



ST. PANCRAS CHURCH

ST PANCRAS NEWSLETTER 3 – 11 MAY 2020

REACHING FOR GOD'S LOVE

The Queen's message this week contained the memorable phrase: 'Our streets aren't empty, they are filled with love.' Over the VE weekend, there have been so many encouraging stories of neighbours celebrating (six feet apart), playing music together, and decorating streets and homes. Others in our city continue to make big sacrifices every day, particularly those working in our care homes and care services. Parents are home-schooling, grandparents are staying physically distant, children have given up seeing their friends. All of these, in this strange time, are signs of love.



Love is difficult to define. What do we mean by love? Oswald Chambers writes that, 'Love is the sovereign preference of one person for another, and spiritually Jesus demands that that preference be for Himself.' We show love by choosing to act toward others in a certain way, or not act in other ways. God shows His love for us by sending His Son. In Jesus, we see God's love is inexhaustible. His love reaches to the very depth of our need; He loves to the end.

Love is spontaneous, but it can only be maintained by discipline. Sometimes it is easy to love other people, other times it takes great effort. In these times of hardship, it takes endurance to keep loving people, especially those with whom we don't naturally get along. It takes love to keep picking up the phone to ask how they are. It takes love to keep on praying for them. It takes love to keep answering their requests with grace.

And there is another kind of love that I think is becoming harder. As the lockdown continues, it takes love to keep on praying for our government and officials, leaders and politicians. It takes love to see them as human beings trying to make the best decisions in the light of incomplete facts. It takes love not to become bitter and frustrated at the continued sacrifices that we are called on to make. It takes love to continue living in hope and faith.

Jesus says to his friends, 'Love, as I have loved you.' (John 13.34-35) We can try standing on tiptoes to match God's love, but we will never reach it. It is only when we know that we are loved that we can reach out to others in the same kind of way. But take comfort. As the Queen reminded us, love fills emptiness, it is stronger than the grave.

Every blessing in Jesus Christ,
Lawrence

BISHOP NICK MCKINNEL WILL BE JOINING US THIS SUNDAY

We're glad to welcome the Bishop of Plymouth, the Rt Rev Nick McKinnel, at our next Sunday service (17 May). Our Sunday service begins, as usual, at 10.30am (via Zoom - if you would like to join this service please contact lawrence.braschi@stps.org.uk).

ST PANCRAS CHURCH NEWS

The government's announcement today advises that **churches will remain closed for public worship at least until July**. At St Pancras, we will continue to follow government advice and the advice of the diocese, while looking to re-open the church building as soon as it is safe to do so. Meanwhile we will continue to meet together via the Zoom app. If you are concerned for anyone's well-being during this time, please do contact the vicar, the church wardens or the leader of the pastoral care team (Maggie Dyson).

June Farley has wanted to express her thanks for all who have been praying for **Allan Farley and the family** over the last two months. Allan returned home from hospital last week. You can see a video of him leaving hospital accompanied by a standing ovation from hospital staff on the St Pancras Facebook page. Allan is still very weak and tires quickly but is enjoying time with his immediate family.

Please continue to remember him in your prayers, and all those who continue to miss his twin brother, Stephen.

[One of the first places that Allan was able to visit after coming out of sedation was the hospital's 'Secret Garden' – to find out more about this garden, read Liz Dunlavey's piece below.]

Joe Mattock has returned safely home after being in hospital last week. He has good support from his sons and is thankful for all who have phoned and prayed for him.



At St Pancras we have continued to provide **lockdown food hampers** with the help of Provide Devon and Transforming Plymouth Together. Last week we supplied hampers and a 'Beat the Lockdown Boredom' craft pack to 22 families – more than 40 adults and 60 children. Thanks to our families' worker, Mariska, for coordinating all the work to get these hampers ready and for the volunteers who make it happen each week.

THE HOSPITAL'S 'SECRET GARDEN' – by LIZ DUNLAVEY

There have been many lovely stories about the 'secret garden' at Derriford Hospital where many COVID patients have experienced their first glimpse of the outside world since they were admitted to the intensive care unit. It has become a place of hope and recovery, and a symbol of the power of nature to heal.



