

30/4/2020

Letter to our church and community

Dear friends, sisters and brothers,
Welcome to all those who have joined our e letters this week. Please do have a read of the back dated ones on the website as they give a sense of the journey we have taken over the past six weeks! This is our 7th letter which we can't believe.
What now? We are sensing a call to prayer in all sorts of creative ways. We hope you enjoy this letter and please do follow the resources we have put links to as they all point to a variety of prayer opportunities.



COVID 19 – An opportunity:

A reflection by Angela Elfick who is working in an Intensive Care Unit in Barnsley hospital and is a Reader with Sandal Magna Parish.

“We don't have normal Sundays” – these were Rupert and Sally's words to me as I prepared for what would be our last Sunday worship service together for the coming months, in the days before COVID 19 and Lockdown. How right they were. We certainly don't have normal Sundays anymore.

Without times of communal worship, teaching and prayer, we are suddenly faced with the question “What do we actually have?”. So many of us, myself included, live from one Sunday to the next. Our times of worship together on a Sunday are a source of strength, they enrich and motivate us. They give us purpose and guidance on how we can serve the world around us, how we can share God's love and the light of Christ to those we meet.

Without these times together, what do we actually have?

COVID 19 has faced us with many varied challenges and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. During this time how do we ensure that our faith continues to grow and does not wane? Where does our strength, motivation and guidance come from, if we are not meeting together as we have done for the past 2000 years and more?

No doubt like me, you feel robbed of something very precious, sacred and essential to life, spiritual life as we have always known it.

Henri Nouwen writes that “even the smallest event of human history can be an opportunity to be led deeper into the heart of Christ”.¹

COVID 19 is not a small event in human history – it's massive and presents us with an equally massive opportunity.

It presents us with an opportunity to discover or re-discover our own spirituality. What is it that draws me personally deeper into the heart of Christ? What feeds my soul, my relationship with God? How can I discover my individual spirituality?

An old Sunday School song went along the lines of “Read your bible, pray every day, if you want to grow” and while the song is from long ago, it does actually offer good advice for today. But the traditional idea of reading the bible and praying on our knees as a laborious task is far from what God wants us to be doing. Being a Christian is about relationship with our heavenly Father and that involves getting to know him and communicating with him.

Learning from the bible is a great way to get to know God. God is creative and how we learn about him can be creative too. Psalm 1 encourages us to meditate on God's word day and night but how we meditate is not prescribed. But it is important that we read the bible with open hearts and minds, allowing him to speak to us. John Stott writes: "We need to allow God's word to confront us, disturb us, to undermine our complacency and to overthrow our patterns of thought and behaviour"².

Likewise how we communicate with God can be creative. There are times when we need to shut ourselves away and focus completely on our dialogue with God, and yes maybe on our knees. But prayer is primarily relational rather than transactional and a lot of the time God wants us to just chat and listen. The blessing does not come from just the act of prayer but from our eternal, life-changing, and resurrecting relationship with God, cultivated through prayer. Many Christian leaders believe that, in this crisis, the church, God's people are being called to pray for the healing of our nation. That is a call to each one of us.

If COVID 19 offers us nothing more, I believe it is a God-given opportunity to be led deeper into the heart of Christ. Let's not miss this amazing opportunity. Let's accept God's call to deepen our relationship with him and to pray.

Love Angela

- 1) Henri J. M. Nouwen (1989) In the Name of Jesus;
- 2) Authentic Christianity: From The Writings Of John Stott

How can we grow our prayer lives? Here are some ideas and resources:

2 Chronicles **7:14** Modern English Version (MEV)

If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

As people of prayer we have been encouraged to take this verse from Chronicles into our daily prayer life. **2 Chronicles 7:14**.

All over the world Christians are setting their phone alarms for **7.14 am** and **pm** to pause and pray for a few minutes using this verse as a guide. We would encourage you to join in.

Thursday 30th April. TONIGHT at **7.14pm** on htb.org there is an evening of prayer and worship called **Kingdom Come**.

HTB at Home Catch Up: Sunday 26th April was a beautiful hour with encouraging, honest interviews, stories and a talk on prayer. The joys and the struggles. This is really worth watching to encourage and inspire us with our praying.

An excellent talk from Holy Trinity Church about prayer and its importance during this time. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVqfEzsJTf4>

Pete Greig: Prayer course

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eO1WlawSAkQ>

Book: "How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People"

NEWS

With Sandal Castle School in partnership with The Spring and Portobello Community Forum/Make Lunch, we are cooking and putting together hampers each week to support the most vulnerable and under pressure families in our community.

If you would like to support this work please can you donate any of the following and leave it outside **Sarah Cutts' home, Spring Bank, 238 Barnsley Road, WF2 6EL** just opposite Becketts School. If you would like to give financially please contact Cath Moxham the manager of The Spring Cafe and Shop on 07533996265, *Thank you*

Breakfast Cereal, Jam, Honey
Tinned vegetables
Tinned rice pudding, Jelly
Tomato soup
Baked beans
Tinned fish
Tinned meat
Tinned fruit
Tinned spaghetti
Hot dogs
Biscuits

Gravy granules
Pasta, Pasta sauce
Rice
Tea bags, Coffee, Sugar,
Long life milk
Washing up liquid

Toilet Rolls
Soap and hand wash
Shampoo
Sanitary towels
Disposable razors
Shaving foam
Nappies
Wet wipes

A big thank you to all who have contributed to this venture, please keep it going. Cath, Sarah and the team are amazing and it is working for the school too.

