

THE GRAPEVINE

Monthly Magazine of Botley Baptist Church

During this national emergency

*Look up to the mountains!
Does our strength come from mountains?
No! Our strength comes from God,
who made heaven and earth,
and the mountains!*

Psalm 212:1-2



APRIL 2020



If your clocks and watches
can't do it themselves,

help them spring ahead
by an hour,
before going to bed

TONIGHT

Saturday 28 March, 2020

APRIL PRAYER DIARY

Wednesday	1	Prayer for Church & Community	
Thursday	2	The whole world in this time of turmoil	
Friday	3	Guiding the politicians making decisions	
Saturday	4	Work of our overstretched NHS workers	
SUNDAY	5	Palm Sunday	(C)
Monday	6	Shop and distribution workers	
Tuesday	7	Prayers for the safety of our congregation	
Wednesday	8	Supply of medicines and safety equipment	
Thursday	9	Those feeling lonely and worried	
Friday	10	Good Friday	
Saturday	11	Prison and Hospital Chaplains	
SUNDAY	12	Easter Sunday	
Monday	13	Those facing a long time self-isolating	
Tuesday	14	Families looking after loved ones	
Wednesday	15	Workers keeping vital travel links running	
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Friday	17	Those working in doctor's surgeries	
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SUNDAY	19	For Christians all over the world	(C)
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Thursday	23	For all who are in despair	
Friday	24	The leisure industry unable to work	
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SUNDAY	26	For a renewal of faith in the world	
Monday	27	The tourist industry facing anxiety	
Tuesday	28	Those worried about paying bills	
Wednesday	29	School children facing time at home	
Thursday	30	For the worldwide sporting industry	

(C) - COMMUNION

PASTORAL MUSING

I start this on the “Ides of March”, the 74th day in the old Roman calendar, the deadline date for settling debts. William Shakespeare gave the phrase an ominous tone in *Julius Caesar*, when a soothsayer warned the Emperor of his impending death, “*Beware the Ides of March*”

March 2020 will be remembered for a long time because, the “Ides of March” marked the day when the onslaught of the Corona virus crossed a significant threshold, which prompted our Prime Minister to encourage the nation to “*self-quarantine wherever possible*”.

We are getting used to a vocabulary of new words like *Self-Isolate* and *Draconian Measures* and *Social-Distancing*, and new ways of doing things: the House of Commons will now **nod** (not vote!) through virus-related legislation. Change is fast-paced and here to stay!



Who would have thought, in the midst of a country-wide lockdown, Italians would throw open their windows, let rip their glorious baritone and operatic voices and serenade each other across streets!

Gareth Malone wants to use this new social magic to bring joy to those in self isolation.

Did anyone think of placing a bet on a rapidly contagious virus that would change us from self-centred living, to serving family, friends and neighbours?

Jesus responded to a group of self-righteous religious teachers who wanted Him to rank the laws by their importance, that to *love the Lord your God all your heart, soul and mind, and your neighbour as yourself*, takes the spotlight off ourselves

and introduces an uncomfortable Truth: loving our neighbour requires sacrifice on our part, which is difficult.

Have we grown accustomed to let government tax the rich to pay for the care of the poor, absolving us of the physical responsibility to do so?

Have we lost confidence and trust in the human spirit, made in the image of God and beating in sync with the Father's heartbeat, to reach out and serve people in need, without incentive or compulsion?

Now, a small, but rapidly contagious virus has captured human imagination and paralysed it with FEAR and ANXIETY. We cannot hide from its rapid advance, but we have a choice: to allow fear and anxiety to dominate and overwhelm us, or to rise above these controlling emotions and bring joy to our neighbours near and far, serving them with the love of God. Some need companionship and friendship, others need shopping done and dry-cleaning collected.

God has placed worship in our hearts (Psalm 40:3). History informs us, in desperate times, when life is threatened and existence is uncertain, the Church being the body of Christ, cannot stop worshipping! During the Black Death of 1347 and the Bubonic Plague of 1665, the Church continued its pattern and liturgy of worship. People chose to gather and participate in the power of prayer in worship, experience the majesty of God, and experience the comfort of fellowship.

Would you recognise these lyrics, strangely appropriate at this time:



"No more talk of darkness; Forget these wide-eyed fears;
I'm here, nothing can harm you; My words will warm &
calm you.
Let me be your freedom; Let daylight dry your tears;
I'm here, with you, beside you; To guard you and to guide
you."

