

Feedback #2 24th - 28th March



WEDNESDAY 24th MARCH

Claire - The prayer hour was good. I listened to songs, and read the passage, and made a craft wreath.

Calvin - Faithfully expectant, Sacrificially loving, Boldly creative, Truthfully humble.

Inspired by yesterday's community session led by Alex:

1 Tim 1:16 and also *Psalms 22:1* seem to exhort us to be 'transparently honest'. But rather than suggest another proposed UV value, this provides a different insight into 'truthfully humble'. The latter may relate to 'speaking the truth in love' and from a level playing field before the cross. Transparently honest is more to do with arresting pretence (eg in relation to where we are in our walk with God) and avoiding hypocrisy. Certainly, St Paul seemed to play up (rather than hide) his weaknesses *as a God approved example* for non-believers.

Livermead Small Group - In our 24/7 prayer session on Tuesday evening we had a good time and at the end did a recap:

Sue saw a picture of a pile of clean stones at waist height; all had rough edges, not perfect but rough.

Andy felt that one stone. If you saw it, you could kick it aside, it would travel a long way but together they all form a strong pile, and you couldn't kick it far. Phyl reminded us that as partners churches had been prayed for earlier, together developing stability and strength.

Stones rub sharp edges off each other, sharp edges within a group help to stimulate change. Perhaps if we run along together we will smooth the roughness out of each other.

Andrew said Stone piles, (Cairns) can also guide the way along a rough path.

Kathy said: 'You can make the stones into a wall (dry stone wall), strong and fitting together makes something useful.'

Moses, after meeting God up Mount Sinai, used stones to make 12 piles to represent the 12 tribes of Israel and used them as an altar.

A later thought: 'thinking about 1 Peter 2:5, about us being living stones being built into a spiritual house, outside the walls of the building'.

Wednesday Evening Community Hour

Concentrated on *Psalms 33* which is a psalm of praise because God is creator, Lord, Saviour, deliverer, and He is worthy of our trust and praise.

GOD IS IN CONTROL

1. Acknowledged and thanked God that He is in control of all nations
2. Prayed for wisdom and compassion for our Government as they work with governments around the world
3. Wisdom for vaccine rollout
4. Prayed for support of Police and NHS
5. Prayed for truthful news and against fake news
6. Refreshment for workers in Central and Local government
7. Prayer is a powerful support for international, national and local agencies who work to help vulnerable people
8. Prayer for people Christians and non-Christians held in captivity for one reason or another and for freedom for people to live without fear.

Really good time of prayer

THURSDAY 24th MARCH

Thursday Morning Community Hour

Rejoice: time spent reflecting on likening lockdown to time in the wilderness and how God has used this in times past (e.g. Israelites in the desert, Jesus in the desert) to bring renewal *Isaiah 43:19*.

- Picture given of a jigsaw of Upton Vale (the building without anybody in). All the pieces were then scrambled up and being shaken together in the box and then scattered. Each one of us has a piece of a new jigsaw (a colour or a number); what piece of the puzzle do you have? It might feel insignificant but is vital for the whole picture. When the jigsaw is eventually re-assembled it creates a brand new, totally different picture; different from what we imagined.
- This resonated with a reminder for someone else of Haggai 2:6 which was given to the Egyptian church during the Arab Spring. Thousands became Christians through this time of shaking up. When God shakes us up, we realise afresh what is important.
- Blessing of TOGETHERNESS (strengthening of small groups, deeper connecting, each pointing to Jesus and realising more of who He is).
- Jesus is everything *Rev 5 & Isaiah 58*.
- Thanking for past but letting go and thanking for what is yet to come.
- God is love; His heart is kind. The wilderness experience takes us deeper into God's heart.

Ask:

- Struck by *John 17:23* - meeting point is Jesus. The way I think about God is the most important thing about me, but also about the church.
- For us to be a disciple making body that reflects Jesus.
- *Psalms 133, John 17:20-23*

Yeild:

- Take away the fear of the future and replace with trust in God, because He holds the future.
- We don't need to worry 'Jesus does the night shift'
- Prayer from *Isaiah 41:13*
- *Is 43:19* - we can get stuck on dwelling on the past BUT in Jesus God has truly done a new thing, new fresh waters on a daily basis, giving daily refreshment.
- *Matthew 4: 19-20*

Lee - During the course of the hour I felt strongly (and not for the first time) that the "New Thing" God is doing right now is not in or for the church alone but in and for the whole world.

In spite of society's yearning to restore normality, it seems to me (and ever-growing numbers are saying) that things are not going to be the same in future - locally, nationally or internationally. God is indeed doing a new thing. We are all going to have to learn how to live with Covid and it's going to change the way people live. We shall have to learn how to live more locally and in doing so we'll invest more in our localities, reducing travel, food miles and energy consumption.

