



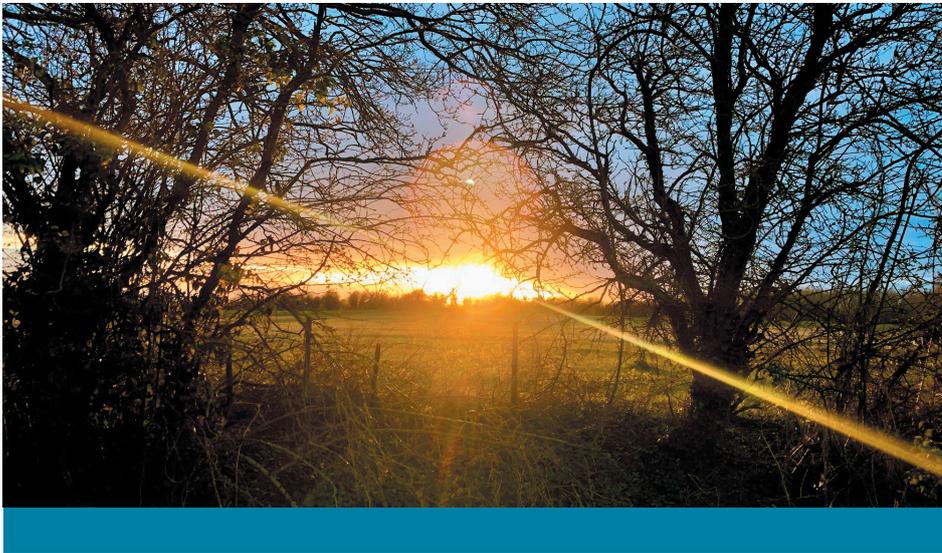
highworth community church | 27 march 2020

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.



FREEDOM

by Jacky Storey

Flights cancelled worldwide, the skies have become silent.

Roads are empty with police checking to ensure your journey is essential.

Eggs, pasta, toilet rolls, hand gel, flour—all highly sort after items no longer in the shops.

Exercise outdoors permitted once-a-day.

Distancing of two metres between people enforced.

Online lessons, lectures, church services, conferences.

Meet ups with those outside of your household banned.

Freedom is something we have always taken for granted in the Western World where we have been able to do what we want, when we want, eat what we want, buy what we want, see who we want, and go where we want at any time. We have never experienced our freedom taken away until now and wow, what a lesson we can learn from this time!

I was with a friend a few weeks back (when it was permitted) when she received a very excited phone call from her daughter, who had been going through the gruelling process of interviews to get accepted onto a midwifery course at university.

The call went as follows:

Daughter: Mum, Mum guess what?

Friend: What? (*Excited and hoping it was an offer of a place.*)

Daughter: I found some toilet rolls!

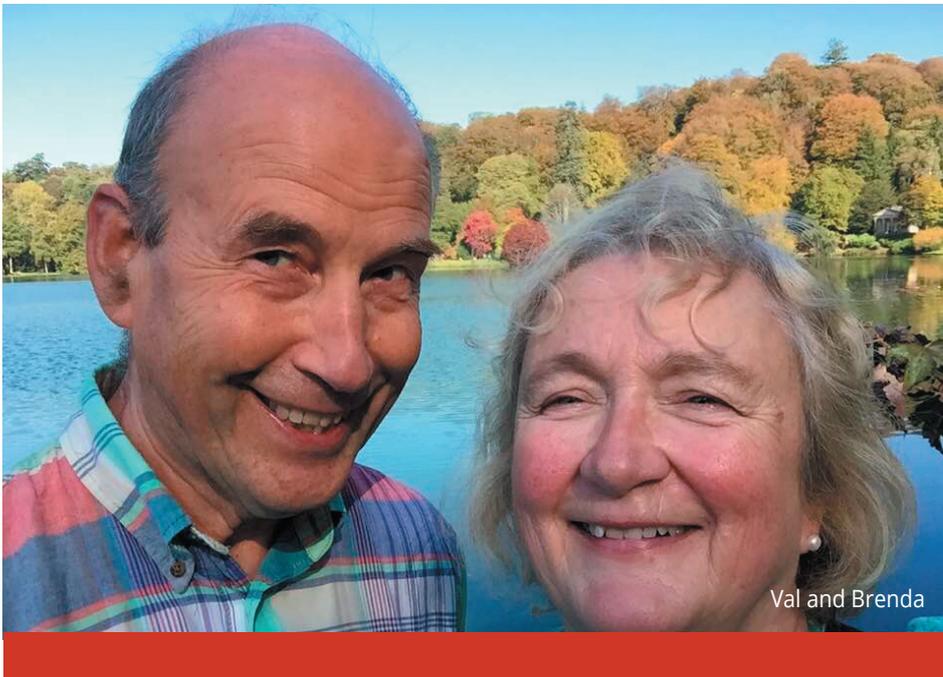
We both laughed and cried at the same time at the situation where the most taken for granted item becomes the most talked about and celebrated when found.

