



# CONTACT



## MY JOURNEY THROUGH TROUBLED TIMES

by Heather Ford



In my clearing out yesterday I found this reflection written in 2002 after a turbulent few years in my life. I did not

know then the impact that those hard years would have on my life, and the new life and direction that emerged from the ashes.

I pray this for us as church at this time and declare that new life will arise as we face the journey together.

The hills in the distance remind me where I am going, they glint in the sun's rays, beaming hope into my heart. Yet it is still so far and I walk through

muddy marshy valleys, over desert places where I long for refreshment and rest, through darkness and emptiness. How long is this journey?

God help me see that I can't have it all now; the longings you have placed within me are to keep me going, not to cause me to despair because I haven't yet attained them.

Within my despair, within my disappointment is a jewel. The jewel is the hope of my longings, the reality of what I most want, the desire that keeps me going.

If I didn't feel disappointed I would have nothing more to hope for, if I didn't feel

ashamed and deeply sad I would not be reaching in hope for a better place.

The call of heaven has cut through me, it governs my thoughts, my desires, my whole life. I want more because there is more. I want closeness, intimacy with you God, joy unspeakable because it exists, it is reality!

Then heart despair, be dismayed, be sad, I pour it out into your cup Lord, count the tears mingled with your own. You, who for the joy set before you endured the cross, embraced the pain, bought my life back from death, you know, you understand.

Raise me up. The despair is my hope hidden from my eyes, my guilt, my shame, is a call to repentance, to newness, to freshness, to complete and utter forgiveness.

The journey has not ended here—it has begun in earnest

## MATT'S CHALLENGE —AN ACT OF KINDNESS

by Lois Wells

During the week leading up to the *Big Sunday* Matt had encouraged us all to do an random act of kindness. I was praying for a way to do this.



When we gave them to him, he was really thankful. I said that he didn't need to thank us, but could thank God for them. This opened up a conversation about faith. Daniel said that his faith had helped him keep going. After a while, we once again said our goodbyes and went on our way, firmly believing that Holy Spirit had led us to Daniel in order to carry out this act of kindness.

What I loved is that Holy Spirit seemed to have everything set up so perfectly—the need, a nearby shop, the goods, a kindly shop assistant, and affirmation. My only regret is that we didn't ask to pray with Daniel. So that remained my challenge: to see that next time I finish the job properly.

### An Act of Kindness (continued)

During a visit to Barnstaple with Rob an opportunity arose.

As we wandered along the high street there, sitting in the doorway of an empty shop, we noticed a homeless man sitting and watching the world go by—literally. Everyone seemed to be ignoring him, so we went across to chat. We'll call him Daniel. It turned out he'd been living on the streets of Barnstaple for about twenty years. He was a diabetic and struggled with alcoholism. He was very chatty and grateful that somebody had stopped. A support worker had been coming to see him to check he was okay, especially during the COVID lockdown. They saw that he had enough money to buy food daily, but he had no means to buy any other things he might need.

We asked if there was anything he needed and he asked for a cup of tea, which we duly bought him. We saw he had all his worldly goods in a single rucksack, which, it has to be said, had seen better days. He said he'd like a new one but, because he couldn't save enough money, this was out of his reach. We chatted for quite a while and eventually said our goodbyes and walked on.

To our surprise, just a few doors down the street was a *Mountain Warehouse*. We decided to see what rucksacks they had in stock, perhaps we could find one to help him. There were a few options, and a large blue one seemed to fit the bill, but we weren't sure if this would be too large, so I decided to go and ask him. On the way back I asked the Lord whether he was really in genuine need. In chatting to him again the rucksack we chose seemed perfect, so I also asked if there was anything else he needed, for example a roll mat. He said that would be lovely.