Is God helping us to do what we are so evidently unwilling and unable to do of our own volition? Is this the way to redeem the planet and save the human race from its own path to destruction? Could this be God's new thing? Can we see it? A way in the wasteland? Is God stepping in through the Covid pandemic to save us from the even greater dangers we have been mounting up for ourselves?

I also reflected on the digital world and the internet as an agent of connectivity and business. However, the internet itself is enormously resource hungry and every email (like this one) consumes a disproportionate quantity of energy which all has to be generated somewhere. If we are truly to reduce the load on the planet the internet is not of itself the key to our future. In any case, there are growing signs that people of all generations are growing weary of digital connection.

Can we make the leap? Can we stretch our minds to consider such big changes? Would we be willing to change our lives so fundamentally? Are we being left with any choice? Only time will tell, and such changes will almost certainly be painful for society, taking generations to work through as communities adapt to what "localism" really means.

Jesus never travelled far, but his ministry changed everything for ever. Is this the challenge for the church? Can we as Christians show the way and bring the light of God's truth to bear on our planetary crises? Green church is often considered to be a side issue. Is God prompting us to make it more central to the way we live in Him?

It was a great hour of prayer and contemplation for me. Thank you to those who shaped the context. I pray that my ramblings might have something of God's truth within them.

THE NEW THING GOD IS DOING IS NOT IN OR FOR THE CHURCH ALONE
GOD'S NEW THING IS FOR ALL HUMANITY AND FOR THE WORLD HE CREATED
GOD SO LOVED **THE WORLD** THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON
SO THAT THOSE WHO BELIEVE MIGHT NOT PERISH
BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE

ALL CREATION GROANS ...

FRIDAY 25th MARCH

Friday Morning Community Hour

A. Z. Tozer [paraphrase] - What comes into our minds when we think of God is the most important thing about us.

Pause: Centrality of the cross- Matt Redman's 'Jesus Christ, when I think upon your sacrifice...'
Romans 1.16 I am not ashamed of the gospel. *Matthew 16.19* I will build my church.

Rejoice: thanking God -

- For our freedoms.
- For God working through even an imam visiting Iranian prison with English translations of parts of the Gospel. *Romans 8*. If God is for us who can stand against us.
- For the hands of the carpenter steering the donkey on Palm Sunday; soon to be pierced; stretched out to bless us, not thrown up in horror at the failings we bring to Him.
- For people standing fast in spite of oppression.
- For being in the same family through Christ.

Ask: Top 10 countries on current World Watch list from Open Doors.

1. North Korea
2. Afghanistan
3. Somalia
4. Libya
5. Pakistan
6. Eritrea
7. Yemen
8. Iran
9. Nigeria
10. India

340 million persecuted Christians worldwide.

Psalms 139 4-10

Prayers that your Word goes round the world, that there will always be a way through. That those in labour camps and prisons would hear your Word in their hearts and have the opportunities and boldness to speak. For food and spiritual sustenance, that hope will rise. That as we are overwhelmed You are not, step into the need of each heart. *2 Corinthians 1:8-9*

Turkic Belt Ministries. Rhea = Kenny and Mary in Barnstaple and Riffat and Anees in Pakistan. Healing for Riffat who has Typhoid.

Yield: Aid requests are primarily for prayer rather than material things.

Consider: * Praying regularly Open Doors meet monthly for an hour. * Praying for missionaries and Aid organisations in areas of persecution. * Monetary support * Joining Advocacy campaigns.

* Rev 12 .11 It's not what we do but what God does through us. In dying we become living stones.

Closed with 'No turning back' - hymn from a martyred family in a village in North India, who in dying led to the whole village becoming Christian. 'I will build my church.'

Friday Evening Community Hour

Thanks for Claire arriving safely in Chad. Now in isolation for 2 weeks, with very high temperatures (currently 31°C at night-time)

Pause: 'You lead us through the wilderness' song. The Lord brings transformation even in the driest of wildernesses. *Psalm 46*

'God of Creation' song in French. Worshipping God in a different language.

Rejoice: Prayers for France and their overseas territories.

God understands all the languages - no boundaries, even knows and understands us when we don't understand ourselves.

Ask: Prayers for BMS folk in **Guinebor II** - Bethan & Gareth, Brian & Jackie (who arrived with Claire and first time in Chad), Kalbassou Doubassou, Melanie & Tom, Mark & Andrea, and Claire

* Claire - good internet connection; good management decisions to be made in unity.

* Name of Jesus to be shouted from rooftops - openness to the Gospel.

* New believers to have protection, guidance and discipleship.

Chad and Sahel region - presidential election on 11th April with results about 2 weeks later. Peace and safety.

