

CHRIST CHURCH WARE

Issue 68 THE LIGHT OF HOPE

Christ Church Ware Magazine Christmas 2020



Christ Church Ware
Jesus led, Spirit empowered, Grace based.

www.christchurchware.co.uk

John's Journal



from
Rev. John Hookway

Welcome to the magazine. When this year began, never would anyone of us have imagined that by the end of 2020, we would have a string of words that would become the new 'norm' in our daily lives - Coronavirus, social distancing and lockdown are just some of them. However, some things don't change and that is God's love for us demonstrated in Jesus, and celebrated at Christmas. Our theme for this Christmas is "The Light of Hope" and I pray that as you read and connect with us this Christmas, you too will know Jesus' light of hope.

The Light of Hope

Two of the most powerful metaphors in scripture – light and hope. They're what Jesus brings to us and they're what we also can bring to the world as His people. John 1:5 says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." That's the light of Jesus.

Today, God's light can still shine upon us. Light brings clarity. It helps us to see things as they are, to understand things, and to bring things into perspective. Light also helps us to see the way. Sometimes, it can feel that this time with Coronavirus, lockdown and uncertainty, the way ahead is not clear. But when we have a light, it can show us the way, and the light of Jesus has always shown God's people the way.

Light also brings comfort. Many of us might be afraid of the dark but with light, we are comforted and warmed in the presence of God's light. But seeing things as they are is one thing, and knowing that things can

change and be different, is something else. Do check out my video series on "Light in Scripture" on our website, www.christchurchware.co.uk, and YouTube channel.

This leads to the second part of our Christmas – hope. Hope that this is not all there is. Hope that changes and transforms. Hope is a most powerful metaphor. It helps us to see beyond the present, for example, in Romans 5:5, "And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." and in Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

Martin Luther King Jr. also knew the importance of hope, "If you lose hope, somehow you lose the vitality that keeps moving, you lose that courage to be, that quality that helps you go on in spite of it all. And so today I still have a dream."

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." That's the light of Jesus.



The Light of Hope

20th December 2pm, 4pm & 6:30pm*
Carols by Candlelight

24th December 2pm & 4pm*
Children's Christmas Eve Service

24th December 11pm
Christmas Eve Communion

25th December 10am*
Christmas Day Family Celebration

27th December 10:30am*
Reflective Service

*Services will be in-person in church.
Times marked with an * will also be online. Check our website for the latest information and how to join in.*
www.christchurchware.co.uk

Invitation

Jesus himself invites us to know His hope and so, I invite you to join with us this Christmas, either in-person or online. Do keep checking out our website for the latest details. You'll see that there's the Children's Service, the Christmas Eve Communion Service and the Christmas Day; and also, all the Carol Services. Each service offering an opportunity to connect with God's light and hope.

Find out about Jesus

In the New Year, we have a new Alpha course, which is an opportunity to be able to explore and once again, to understand the faith in Jesus. If you've never understood that light or hope before, I invite you to join and connect in the Alpha course in January.

Going Deeper, Going Further

As a church, we are going to continue to find more about Jesus in the New Year and what it means to live for Him. So, from January onwards on Sundays, we'll be looking at the book of Philippians. Whenever you can, do take a moment over this Christmas time to read that epistle; that letter that Paul wrote.

To have light and hope, we need to continue to have depth. Let me invite you to join in our days of prayer and fasting on the second Wednesday of each month, as we go deeper into God that we might know the hope and light that comes from Him. Our Lifegroups are going to be encouraged to do the Bible Course. The Bible is the world's best-selling book and I love it as it's the foundation for my life, and I hope that you too will find new hope in God's story.



This Christmas, although it's going to be different in some ways, one of the things that is unchanging is the fact that God became Jesus and He walked here on earth. He lived, he died and He rose again. God chose to be with us as His people. He chose to be with us, both in the highs and in the lows of life. Why? Because He always wants to give us a new start. He always wants to comfort and He always wants to hold us. So, if Jesus is with us, let us invite Him to bring His light of hope into however we are celebrating this Christmas.

On behalf of the church team, and on behalf of Heather, Talitha and Esther, may I wish you a peaceful and joyful Christmas season.

Your Magazine

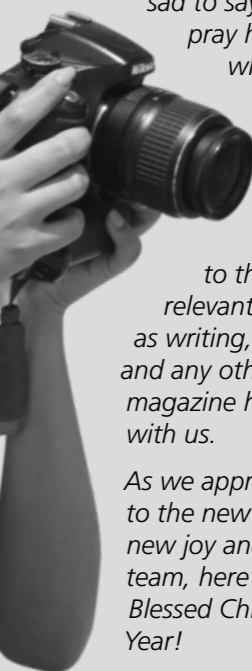
Welcome to the Christ Church Christmas magazine..... Having missed the Autumn edition we are pleased to be back!