("All I ask of you" from the Phantom of the Opera)

Comforting as they are, the singer cannot deliver on the promise of release from fear and anxiety. Now hear the Psalmist sing, "I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears" (34:4) and "When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy"(94:19) and "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise— in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" (56:3-4). Only God can release us from fear and deliver us from

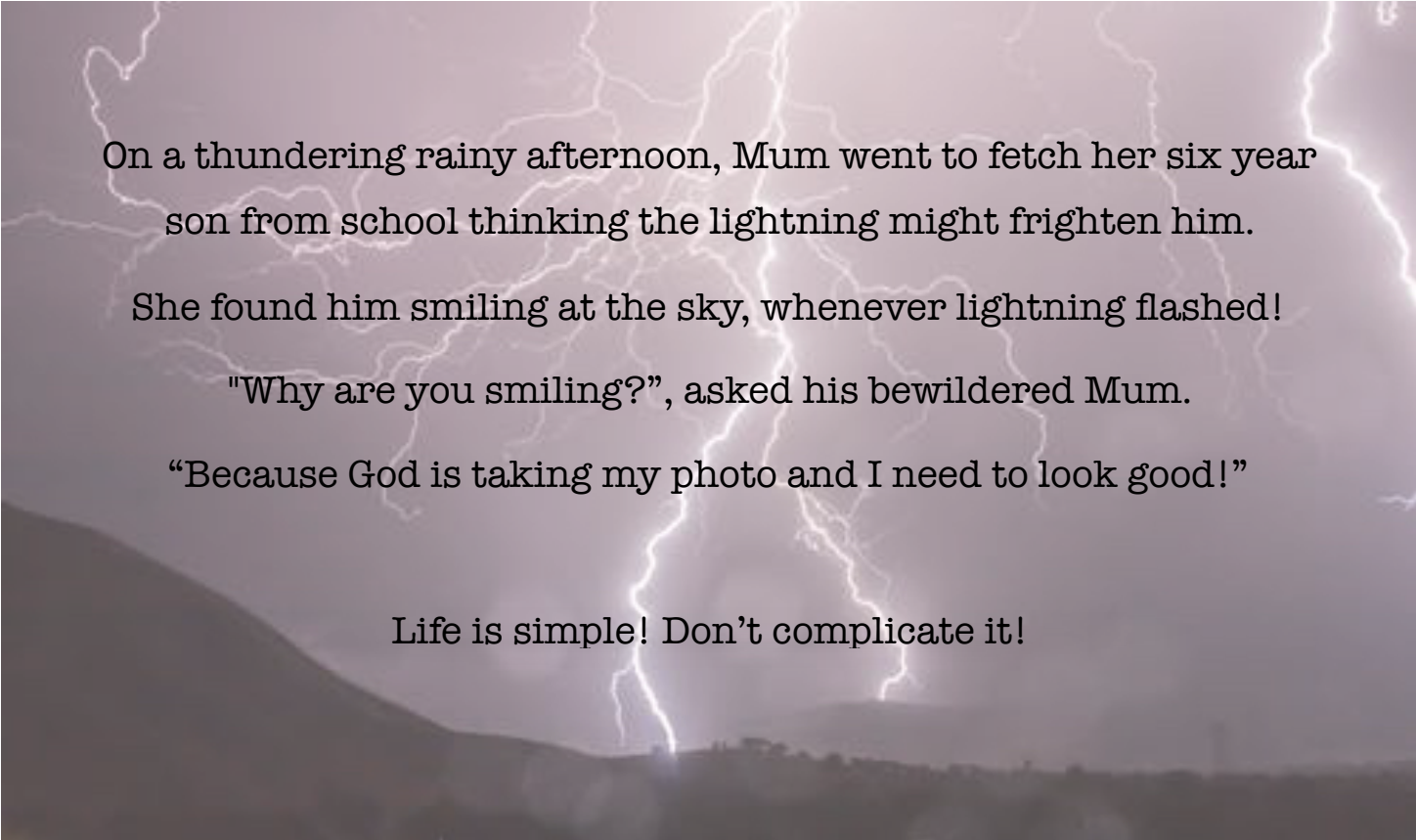
anxiety! I don't know of another faith framework, where the "god" worshipped can deliver on such bold promises!

