

FELLOWSHIP MATTERS!

THE BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF
CLARE BAPTIST CHURCH

To follow and worship Jesus
and make Him known



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LOCKDOWN EDITION

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Issue No 115

This edition of the magazine is different.

Rita had the excellent idea of asking some of our fellowship to write about their time in Lockdown.

It is a privilege to share their experiences. We particularly thank those who have very busy days but have still managed to find time to write.

We are grateful to everyone who has contributed and hopefully their accounts will help us to focus our prayers as we ask for God's blessing on them.



Pandemic Ponderings and Permutations...

By Rev Paul Graham

It feels like a long time since the world wasn't dominated by talk of pandemics, "Clap for Carers" and living in fear of the virus for which there is currently no vaccine. If we dare to cast our minds back to those heady carefree days of January and February, when we thought nothing of going to the shops, meeting with friends or turning up to church on Sundays. There was even once a time when we hadn't heard of COVID-19 or social distancing....

But the world that we've been living in over these past weeks has brought to light many questions, some of them fundamental to our understanding of humanity and our place here on this planet. With the lack of air traffic, we seem to have more birds around than at any time in the past century; the air is cleaner as cars are left on driveways because of furloughing or working from home. The planet seems to be breathing a sigh of relief.

Our interactions, journeys and visits have been scrutinised as never before, as have motives and intent. Towns and cities have become quieter as people have stayed indoors, with many high streets silent save for the essential shops. Even the nature of what is "essential" has become redefined in some ways, with people who usually operate in the shadows being thrust into the limelight as Key Workers, while others have had to learn that they weren't as important as they may have thought.

We still don't know what the future will look like, even with all the planning and preparation that governments, schools, businesses and churches (to name but a few) are putting in place. A lot will depend on one of the greatest assets given to humanity: their capacity for common sense. But plans must be made, contingencies will be considered, and risks assessed as we consider the future.

Until then, it's a good opportunity to look back and reflect on what has been going on in these past few weeks. As minister of the church, I had to make several decisions back in March once it became clear that we would not be physically meeting on Mothering Sunday and for the weeks following.

Mindful of the community around us, as well as the church family that I am called to serve, I had to make one decision: where to put most of my efforts. Alongside the very real worry about catching the virus and the repercussions of it affecting the family, I had to make plans that could cope with the shifting and changing landscape around us.

The first Sunday saw the release of an email with the first "Thought for the Week", swiftly followed by a "Midweek Musing" on the Wednesday. Though I have written the majority of these, I have been ably supported by Elsa, Wilf, Vivien and Alban in submitting their own thoughts and reflections, all of which I hope have been an encouragement for those who have read them. They were never meant to be a replacement for the traditional sermon, but would provide people with a perspective on the current crisis, a bit of "biblical archaeology" to inform and possibly even a challenge to take on into the coming days.

When it became apparent that we needed more than a bit of text to join us, I turned to technology. We have been using Zoom, a platform that I had never even heard of let alone used before this pandemic, to provide a space to meet up, to see each other (at least from the chest up) and find out what each other's houses look like. I've adapted the format over the weeks, from a casual meet up with



prayers to a more structured time with Bible reading, a brief reflection, prayers (following updates from friends and family) and even a song. We've had some significant moments together through this, from the Maundy Thursday Communion to the tearful joy of seeing and hearing Alexander Love in his hospital bed as he begins the long road to post-COVID recovery.

Other churches have utilised technology differently, with some posting entire services on the internet via YouTube, Facebook Live and other platforms. Personally, I rejected this option early on for a number of reasons. For a start, I was concerned about the time it takes to put this together; there are reports of ministers spending whole days filming segments, causing great disruption in the family

home. Without putting all my eggs in one basket by spending all my time producing online content, it enabled me to support the wider community as well as the church family.

Possibly more controversially, I was also concerned about turning the church service into a broadcast event, rather than an engaged act of worship. Where it is only possible for people to watch or listen via radio or television, then that's fine. However, I felt (and still feel) that we get the most out of our experience of being "in church" (even while the building is out of action) when we are acting and reacting at the same time as each other.