We are especially grateful to those who have contributed to this magazine, and would like to say a big "thank you" to those who have risen to the challenge of writing. To those who are wondering about writing for the magazine – just do it! We would love to have a steady stream of people sharing their stories, inspiring others with their favourite bible verses or giving us a giggle with their first record purchase. Don't wait to be asked, pick up that pen and get writing! We are getting ready for our next edition in March, so send in your story to magazine@christchurchware.co.uk

A great big "thank you" to Darran Mustoe for giving the magazine a much needed lift over the last couple of years. We are sad to say goodbye to him but pray he will be richly blessed where God has called him to next.

Joanne Beer has joined us, bringing her excellent writing and editing skills to the team. If you have relevant skills to offer such as writing, photography, design and any other skills to make a magazine happen, get in touch with us.

As we approach 2021, let us look to the new year with a new hope, new joy and new light. From the team, here's wishing you a very Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year!



Get in touch at:
magazine@christchurchware.co.uk

Next Magazine deadline is March, but the earlier we receive your input the better! Publication early April.



Lament and Suffering



from
Emma Dipper

“But in the uncertainty of an invisible virus, Psalms of lament help give voice to the pain that we feel.”

In the last few months, many of us have experienced the brutality of pain and suffering for the first time or have had to accompany those in grief, feeling ill equipped nor ready for its impact.

The first time the invisible power of grief struck me was when I was six years old having just received the news of my grandfather's death. I was apart from the safety of home and family with little understanding of death whilst his passing was tidily dealt with in a hospital miles away. What have you learnt by the age of six on how to grieve? I quietly tucked myself between a drawn curtain against a window running with condensation against the cold winter's air outside and sobbed. I never told the grown-ups.

Years later, I worked in a Mission Hospital in Zambia when the first death occurred since my arrival. The relatives of the deceased threw themselves onto the floor wailing in anguish sharing their loss with all who could hear. I was shocked. I tried to tidy up the dramatic scene in front of me and bring some screens around the bed as I had been taught to - 'Give space and dignity for the bereaved'. Keep it hidden. Remain calm.

How could we be ready as a nation and a church for the harsh loss of life, livelihoods, freedoms, choices and identity as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic? What preparation might have been overlooked in our spiritual resilience, our theology of suffering and risk with our ability to respond as faith-filled believers?

We were not ready. Only a few of us had wrestled with these questions before and they were not always the ones that had been voiced. Wisdom, experience and resilience lay behind the doors of the shielded due to age, disability, long term illness and living with life-limiting conditions. These members of our community continue to model faith, hope and perseverance that many of us don't understand perhaps until now.

Let's be really honest. Covid-19 has made us feel out of control and question if God was in control. To make matters worse, we couldn't necessarily 'buy' health and protection as the lie of consumerism says. Matthew Vaughan (see *Delving Deeper*) suggests that we have been blinded by other influences such as humanism even as Christians, whereby we believe we can create the perfect world and that progress is achieved by us. We no longer primarily serve God but our own desires.

We have come to believe that if we insure against loss, immunise ourselves against pain, ignore the broken and throw it away, then we will be alright. That is not the gospel of the suffering servant but the 'health and safety gospel'.

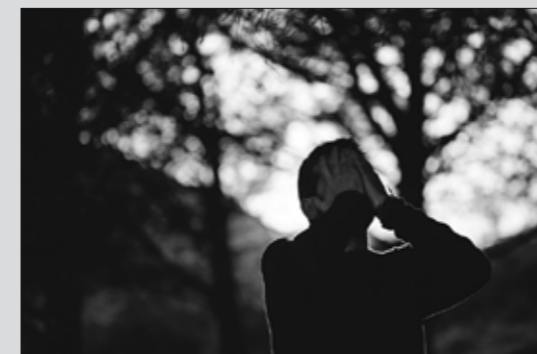
As a church, we have to face Covid-19 on our knees. We need to look to scripture once again and see the Biblical narrative whereby God remains sovereign in a world full of folly, confusion, sin and man-made crisis. Whereby the rich and powerful abuse the vulnerability of the weak and Christ came to save us all. Suffering can draw us to himself. Our persecuted brothers and sisters will tell us that, and they remind us that the church can grow in these times of crisis. Not all, but many and there is testimony to that time and time again in this season.

So, what of our response? We can learn from the lives of Job and his comforters who did so well to support him for seven days. They were silent. Then they spoke with so many words! They spent chapters asking the questions of what and why Job was suffering until God himself spoke (Job 38:8-10) and reminded them of his power, authority and character.



