



ST. PANCRAS CHURCH

ST PANCRAS NEWSLETTER 2 – 20 April 2020

Dear friends, brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ,

In our current circumstances, it can feel that we are surrounded by lots of people saying 'no'. 'No, you can't drive up to the Moors.' 'No, you can't go and visit your grandchildren.' 'No, you mustn't spend too long sitting on that park bench.' We understand that these instructions are for our own benefit and for the greater good of our community; still they can be hard to bear.

Sometimes, we think of God as basically someone who says 'no'. Although we know and believe the good news, we really don't trust God enough to believe that He is good and powerful enough to say 'yes'. Often our lives are so marked by rejection, self-rejection and feelings of inadequacy that we think if God really knew who we were, He wouldn't want much to do with us. We don't dare ask Him for more. We pray for others but not for ourselves. In these thoughts, I was encouraged by reading these words about Jesus: **'For all the promises of God find their "Yes" in Him.'** (2 Corinthians 1.20) All the promises of God are affirmed for each one of us in Jesus Christ. It is not selfish or wrong to ask for more of God.

Asking for more doesn't mean that we want to move beyond the foundational truth of what God has done: Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and on the third day rose again according to the Scriptures, and pours out His Spirit on all who trust Him. Rather we want the riches of these truths to soak deeper into our lives, to fill our motivations, our wills, and our willingness to trust God more.

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In Jesus, God says 'yes' to us. In return, God calls us to say 'yes' to Jesus. That means saying 'yes' to Jesus as Saviour and 'yes' to Jesus as Lord. It means saying 'yes' to the leading of God's Spirit. It means we want no parts of our lives to be 'no-go' areas for God – our relationships with families and friends, our work, wallets and our hobbies, our future and our past. These days offer us a real opportunity to go deeper with God.

Jesus is the good shepherd and overseer of our lives. Let us trust Him with more and ask Him for more. Every blessing in Jesus Christ,

Lawrence

FUTURE ST PANCRAS MEETINGS (VIA ZOOM)

St Pancras Sunday Service – Sunday 26th April at 10.30am

St Pancras Praise and Prayer – Wednesday, 29th April at 8pm

St Pancras Men's Breakfast – Saturday 2nd May at 9am

If you would like to join any of our Zoom services please contact lawrence.braschi@stps.org.uk

NOTICES

The **funeral service for Stuart's mother, Brenda Barnes**, was held this Monday. Please continue to remember the Barnes family in your prayers. Stuart's father, Peter, is recovering from COVID-19 and has been moved onto a lower dependency unit. Please pray for his full recovery and patience for him as he adjusts to living without Brenda.

The **funeral service for June's son, Stephen, will be on Thursday** (23rd April). Do uphold June and the rest of the family in your prayers. Another of June's sons, **Alan**, has been making good but slow progress recovering from the virus. After a month in intensive care, he's been taken off the ventilator, is sitting up in bed and has been able to be taken out into the hospital garden. Thank God for answered prayers and let's pray for his continued recovery.

Congratulations to **Bekah Hanna** on her 19th birthday, celebrated lockdown-style.

EASTER APPEAL UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who has given or promised money to the Easter Appeal. We have raised nearly £500 in order to provide food hampers and craft materials for vulnerable families in our parish. We are working together with the Christian charity Provide Devon (<https://providedevon.org.uk/>) to enable packs of essential food items (pasta, rice, milk, cheese, etc) to be prepared for up to 20 families each week. Provide Devon are also helping to fund this provision. Fare Share, a charity sponsored by Tesco's are continuing to provide us with food approaching its sell-by date. Meanwhile, transforming Plymouth Together has also secured funds for churches across Plymouth to be able to provide craft packs for families in lockdown.

Thank you also to those who have stepped forward to help neighbours and church members with essential shopping, delivering prescriptions and other practical help. Let us continue to 'serve one another in love' (Galatians 5.13).

MOVING HOUSE AND THE CORONAVIRUS AN UPDATE FROM KEVIN AND SUE ELLISTON

It is said that selling and moving house is 'up there' on the 'top of the list' of 'stress making circumstances' in life; selling and moving house while in a global pandemic just made it more complicated! As many of you will know we felt 'called' to return to Norfolk when Kevin retired from Public Health England in April. Norfolk is home to Sue and it is where we met (we actually went to the same primary school in Thetford but Sue was in the 'A' stream class and Kevin was in the 'B' stream – needless to say our paths didn't cross until we were in the same 'CYFA' youth-group several years later - but that is another story!