Celebrating Easter is always a roller-coaster of emotions, starting with the high of heralding in The King of Kings on Palm Sunday, down to a muted Passover meal (normally joyous!), sliding further down into betrayal, denial, an obvious mockery of justice ending in excruciating death, before the exhilaration of Jesus' resurrection. Fear and anxiety gripped those who witnessed all that happened to Jesus, despite the fact that Jesus had told His Disciples, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

We have every reason to consciously reject fear and anxiety at a time like this, because God gave did not give us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7). This would be a grand time to demonstrate to our world, There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

Yours learning to love without fear

Kalyan



On a thundering rainy afternoon, Mum went to fetch her six year son from school thinking the lightning might frighten him.

She found him smiling at the sky, whenever lightning flashed!

"Why are you smiling?", asked his bewildered Mum.

"Because God is taking my photo and I need to look good!"

Life is simple! Don't complicate it!

God's Promise of Protection in Difficult Times

If you say, *'The Lord is my refuge,'* and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. (Psalm 91:9, 10)

COVID-19 is now officially a global pandemic, and the world is in the grip of this virus.

A pandemic causes fear, and fear is a major trigger of disease. The Psalmist encourages us *"not to fear the terror of night... nor the plague that destroys at midday"*.

During times of uncertainty and insecurity, we can depend on God's promises, because His character is that He is true to His word!

In His Word, God has promised to save us, to deliver us, to watch over us, and to keep us safe in His shelter. If the present circumstances have caused you to struggle with feelings of despair and helplessness, take a step of faith to trust in God's promises.

Psalm 91 is a powerful worship "song"

Psalm 91 was written for just such a time as this! Whenever you feel despondent, when you feel the world is spinning away from you leaving you fearful and without hope, read Psalm 91 and count the number of promises God makes! Verses 5 and 6 are God's promise to us, *Do not be afraid..., Do not dread...* Make this Psalm a personal prayer of protection. Speak the promises of God's protection over yourself and your entire family. Rather than live in fear, actively receive His love and protection personally.

God is in control of this world and nothing catches Him by surprise.

Whether God planned this pandemic, caused it, or allowed it, should not be our concern. Every life is precious to God and every death is mourned by a family and their friends, and God joins in mourning, but our God rejoices in life.

It is sad when Churches preach God's condemnation at a time like this. It is not for us to stand in as judge for God; He does NOT see us as a people to be condemned, He sees us instead, as a people needing to be rescued, because all Heaven is waiting to celebrate our arrival!



The Coronavirus may impact our health, our economy, and our very way of life, but our God says, *I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in My Name. When they call on me, I will answer. I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue and honour them. I will reward them with long life and give them My salvation!*

SEVEN Promises, made by the only One who will will keep them and deliver on each one! Wouldn't you want to trust Him?

Imagine what the next few months could look like if we God's Church took the lead on compassion and community care during this trying season. Imagine the impact God will make when we depend on His promises and He uses us to deliver on them?

-Contributed by Elisabeta

WORRYING does NOT TAKE AWAY
TOMORROW'S TROUBLES;

IT TAKES AWAY
today's PEACE

“Yes! I Believe in God!” But do I Trust Him?

A person started to walk on a rope tied between two tall towers. He was walking slowly, balancing a long stick in his hands. He had his son sitting on his shoulders.

Everyone on the ground was watching him with bated breath, and all were very tense. When he slowly reached the second tower, every one clapped, whistled and cheered him. They shook hands and took selfies.

He asked the crowd “Do you all think I can walk back on the same rope now from this side to that side?”

Crowd shouted in unison “Yes, you can!”

Do you trust me?, he asked? They said, “Yes, yes, we are ready to bet on you!”

He said, Okay! May I have one of your children to sit on my shoulder; I will take the child to the other side safely.

There was stunned, deafening silence. No one dared speak.

Belief and Trust are different. Trust needs **total** surrender.

This is what we lack towards God in today’s world.

We might believe in Almighty God . But do we trust Him?



Don't worry about anything;
instead, pray about everything.

Tell God what you need, and
thank him for all he has done.



Then you will experience God's
peace, which exceeds anything we
can understand. His peace will
guard your hearts and minds as you
live in Christ Jesus.