How many Psalms do we know or sing as choruses? They will probably be ones of great rejoicing! But in the uncertainty of an invisible virus, Psalms of lament help give voice to the pain that we feel. Do we still hide from others or put a screen around the pain, as I did in Zambia as a nurse? Let us do that no longer. Cry out. Admit your despair and a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. For Christ himself did that on the cross. 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' A two thirds of the Psalms are laments and yet so often brushed over. Let us use the Psalms and Lamentations to help us journey through this season as God's people.

Let us remember the tenderness of love in pain and suffering. The gentle touch even with a gloved hand of a carer or some bakery left on a neighbour's front door step. As Jesus suffered on the cross, He did not forget His mum. And I write 'mum' intentionally. The young girl who suffered judgement as a pregnant teenager, who was prophesied that 'a sword would pierce your heart also', now stood below his nail torn feet on a rubbish heap watching her Son die. She expected to be condemned as 'rubbish' herself as a mother of an executed criminal and Jesus knew that. As He struggled for breath, He gave her another son, 'Woman, here is your son.' Is there a way that our suffering and pain can be transformative for others as we continue to love?



So how do we mourn as we look back over these months where we could not attend memorials, leave flowers or visit the sick and dying?

If you are bereaved, intentionally make space for your grieving. Remember that not all of us will be grieving a person. Loss of livelihood or dreams and hopes affect us deeply. Consider what you have lost and give yourself time to tell God how hard that is. Give yourself the



time and space as Jesus did when He went up the mountain on hearing the news that His cousin, John, had died. One of my closest friends died of cancer during the lockdown and missing her is not a reality whilst I cannot see her empty chair or cuddle her heart-broken children. Don't let a pattern of loss emerge that buries reality. Ask God to step in and help you feel and grow through the pain.

Don't place your own pain or stories of bereavement onto others who grieve. We each have our own journey through lament and pain and we are better to speak less and just be. Provide food, be practical and make sure you keep in touch and especially after six months talk about that person or part of life that changed so radically as a result of Covid-19. Listening is the greatest gift as a journey mate through pain.

Finally, share your suffering with your neighbours so that they meet Jesus in you. That might sound strange but when God's people are honest in their pain but cling on to hope and faith that is the greatest bridge to the gospel. People come to Jesus when they need meaning in their chaos. Acknowledging suffering and sharing lament is the best missional response the UK church has to give to our communities and nation right now.

A version of this article first appeared in Mission Catalyst Magazine by BMS World Mission in August 2020, www.bmsworldmission.org/catalyst

“Let us remember the tenderness of love in pain and suffering. The gentle touch even with a gloved hand of a carer or some bakery left on a neighbour's front door step.”



Prayer Makes CAP Happen

Let's be honest, this has been a strange year for all of us as we've adapted to so many things needing to be done differently. This has been true of our community debt counselling service too, which is run in partnership with Christians Against Poverty. We had to switch from face to face appointments to phone or video calls and manage "paperwork" with photographs or scans. It took a few weeks to get all that setup, but then we've carried on offering this crucial service to our community all the way through this year, and we've seen lives changed and clients finding hope as well as a way forward in their financial difficulties. We've also had a record number of clients going debt free in the last few months. A fresh start after many years of struggle is something special and it is a privilege to be a part of someone's journey as they work their way out of debt.



from **Sam Rich**

What makes it possible to see this happen? The answer is simple - prayer! Our dedicated CAP prayer team receives praise and prayer points every week to reflect on, and it's so encouraging to see desperate needs move from the prayer list to the praise list with answered prayers and celebrations of God's blessings. It has built my faith seeing so many breakthroughs in difficult situations, and is such a good reminder that we do not have to have all the answers ourselves but we do need to trust God. He cares for each of us deeply and knows what we need.

If you would like to join our prayer team, drop me a line samantharich@capuk.org. I would be delighted to have even more people

praying! To get you started, please pray for:

- CAP Christmas Hampers which are being prepared for delivery
- Enough jobs to be available in the local area
- Our clients to see God's work in their lives

If you, or someone else you know, are struggling with debt, phone **0800 328 0006** to make an appointment

CALL FREE ON **0800 328 0006**

Struggling with debt?