Other mission partners - * Albania - Endri and his dad recovering well from Covid in Brinza, but his wife is very weak and struggling to walk. Might be homeless at the end of the year as landlord wants to sell property, which is leaking and he won't fix it.

* Moldova - remote rural setting which is doing ok with no Covid, recovering from drought, pray for good harvest this year.

* TBM (Turkick Belt Ministries) - Elnur - people are struggling financially, there is church growth.

* BMS - in other places other than Chad.

Yielding: You are the potter and we are the clay - we yield ourselves to the Potter's hands. 'New Thing' song.

SATURDAY 26th MARCH

Saturday Morning Community Hour

Pause: Song 'Here I am to worship' *Isaiah 43:19 Psalm 24*

Rejoice: * Thankfulness for answered prayer over the years for unity.

* Thanks for repeating themes and working together.

* For the new initiative of Pray Torbay.

* For Central Church willingness to open its doors to shoebox appeal, CTT prayer breakfast, PATH, blood donation.

Ask: *Pray and praise God for:*

- unity between the churches of Torquay and across all of Torbay
- 'Pray Torbay' - *that it will be a blessing for all who join*
- partnerships between churches and with others
- the way these partnerships have flourished under Covid
- key people - *Steve Darling (our Council Leader), Kevin Foster (our MP), Dr Lincoln Sargeant (Torbay's new Director of Public Health) and others ...*
- key inter-church ministries - *Torquay Community Larder, ToWNS, Ladies Lounge, Street Pastors, CAP, Home for Good, TLG, LiNX, Open the Book and others ...*
- plans to bring Easter Hope to the people of Torquay

- the 'Hope in Jesus' poster - *designed by Becky Bettesworth for wide distribution*
- the 'Hope in Jesus' sand pattern - *to be created by the Sand Man, Geoff, at Abbey Sands*
- good coverage on social and in local media
- prayer walks / mini-pilgrimages between the churches - *for individuals or groups of no more than 6 people*
- *Covid safety in all these things and that no church might become a super-spreader*

Prayers:

- That we strive to keep the bonds of unity and that people turn to you because of the unity not us.
- Isaiah verse was as people of Judah came out of exile to a new unity in their territory.
- For Geoff, thanks for his gifts and life and blessings for the Easter sand picture.
- Picture of God's people striding across the land. Leaving buildings, walking and claiming the territory for God. In God's time and together.
- Picture followed of the precious new shoots and cultivation of the land, free of weeds, in unity of God's love, tilling the soil to bring hope. Guard unity and declare God's hope and love.

Yield:

- All churches to become 'super spreaders' of the Gospel.
 - Picture of Jigsaw depicting Jesus' face made up of different scattered pieces.
 - Picture of unrisen bread. God has added the yeast and it is growing.
 - The word 'creative'. As we have been kept away from our buildings so many creative ways of sharing God's love have happened.
 - Jesus is our living water, already a new thing. Yield completely to Him.
- Song: St. Patrick's prayer. *1 Peter 1:3-6 2 Cor 4.16-18 John 4:13-14 2 Cor 13:11*

Leith - "I am doing a new thing..... do you not perceive it?"

What new things have been done in the last year due to the restrictions?

Maybe some of them are personal to you.

Are they, or some of them, the new things God mentions in Isaiah 43:19 and have we recognised that?

If that is so, how many of the new things you recognise, should be continued after restrictions are lifted?

Saturday Evening Community Hour

Talked about Geoff, "the Sandman" who drew a cross on the beach.

Rejoice: Song 'King of Kings'

- * Jesus' sacrifice and His great gifts.
- * We can lay all things at the foot of the cross, even when things are hard.
- * How Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.
- * Jesus is DOING A NEW THING.

Ask: **Asking for God's mercy to break out in Torquay**

Praying for

- * us to be salt and light in Torquay.
- * the economy in Torquay.
- * those who don't believe, that we could take church to them in Torbay, showing them God's love- that they could come to Him.
- * we would be open to new things.
- * the poor in Torquay.
- * Asking God to stir us up and send us out to the harvest, he would challenge us to go out into communities and to listen to his calling that we've perhaps forgotten.

Asking God to bless Torbay

Praying for:

- * school and street Pastors, that they could come back.
- * those isolated, that they'd know God is there and in control.

- * those people who are alone, isolated by lack of technology knowledge.
- * the relationships between the Churches and the local authorities.
- * Thanking God for laughter.
- * Praying against mental health issues.
- * for an endurance now in the third Lockdown.
- * for a wise use of funds in the health system and in the government.
- * thanking God for Lee Bray's role in CTT, that God would have His hand upon him.
- * that we could be "super spreaders, not of Covid, but of the Gospel".
- * that our witness would be strong, like through "the Sandman".

Yield: to God, asking for his Will in Torquay whilst listening to "Did you hear the mountains tremble".