<https://www.westyorkshire-pcc.gov.uk/coronavirus#Sup>

Very useful Coronavirus web page from West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner. (health guidelines, volunteering opportunities, various links for financial help, various links for mental health help, etc). Thank you Caroline

Will Van De Hart: Pastor at Holy Trinity Brompton.

Mind and Soul Foundation mindandsoulfoundation.org

Really helpful and a wide ranging selection of support networks

**AGE OF
CREATIVITY**

<http://www.ageofcreativity.co.uk>

The Age of Creativity is a network of more than 1,000 professionals who all believe that creativity and culture supports older people to experience better health, wellbeing and quality of life. Our network is free and accessible to all.

We would normally be having our Annual meeting this week, so please do read the Annual Review for 2019 which is on our web-site, sandalmagna.com.

We thank God for a wonderful year and everyone who contributed in any way. Our love, prayer and blessings to you all

Sally and Rupert

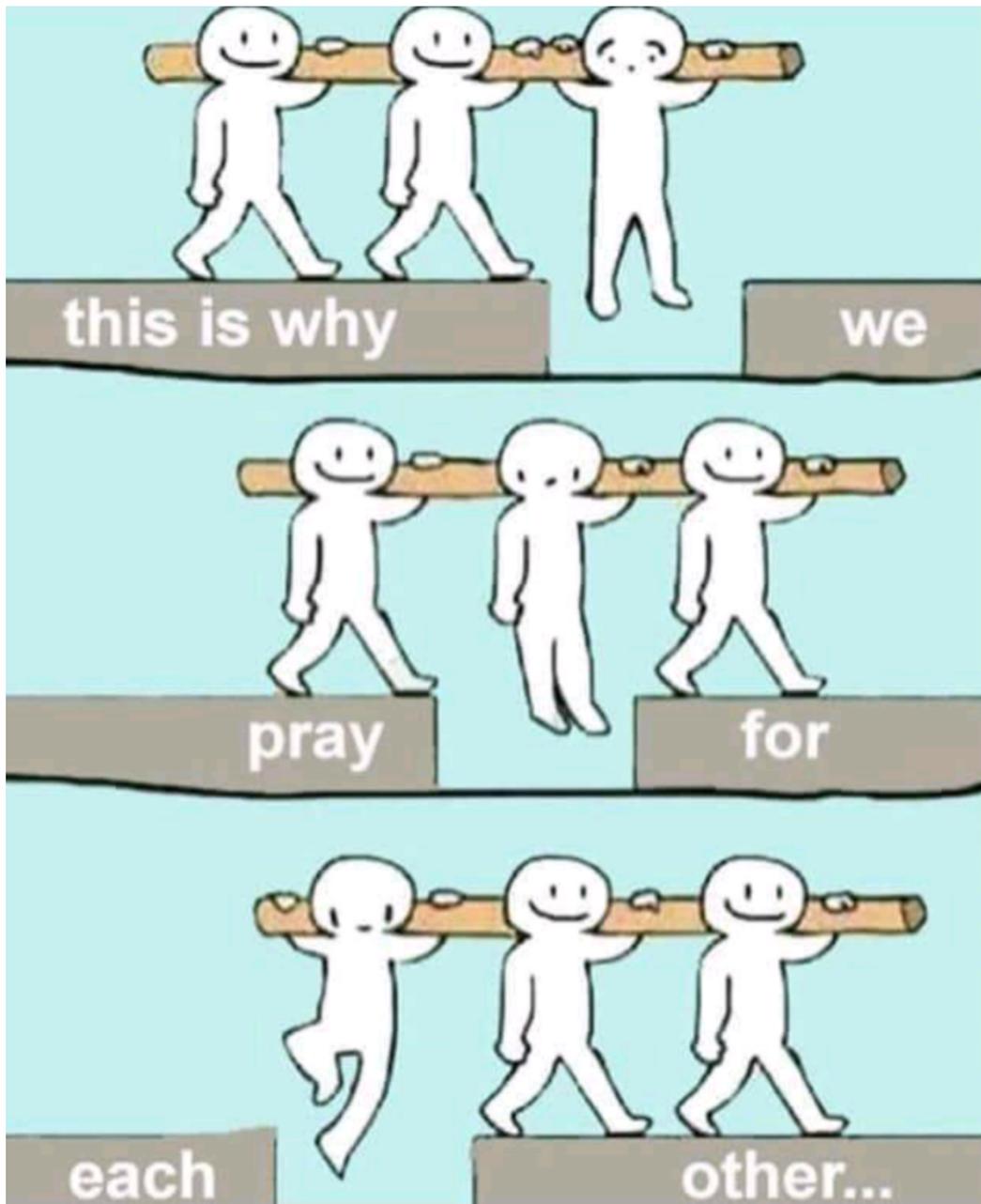
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*Father God
 When the news is bleak, steady us;
 When the pain is bitter, surround us;
 When the days blur, sustain us;
 When despair burdens, still us.
 In our weakness, make us strong;
 In our lowness, lift us up,
 Confident that our Redeemer
 Lives and prays for us
 And will never let us go.
 Amen*

Funerals of dear friends in our church family

Pat Clay	5th May 11.40am at Wakefield Crematorium
Derek Coombes	7th May 11am in Sandal Churchyard
Joan Witts	13th May 1.40pm at Wakefield Crematorium

Prayer by Martyn Payne