To give an example, I watched one of the Baptists Together Prayer Times led by Lynn Green a few weeks ago. It was a few days after the original live broadcast, and I was keen to join in. Though I could appreciate what was going on and felt connected in some way with the words that were being spoken, it was obvious to me that this was something that had already happened and it lost something in that distance of time from then to now. The best illustration of this was to compare the way that Lynn led us in the Lord's Prayer to the slightly cacophonous way that we have said the same prayer during our Sunday morning gatherings. We don't all start at exactly the same time and we hear the "Amens" like an echo across the countryside, but we are saying the same words together.

This is not to denigrate in any way the work that Baptists Together or any other church have put in with their different approaches. It's a case of "horses for courses" and there are certainly ministers who have been able to maximise their gifts for communicating the gospel during this time. There are also those that have changed their methods over the time and others who wish that they could do it differently. The joy of facing unprecedented times is the ability to get it wrong as easily as getting it right! We all have to rely on the grace of others as well of God as we do this together.

I know that in doing our gathered worship in this way we have not been able to enjoy some of the surprising effects that have been reported, of people watching YouTube services from far and wide, or people coming to faith through these online broadcasts. But

that's something that I pray God will make provision for in other ways and pray his blessing upon those who have found a new church family as they continue their journeys into faith.

I suspect that there are others who would like us to do something different. As always, I'm happy to hear of positive changes that can be made within the constraints that I've described. Please call me to discuss how we can "do church" better...

Alongside the Sunday gatherings has been the effort of keeping contact with folk around the church. One of the early suggestions put forward fell conveniently in line with the release of the updated Church Directory. If everyone took the responsibility of phoning the person who was next to the in the Directory, then everyone would be contacted to be asked the vital question "how are you?" This would supplement the work of the Pastoral Care Team, my own contacts and the friendships that exist within the church family. I don't know whether everyone has received one or more calls, but again, I would encourage people to get in touch with me; whether you haven't heard from someone or if you don't feel that you are able to make this call. It's not about judging people's pastoral abilities, but whether people are being cared for.

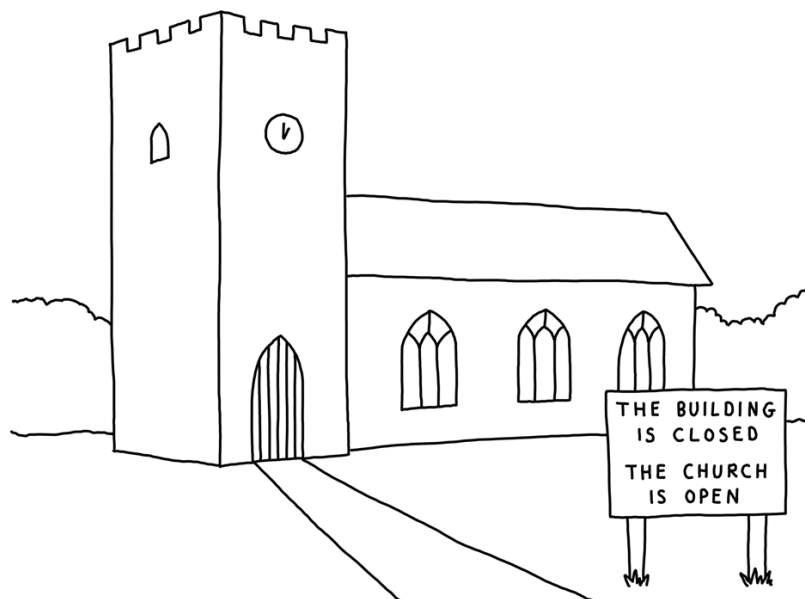
Earlier on I mentioned the challenge that I faced with supporting the wider community of Clare. As you probably know, from the first days of the crisis I have been working with the Town Council, Local Authority, District Council and CLASP as part of the Clare Community COVID Response Steering Group (or "Clare Cobra" to give it its shorter, more humorous title). Helping to co-ordinate the brilliant response from the local residents in volunteering to support their neighbours has brought me into contact with people who I never previously had reason to speak to. Being a primary point of contact for the Local Authority's efforts has meant that at times the Manse has felt more like a telephone exchange, but it has been a real privilege to be the only overtly Christian representative (the sole "professional Christian", if you want) within the Steering Group.