Anon - I was at the evening prayer meeting and felt, as Andy played the last song, that it is a message for UV and other churches in the Bay:

*"Open up the doors and let the music play,
Let the streets resound with singing
Songs that bring your hope and
Songs that bring your joy
Dancers who dance upon injustice"*

SUNDAY 28th MARCH

Sunday Morning Community Hour

Psalm 63, followed by 'I am who you say I am'

- led to prayers around being set free, identity in Christ, Jesus turning our lives around.

Yielding the future of UV to the Lord

- Reminded of the image of church as the bride; through this past year might consider it a time of preparing for our bride groom. And as Jesus, the bridegroom, turns to His bride He sees us with eyes of grace as we become more like Him.....
- increase our Trust; recognising we can do nothing in our own strength and that our futures are perhaps more unknown than ever.
- May the Gospel pour out of the walls of UV, across the Bay & beyond.
- Recognising that over this past year we have been no less UV despite not physically gathering.
- Help us to be driven by Joy, even as You were riding the donkey on Palm Sunday, despite knowing what was before You.....
- Prayer for a hedge of protection around our church leaders & families.
- Prayer that we would move forward together in unity - to a blossoming.

Yielding our struggles (individually and as a congregation)

- Prayers particularly for those during this past year with life-changing illnesses, nervous of returning to gathering, in Fresh Hope group & B2gether, coping with chronic illnesses.....Bear one another's burdens.....
- Courage and strength to take God's love out into the world; His grace is sufficient.

Final yielding

- Giving the future to God and putting trust in His plans, not our own.
- Asking for a childlike trust
- *John 13* (Help us to yield completely to You: mind, body and spirit.
- Change our priorities where we need to....
- *Psalm 23*; embracing change & courage to deal with it.
- Although God is the same yesterday, today and forever this doesn't mean that he doesn't change circumstances - lean not on our own understanding.....listen and obey.
- King of love and grace/ my guardian - all is in your hands.
- *Isaiah 59:21* - God unsettling us to be able to move forward, seeing transformation.
- Reconsider what church is and make us closer followers of Jesus into this new season.

AMAZING GRACE!

Becky - My reflections from the 24/7 prayer week

I've enjoyed so much reflecting and praying with others this week and being led in structured prayer times using the PRAY format.

For me the key themes have been unity, individual growth, waiting for God and then going with Him, working together as a body.

* Unity

I have delighted in answered prayers. During ToWNs season 2019 and in early stages of Good News to Torquay I remember us praying for churches and agencies to work together better especially in the area of caring for the marginalised and vulnerable. This week I've realised that this is a "new thing" that I perceive God is doing now as in the theme verse of this week. He is bringing the churches of Torbay together and also agencies such as PATH, community larder and the Council in order to "make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert"

We have members of different churches working together in Street Pastors, Home for Good, Ladies Lounge, Unleashed Theatre and other organisations

I also pictured armies of God's people moving out from the Torquay churches to claim the land - could this be a physical thing as we are encouraged to prayer walk over this Easter period as well as a spiritual thing of praying together and claiming the territory in a spiritual realm?

* Individual spiritual growth

The picture of the shoot and the deep and wide roots. Some of us have found new routines or more time to dig deeper in prayer and God's word in the last year of Covid.

Jeremiah 17:7,8 tree planted by the water

New wine skins - *Matt 9:16,17*

Song "New Wine" and the lyrics "When I trust in you, I don't need to understand "

Psalms 63:8 (TPT) "With a passion I pursue and cling to you. Because I feel your grip on my life, I keep my soul close to your heart."

* Waiting and then going

Psalms 37:7 Be still before the Lord and WAIT patiently for him

Psalms 5:3 (TPT) Every morning I lay out the pieces of my life on the alter and WAIT for your fire to fall upon my heart

Numbers 14 We mustn't be afraid to go in and take the land when God asks us to. The Israelites surveyed the promised land but most of the spies who went to check it out were so scared that they forgot God's promises.

Luke 5:4-6 Peter in obedience cast his net again when Jesus told him to even though he hadn't previously caught any fish!

Luke 5:16 Jesus often went to wait before his father in a place of solitude

The call to "stretch out our tents" in *Isaiah 54:2* "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.

Working together as a body

The picture shared of a jigsaw puzzle with pieces scattered and then the following day the image of

Jesus' face made up from numerous individual faces. These spoke to me of how each and every one of us are needed to be together fitting into the complete jigsaw in order to show the face of Jesus to Torbay.

Rev 21:2 The image of the bride coming prepared for her husband and how the church is the bride of Christ. Has Covid time been a time for the church as a bride to prepare and now to step out with Christ the groom. Christ sees us through his eyes of forgiveness, mercy and grace just as a groom sees the beauty in his bride. Christ knows our failing both of the past and the future yet still loves us and cheers us on!