



Virus update newsletter

Thursday 28th January 2021

As I write this, the horrible milestone of 100,000 deaths from covid in the UK has now been reached. In the future I am sure there will be a full-scale public inquiry as to why this figure is so large, but for now it seems fitting that sombre reflection and grieving is in order. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have called for the nation to reflect and pray at this difficult time. As they say, '*100,000 isn't just an abstract figure. Each number is a person: someone we loved and someone who loved us. We also believe that each of these people was known to God and cherished by God.*'

The full text of the archbishops' letter can be found here. It is worth reading in full:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/coronavirus-archbishops-invite-nation-pause-pray-and-remember>

A PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO MOURN

Gracious God, as we remember before you the thousands who have died, surround us and all who mourn with your strong compassion.

Be gentle with us in our grief, protect us from despair, and give us grace to persevere and face the future with hope in Jesus Christ our risen Lord. Amen.



Parish Directory

Keeping in touch with regular communications based on accurate information has never been more important to us as a church family. We are updating our Parish Directory in the near future and if you're not listed in this directory, regrettably under GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) you cannot receive a copy or have access to the ChurchSuite online directory. Please look out for an email in the near future which gives options for appearing in the Directory.



Food Bank & CAP (Christians Against Poverty)

News from the Swindon Food Collective:

Covid 19 has and continues to impact upon our food bank. Where normally we would have had 65+ volunteers to support our work, in March 2020 we lost more than 50% due to shielding and isolation.

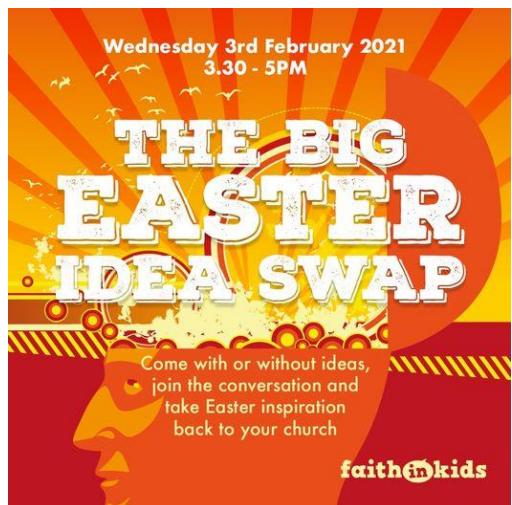
So we paused, re-scoped our operations and redeployed people so that we could conform to social distancing requirements both in our warehouse and at our distribution centres. We decided to open more days, but with fewer volunteers doing more "shifts". In doing so, we were able to have smaller teams working 4 days a week in the warehouse and for a period of time, operated a temporary distribution centre, on Saturday mornings at the church next to the warehouse.

Not surprisingly we saw numbers rise throughout the year and we fed almost 7,500 people and redistributed almost 90 tonnes of donated, non-perishable food to those in need.

Thank you for your generosity in supporting this vital ministry. Here is the poster sent to us – well done!



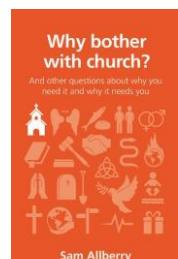
Children and youth



It has been a hard time for many families, what with the joys of home-schooling, the uncertainty of when schools will re-open, and how exams may be affected. Church ministry among children and young people has also been badly hit, with most families worshipping from home and joining in with online services. It is unclear exactly when we can re-start physical Sunday groups and other children's ministry, but we know this lock-down will not last for ever and we can plan ahead with exciting and faithful resources.

It is a real blessing to see the many wonderful online resources freely available and I would really encourage parents/grandparents/godparents/ family friends etc.. to check out the website below and get some inspiration. It is full of real imagination and an infectious love for God and youth! LINK: <https://www.faithinkids.org/>

Our secondary school age children are meeting in 'The Grid' online every two weeks under the expert leadership of Chris Saunders, our team youth-worker, and his merry band of faithful volunteers. At the moment they are looking at what the purpose of the Church is and how they can be part of it. They are using some material from a very helpful book by Sam Allberry called 'Why Bother with Church?' Please pray for this group as they meet online for teaching, encouragement and fellowship.



Useful resources

Many Christian organisations produce helpful resources for Lent. SAT-7 broadcasts Christian satellite TV into the Middle East and North Africa. This is their Lent offering for 2021:

40 Testimonies for Lent

People across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) face restrictions on their freedom of religion and belief. And yet, every year, SAT-7's viewer support teams receive thousands of messages from viewers telling us how they came to faith, asking questions, and wanting to find out more about Jesus.

This year's Lent resource, *Free to believe*, shares 40 messages from these viewers with you, one for each day of Lent – from all across the MENA – and invites you simply to pray for them.

<https://www.sat7uk.org/about-us/>



Through satellite television we enable the Church in the region – isolated, often small and facing many restrictions – to make known the love of Christ, to teach and encourage believers, and share a positive Christian vision for life and society.