FREE debt counselling in your community from an award winning charity

www.capdebthelp.org

[facebook.com/CAPuk](https://www.facebook.com/CAPuk) @CAPuk

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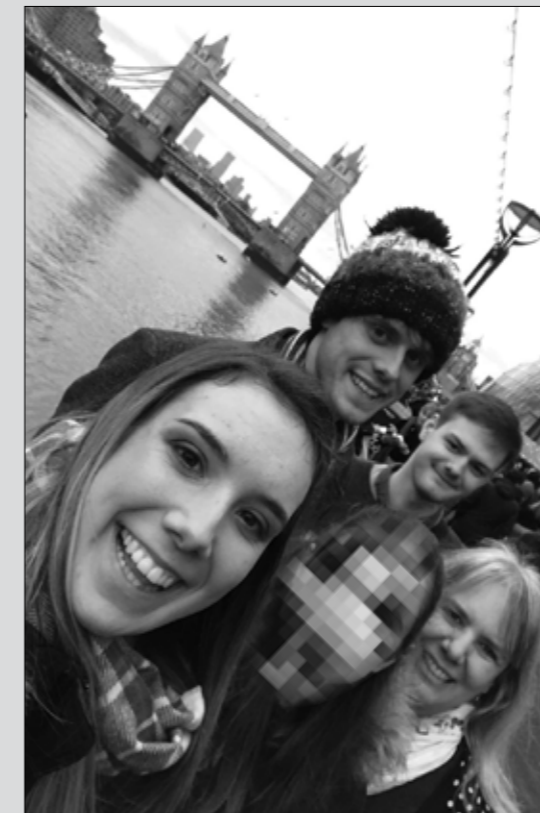


A Day in the life of...

Jacqui Matthews shares her daily life as a teacher...

What can I tell you about myself, my average day and how God is part of that?

Well, first off I am wife to Gavin and mother to James, Adam, Bethany and Emily. I am sure some of you know one or other of them and thus me by association. You may also know me through Bubbles or because I teach next door at Christ Church School.



zoom meetings, eat dinner, prepare for the next day and try to end with a time of quiet reflection and reading before falling asleep.

It is the time between 8.45am and 3.15pm which is different from most! During this time, I have the privilege of working in a classroom with an amazing team of adults and thirty 5 year olds, who never cease to amaze me with their view on life. I get to see the world through their eyes and experience that awe and wonder all over again. As part of my job, each day, I attend some form of collective worship; sing (well I did pre-Covid-19) in praise, take part in prayers and read the Bible with others.

Working in a school can also be exhausting and challenging. There is no situation that does not have God's hand on it, but there are times where one can't help but question why. This is when I need to remember to step back, breathe, take a moment to offer up a silent prayer for help and to remind myself to pause and listen. I am truly grateful for those of you in church who pray for us as a school, as a class and as individuals, as well as for those to whom I know I can turn to for support.

So, how do I invite God into my day? The answer is He is already there; surrounding me in my work and family life, what I need to do is to ensure I give him the time He deserves and make time to listen and act upon His word.



from **Jacqui Matthews**

I expect the start and end of my day is very similar to the majority of people. I wake up, get ready for work, have breakfast and make my packed lunch. Then I leave for work. As I walk to school, I make the most of the solitude to think through the coming day. I ask God to help me make wise and loving choices and to be with me as I interact with pupils, their parents and colleagues. I don't think God minds me walking and talking, but I will apologise to any of you who have seen me during this time and I have seemed to ignore you. Sorry, it was possibly because I was pre-occupied with God.

The end of my day is probably very much like that of many other parents. I walk home from work (again taking the time to reflect), chat to my family about our respective days, get caught up in the busyness of family life, attend



Be the Light in Your Street!



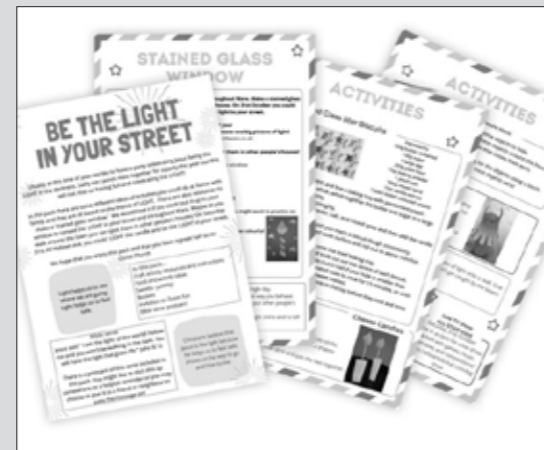
from
Jess Cole

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Follow me and you won't be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life." (John 8:12). This is an incredible verse and amazing promise that Jesus gives us, that He will give us the light that gives life!

Normally, when October comes round, it is time to get ready for our light party. It is a night I really enjoy as we talk about Jesus being the light and we celebrate that rather than focussing on darkness. This year, although the format had to be different, we still wanted that message of light to be delivered.

Light packs were created which included lots of fun activity ideas, a Scripture Union booklet

about Jesus being the light, a bible verse, craft resources to create a stained glass window with tissue paper, a tea light and of course, sweets! The pack encouraged them to 'be the light in your street.' The idea being to spread light and hope on our streets and throughout Ware, something that is especially needed at this time. There was a church wide invitation for adults to join in with the fun too, and to create something for their window which would encourage them to 'be the light in your street.'



