



highworth community church | 23 april 2020

CONTACT

registered charity no. 1080002

HELLO!

So much may feel uncertain at the moment, but you can always rely on a delivery of *Contact!* Hopefully, you'll experience a little more connection to your church family as we navigate this time together. Bless you, dear Family.



A LETTER TO MY SAVIOUR/I SURRENDER

by Jackie Kerr

In this difficult time I am sure we are all feeling anxiety, worry, panic desperation and loneliness, fear for loved ones and friends, and even for some maybe questioning their faith.

My fear has always been that of losing control. It is huge, and that fear was in me but I now know that the power of being in control was an illusion, and I have fully surrendered and come close to Jesus.

Let me explain.

Many of you will know that I am a very positive person, looking at the good in everything and wanting to help everyone, but with this comes the downside of

always rushing here and there, on to the next project, hardly stopping or even sitting still for a moment to breath, wanting to always be in control. I was worn out.

As a fairly new Christian, I have become close to Jesus, but always wanted to come closer and he knew my fear of letting go of control, my busyness, worry and sometimes being judgemental of others, had pushed him away.

Isolation, of course, has stopped me in my tracks and given me chance to breathe and come close to the Lord. Has it for you?

I have become a different person, a calmer, more attentive person, listening to others. I am also struck so many times a day by the things I have given up and don't want back.

The enjoyment I feel in the simple things is overwhelming and I would say, at times, has brought me to tears:

- Passing on my skills to my girls.
- Teaching Lucy to garden—planting seeds together and watching with excitement each morning as they have grown a little more.
- Dressmaking with Lorna—watching the results unfold with awe as she follows my instructions and excitement when the dress is made.
- Talking through childhood memories together.
- Sitting outside, admiring the blooms on the cherry tree. We have been living in our house for over ten years and I have never really noticed the bloom on the tree before.
- Talking to my non-Christian friends on Facetime about my love for Jesus.
- Childlike excitement each evening with my daughter's cooking—wonderful vegetarian meals fit for a high-class restaurant!
- Sitting together outside under the cherry tree, eating and long chats over the supper table.
- Waking every morning with excitement to savour the day.
- Each evening hearing the chatter and laughter of the girls from their rooms



Jackie Kerr

as 'night, night,' and how much we love each other. Yes, we said it before, but this time with heartfelt meaning and real love.

- Facetiming my parents and listening to every word and taking the time to chat. (Even if they are repeating a story for the tenth time! My girls say I do this now! We all do it!)

- Reading my Bible and taking the time to listen to Jesus talk to me which he has done so many times before when I have been still.

- Watching Spring Harvest, and taking the time to pull out my Bible, pause and really understand the verse not rushing through.

- Reading my stack of biblical books that I have been kindly lent by my church family.

- Tidying cupboards and drawers—the highlight being finding a bible that Eoli bought me in 2011, crying. I have only been a Christian for less than two years so the Bible made me realise you showed me the Lord then, Eoli. (Sorry. Why did I not listen?)

- Listening to my Bethel Music as I take my daily walks and deep-breathing in the air—air, which I am sure has got cleaner, does anyone else think so?—raising my hands as I sing out loud to the Lord and not worrying who can hear me. Well, to be fair, I did not really worry before but now I do it with more passion!

- Taking the time to nod at strangers with a big smile and say, 'Hi, how are you?'

- Reading the message and prayer Lainy gave me that she personally wrote—knowing I am accepted by God just as I am, as we all are, and that He loves us all so very much. As I said, there have been a lot of tears!

My mind really has slowed down and been in the NOW, in the moment, but it's not stopped me thinking. I have still had many new ideas, both with my faith (don't worry Matt and Kathryn I won't bombard you with my ideas just yet) and my business plans. That passion will never go from me, but what has left me is my racing mind and the need for more and more possessions.

My bank balance is the healthiest it has ever been, but I am the most content. The need for more is not where my contentment is found, it's found in you, Jesus. Amen.

I love my casual wear, my casual hair. I don't think I will ever go back to business wear. Anyone else joining me? And more importantly, I'm letting go of my status in who I am, what I look like and what I have achieved, where I've attached my achievements to my success and lived by them. They have left me and I don't want them back.

My eyes are fully focused on Jesus, I believe surrender is not a one-time event, but it's daily. I am surrendering.

I feel Jesus has stopped us all in our tracks. Forgive the pun, but we have woken up to smell the coffee. (Of course it has to be 'good' coffee hey Jo! Heel! heel!)

As I am writing this, it may look like my life is perfect, but I have struggles and worries just like we all do.

I was told this week that my Mum has just a few months to live and I can't go and see her. I have also been very poorly. And I have a business which I have to find the money to financially support through this difficult time, especially with little business coming in.

But as Matt says, 'Hey, it's ok right.' In the tough moments, I have experienced the peace of Jesus which has enabled me to face the reality of what is in front of me

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Cherry blossom's in Jackie's garden



Sally Willson

FIRST MONTH OF COVID LOCKDOWN

by Sally Willson

Having embraced the prophecies saying that 2020 would be a year of renewed mission and spiritual breakthrough, it is fascinating that all our own plans to run with this vision have been put on hold. It is apparent that in all this God is wanting to get our attention and get us focused on His agenda.