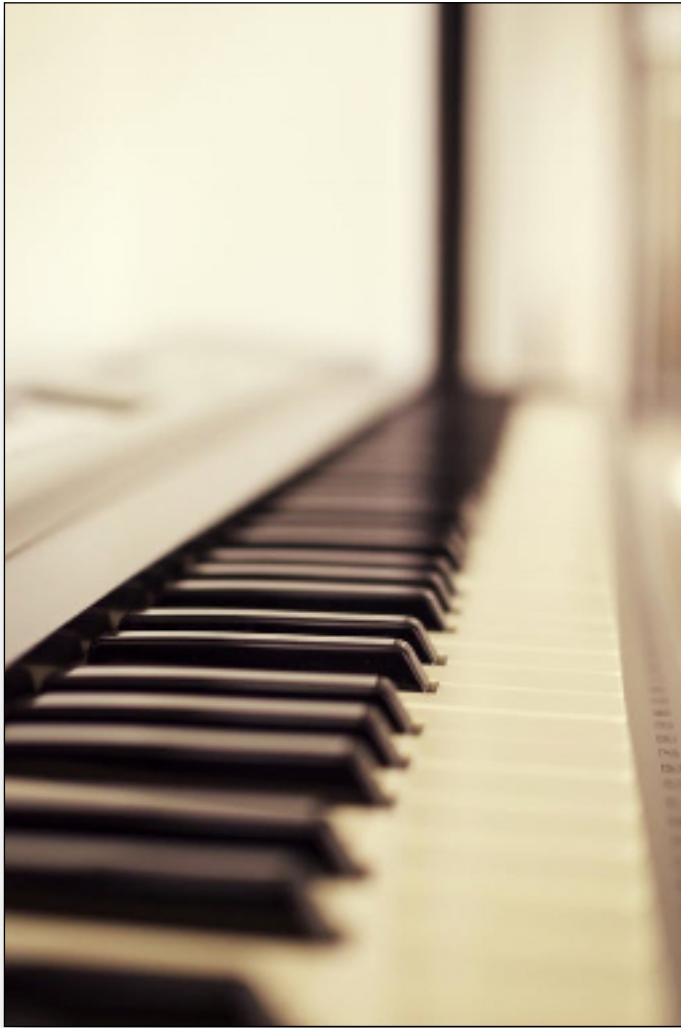
Philippians 4:6-7

Off Key and Out of Tune

*"Blessed are those whose ways are blameless,
who walk according to the law of the Lord.*

Psalm 119:1

Today I turned on my computer and began to type. I had finished about two lines before I looked at the screen and saw a confusing jumble of letters. I had unknowingly placed my hands one key to the left of proper starting position.



Therefore, each word I wrote made absolutely no sense. The same could happen if I played the piano and put my hands in the incorrect position. The mistake would be audible and detected quickly, but the short musical interlude would be miserable sounding.

The same is true of my Christian walk. I may be off the "beaten path" a little; perhaps putting self first and exemplifying other characteristics which are not Christian. I would sound and look unappealing and make no sense as a Christian, even by being one step to the right or left of where I should be.

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." Isaiah 30:21

I am thankful God wants to place me back where I need to be, in the proper position in His beautiful plan. I need to remember to "look" where I am and "listen" to how I sound. Am I glorifying God in my actions and words? This is my desire, and I am thankful God taps me lovingly on the hand when I am out of place. How about you?

- Marion Smith

An Amazing Fact: *Naples was on the verge of insurrection against the Italian monarchy when King Humbert took the throne. Politicians urged violent measures to force the city into submission, but King Humbert refused. However, in 1884, Naples was soon hit by an outbreak of cholera, and the dreaded disease raged with deadly fury. Ignoring his advisors, the young king made an amazing move of devotion toward even his disloyal subjects.*

Shocking his counsellors, Humbert left the palace and went alone through the crowded hospitals of Naples, ministering to his subjects.

He ventured without a guard into the slums and among the sick. Many of the suffering breathed prayers of gratitude for this young medical servant, not knowing it was the very king they'd spurned. When the plague was finally checked, many learned his true identity.

Naples then became a conquered city—conquered by the love of a monarch it once refused. From that time forward, the people of Naples were among Humbert's most loyal subjects.