When I returned to Rob, he was chatting to the shop assistant who'd asked why we were buying it, as he was concerned that sometimes people had been taken for a ride by people posing as 'homeless' trying to make money. He'd confirmed that Daniel was genuinely on the street and had been in about a week ago and had chosen some goods which they had been considerate enough to put to one side until he could get some money together. The rucksack type he'd chosen was the very one we'd singled out. So we bought it, with the rest of the goods he'd chosen and, of course, the roll mat.

So, about a week later, I rang to make an appointment at a local shop. I discovered that the assistant I was talking to had a health need, and whilst on the phone to him, I felt sure that Holy Spirit was prompting me to visit him and offer to pray. I was sharing Daniel's story with some friends from HCC and mentioned this second conversation as well. One of those friends said 'Well, just go and do it!' So the challenge was set.

Two weeks later, at the end of my appointment, engaged in conversation and about to leave, I felt strongly Holy Spirit saying, 'Well, are you going to do it? Are you going to pray?' I felt really apprehensive but decided I had to go for it! So I offered, he said yes, and I prayed. I could feel Holy Spirit's presence and now I must leave it God's hands.

I'm really pleased that Matt asked us to do an act of random kindness, and that God gave me another opportunity to step out of the boat. I continue to pray for the courage to act when other situations arise. And I'm thankful for being part of a church where we are challenged and encouraged to step out in faith in our everyday lives.

# DESIRE TO BE IN HIS PRESENCE

by Sarah Wilson



How often do we/ do I actively seek to have a period of uninterrupted closeness with Jesus? Well, during lockdown, more often than I have ever done before.

At this point in the year, had there not been a global pandemic, Andrew and I would have taken advantage of my current situation and booked a holiday (during term time!) to celebrate our upcoming Silver Wedding Anniversary. I would also have been on my first ever retreat week. Instead, Andrew bought me this book: *Invitation to Retreat* by Ruth Haley Barton. I can highly recommend this book to

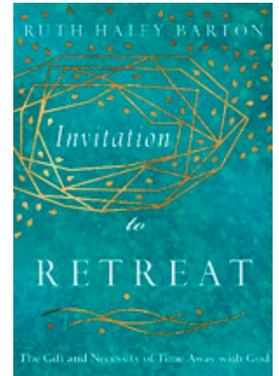
anyone—if you are thinking about going on a retreat, if you plan to go on one in the future, or if you have no intention of ever going on one! I have been on a journey as I have read, studied and journalled through this book.

Here is an example of why you should consider it, or if you even just desire to spend more time with Jesus:

*'A barge enters a canal lock. (You are the barge) It turns off its engines. (You are forced to stop) The propellers stop. The canal gates are closed. The barge just sits there. (You have to rest) As the new level of water flows in (the living water of Christ)*

*everything is lifted. When the gates open, the barge goes out to a new altitude, buoyed up- not by anything it has done, but by the lifting power all around it. (The restoring power of Jesus which allows you to see things differently).'*

I recommend the book and I recommend going to a place where you can be lifted by the power and presence of Jesus.



# WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING WITH FAMILIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

by Jon and Lizzie Hares

If you don't have any small people or teenagers currently living in your house, you may not be aware of the constant hum of activity that has been happening in this area while we've not been able to meet in person. Big thanks to all those who have stepped up to help out, from delivering packages to recording content, to keeping in touch with folks—it's really felt like a joint effort!

## Prayer Walking

As a family, we wanted to keep in touch with our loved ones in church and also in our community when lockdown stopped us meeting together. Taking all necessary precautions to keep ourselves and others safe, each day we had a 'Boris Walk'. Sometimes we just walked and followed the Holy Spirit's promptings as to whose door to knock on for a garden-path or through-the-window conversation.

Sometimes we just bumped into people as we wandered. And other times we sensed a real call to walk directly past or to certain houses to call on people. Thanks to some generous HCC family, we also had gifts we could take a long with us to brighten people's days, like sunflowers.

These opportunities to talk face-to-face have enabled us to build deeper relationships and encourage people that they don't have to feel alone!