122 packs were made and given to Christ Church school, our children's church groups, Emmanuel coffee van and CAP clients. Please continue to pray for the children and families that received these packs and who accessed them via the website. May they keep reading the booklets in the packs and understand more about who Jesus is and may they choose to ask Him to be the life giving light in their lives.

As we continue through these dark, cold winter months with a pandemic overshadowing our everyday life, and people in desperate need of hope, think of who you could be sharing this good news of the One who came to give us life and light with, so that we need not walk in darkness.

Postcard from...

Hi – I'm Josh! You've probably seen me sitting behind a sound desk on Sunday mornings, among many other things I've been involved with at church over recent years.

At the end of September, I moved from Ware to study Computer Science at the University of Warwick. My days mainly consist of sitting in front of a computer all day on video calls or programming. It's been a weird time to start university, and along with many others, I spent just over two weeks in isolation near the start of term. My course, though, is really interesting, with a variety of topics ranging from philosophy of the mind, how computers are built, good old maths, and programming (specifically a robot to move around a maze). I've begun to get involved in a couple of societies, one being the Christian Union. I'm part of an Impact Group (think Lifegroup but smaller), which is nice to chat with other Christians and study the bible together, albeit over Zoom.

My future plans still remain a bit of a mystery. Being in my first year, I still have lots of time to decide what I may want to end up doing, and with everything changing, it's hard to even create short term plans. I have many areas where I have an interest in working but no real "calling" towards one yet. However, I'm so excited for what is to come and I'm looking forward to what is ahead (as well as coming home for Christmas!)

Josh Davies



Please pray:

- That I will find the church for me. Many factors have delayed my "church search" and I'm still waiting to find the one.
- That life will "go to plan" with everything constantly changing around me.
- That I'll feel guided towards an area to progress my learning in and potentially move into a career in.



Ron's Reflections

Life can sometimes be like a photograph; it starts as a negative and becomes a positive.

To develop from a negative, it has to go into a dark room to go through a process to become a positive image.

There are times when we find ourselves in negative situations where everything seems dark, but by being in the darkroom, we can develop, come into the light and see the positive. God is the 'cameraman' who can see the whole picture. We sometimes only have an idea, and don't see it until we have been in the darkroom and been developed.

In these days of digital photography, we can see pictures immediately, but life doesn't always give us instant results or answers. However, by going through the darkroom with the cameraman, He can develop us, bring us out into the light where we can see the positive, and also things we may not have seen at the time the 'photo' was taken.

As an exercise, have a look at some old photos and see if there are things you did not see initially when taking the photo. Looking at photos can bring back memories. Looking back at those negative and dark times in our lives, we may see things we did not understand at the time, but which God has developed for us to be able to see the positive.

Life doesn't have to be black and white, let God put some colour into it! Turn your negatives into positives!



from
Ron Porter



Covid is Lamentable!



from
Richard Harvey

Thoughts from a socially distanced missionary...

There is an old Jewish saying, “when things are going well, read the psalms. When things are going badly, read the psalms”. We often think of the psalms as hymns of praise, where we sing hallelujahs and shout to God with songs of joy, and so they are. However, in addition to hymns of praise and thanksgiving, meditations on God’s faithfulness and trustworthiness, and proclamations of the coming of the Messiah and the way God is bringing in His glorious reign in triumph over His enemies, there is a darker side.

Almost a third of the psalms can be classified as “laments”. Here, the psalmist expresses their anger, pain, frustration, bewilderment, complaints and sadness to God in prayer in terms that are quite embarrassing for those of us with a “stiff upper lip” and “British reserve”. Our culture often encourages us to display fortitude and stoicism in the face of adversity, to keep a hold of our emotions and exercise self-control. It’s often seen as a sign of weakness to let others see how we feel, such as when we cannot stop our upper lip from trembling, a sign that we are experiencing a deep emotion.



The psalmist, as in Jewish life generally, does not see it this way. They let it all hang out and express their feelings with words that hold nothing back. Even accusing and blaming God for suffering and misfortune is not beyond the psalmist. Whilst some laments acknowledge the sins that have led to misfortune, and take responsibility, others do not, as the psalmist protests his innocence and calls on God to exact vengeance, often graphically described, on his enemies.

There is nothing that cannot be brought to God in a lament: Our own personal sufferings of hunger, pain, rejection, grief, bereavement and illness; the sufferings of a king and his people at the hands of enemies, the onslaught of plagues, failed harvests and other natural disasters. Perhaps most worthy of lament is when God’s own honour and glory are mocked,

His holy places desecrated, and the nations around Israel do not recognise that there is only one God who is in charge and that He only is to be worshipped.