Back to the move story. We prayerfully made plans late last year to set the Lord's call into motion and as we searched Norfolk for a new home we were amazed at the number of lively Evangelical CofE churches there are all across the County; several are in Norwich but many are in the rural areas and are made up of a number of parish churches in 'district teams'. Initially we thought we were going to move to Alysham, a lovely market town in north Norfolk and with a lively church family but in January, after a fairly brief search, we felt this was not right and not where the Lord wanted us to be. Instead we went back to Horsford, a small village, six miles out of Norwich which Sue had seen



in the previous October and that did 'feel right' so we started the process of purchasing a new house there. Interestingly the village church only has a limited web-presence but we were so impressed with the welcome when we went to visit the church that week. The church was 'open', the 'heating was on', (which was amazing for a mid-week in January) and there was a welcome note from the Vicar for all visitors, an invitation to 'help yourself to tea, coffee (milk in the fridge) from the little kitchen area' at the back of the church. Kevin checked out the books for worship (you can tell a lot about a fellowship by what a church sings) and it was the latest version of 'Hymns Old and New' so plenty of new and more traditional songs were being sung. We felt very encouraged and we look forward to serving the Lord in this new place.

As we travelled back to Plymouth, in the first week of January this year, Kevin had to dial-into an urgent PHE call to discuss 'a public health incident taking off in China' (Sue was driving!) and from then onwards we have, like many other people hoping to move house in the UK, had to adapt our plans due to Coronavirus. Trying to sell/purchase while the pandemic is in full flow has, at times, been stressful as the legal system was also playing catch-up with how to respond to COVID-19, as were the house Developers, and at times Kevin was advising both the Solicitor and the Developers on how they might like to respond! Lockdown has now put the new house build, and the move, on hold but we have a provisionally agreed legal completion date of 30th June. This is much later than we had initially planned for (pre COVID-19), but we know it is in the Lord's timing as to when we will move and when we will start a new chapter. The lockdown time has however provided us with unexpected additional time to spend with our St.Ps church family, via Zoom and also phone calls, for which we are very grateful and thankful. It has also given us the opportunity to take advantage of 'enforced exercise' slots and to notch up over 140 miles on our 'e-bikes' in the first three weeks of lockdown!

'There will be a solution,
even if we don't know
what it is yet.'

We have and continue to be thankful for the Lord's guiding hand at this time, and to remember Dr Chris Williams wise advice (a Christian Psychologist who founded 'Living Life to the Full' www.lltff.com) who said recently about 'living with uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic' that "there will be a solution even if we don't know what it is yet".

WORKING THROUGH THE COVID-19 CRISIS

PATRICIA WASS

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of us, whatever our age, wherever we live, and whatever we do. I work as a lawyer in a large South West law firm and for us it has meant that the usual office 'workplace' has been replaced with a laptop situated on a desk in a home study, a kitchen or a dining room table or a spare bedroom. Our firm was very proactive even before the lockdown was imposed. They ensured that all 500 of us had a laptop with supporting technology and we had a run through the week before the lockdown when we all had to work at home for a day to test the IT systems to make sure that everything worked without any problems. Which it did.

Inevitably, the lockdown has placed huge financial pressures on anyone working in private run businesses who do not have the benefit of public funding to keep going. We have seen the visual effect of this in our high streets with the closing of all the businesses we take for granted - the retail shops, cafes, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, hairdressers to name a few. For us it is no different. About a third of our staff have been placed on furlough under the Government scheme and those still working have all had to take a cut in pay, top to bottom, across the practice.

Keeping in touch with our clients is very important for us and with the modern technology we have in place we are able to 'see' our clients using Skype, Zoom and Microsoft Team software. Emails are used wherever possible but some letters and documents still have to be signed using 'wet signatures' rather than 'electronic signatures'. This means that someone still has to go in to the office, post the relevant papers to the lawyer who then has to sign and get someone to witness the signature, at a safe distance, and then pass it on to the next person. This is time consuming and it makes you appreciate how easy it is to get documents signed when everyone sits next to each other in the office. Court hearings are now done by telephone or by Skype. I read in the legal press this week that some lawyers have received a ticking off from the Judges for 'turning up' in inappropriate dress (probably their open necked shirts and jeans as they are working at home). Court dress for us is usually black suits and very formal and I understand that the Judges are still wearing their robes to the Skype hearings!