I thought I would give my experience of this very special garden.

On the 23rd March I was moved from my usual nursing job at the hospital to work on intensive care as part of the COVID escalation team. I didn't know anybody and I was apprehensive about what was to come. On my second shift in the unit however, I heard about the secret garden. I was told that as the Chelsea Flower Show had been cancelled, a large donation of flowers and plants had been given for the garden and volunteers had given their time to plant them.

This garden, over time, became somewhat of a solace for me, after taking off all my PPE and feeling the air on my face again I would gather my lunch and sit in the sunshine of the garden. I would feel human again, talk and laugh with my colleagues and for a brief period escape the trauma that was happening around us. No matter how bad things got the garden was always there.

I spent one morning blowing up balloons and decorating the garden with bunting to celebrate a patient's birthday, this was a place for them as much as a place for us. We would not only share in their darkest moments but also in moments of happiness and joy.

In a time where our luxuries have been taken from us, it is also a time to reflect on the world around us and the kindness, we can show others. It is for this reason that I view the garden as that symbol of kindness and how a community of healthcare professionals worked together to create this communal space, not only for the benefit of the patients, but for their colleagues as well. Sometimes it's the simplest of things that can give us the most pleasure and hope.

[Liz is a nurse at Derriford hospital and volunteered to transfer to work back in ICU during this COVID-19 crisis. Liz and Alex had planned to have their baby George christened at St Pancras this Easter.]

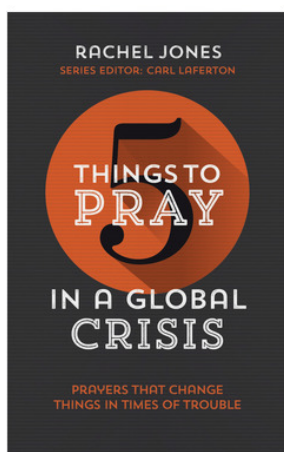
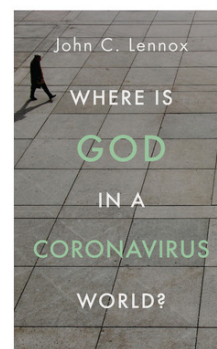
PRAYER AND WORSHIP IS ONLY A PHONE-CALL AWAY

Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line. Launched by the Archbishop of Canterbury last week, the free phone line is available 24 hours a day on 0800 804 8044. Daily hope has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.

CHRISTIAN THINKING ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS

There are already several books thinking about Christian responses to Coronavirus and its effects. Here are some of the most prominent:

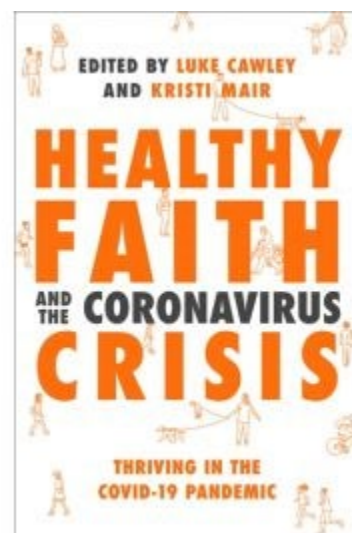
John Lennox, *Where is God in a Coronavirus World* – this is a freshly rewritten booklet from one of the world’s clearest Christian writers (who also happens to be an Oxford professor of mathematics). This is a good, short book to give away to friends or family asking the question, ‘how can there be coronavirus if there is a loving God?’ You can find a link [here](#).



Rachel Jones, *5 Things to Pray in a Global Crisis*, - this is a really practical booklet helping us to pray for ourselves, our family and for the wider response to the epidemic. Rachel Jones draws on prayers in the Bible to help us pray in line with God’s heart. You can find a link [here](#).

John Piper, *Coronavirus and Christ*, This book by the well-known American pastor John Piper, who is also in his mid-seventies, asks what it’s like to face Coronavirus trusting ‘in the odds’ of survival or trusting in Jesus Christ. Piper

particularly looks at the sovereignty of God and how this crisis awakens us to the purposes of God to bring glory to Jesus. You can find a link [here](#).