## Blessing Packs

Over the last few months, we have put together several different blessing packs and distributed them with a team of volunteers. At Easter, we made an Easter pack with chocolate, an



Easter book, activities for the kids, and something for the grown-ups, for families both from HCC and

also ones we know through *The Sanctuary* and *Little Treasures*. We have recently sent out another one to *The Sanctuary* families, devised and delivered by the lovely Sanctuary team. We are really praying that the families were encouraged by these, especially the ones who don't yet know Jesus. They have led to some amazing conversations so far, please pray for more questions, more opportunities and more fruit!

We also put together a pack to encourage our young people, including a book and a word written for them individually. Thank you to our lovely team who prayed for our young people and who delivered the packs!

### Virtual Youth Group

Since the end of March, the joint church youth groups have been meeting every Tuesday on Zoom, and there is also now a mini bible study on a Thursday, along with a weekly email and Youtube video each Friday. It's been pretty full on for the youth leaders, with sometimes over four hours of Zoom in one night over three different age groups. Although it's not the same as meeting in person, it has been great to chat, study the Bible, pray together and build towers out of everything from cans of baked beans to toilet rolls!!

Although our HCC team has decided to take a break from this over the summer, we'd love to connect with you in other ways, so watch this space!

### Little Treasures: Rhymes at 11

Our *Little Treasures* group is like a little family. If you couldn't see your family for six months you would really miss them, so we've had to find other ways to keep in touch. We've really enjoyed streaming a Facebook Live Rhymetime almost every week since lockdown began. At first, we did this from our home, and more recently we have been doing it from The Bridge Centre. At

its peak, this was getting around seventy views a week, so it's been a real feature of lockdown for our family, as the kids have joined in too!

Families have been faithfully tuning in and interacting, requesting their favourite songs, and doing shout-outs. It's been a really precious way of keeping in touch with these families, a space where we've been able to show God's love, and where we've been able to signpost to other support opening up, particularly as the effects of lockdown have been on people's mental wellbeing and their jobs. It's been a great springboard for us to be able to encourage these families to join in with other online church activities, when normally they wouldn't feel comfortable coming into a church service.

### Explorers: Live and Explorers: At Home

This is something that you may have caught sight of as we have shared snippets of it on a Sunday morning. *Explorers: Live* is a live-streamed session aimed at our primary aged children that happens every couple of weeks on our Explorers Live Facebook page. The sessions so far have been put together by the lovely members of our Explorers team; it's been a whole new experience getting to grips with the tech and we are so grateful for all the efforts they have put in—the team have been heroes and have been a great help. We've had an array of techies, teachers, singers, actors, and gamers!

Many families from church, but also from *Little Treasures* and *The Sanctuary*, have been watching the sessions and been encouraged, and these sessions have really helped people to consider faith in a way that's hopefully not too 'churchy' and maybe dispel some myths or preconceptions they have about what church is actually like!



Alongside each session, there is a downloadable resource pack called *Explorers: At Home*. These contain lots of different activities like creative prayer, games, baking ideas and crafts for parents to do at home with their children to help them dig deeper into the message from *Explorers: Live*. If you have kids, please do use these resources, and help us better tailor what we're offering by sharing your feedback.

### Schools

As a schools team, we have been unable to go into schools since March. This means we have had to be a little bit creative! Normally in July, we would go into Year Six to lead transition workshops with every Year Six student. This year, we were able to make five pre-recorded workshops and upload them YouTube. We hope to keep using this as a gateway to other resources, and to encourage many young people who might have stayed home. The feedback from schools has been really positive.

We've pre-recorded some assemblies, and as visiting restrictions look set to continue into September, we plan to carry on doing this in the new school year.

Please keep remembering us in your prayers. Remote working is a huge challenge in an environment where team is essential to what we do and who we are as God's people. Please pray for continued inspiration, unity and joy as everyone plays their part.

**CHALLENGE  
2020**



# 25,000

# MILES



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