24-7 Prayer is one of many Christian organisations around the world dedicated to encouraging Christians to pray that this world would be transformed. They say of themselves:



Reviving the Church and rewiring the culture through non-stop night and day Prayer.
We started in 1999, when a simple, student-led prayer vigil suddenly went viral.
Today, 24-7 Prayer is an international, interdenominational movement of prayer, mission and justice; a non-stop prayer meeting that has continued for every minute of this century so far, in over half the countries on Earth.

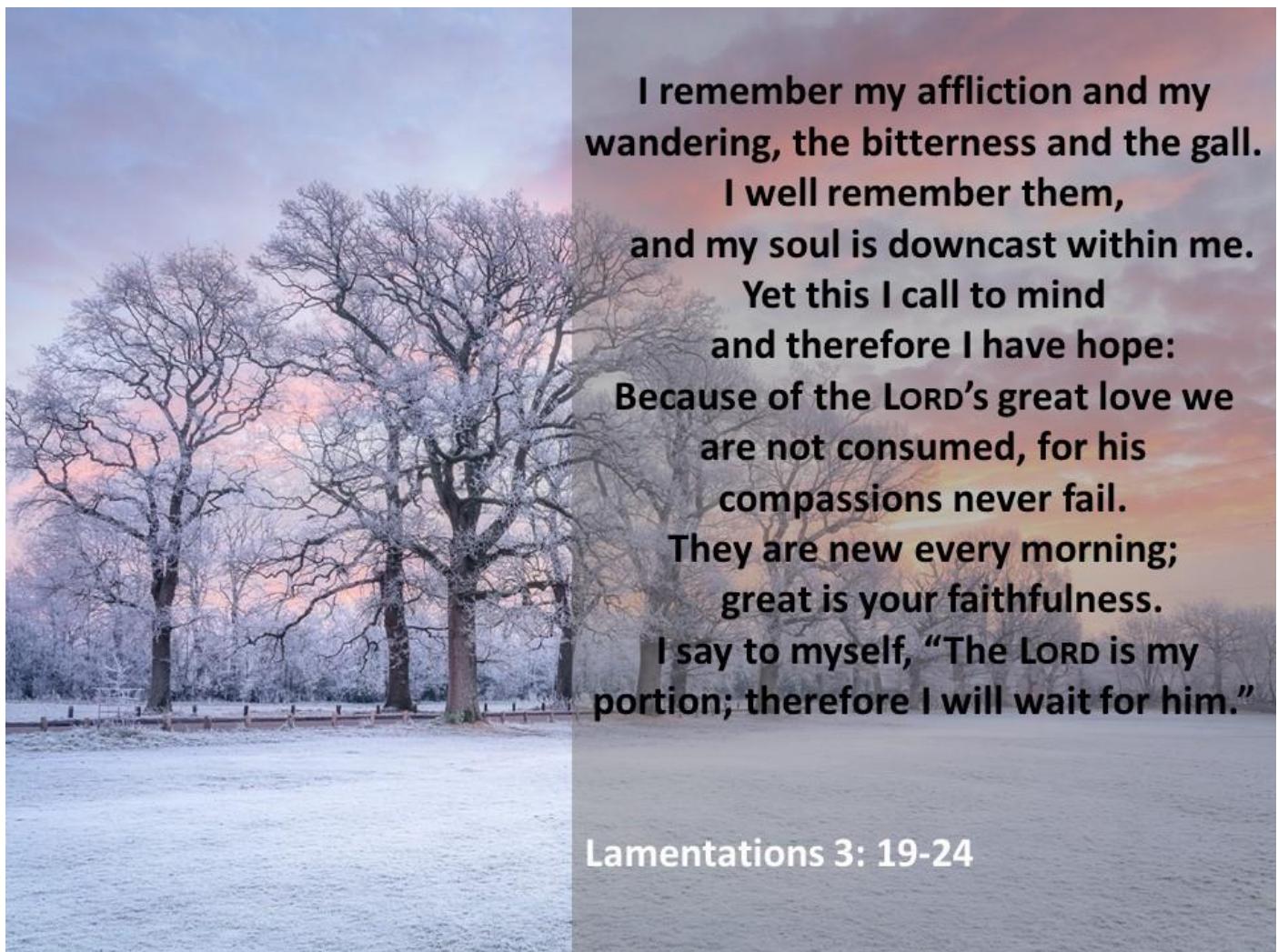
For a range of prayer resources, start here: <https://www.24-7prayer.com/helpmepray>



The Book of Common Prayer is one of the great glories of the Church of England. Its beautiful form of words is matched by its thoroughly biblical and Reformed theology. Many churches are now live-streaming BCP services, both on weekdays and on Sundays. See the Prayer Book Society's website for further details: www.pbs.org.uk/churches-and-services/-1

And finally...

At our online prayer meeting this week I shared these verses from Lamentations- a book in the Old Testament we don't often venture near, but it is full of good things. Jeremiah the author does not sugar the pill. He does not stick his head in the sand and ignore reality. He acknowledges the bitterness and suffering in this world, but he holds fast to the goodness of God.



I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall.
I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.
Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:
Because of the LORD's great love we
are not consumed, for his
compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
I say to myself, "The LORD is my
portion; therefore I will wait for him."

Lamentations 3: 19-24

Yours in Christ's name,

Andrew Cinnamon
Vicar of Lechlade, Eastleach and Southrop