It has been great to see other church members (and members of other churches) join the volunteer force, or be willing to receive help, loving their neighbours and themselves as Christ commands. And that's not including the many "unofficial" support structures that have been active and those who have been part of the community groups outside Clare where they live.

All in all, as we start tentatively to look forward for the first time in weeks, I can look back on this time with gratitude. I am grateful to God for those who I've been able to serve and support. I am grateful for the church community, those who I see on a Sunday morning over Zoom, speak to over the phone or talk to on the doorstep when I deliver their printed church materials. I am especially grateful to God for blessing me with a wife who continues to support me, challenge me, love me and feed me! And I am grateful for God's continuing presence during this crisis. I pray that he will continue to show us the way to go in the following days, weeks, months and years as we move forward through and beyond this crisis.

Paul



CartoonChurch.com

Hello, we are Tim and Lorna Hayes (aka Luke's mummy and daddy) How has COVID-19 changed our lives?

As you may know Tim is a deputy head at ARU, teaching paramedic science. Following the introduction of lockdown the university closed and Tim's office moved to home, planning and arranging teaching for students via remote access. Work has carried on, to continue to plan for the future with the working day consisting of lots of Zoom meetings and responding to e-mails.

As a senior manager in the ambulance service, managing our volunteer workforce, again the lockdown reduced my mobility and moved my office to my craft-room at home. With the fast moving of the virus, it has been challenging to keep up with keeping the volunteers safe responding to patients, keeping patients safe and also looking at increased workstreams to assist us as an ambulance service to be prepared for the worse case unknown scenario.

Thankfully for Luke he has been able to attend nursery (other than the couple of weeks I was poorly) which has maintained a routine for him, and enabled him to keep making friends and having lots of social stimulation.

The biggest change has been interaction with people: work conversations are via conference calls, and interactions with family through Zoom and Facetime, with shopping delivered to the front door. Waving at neighbours (or the short conversation over the fence while walking to the post-box) is the closest we get to what was normal social interaction. For us this highlights the importance of face to face community interaction, and the importance of actively supporting and managing your own mental health and supporting others.

Ensuring we make time to step away from the work Zoom meetings has at time been a challenge. Recently as lockdown has continued we've started to make a conscious effort to ensure that we compare our daily work meeting schedules to take time once a day to go for a short walk together. We also try to do little things, like

make regular cups of tea for each other and the occasional snack or lunch for when one of us has a long running conference call and can't easily escape to the kitchen.



In our spiritual life we've been fortunate to have a home group that allows us to continue to have regular biblical discussions with others via the 'new normal' medium of Zoom. We've missed the structure of the normal Clare church service, with Luke and his little friends dancing and playing at the front, and the wisdom and contemplation derived from Paul's sermons. Though Zoom can fill part of that void, it cannot do so completely.

An unexpected side effect however is that it has spurred us to seek out some Christian podcasts to listen to and discuss together as a couple during the week, which is a new experience for us together. Likewise we have been exploring a variety of forms of virtual worship to supplement and try to fill part of the hole left by the lack of face to face contact, both social and spiritual, we feel at this time.

Tim and Lorna

Blessings in lockdown by Jane Baillie

Rita had asked me to reflect on lockdown, to think about the positives, rather than the negatives, the situations in which I have felt the presence of God.

Let's start with work. When everything started getting "serious" with COVID-19, there was much talk about how my role might change. After 18 years as a diabetes specialist nurse, there was a very real possibility that I would have to head back to the wards and carry out duties that I hadn't done for nearly 20 years!! It was a daunting prospect, but also a little exciting too!

As it turned out though, my diabetes experience worked in my favour, my services were required to aid admission avoidance and to facilitate safe and timely discharge from hospital. I've had to learn how to do things differently, video and telephone consults have replaced the face-to-face aspect of my job that I love. Throughout everything though, I have felt the peace of God and the knowledge that He will equip me with the skills I require.

On the home front things are different too. We had become used to having only a part-time daughter! What with college, work, boyfriend and friends, we were seeing Daisy infrequently. Although she has struggled with separation from Jack, it has been a real joy getting to spend a bit more time with Daisy over the past 10 weeks. She'll be leaving home in a little over a year so this time together has been very special.