In the midst of all the suffering, upheaval, and uncertainty around, I am aware that I personally have been given a gift of time—to reset, reprioritise, and find a new rhythm of life. Not easy, when I'm used to dashing from one thing to the next without a pause inbetween, but it's very welcome. The glorious weather has helped slow me down.

At the beginning of the month, I read Gordon Hickson's life story, 'Harnessed for Adventure'. It was like reading the Acts of the Apostles in that it was inspiring and challenging, but left me thinking I've missed the mark in terms of experiencing the miraculous! I know that my apparent self-sufficiency is a big barrier to being totally reliant on the Holy Spirit to direct all I think, do, and say.

It is wonderful how the Spring Harvest team managed to adapt and make all their amazing teaching and devotionals accessible online. The theme *Unleashed* is just so spot on for those longing to see and be part of a new move of God in this

land. I'm currently reading Gavin and Anne Calvert's book *Unleashed* so watch this space!

I really find the Lectio365 app a helpful devotional tool. This week's theme is on 2 Chronicles 7:14, focusing on the prerequisites to God forgiving us and healing our land.

Praying for and missing you all. May God's power, presence and potential be released in each of us as we lean more into Him than ever before.

Letter to my Saviour/I Surrender

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My close friends will know the realisation of my surrender is quite something. I have been asking for a long time and it's here. There is no way I am going back to the normal for me. This the new normal. It is here to stay. Is it for you ?

I love Jesus and the work He has done in me at this time, all by slowing me down. I surrender to You, Jesus. Praise the Lord!

What has Jesus been doing in your life at this time? What is he trying to say to you? Have you surrendered to him fully?

Are you ready to let go of control, anxiety, worry? What prayer would you write to our Lord? Are you a servant of God?

Let your worry, anxiety, anger, judgement, lift away from you and bring Jesus close. He's waiting for you to open the door and let him in.

My Prayer

My dear loving Heavenly Father—

Please forgive me for my sins, especially when I don't stop to take the time to really listen to you when you want to talk to me and come close to me.

Forgive me for looking at others and thinking, 'I would not do it that way! They need listen to me I know best!'

Forgive me for rushing through my daily bible reading and not taking the time to listen to what you want to say to me.

Forgive me for not sitting down and taking the time to fully listen to my family and friends when they want to talk to me about Jesus.

I want to thank you for helping me to let go of the things that are not important.

Thank you Jesus, for coming close to me, so close I can hear your gentle voice, that soft beautiful whisper.

I want to thank you for always being there for me, forgiving me for my sins and giving your life for me.

Thank you Lord for always being there for us all.

Take care of my family, my friends, my church family, and all the key workers in the world at this time and always.

Please Jesus, bring more people to you.

We are listening and will follow you forever.

I surrender

Amen

THOUGHTS ON THIS SEASON

by Phyllis Reid



WHAT IF?

This is a season when God is preparing us, His bride, to be ready for what is to come? What if He wants us to be listening, above all else, for the sound of His voice, the prompting of His Spirit, the empowering of His Spirit?

What if we've been so pre-occupied with our own plans, our own thoughts about the day ahead where, sometimes, there's barely space for God to move unless it fits in with our plan? (I certainly include myself in this—I like to have a 'plan' for each day? Is God's plan the same as mine? Something has to give. Am I willing to be flexible?

What if, in all our busyness, we don't stop long enough to hear His voice, His prompting? What if he wants to do new and greater things that we can hardly even imagine? Wow!

ARE WE BEING MADE READY?

Could it be, could it just be, that He is making us ready for what HE wants to do, even in our midst. Our plans are so little compared to His. He is the LORD after all and He can do anything...and yet He chooses to live in us, His bride! How astonishing is that! My heart cry is, 'Lord, change me, so that I am made ready.'

THE HARVEST WE ALL PRAY FOR

This week, in bible study, Paula spoke about how important it is that people are disciplined, and she asked us, 'What if we see revival and many coming into the kingdom? Can we find the capacity to disciple many, not just a few?' We would ALL need to be involved. Challenging to think about. Are we each ready to play our part in this? This is not reserved for 'a few' to do, but for EACH of us to play our part.

This reminded me so vividly of a prophecy given across the churches in Highworth (each congregation) many years ago. (Some of us remember and we wait for it to be fulfilled!). What follows is part of that prophetic word:

'By your willingness to allow the Holy Spirit to work through you, a great work will be accomplished in Highworth. You have been in drought but I will bring you refreshing rain. You will overflow with a greater harvest than you were expecting and my name shall be held HOLY and in AWE.

A great reorganisation will be required to help my new children to go on with me and not to fall back into their sinful ways. In this I will guide and help you but you must be alert to my voice.'

ENLARGED CAPACITY

by Janet Hodgson



I've been thinking about Matt's message last Sunday when he challenged us to use this current season to enlarge our capacity.

This theme is echoed in one of the Spring Harvest talks where Gavin Calver challenges us to, 'go wider, be bolder, be braver and kinder,' and to pray to be equipped to step out to share words, works and wonders to those who don't know God. Amen!