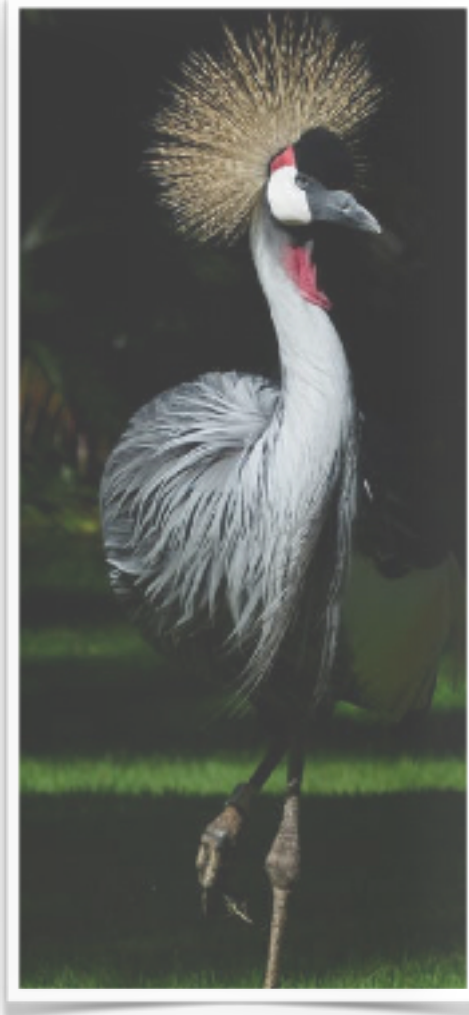
Another King once left His throne to walk among the sick and dying. Jesus came from heaven's royal kingdom to pass unrecognized through the streets of our world and reach out with love. The Bible says, *"He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, And we hid, as it were, our*



faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him" (Isaiah 53:3). He loved and served many, yet Christ was not accepted by the powers of His day. The religious politicians despised him and eventually had Him killed.

Today, Jesus calls us to walk the road of servanthood, even though we might be despised and rejected. Someday, when heaven's gates open, we will be forever accepted.

Thought for the Day



When we thought we were all powerful
And we did exactly as we pleased.
When we treated the earth with contempt
A virus brought us to our knees!

When we proved ourselves on social media
With photos of places we roamed
microscopic virus decided
bind our feet and keep us home

When the whole world seemed divided
And no one could see eye-to-eye.
We needed a tiny virus
To show us where our connection lies.

We need to wash not just our hands
We need to cleanse our thoughts
We need to elevate humanity
Before the virus is fought.

Author Unknown

Jottings

Isn't it fascinating, after enduring the worst wildfires Australia had ever seen, when the fires died down but embers continued to glow nearby, new life was sprouting through!
This is the reality of HOPE!

When you pray for others,
God hears you and blesses them;
Sometimes when you are safe and feel happy,
remember,
someone has prayed for YOU!

“We walked as far as the A420 junction and back, avoiding the few other pedestrians we saw about at 9:00 a.m. Peter Durham has opened a green grocer's shop near to Warlands cycles. He and his father before him ran a green grocery on the Parade from its opening to well after we came here, always good produce and service. Free delivery, looks interesting. Check name on google for website.”

- Anonymous for fear of getting caught!

THE GERM

In view of the current situation, would it be appropriate to publish this poem by Ogden Nash, American poet (1902-1971)?

A mighty creature is the Germ
Though smaller than a pachyderm.
His customary dwelling place
is deep within the human race
by giving people strange diseases.
Do you my Poppet, feel infirm?
You probably contain a Germ!

Perhaps he could see the future!

-Contributed by Peter J Collins

A letter in today's Irish Times

Coronavirus – the need for vigilance

Sir, – Many people have been showing great support for the healthcare workers on the “frontline”. People are asking what they can do to support doctors and nurses, a heart-warming sentiment which shows a huge misunderstanding of what is actually going on here.

The frontline is not in hospitals. The frontline is where you are, out on the streets. If we are using this war analogy, doctors and nurses are not soldiers; they are doctors and nurses dealing with casualties of war. Citizens are the soldier. You are playing the most important role in fighting this disease. We do not have medicine to treat this virus. Prevention is the only way to fight this and is up to every one of us.


There are two things about viruses we all must understand. First, they require hosts to spread. They cannot replicate by themselves. Every time you come into contact

with someone you are giving the virus a chance to spread, to replicate, and become more powerful. Every time you decide to avoid contact with someone new, you starve the virus.

Second, viruses spread exponentially. Every time you come into contact with someone new, you are not just putting that person at risk, but also all the people that that person comes into contact with, and all the people those people come into contact with. Every time you meet one person, it will affect an untold number of people, many of whom will have weaker immune systems than you, and will suffer severely. It is your duty to protect these vulnerable people. I cannot stress this enough. It is the decisions you make that will decide the course of this disaster.