Amidst all the things that we have to feel down about, there are many things (including the glorious weather) to give thanks to God for in this time.

Jane

Some Lockdown thoughts from Rhona Bruce

At the beginning of this year my diary was rapidly filling up with dates for outings, weekends away, day trips and friends coming to stay. But all that changed in March when lockdown was imposed. These weeks have been very different to what was planned and it made me realise that we're not in control but we can take great comfort in knowing that God is. It's been heart-breaking listening to the news and thinking of all the families affected by the virus.

Daily life is different and there are many benefits with these changes but my hair cutting skills is not one of them!!!! I'm enjoying gardening, catching up with friends and family on Zoom meetings and phone calls. I get great pleasure from walking in our beautiful countryside. I feel very blessed to live in such a lovely area.

I think I'll throw my diary away and learn to enjoy each day for the gifts it gives us!

Rhona



“Groundhog Day” By Chris Grist

Do you remember watching Bill Murray in this film. Each day he wakes up, the same song is on the radio, and the same day starts all over again, until he gets it right. Well, I think our current situation is a bit like this. We wake up each morning quite happily, then the realization sets in of the current situation, and the day begins very much same as the ones that preceded it.

I don't know how things are for you, but I feel that we have been blessed with some amazing weather, and have been able to venture out. There are so many wonderful walks, of varying distances, around Hundon, and we have been out most days. Without the noise of the traffic, and the pollution caused by that and the airlines, with clear blue skies, and the sun on our faces, it has been a joy to walk in the countryside, seeing the plants and trees growing around us, and hear the birds singing in the trees. I don't think I have ever walked so much.

The garden is also blooming, with much effort going into it. We have over 100 seed trays on the patio, and they are coming to life. The thousands of tadpoles in the pond will soon be turning into frogs, it sounds like we will soon be suffering from one of the plagues.

We have already lost one cruise this year, and I think we will be cancelling the other, but it has given us the opportunity to appreciate what we have around us, albeit within a five mile radius. I, as I am sure is true of many of you, would rather be safe.

As many of you will know, I volunteer for the National Trust at Ickworth two mornings a week. I have seen pictures and videos of the park, the new lambs that have been born... but it is not the same as seeing with your own eyes. As I miss seeing (in person) the people at church, I miss the people at Ickworth, and at my gym. Keeping fit during this period is not easy, as it is so easy to just sit, but with our daily walks, and hopefully soon I will get out on my bike again, the pounds will fall away.

I do worry about those who aren't blessed with the countryside around them, and really have very little to be joyful about. The joys of living in a nice house with a garden, rather than a one bedroom flat. We should count our blessings at this time.

So until we meet again, stay safe.

Chris



Lockdown with Rebecca Chapman

Some of you will already know that I have been a Respiratory Physiotherapist for 24 years. I have worked 3 days a week at the West Suffolk Hospital for the past 10 years and my work involves treating patients on Intensive Care and the Respiratory wards, as well as running exercise classes in the community for patients with long-term lung conditions.

During my 24 years we have prepared for several possible deadly viruses, but none has hit the NHS quite like Covid-19. At the West Suffolk Hospital we have had a 'steady' influx of patients both to the wards and Intensive Care over the last few months, but thankfully have been spared the overwhelming numbers of sick patients that have been experienced by the city hospitals.

As Physiotherapists we are very adaptable (some may even say 'gung-ho!') and keen to get 'stuck in' to any task we are set, and this has been no exception. Our Respiratory Physiotherapy team doubled in staff numbers almost overnight. Wards for 'planned' surgery across the hospital were closed and staff redeployed. As a team we have had to upskill to take on nursing tasks and more specialist tasks, which I can proudly say we have certainly risen to the challenge of and achieved. The team has been flexible and determined, with our main focus being the welfare of our patients and their families. Our staff have also learnt to work adapted hours so that we can provide a more robust 7-day service.and nobody has complained!

Our clinics and classes have ceased in their normal form, but have been adapted to keep our patients safe by carrying out telephone appointments, video appointments and my community classes are now looking at starting virtual exercise classes (health and safety permitting!!).