That's easy in a church context, but what about in my relationships with my pupils, their parents, my relatives and my Facebook friends? This is an area in which I definitely need to be bolder and braver!

So I'm starting with Facebook. I have always been reticent to use Facebook to share my faith publicly. I'm very comfortable writing posts on the HCC Facebook page where I'm fairly sure that I will have a supportive audience, but I've felt anxious about posting to a wider audience from whom I may not get such a favourable response.

So this week, I metaphorically took a deep breath and wrote a public post, intentionally aiming at a wider audience and sharing my personal reasons for my hope in my Father God at this time.

And guess what...? I even got a few "likes" from people I wouldn't have expected!

HE HEARS US

by Helen Stokes



This is the way that the American theologian Richard Rohr always brings a prayer to a close:

'Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God, Amen.'

I love the way that Father, Son and Spirit are all acknowledged as expressions of who God is. Most of all, I love the confident affirmation that you, Lord, never fail to hear us and you understand our intentions better than we understand or express them ourselves. Believing I am heard changes my heart.

May we all live in that awareness that nothing, in His love, is unheard.

DEAR LORD

by Denise Jackson



'I don't know who or what will cross my path today but I do know you are my rock and my fortress. You are my shield and my strong tower. Help me to anchor myself in you today. Help me to walk by your truth, and not my feelings. Help me embrace anything that comes my way as an opportunity to see you at work, and an opportunity to point others to you. Thank you that you love me and nothing can take that away from me. Even if I fail today and fall short, you whisper your unconditional love deep into my soul and remind me that your mercies are new every morning. That amazes me Lord.

In Jesus' name. Amen.'

If you have any non-perishable items for the Food Collective distribution, please bring them along to The Bridge Centre, Monday to Thursday, 11am to 1pm.

AS SEEN ON FACEBOOK

Lesley Lambert
24 April



Imagine walking into a room the size of a ballroom and it is packed with people that you don't know. A few hundred of them all jostling each other for space.

But just as you are about to panic and turn to go, you see a bright pair of eyes right at the other end of the room. They are looking at YOU and they recognise you amongst all those people.

You feel the relief that someone here knows you amongst all of the others.

This is a picture that God gave me at "River" the other night.

Jesus sees you. He acknowledges you as His friend. Amongst the thousands, millions he personally recognises YOU.

Debra Wathen
23 April



So my mam and dad have been busy again with poetry. Here's one they wrote especially for their extended church family at HCC. Enjoy. (this actually made me cry)

HCC

They moved the church out of the community hall,

Why? Because it proved to be too small!!!

God holds this church within His hands, His plan is to grow this faithful band.

Matt is the minister, Kathryn is his wife, She plays the keyboard, he preaches of Abundant Life.

Matt's dad is always there at hand ready to speak to HCC's eager band. Church is held in the hall at Warneford School, and it's Sunday worship as a rule.

No need to dress up, just come as you please, The idea is to meet Jesus, enjoy, feel at ease.

If it's your first time to walk into the hall,

don't be worried, there's a welcome for all!

What is asked of you before they start? Just that you accept Jesus with an open heart!

During this pandemic there's no church I'm afraid, but with Matt at the helm, don't be dismayed.

There is The Bridge and its wonderful prayer room, The technology used there can dispel all your gloom!

When this virus has been defeated and the evil one slinks away defeated, once again, God, the victory will have won,

time for all Christians to say thanks for His son.

May God bless and keep safe everyone at HCC,

When we visit from Wales, you're like extended family!!

It will be good to see familiar faces again

but will life for anyone ever be the same?

Terry and Angela Edwards
Ebbw Vale, April 2020

Lizzie Hares
23 April



Great news! We're back next week (Thursday 30th) zooming into your front room!

If you weren't a part of The Bible Course this time around but would like to join us online then do get in touch, we can get a book to you and show you how to catch up on what we've done so far.



Jon Hares
22 April



Check out our Highworth youth youtube channel running in partnership with our friends over at St Michael's and Highworth Methodist Church. It's been great to have growing numbers of young people joining us via zoom for the online groups on Tuesday evenings! Be blessed.

Ian Coulson
20 April



Based on Rodney's word yesterday.

Psalms 37:4 — 'If I delight myself in the Lord, he will give me the desires of my heart.' (My paraphrase to apply it to me). Similar to seek 'first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added.'

But what are my desires? To be honest, a lot of the time, I might not have desires for the kingdom of God. Yes, I can be very responsive to needs and situations, and that's good. But what is the focus of my kingdom desires? For God to give me my desires I've got to have them in the first place.

Forgive me Lord for drifting and not acting with purpose and desire. Thank you for your grace, for your favour.

Jeanette Ketcher
20 April



Today I read my daily reading and a part of that was Psalm 42. That has always been a special Psalm to me. The narrator remarked on how Asaph the Worship leader was reminded of how good God was to Israel and he started to rejoice, because he wanted to regain back his Hope. Let us not lose our Hope in Christ Jesus even though things may challenge us in these times. Let's lift our voices today and sing out a worship song that will stir our spirits and give Praise to God.