This time has made me realised that we only start to value something once it is taken away and that we should never take our freedom for granted again. I hope our hearts will be bursting with thanksgiving when we are able to start doing the little things of life again that we so took for granted. Over the past few weeks, sometimes I have been OK and other times I really have not. One of my favourite verses that has helped me through is Psalm 18:2, 'My God is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer.' The world may have changed but our faithful God will stay the same now and forevermore, showering us with love that we can share with the world around us.

Looking for what you can do, finding humour where you can, and blessing those around us are the three opportunities we can embrace at this time.

Mega blessings!

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



BLOOD!

By Val Savill

At HCC, we love to support those in need or crisis; responding to the Bible where we are repeatedly urged to love and serve others. There is a plethora of ways we can do so. Before I suggest one, I would like to take you back to 1981 when Brenda and I were very grateful to receive help from strangers.

We were in a delivery room in Bury St Edmunds Hospital and Brenda had just given birth to our first daughter. I was pleased to be quickly given our baby to cuddle (even before Brenda), but I was greatly concerned for Brenda as she was haemorrhaging badly. The NHS medical team applied their considerable skills, which included giving Brenda several pints of blood, whilst I prayed. Crucially, because others had previously donated their blood, Brenda lived. I'm incredibly grateful to the donors and so, in turn, have donated regularly over the years, as well as encouraged our two daughters to do the same. (One of whom wouldn't have been born if Brenda hadn't received the donated blood.)

When I visit the donation centres and relax in a reclining chair, as the bag slowly fills I often pray for the various medical staff involved, as well as those who will benefit from my blood. Usually, I visualise people who receive surgery or are injured in a road traffic accident. However, recent developments with the Donor Service mean that I'm told where my blood is to be

used. I was pleased to discover that my last donation was to benefit babies in a hospital in the Midlands.

I can say from personal experience that blood-doning is a very worthwhile way to help others and I encourage you to consider doing it too, if able. Jesus spoke of giving a 'cup of water' to others (Matthew 10:42); to me, a pint of blood appears to be a good alternative! What about the present situation with COVID-19? The Blood Donor website states: 'You can still travel to donate. Giving blood and platelets is essential to the NHS and vulnerable patients. Please keep donating'. On the website, there's screening information to indicate whether individuals are able to donate and or not. I usually go to Shrivensham Village Hall or the Faringdon Corn Exchange, but there are other locations nearby. Check out the website for further information or how to register and book an appointment:

<https://www.blood.co.uk/>

A final thought. At present, fewer men donate than women, yet men's blood can be used for purposes that many women's blood can't. Time for more men to step up to the challenge? Follow this link to watch rugby stars and BT Sport presenters enjoy

a short brainstorming session about why more men don't give blood:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5s2wZpjiQAw&feature=youtu.be>

There are three additional reasons for men to donate: a) they can do so more often; b) generally, have a higher platelet level; and c) their blood contains fewer anti-bodies which is better for recipients with weakened immune systems. That said, all donors, male or female, are given a warm welcome. As well as that, I particularly enjoy the tea and biscuits (cheesy ones for me) before I leave!