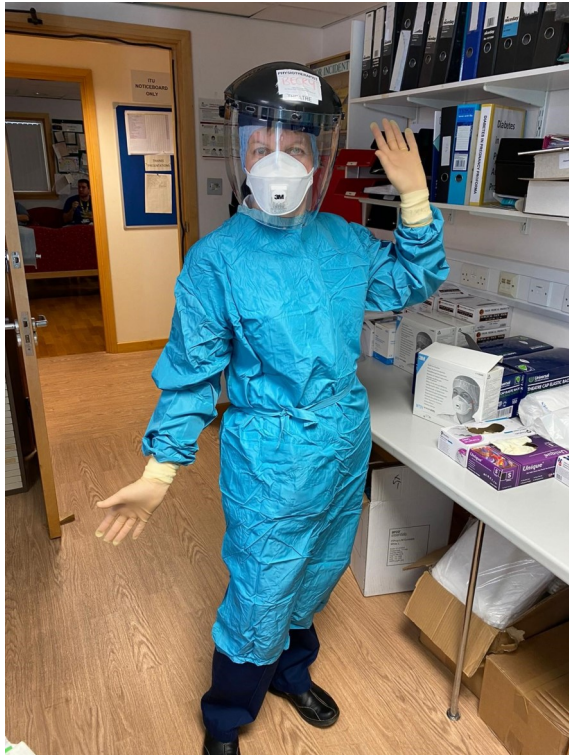
If you were to come to the hospital at the moment (please don't, unless you are sick!) you would notice that the corridors are no longer bustling with staff and patients, but are deserted and eerily

quiet.

The virus in this area, as in any other, has been indiscriminate. We have treated Consultant's, ambulance crew, carers, nurses, and the general public.

As a Respiratory (chest) Physiotherapist I help patients to remove phlegm from their chests on a daily basis – apologies if that sounds disgusting, but it's my 'bread and butter' work! However, with Covid -19 our patients have not really struggled with phlegm, but instead with getting enough oxygen into their bodies and keeping their oxygen levels from dropping to dangerous levels (which has been a challenge).

We have been shocked by how these patients can be talking in full sentences one minute and then become so poorly that they need to be ventilated (breathing is taken on by a machine) the next. Recovery has been variable both in length and outcome. As staff we have had to learn to work at a slower pace when rehabilitating



those that survive, as they become fatigued very quickly and their oxygen levels can continue to plummet with even the merest exertion.

And so to PPE (see attached photograph.....not sure they got my best side!!)....for most of us as therapists this has been the one of the most exhausting parts of the job. We arrive at work in our 'civvies' and then change into scrubs (a bit like pyjamas!). Then, if you are like me and working mainly on the Covid Intensive Care unit, we have to put on full PPE – a long gown with long sleeves, a head covering, an FFP3 mask (which should keep the virus at bay?!), a full face shield and elbow long gloves.

On seeing each patient we then have to don a plastic apron and a second pair of gloves.....the heat and lack of being able to hear is quite something (I struggle with my hearing and did not realise how much I relied on lip-reading until I had to wear a mask!). Once we have finished on the ward we have to go through a very thorough routine of 'doffing' (removing our PPE), washing ourselves with soap and water and alcohol gels....we even have to wash our shoes!!

At home time, its back into 'civvies' and then once I am home my car has to be disinfected and I have to shower and wash my clothes before greeting my family.....a never-ending worry that I should pass anything on to them!!

What I take from this experience is that however overloaded the NHS is, it is (for me) the best family within which to work. Our self-less staff and our overriding desire to always put our patients first and do the best for our patients and their families, however tired we are. But also, it has been the sheer willpower of our patients who have endured this virus and the fact that those who have been the most poorly have never complained or grumbled.

As some of you know, I have been very privileged to work with Rev Alexander Love in his recovery from Covid-19 and although there have been a few 'down' days through his rehabilitation, he has never stopped thanking the staff and declaring his love for Jesus (and Sirrka his wife!).....he has been the model patient, who is al-

ways keen to do his Physiotherapy and has acted on every piece of advice and exercise he has been given!! He is a true inspiration!