Social distancing is the most important intervention we can all carry out. It is our greatest weapon. If you can self-isolate for at least two weeks you will help flatten the curve and you will save countless lives. That is the gift that healthcare workers are praying for. Please be our heroes!

– Yours, etc, Dr COLM HARRINGTON, Salthill, Galway



*"I am leaving you with a gift—
peace of mind and heart. The
peace I give is a gift the world
(promises but) cannot give.
So don't be troubled or afraid!*

John 14:27

SECRETARY's NOTES

Following on from last month's reflections on the amazing changes in the fortune of Botley Baptist Church, I thought you might like to hear some of the "explanations" that have been put forward. Firstly, "pure happenstance, co-incidence or luck", we were in the right place at just the right time, with hints of conspiracy. Big business had seen development possibilities and substantial profits to be made out of the semi-derelict Botley Shopping centre, and we just happened to benefit from this situation.



The second version of events allows some recognition of foresight and devotion. Over the last one hundred and thirty odd years a group of independently minded protestant Christians have been determined to offer an opportunity for such worship near to the centre of the local population. Starting in the middle of Old Botley, moving westwards along the old Eynsham Road (now Westway), as Botley expanded in that direction. Then further west to Westminster Way, as the Elms Rise estate was enlarged behind Elms Parade. Now even further west but still pretty central, being on Church Way, the link route between Elms Rise, through the new shopping centre linking to West Way and the newer Tilbury Fields estate. A scenario I find both admirable and inspiring.

The third explanation is at odds with most modern materialistic attitudes, a God-given gift.

Whatever the mechanism might be, this is where we are at and God will expect us to build on past devotion and endeavours to continue to be a blessing to our neighbourhood. I believe that some comments have been made questioning the need for both Elisabeth and India in the new building. With four floors, including the roof with the spacious day-room, five studio flats, a large meeting room, a smaller conference room (used by KUMON), the Sanctuary and two kitchens, there is a lot of space to keep clean and tidy. Add in the comings and goings of the the hall users and the various workmen installing the “extras” (organ, hearing loop, sound systems, cupboard shelving etc.) India has been kept fully occupied. All that space now also contains a lot of new furniture and equipment that needs entering on to a comprehensive inventory, having had some past experience in that area plus responsibility for Health and Safety compliance, I do not envy Elisabeth's ongoing tasks.



I started to write these notes several days ago, and events have moved on apace. This COVID 19 pandemic is causing havoc, it looks very much as if many of us will be on an enforced “lockdown”. Stay at home, exercise “social distancing” at least 2 metres apart, if we do go out (carrying I.D.), and then only for essential medical or food supplies. With most if not yet all social and leisure venues closed, the church building is virtually mothballed for the duration of this emergency.

To keep in touch the church website and e-mail can be used by all who have the means, if not, there is always the good ol’ telephone, and for some, the garden fence - 2 metres apart remember!

Ted

Friends Forever!

Two 90-year old men, Mike and Joe, had been friends all of their lives.

When it becomes clear that Joe is dying, Mike visits him every day.

One day Mike says, *"Joe, we both loved cricket all our lives, and we played cricket on Saturdays together for so many years. Do me one favour, when you get to Heaven, somehow you must let me know if there's cricket there."*

Joe looks up at Mike from his death bed, *"Mike, you've been my best friend for many years. If it's at all possible, I'll do this favour for you."*

Shortly after that, Joe passes away.

A couple of nights later, at midnight, a blinding flash of white light awakens Mike from sound sleep, and he heard a familiar voice calling him, *"Mike! Mike!"*

"Who is it?" asks Mike sitting up suddenly. *"Who is it?"*, he asked.

"Mike! It's me, Joe."

"You're not Joe. Joe just died", said Mike.

"I'm telling you, it's me, Joe," insists the voice.

"Joe! Where are you?"

"In heaven", replies Joe. *"I have some really good news and a little bad news."*

"Tell me the good news first," says Mike.

"The good news," Joe says, *"is that there's cricket in heaven. Better yet, all of our old friends who died before us are here, too. Better than that, we're all young again. Better still, it's always spring time and it never rains or snows. And best of all, we can play cricket all we want, and we never get tired."*

"That's fantastic," says Mike. *"It's beyond my wildest dreams !"*

"So, what's the bad news ?"

"You're in the team for this Saturday's match!"



FAMILY NEWS

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way...”