HIGHWAY OF GLADNESS

by Eoli Pieri



I had this verse twice in one day from different places so felt it relevant to share with you all.

All across the earth, I saw the Lord inviting people to walk on the 'highway of gladness'.

The Spirit of the Lord said, 'Beloved, choose joy today! Set your heart and mind on my goodness and abundance. My joy is your strength and my peace is yours already! Choose to laugh in the face of darkness and uncertainty, for I AM your strong tower and your refuge! Now is not a time for mourning and grieving, but a time to rejoice in the strong hand of the LORD being revealed!'

'Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.'

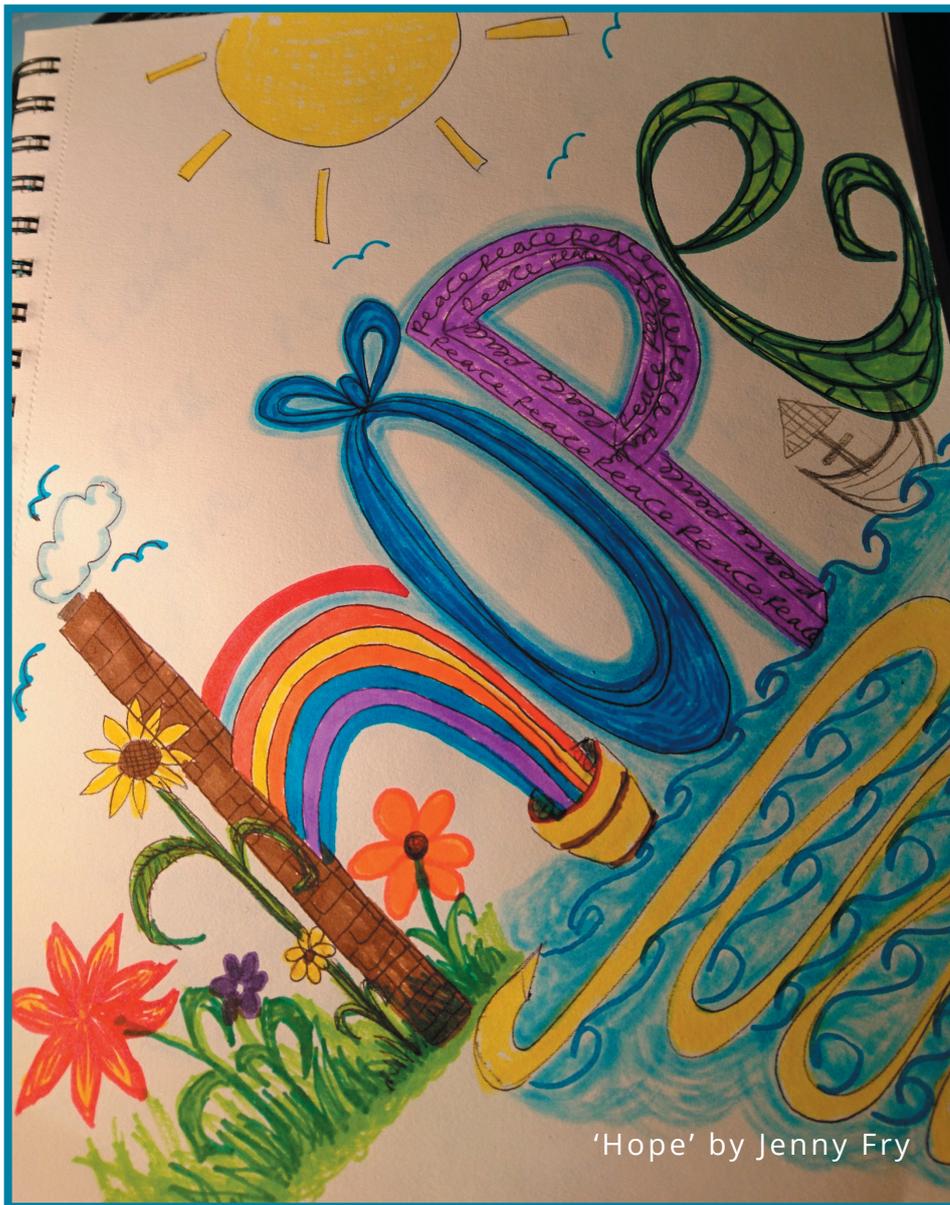
— Romans 15:13

TAP TWINNING

By Val Savill

Many of us in HCC have paid to twin our toilets and thereby enabled families, schools or communities in third world countries to enjoy essential 'facilities' that we take for granted in our homes. You may have noticed the certificate in The Bridge toilet, it is also twinned. The same organisation that enabled toilet-twinning (Tearfund) is

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'Hope' by Jenny Fry

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

by Jo Pearse



Shortly before lockdown began, I was able to get my hair cut. (Now I, for one, would like to think that constitutes an 'essential service' but I realise it doesn't ...) As I walked through Swindon town centre to reach the salon, it felt like a ghost town. There was an eerie silence with even more shops closed than usual and hardly anybody about. I walked through a deserted M&S and thought, 'Who is going to buy new clothes at a time like this?' Clothing has become more and more of a disposable commodity—don't get me wrong, I love clothes, but with no social engagements, interviews, work functions or even holidays in the diary, who is going to be buying a new outfit? Extend this thought to our homes, office, garden and there's a stripping back. What is 'needful'? What matters? Home, food and a phone.

But to be honest, I'm glad I was able to get a haircut—thank you Lord. Not that I've seen many people since. Like everyone else we are socially distancing when we go out and staving off fear of catching or unwittingly spreading something we don't know if we have or haven't got, but just in case we keep away. No one comes into our home these days and I can't go into theirs—but apparently there is