coronavirus rescue flight in Liberia

African nations are taking different approaches to 'lockdown'. It's still business as usual in Tanzania where MAF continues to fly medical professionals to remote parts of the country, but the situation is closely monitored and regularly reviewed. In Madagascar however, flying is strictly prohibited.

Before Liberia's lockdown, Liberia's Ministry of Health requested MAF's help to test a suspected coronavirus patient in Zwedru - a remote town in the south east of the country. MAF Pilot, Steven Biggs, got the call:

'It was 7:30am Saturday morning when I was enjoying my first coffee. An hour later I'm at the airport prepping the aircraft shortly before flying to Zwedru with Liberia's Ministry of Health staff and their test kits. A positive coronavirus diagnosis in remote Liberia could be devastating as there's very little in the way of health facilities here and definitely no intensive care units or ventilators. We arrive an hour later. If not for our flight, they would have had a 20 hour plus journey on terrible roads, then back again - precious time wasted instead of dealing with more potential infections. God has placed MAF in Liberia for just such a reason. I feel so privileged to be here.'

Fortunately, the test was negative. As a result, Liberia's Ministry of Health and MAF are exploring other options to respond to the crisis, particularly as the wet season approaches when MAF will be the only feasible means of transportation to take coronavirus test kits and medication to the remotest parts of Liberia.

Since this is an internet magazine, names, addresses and telephone numbers have been omitted

FLOWER ROTA

June 7th	Mrs E. Cook
June 14th	Mrs S. Morray
June 21st	Mrs A. Brandon
June 28th	Mrs J. Rowlands

ROADS FOR PRAYER

7th June

Mount Road
Mount Street
Old Road
Stonefield Court

14th June

Stonefield Square
Victor Street
Victoria Street
Whitebridge Lane



21st June

Alma Street
Bromfield Court
Dominic Court
Granville Terrace

28th June

King's Avenue
Longton Road
Margaret Street
Newcastle Street

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