The hospital over the last week has now started to settle down with the numbers of patients being admitted with Covid-19, but we are very much on alert for a potential spike in cases as life starts to get back to some form of normality. I pray that we keep going in the right direction and that the public, on the whole, remain sensible. Thank you to those of you who clap on a Thursday evening and for those of you who have held us in your prayers – they are simple gestures, but mean the world to our NHS staff!!

Rebecca



My life with my Stem Cell Nano Genes by Kim Meikle

Cancer or the “C Word” as it is sometimes referred to. Both my parents died of cancer and close friends have been affected by it but you never think it is going to happen to you.

December 2018 following a visit to the Doctor due to extreme stomach pain and a referral to West Suffolk Hospital my journey began. I was officially diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma by my Oncologist. I did not get upset as I think deep down, I knew. However as soon as she told me I would lose my hair I burst into tears (it is only hair and would grow back). I did go onto purchase a

wig but never felt totally comfortable with it.

Chemotherapy began early January at West Suffolk day unit. I soon got into weekly routine of weekly chemotherapy sessions and intermittent clinic check-ups with my fantastic Oncologist. Fortunately, I avoided the sickness but tiredness soon took over and many afternoons I spent asleep on the sofa. Even little jobs like walking the dog zapped my energy. Halfway through my treatment my blood levels dropped extremely low and I had to have a blood transplant. My energy levels shot up following this.

Family and friends were amazing with their support along with the staff at West Suffolk. Hattie my youngest got the bus from school to the hospital on the days I was having chemotherapy. She would give me a quick hug, say hello, tell me she was starving and shoot off to the hospital shop or canteen for something to eat. I feel it is much easier for the person going through it but much harder for those around you.

Following the chemotherapy treatment, I felt well enough to go back to work on a phased return. This was followed up with 3 weeks of Radiotherapy treatment at Addenbrookes. That course of treatment finished in the first week of August. We follow this up with a well-earned family holiday, including the dog, in France.

Unfortunately, almost a year since diagnosis my Oncologist informed me at a follow up clinic that the chemotherapy had not totally worked and a small piece of cancer had appeared on the muscle at the bottom of my back. Just before Christmas 2019 I was taken into hospital for a different type of chemotherapy. This was not the news we wanted to hear but had to remain positive.

The Oncologist told me about a cell transplant trial treatment that she felt I would be suitable for. However, the deadline was close as due to Brexit it would not be available through NHS listing. Forms were signed and my case was referred to University College, London. The board agreed that I would be a suitable for the trial and our journeys to London began. I carried on working throughout this time so as to give some normality to family life. Work was very understanding and brilliant.

The CT treatment involved stem cell collection from my blood which were then sent to America for the treatment to be made. This treatment was not without risk and serious side effects for some patients. Three weeks after cells were taken my treatment was ready so I was I was admitted to UCL form at least a month. I learned that I was to be partially isolated and closely monitored. Initially I was going to stay in a hotel attached to the hospital but the first evening I went rapidly downhill with a high fever so had to be admitted to the ward.

The first week was fine, as I remained in bed hooked up to various lines, with family popping in and out and excellent staff monitoring me. However, lockdown came into effect on the second week and no further visitors were allowed. I had to be isolated in my room. It didn't help that the view from my window was of large construction sites and cranes. I began to get depressed and feel sorry for myself. Conversations home were quite incoherent apparently as initially I lost my ability to verbalise my thoughts. Every morning the Doctor would come in and ask me a list of questions.

By the third week my speech began to come back however the temperature was up and down. By the end of that week the Doctor came in and said that I was improving and if it continued, I would be able to go home in a week or so's time. This perked me up and I even set myself a morning exercise routine as soon as I got up. The days were ticked off on the calendar. Even the food didn't seem so bad.

That Monday morning came and I was told I could go home. Results of the scan were incredibly positive and my blood count had come up. Jim and Hattie came and collected me from the car park as they were unable to come into the hospital. It was extremely surreal being driven along the roads through London, very few people on the streets and hardly any traffic. This was a marked difference to when I came into the hospital just over a month previously. It felt so good to get home to family and get into my garden. Staying positive has helped me through, even though I have some way to go.

Kim



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