a place I can go and in fact I will be welcomed with open arms. I read an invitation this week which defies all the social distancing norms. It said that I would have a very warm and very genuinely welcomed somewhere; I need to put my fear to one side, and be bold and not to hesitate. (Does this person really know me?) I came across this verse which I know so well. I mean, I've heard it, quoted it, sung about it, but never thought about it in quite this way: while we are (rightly) keeping away,

God is waiting for me to come right in to His presence, without fear.

'He [God] welcomes us to come right into the most holy sanctuary in the heavenly realm—boldly and with no hesitation. For he has dedicated a new, life-giving way for us to approach God.' Hebrews 10 (TPT)

The same passage In the Message it reads:

'And since we now have a magnificent King-Priest to welcome us into God's house, we come closer to God and approach him with an open heart, fully convinced by faith that nothing will keep us at a distance from him.'

Yesterday we went shopping, the supermarkets are doing an incredible job keeping the nation fed. We queued at an appropriate distance marked by yellow tape on the pavement outside and it was a one-out, one-in policy to keep numbers down. How quickly we've adapted to a new normal! Although it was quiet there wasn't that eerie stillness I'd felt in the run-up to this—it was more a recognition that this is how it is for now. People were considerate, polite, unhurried, and hopefully the madness of hoarding and over-buying has come to an end. I came home and read another familiar verse, and liked The Passion Translation's interesting wording:

'Don't keep hoarding for yourselves earthly treasures that can be stolen by thieves. Material wealth eventually rusts, decays, and loses its value. Instead, stockpile (did you see that - stockpile!!) heavenly treasures for yourselves that cannot be stolen and will never rust, decay, or lose their value. For your heart will always pursue what you value as your treasure.'

Food for thought.

Tap Twinning

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now offering the option to twin our taps to help stop the spread of the Corona virus. Each £60 donation will help provide hygiene promotion and support in vulnerable communities across more than forty-five countries, so people know how to protect themselves from Covid-19 through hand-washing and good hygiene.