Charles Dickens (along with Ogden Nash, whose poem on the Mighty Germ was contributed by Peter Collins in this issue) might well be a prophet for describing in 1859 in the opening paragraph of his novel, “A Tale of Two Cities”, the mood of our country 160 years later! We are living through a period of significant contrasts of devastation and hope, of nations, their economies, societies and health systems being brought to their knees, against stories of human excellence, of people reaching out to engage with and serve others.

Perhaps the most telling thought which epitomises this crisis is that we have discovered family and neighbours, **and** we have discovered the jewel in our nation’s crown - the **NHS!**

At this time, we particularly remember Margaret, Gillian and Mary Timbrell, whose surgery has been postponed due to present pressure on the NHS. Our prayer for them is that during the wait, God would stall the condition as it is so that at the right time, the surgeons will attend to it. He can, you know!

Also remember those who have self-isolated themselves including Wendy, and friends in “care homes” - Christine, Jeff and Rita. This virus needs people to “host” it, and everyone is a target.

There are several among us who are feeling vulnerable at this time, dependent on others for help, Angela, the Beavers, Phyllis (who fell in her home on 21st March and felt unsteady for a while), Hedley who fell and damaged his elbow and is in a cast for several weeks, Fred’s brother Noel who has not been well lately, and Freda who is well cared for, but is still vulnerable.

Remember in prayer too, those who have lost their jobs and income as a result of businesses downturn, in retail, in manufacturing, and those selling books to schools! The cascading effect of this virus has put people at risk of economic survival; we should be praying for them all.

Many of us feel helpless, not knowing what to do, esp when compelled to be home-bound for weeks on end. Consider this, in the last century, the world saw 3 pandemics: the “Spanish flu” in 1918, (caused by an H1N1 subtype of the Influenza-A virus), the “Asian flu” in 1957, caused by an H2N2 subtype and, the “Hong Kong flu” in 1968, caused by an H3N2 subtype. Of the three pandemics, the Spanish flu is generally regarded as the most deadly disease event in human history, striking

down 20-50 million hardy and completely healthy young adults, while leaving children and those with weaker immune systems, still alive.

The only other pandemic which overshadows most others in recent times is HIV/AIDS pandemic which at its peak (2005-2012), killed 36 million.

Every life is precious to God and every death is mourned by a family and their friends. But we the Church, are called today as we are every day, not to be struck numb by the incomprehensible scale of what is happening around us, rather to be the Church Jesus made us to be - first to pray for our families, our communities and our nations, and then to pray asking God how He would use us to glorify Him!

Easter will not be “special” without our worship time together, ending with a sunrise service and the Easter service, but each of can celebrate in our hearts that the Majesty of God is seen through the work of the Resurrected Christ in this world.

Kalyan

Hidden Heroes

by Max Lucado

A revival can begin with one sermon. History proves it. John Egglan had never preached a sermon in his life. **Never.** Wasn't that he didn't want to, he just never needed to. But then one morning he did!

The snow had left his town of Colchester, England, buried in white. When he awoke on that January Sunday in 1850, he thought of staying home. Who would go to church in such weather?

But he reconsidered. He was, after all, a deacon. And if the deacons didn't go, who would? So he put on his boots, hat, and coat and walked the six miles to the Methodist Church.

He wasn't the only member who considered staying home. In fact, he was one of the few who came. Twelve members and one visitor. Even the minister was snowed in. Someone suggested they go home. Egglan would hear none of that. They'd come this far; they would have a service. Besides, they had a visitor. A thirteen-year-old boy.

But who would preach? Egglan was the only deacon. It fell to him.

And so he did. His sermon lasted only ten minutes. It drifted and wandered and made no point in an effort to make several. But at the end, an uncharacteristic courage settled upon the man. He lifted his eyes and looked straight at the boy and challenged: “Young man, look to Jesus. Look! Look! Look!”

Did the challenge make a difference? Let the boy, now a man, answer. “I did look, and then and there the cloud on my heart lifted, the darkness rolled away, and at that moment I saw the sun.”

The boy’s name? Charles Haddon Spurgeon. England’s prince of preachers.

Did Egglan know what he’d done? **No.**

Do heroes know when they are heroic? **Rarely.**

Are historic moments acknowledged when they happen?