So how do we lament Covid? Both personally, in our communities and as a nation we can pour out our thoughts and feelings in concern before God, even arguing with Him. Actually, He has allowed this to happen, even though others might be making a mess of dealing with it. So, it’s only natural that we would ask God, “Why have you allowed this?” and demand that He tells us how long it’s going to last. Pouring out our concerns like this turns us to prayer, to a deeper seeking of God’s presence and comfort, and a recognition that even though we don’t understand and don’t enjoy what we are going through, at the end of the day, God can be trusted because He is in control.

Have you ever written your own personal psalm of lament? If not, it doesn’t take long and here are some suggestions:

First, read through some of the lament psalms, such as 22 or 74 (or even the whole book of Lamentations!) and see how they combine different elements.

Look at the different sections, for example, in Psalm 74:

- The Address – usually directly to God, “Hear me O God” (verses 1 – 2).
- The Lament Proper – a description of the occurrences for which the people are requesting assistance or rescue (verses 3, 9 and 11).
- National Confession of Trust – a statement showing the nation’s belief that God will hear their prayers (verse 12).
- The Petition Proper and Motivation – a

usually very specific statement of what the people want God to do (verses 19 and 23).

- Exclamation of Certainty – that the psalmist’s prayer has been or will be heard by God (verse 18).
- Vow of Praise – portion of the lament where the people promise to offer thanksgiving once seeing God’s intervention (verse 21).

Then decide who are the people in need that you are praying for – your church, or your city, or your people, or some other person in need, or yourself.

Put yourself in the position of the person or people you are praying for – pray as if you are them.

Remind yourself and God of key facts about who God is or things God has done in the past

– perhaps ones relevant to the prayer.

Tell God straight about the need:

- about the facts,
- about the feelings,
- about the fears.

Tell God you still trust – or tell Him you can no longer trust.

Tell God what you want, in one line.

Listen for God’s answer, and/or imagine you have heard God’s answer.

Respond to the answer.

I’d be most interested in what you come up with. Perhaps we could add it to the book of Psalms! Covid is certainly worth lamenting!

No Longer from the West to the Rest (of the World)

Where in the world is the church growing?

Six of the world’s ten largest churches are in South Korea. (Ref *Operation World 2020*.) Nigeria has 5,000 Christian missionaries. India has 100,000 people involved in church or mission work. As this is so, then why bother supporting mission partners? Surely the task of mission is nearly done! You are right if you think that mission is all about sending out Westerners in pith helmets to tropical jungles, but it’s not. Mission in the 21st century is from all nations (sometimes literally from All Nations!) to all nations, from everywhere to everywhere. Mission partners we support include a Nepali couple and a Brazilian/Italian family, as well as home-grown Brits working with other ethnic groups and in our local community here and abroad.

Members of the Mission Advisory Committee (MAC) say this about their role: “Mission is about sharing and communicating Jesus’ love to anyone who is not in the church family,

servicing and caring for people wherever they are in Jesus’ name. I love hearing about and supporting what God is doing in His mission so I am delighted to be part of the MAC team at Christ Church”.

“We can all contribute in some way to growing our church. Supporting mission expands our horizons and our outreach. When I see our mission partners obeying God’s call and trusting in Him for all that they need, it fills me with awe and a desire to support them. I want others in Christ Church to feel this same inspiration”.



from
Mary Salter

Prepare to be inspired!

Follow this link to learn more about our Mission partners and how you can get involved.

christchurchware.co.uk/missions

From the darkness into the light



from
David Briggs

There are many definitions of 'mission' but this is the one that I really like. It is the church going "into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the glory of God and the good of the world" (*Defining the Mission of the Church, Wax T, 2012*).

This article considers methods of how mission may move forward in a time of difficulty and it is based on a model of ideas by *Sumpter (Growing the Church Through a Spiritual Winter, 2017)*. These include:

1. A guiding light
2. Less is more
3. Slowing down to go faster
4. Size does not matter
5. Dying into New Life

A Guiding Light

Whilst the activities of mission will continue as planned, it will inevitably encounter issues and difficulties. We have often discussed various aspects of these in our committee meeting. However, the fact that there is darkness infers there is an opposite, that is, light. We cannot stop night but what we can do is prepare for day and reduce the effects of the night darkness. We have often heard of issues on the De Lima boat. But each time they contact us, we hear how they continue mission by adapting to new situations. Then, the boat sails on and a new challenge occurs.

We must also remember (and perhaps this is one for us to focus on in a pandemic) growth grows in hidden ways. Sometimes the challenge is finding it.