For more information and to discover how to donate, please see:

www.toilettwinning.org/tap-twinning

AS SEEN ON FACEBOOK

Ian Coulson

29 March

Psalms 31:15: 'My life, my every moment, my destiny, are in your hands.'



Psalms 139:13: 'You framed my innermost being, shaping my delicate inside and my intricate outside and wove them all together in my mother's womb.'

Psalms 139:16: 'Before I was even born into this world, you had me in mind. You even determined how long I would live and when that would be.'

I know that Matt [Ford] loves to ask questions which begin with 'What if ...?' One of the questions which I've heard him ask is, 'What if you were born for this very time?'

What does God have in mind?

If you're reading this then God has determined this is your time to live. He could have chosen any time for this to be the case, but He didn't. He chose now.

Surely this is our time to shine. We have literally been chosen to take part in one of the world's foremost times in recent decades (arguably even longer). God could have chosen other famous heroes and heroines of past eras, but He didn't. He chose you and me for this time.

We, as individuals and as a church, have a purpose. We aren't here by accident no matter how we came into this world or what has happened to us since then.

Let's seek God with purpose.

Stephen Hodgson

26 March

For times like these:



1 Corinthians 2:2-5

'I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.'

Sally Corfe

02 April

Just to encourage you and as a nice demonstration that God's with us...



As some of you know, I work for *Open Doors*. Yesterday our leadership team told us that the May/June appeal, which was planned a year ago, is about how social media is a lifeline for secret believers living in ISOLATION in North Africa! How timely, how amazing, how uplifting is that? Planned over a year ago for a time such as this!

Be encourage friends. He is with us. He has not forgotten us.

Phyllis Reid

28 March

Some of you may [have watched] *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens* on ITV [this week]. I happen to love the *Star Wars* films :). For me they have always represented an allegory of all that I believe, that there is a force within us that is stronger than all the work of the enemy, even though that enemy appears huge. This, to me, speaks of the Church learning to take hold of the power that is within each one of us to overcome the work of the enemy. I particularly love this film *The Force Awakens* as it reminds me of the church, a sleeping giant, which has no idea of the power within until it is revealed to us. Enjoy!



Will Pearse

31 March

The following is from an American friend whose son is working in a medical capacity (not exactly sure what) in Italy.



This is his very real message to his mum and dad. Jesus in the midst of all that is happening!

His name is Josh - if you think to pray for him and his parents please do, especially as his older brother was killed in an accident last year.

'Hey! Just wanted to send you a little update of my first weekish in Italy! Just finished night 9 of 30 in a row! We are all exhausted but still in good spirits and working hard!

Everyone I have met here, from the doctors to nurses to the build crew and everyone else, are absolutely incredible! We have expanded the size of our hospital a little bit, putting more strain on our staff, but it's worth it! Being here, seeing what COVID has done to this place is heartbreaking. Talking with a translator last night, he said that everyone here has someone they know, or in their immediate family, that has died from COVID.

The streets are completely empty and the sick flood the hospitals. They have stopped treating almost everything else in order to have room for COVID patients. OR's have turned into makeshift ICU's. Pacu, recovery rooms, ortho, neuro, any floor that might have had a specialty are all converted to COVID floors and only seeing those patients. Their ICU patient to nurse ration is 8:1. The healthcare workers are worn out, worked to their breaking point, with many of their colleges sick themselves. They are such humble heroes and it is incredible to see them in action. I've really been so blessed just to be here to help ease their burden and share in their struggle!

But God is moving! We have seen so many patients, both in our ICU and wards, and the outcomes of our patients is noticeable! It's causing the hospitals to ask questions about what is so different, and we get to tell them it's Jesus! We are not smarter or better, they have much more experience and research dealing with this than we do. We have less equipment, resources, and medications, but we have Jesus and He's the one making a difference. There have definitely been sad moments as we're there with patients, praying with them as they go into eternity, but there have been joyful moments too!

Sorry I can't share specific details right now, but just know your prayers are being heard!

I'm also praying for you and hope you're staying safe and healthy!!