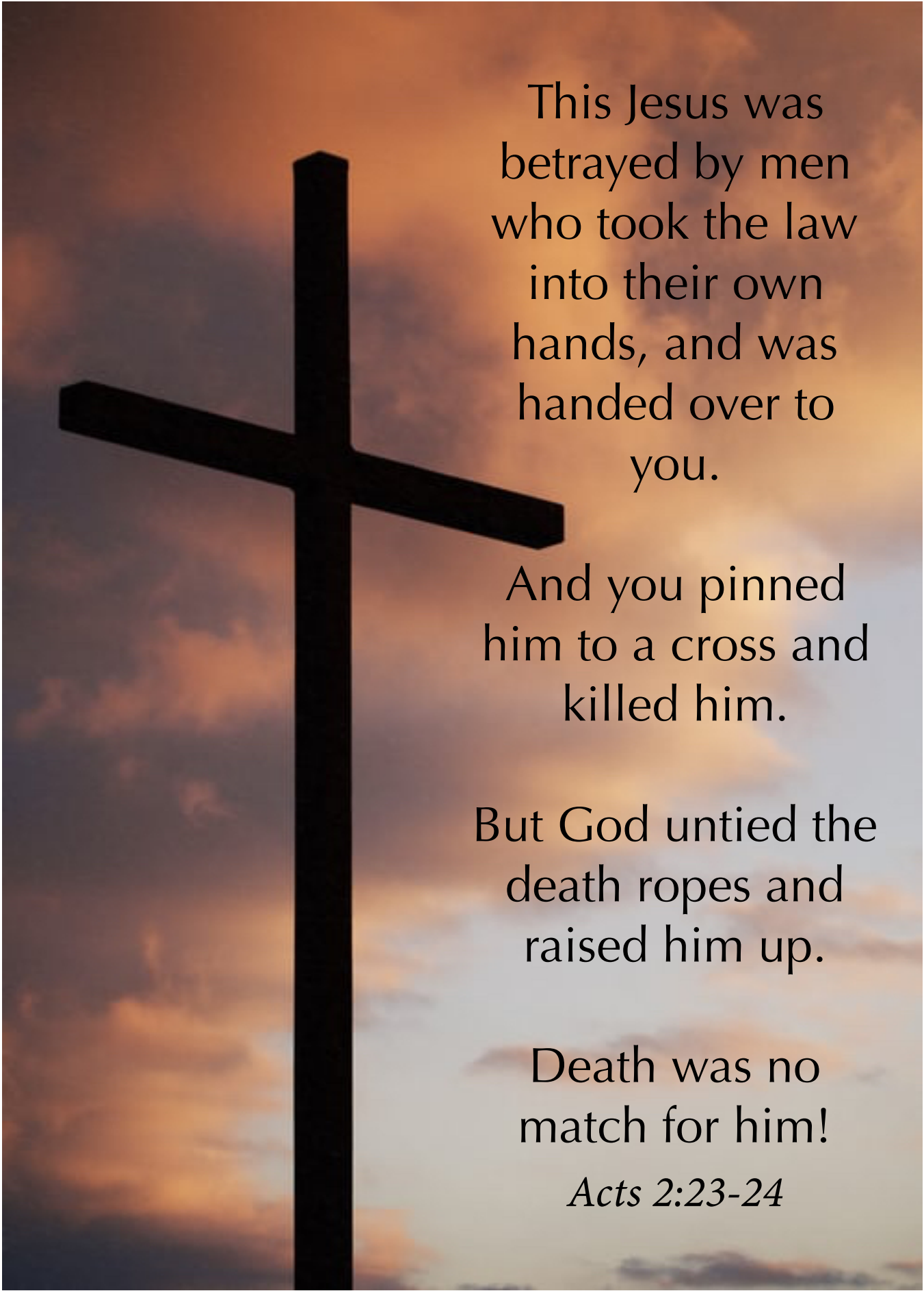
You know the answer to that one. (If not, a visit to the manger will remind you.) We seldom see history in the making, and we seldom recognise heroes.

But we’d do well to keep our eyes open. Tomorrow’s Spurgeon might be mowing your lawn. And the hero who inspires him might be nearer than you think.

He might be in your mirror.

From: *When God Whispers Your Name*. Copyright 1994, Max Lucado





This Jesus was
betrayed by men
who took the law
into their own
hands, and was
handed over to
you.

And you pinned
him to a cross and
killed him.

But God untied the
death ropes and
raised him up.

Death was no
match for him!

Acts 2:23-24

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*Recollections, Reflections, Observations,
The Way We Were, Goings On, Newsworthy Items etc. are welcome.*

Email above, or submit in person to Gillian, Ted or Kalyan

Editor's discretion/decision is final.

Thank you.

Editor: Gillian Guest