Less is More

In the autumn, we prune trees and we do so in order to encourage new growth. So often, I have heard our mission partners say how they have pruned their activities in order that they can grow in a more sustained area. I remember my discussions with a man called Robin when Caroline and myself were doing the assessment. He was describing what the mission partners were looking at and what they did in order that God's word could be spread in the most effective way. The challenge, often, for mission is to focus down on what matters the most.

Slowing Down to Go Faster

Quite often when I have been attending the

MAC committee, it has come across to me how much emphasis the committee applies to planning. Have the mission partners reviewed their objectives; will the resources be used in the best way to achieve this and do they have the potential to survive if things do not turn out as they had wished? Effort put in at the start of a mission often results in the need for less, later. This becomes even more important in times of scarcity.

Size does not matter

Mission can occur with small organisations just as it does with bigger ones. Mission, of course, can grow from a small affair to a much larger one and that is the intention when spreading God's work. It is often assumed that the larger the organisation is, the more likely it will be successful, and I suspect this is because in a market system, it is said that the more resources a company has, the safer it is to deal with. We have some mission partners who are either on their own or in partnership with just one other person (as missionaries from Christ Church). Their contribution is just as valuable as a large missionary partner (say Christian Aid or Save the Children) which many churches support. Sometimes a smaller mission partner may be more active when facing difficulties, where a large mission may not, due to the lack of personal touch, for example.

Dying into new life

Mission changes, and I have seen it with some of our mission partners. Sometimes, mission can cease to exist in an area, but I am always proud to note that this is rarely due to a terminal difficulty. It is usually due to changing circumstances in a particular area and the question arises when does mission become a sustainable and permanent entity? The church, Christ Church and our mission partners have demonstrated time and time again their ability to adapt to new circumstances even when it means leaving actions - we have relied on for many years - behind. This is not dying; this is renewing and rising again!

Chapter & Verse

Diana has been a long serving member of Christ Church and currently sits on the PCC as a Deanery Synod Representative. Here, she shares with us a Bible verse that has comforted her in various situations over the years. Sam, one of our young people, also shares a verse that challenges those of us who worry.

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. - Joshua 1:9 (KJV)

Some 60 years ago, my grandmother gave me this verse as advice to Joshua and Diana. I had been unwell over the summer and was preparing to return to school for the autumn term with some feelings of trepidation and gran gave me a piece of paper with the above words. They have been with me since then on many occasions and although sometimes another verse is appropriate to an event, I always seem to return to this one.

When I was in my first pregnancy, my brother became very ill with ulcerative colitis and because he also had a clotting deficiency, he came very near to death. So I think I was saying this verse for him rather than me. Some 25 years later, we were going through the same problem with our son (without the clotting deficiency) and again the verse was appropriate for both him and me.

There have been so many times when it has been what I need to hold onto. As I write this, the words are on the wall above my computer. I think I prefer the KJV version, for to me, the more positive "for the LORD thy God **is** with

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. - Matthew 6:34

Everyone can agree with me when I say that for most of us, if not all of us, sometimes lead very hectic lives. I mean, the amount of homework being given these days is ridiculous!!! Because of the way the world and humans are, we tend to worry. We wish we were somewhere else, doing something else, and we lose joy in what we have right in front of us.

I used to worry a lot. Whenever there was something that I didn't want to do or had trouble doing, all I could think about was getting it over and done with. Because of this, I would lose sight of what God was doing for me at this moment, and I found it really hard to relax. But one day, I was going through the Bible and found this verse. It reminds me to just take life one day at a time, and to enjoy

thee" rather than the NIV which says "for the LORD your God **will be** with you", gives me the feeling that whatever is going on, God is with me and that I don't have to call to Him because He is holding me always.

I may well need to hold very tightly to this verse over the coming months as I wait for what could be a somewhat daunting event. At this stage, I don't know if it is going to happen or not, and it is quite hard-going waiting as I am not a patient person. If it does happen, I'll let you all know as I shall be very much in need of your prayers.

Recently another verse, or two, to be accurate have been helpful, "You, Lord, keep my lamp burning, my God turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall" (Psalm 18: 28 - 29). With all that is going on for all of us, I find that quite a comfort.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go. (NIV)

whatever God is doing for me right now.

As Christians, it is important to learn as much as we can about God and his teachings as they remind us that there is a purpose to our lives, and we need to live it as best we can, for ourselves and others.

This doesn't mean that you shouldn't pay your mortgages, or use Matthew 6:34 as an excuse to not do your homework (believe me, it doesn't work!). What I'm saying is that you should not spend time worrying about things that don't need to be worried about. Your life is not going to get any better by worrying, and you're not going to gain anything from it.

So stop worrying and enjoy what is happening right now!



from
Diana Perkins



from
Sam Richardson
(Year 9)

Replaced by God's plan



from
Steve Elliott

“and how it brings together dozens of knowledgeable, experienced, and utterly committed volunteers that any business would be proud to employ”

He had planned how and when he was going to retire but, for Steve, God had other plans for him instead...