Luke Cawley and Kristi Mair, *Healthy Faith and the Coronavirus*. This is a much longer book, a collection of chapters by many well-known Christian writers and teachers, including Tom Wright, Derek and Dianne Tidball. Kristi Mair writes, ‘We have never been more at home, and yet we’ve never felt less at home.’ The book addresses questions of loneliness, fear, singleness, marriage and growing faith. You can find a link [here](#).

PRAYING WITH THE PSALMS – by SARAH SHARLAND

Cambodia was once called the Land of Paradise. In the 1970s it became known by a rather more gruesome name following the terrible actions of the Khmer Rouge: The Killing Fields. In his book, *The Tears of my Soul*, Sokreaksa Himm tells his personal story of being caught up in that killing. His family story is a stark tale of brutal oppression but is simply told with a gentleness ironic to the subject matter. Like many in that region his family were Buddhists but along the way Mr Himm became a Christian, a faith he had never encountered before and which may have impacted his prose. After his escape from the physical killing fields he was still greatly troubled: ‘Every day, images from those torturous years filled my mind’. He eventually found the psalms to be a – and indeed the only – source of comfort to his soul, ‘I

found the Book of Psalms a wonderful source of support and comfort'. Every night he would meditate on Psalm 23 and the nightmares ceased.

Generations of people have found true solace in the psalms. They are not just lovely poems but give us permission to be ourselves before God. When we are in need of consolation and reassurance such as no amount of professional counselling could give Reaksa Himm, or feel a great need to rage against others or 'the system', or want to praise God for his generosity, compassion and love, then the psalms are a rich source.

If you are not familiar with the psalms, why not read some? You might decide to read one per day. Each time you pick one up, read through it and see if any particular verse stands out for you. If so, then return to it and dwell with it a while. Try to see where that might impact on your life. Turn that verse into a prayer simply by speaking it to Jesus. What does Jesus reply?

If you have a particular event in your life you want to bring to Jesus, try using one of the psalms to pray into that event. Scan through them and find one which matches the sentiments of your emotion. Use that to meditate on. Try to imagine yourself within the image which is given, for example, 'he will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart' (Ps 91:4). That particular psalm goes on to give the effects of that protection, 'You will not fear the terror of night, ... nor the plague that destroys at midday' (Ps 91:5,6). Often, as in the rest of the Bible, there is a decision on our part to take God seriously and that is true also of this psalm, 'Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty' (PS 91:1).

Immerse yourself in a psalm, make it a prayer and listen for God's response.

MERCY SHIPS: THE FLOATING HOSPITALS – by DEREK GRIBBLE

Mercy Ships is one of those organisations which demonstrates compassion by going to places in the third world and deploys hospital ships to some of the poorest countries on earth. The ships deliver vital, free healthcare to people in desperate need. If you are able please look at [this video link](#), and you will be able to see just a small example of the work taking place from one of the hospital ships.

Conditions requiring surgical treatment kill more people in low-income countries than HIV/Aids, TB and malaria combined. Globally, five billion people have no access to safe, affordable surgery when they need it. As well as completing thousands of urgent operations onboard its floating hospital, the Africa Mercy, Mercy Ships volunteers also work closely with host nations to improve the way healthcare is delivered across the country, by training and mentoring local medical staff, and renovating hospitals and clinics.

Founded in 1978 by Don and Deyon Stephens, Mercy Ships has worked in more than 56 countries, providing services valued at more than £1.2 billion. By improving healthcare delivery in every country it visits, Mercy Ships is working to eradicate the diseases of poverty and effectively do itself out of a job. Mercy Ships follows the model of Jesus by

“bringing hope and healing to the forgotten poor”, helping people of all faiths and none.

As a church fellowship we will this year be supporting the work of Mercy Ships as part of our 10% giving to God’s mission around the world. If you have any questions about Mercy Ships then please feel free to contact Derek (derektricia@blueyonder.co.uk)

NEXT NEWSLETTER

If you would like to include anything in the next newsletter do write or phone Lawrence Braschi (lawrence.braschi@stps.org.uk)