I work as a lawyer in the Court of Protection, looking after some of the most vulnerable people in our Society. Many are looked after at home with care teams attending around the clock. Among some of the challenges we have faced are anxious parents not wishing the care teams to still attend at their homes because of the threat of the virus. This places huge pressures on the parents and relatives who are now trying to provide all the care for their family member without any additional help. For those care teams who are still working we have had to get hold of extra PPE, aprons, gloves, masks etc which, as we all know, are like gold dust at the moment. I have had to provide a number of letters for the care teams to show to the police if they are pulled over to prove they are key workers. We have had to make separate arrangements with some hospitals to agree that they will take in our vulnerable clients in the event that the carers, due to their own illness, or their own quarantine arrangements, are unable to provide care. Payments from the Local Authorities are having to be renegotiated and employment advice taken for the families who wish to retain the care teams after the lockdown is over. Building projects and property moves have all been placed on hold which means that some of our families are living in less than suitable accommodation until the pandemic is over. A challenge was made to the Government about the 'once a day' exercise restrictions which discriminated against some of our clients who need to get out more than that due to their brain injuries and that has now been relaxed so that the affected clients are able to go out regularly as long as they respect the social distancing rules.

There have been some good things to come out of the lockdown restrictions. We have a work team 'WhatsApp' social media group which is keeping us cheerful and in touch with each other. Clients have been very understanding and appreciative of the continued contact with them. You do get a huge amount of work done at home when there are no distractions. I do have great admiration for the young parents in my work team who are juggling work, home and home schooling which is a real challenge. Many are putting in long hours at the beginning and end of day to keep up to date.

At the end of all of this I think we will have a stronger work team who will look out for each other. We will get through this. The sun will come out and the dark clouds will disappear....

PRAYING DURING LOCKDOWN

Now that lockdown has been extended, you may need some extra sources of help to continue in isolation. You may be feeling low and downcast. But really, none of us are alone as we have God and whatever our circumstances, He is there for us and with us. Do not allow yourself to be dejected in this hour. We are fortunate because we have a God who comforts the downcast (2 Cor 7:6). If you (or anybody around you) is downcast, then no amount of talking, encouraging or attempting to look on the bright side will help for long, but you have a God who comforts the downcast. God is our comfort and the one who lifts our spirits.

‘God, who comforts the
downcast ... ‘
(2 Corinthians 7.6)

We can meet him through prayer, which need not be through a prescribed method. It can be formal or informal, pre-planned or on the hoof. Here are a few ideas of how to begin or perhaps to stimulate your usual prayers.

It can be helpful to have a regular time and place for prayer, perhaps a particular corner of a room or a chair. If safe, you might light a candle to remind you that Jesus is the light of the world and that he casts out all darkness. Candles can be helpful if your attention wanders, as seeing the light can be a reminder to refocus.

Spurgeon, in his work *‘Morning by Morning’*, helpfully points out that when a handpump is dry you must first pour water down it. You get back your water and then more follows. To prime your pump in this way is like us first asking God when we need comfort and then receiving that comfort. If you want to prime your prayer pump, then start simple with something like, ‘Lord, I am lonely on my own, show me your presence’, or ‘God, I want to know you better. Please help me’. Then wait and be aware in your senses for how God will begin to answer your prayer. You might write down what comes to mind. Seek God further when you don’t understand a concept that he gives you and record that, too. Move on to pray in deep repentance in this season, thankfulness for his faithfulness and in anticipation for God’s good gifts.

I’d like to encourage you to take time each day to go deeper in your relationship with God and pray for any or all of the following, each day or rotationally over a few days:

Our world

- Nations in crises
- World governments

Our nation

- Our keyworkers
- Our diocesan response

Others

- whose constant company is proving challenging
- outside your isolation group you are missing
- who are struggling more than you (by name or generally)
- who have lost jobs, livelihoods or purpose through lockdown
- who are grieving

Yourself

- repentance
- to seek God’s particular purpose or change of emphasis for you and your life (and what is worth keeping beyond lockdown)

NEXT NEWSLETTER

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