We joined the church in May 2012, though there had, of course, been 58 years of rollercoasting before that. Jan and I were stood in the third row of Christ Church's pews; Chris and the band were singing of Jesus on a throne – except that for a few seconds, I saw Jesus not on a throne, but standing there between the front pews in the Nave with his arms outstretched to the congregation.

I spoke with many in the church about what this might mean – had I really seen Jesus; why me; what was the expectation now? Church friends offered some excellent responses that caused me to think widely, but how could I have known that this might signal a complete overriding of my life plans?

My plan was to continue working as a managing director, while also chair of our industry's trade association for two years, and then retire at 66; except that one day in early 2014, Katy Cole asked me if I would consider standing as Churchwarden. The thing was, I knew practically nothing about how a church was actually run, or what a Churchwarden did; and anyway, running the business did keep me a tad busy as it was.

So, I asked some close friends in the church, and realised I could perhaps bring some different skills to the “business” of the church as well as learn a whole lot at the same time.

Three years of churchwardening then immersed me in the whole different world of “the church”. I learned how the organisation blends business practices (with which I was

familiar) with very different ways of measuring outcomes; and how it brings together dozens of knowledgeable, experienced, and utterly committed volunteers that any business would be proud to employ.

Then, in January 2016, my own life plan was instantly destroyed when I was told by my business' owners that my services as a managing director were no longer required. Thankfully, churchwardening and a very supportive vicar in John, kept me from going down badly.

I really did need a breather from all kinds of “work”. So, after my three-year term, I stepped down from being a churchwarden and started trying retirement. What I still hadn't realised, was that my life plan had actually been completely replaced by God's plan, whereby my forced early retirement and being Churchwarden were essential elements! I had learnt about the church “business” and a little about the Diocese, but most important of all, I had met and worked alongside a huge number of wonderfully skilled people in the congregation.

So, when I heard that Antonia Preston had stepped down after five years planning the building development and after delivering Phase 1, I felt that I might be able to help with Phase 2, as I'd realised I wasn't really ready for full retirement just yet.

What I hadn't accounted for, though, was that taking on the building project would need everything that I had been gifted by God throughout my entire life – and His plan had needed me to have some specialised training for the role that I was now going to fulfil.

I've lost count of the number of times I've revisited the vision of Jesus that I'd received. It will sustain me for my entire life, particularly when the going gets tough, as it did on many occasions in the building project. As for my plans? Well, clearly God had quite a different plan for me, and I now must accept that He also has a different way of measuring outcomes.



I had thought that we were preserving the church building for the congregation and community to meet in, for the next hundred years – but actually, what we had done became clear just seven weeks later when the

congregation was summarily locked out of it.

It meant that now, the people of Christ Church must and could focus on spreading God's word far beyond Ware, all supported by the new technology, the attractive building backdrop, and above all, the revitalised spirit that the project had delivered.

Seven months later, I was lying in Ward 7a in Lister Hospital recovering from having had my cancerous kidney removed a few days earlier. I had my iPad on my knee – and I was attending church without leaving the bed. I had to ask myself, would I have been able to attend church without leaving the hospital bed, if we hadn't done the project?

Having cancer is never in anyone's plan, but I do now know to trust in Him implicitly for the next instalment in this journey of mine – it's been quite a ride so far, so I'd better hang on tight.

“I've lost count of the number of times I've revisited the vision of Jesus that I'd received. It will sustain me for my entire life”

Songs of Praise

Lizzie, who recently joined Christ Church with her husband, John, shares why “Great is Thy Faithfulness” is her favourite song and how it has brought her comfort particularly during this challenging time.

This is a song that I remember from my childhood and have heard many adaptations of it as I have grown older. It reminds me that God is faithful through every situation, even when I feel distant from God or when my faith is wavering. Verse one speaks of God's faithfulness revealed in his word, verse two tells us of God's faithfulness revealed in creation and verse three reminds us of God's faithfulness revealed in our lives. My favourite version is by Chris Rice because it helps me to feel peaceful, calm, and close to God. However, I will always think fondly of singing this as a chorister when I was a teenager.

The lyric ‘morning by morning new mercies I see’ prompts me to remember that His mercy is not a one off but is a constant source of encouragement and comfort. Whenever life seems hectic and out of control, we are reminded that God never changes. John and I had this hymn at our wedding in April 2019 as God had been so faithful continually during our relationship, and brought us closer together as a couple and closer to Him. God has particularly shown his faithfulness to us during lockdown regarding our finances and work. Whenever we were worried about money during lockdown, God provided for us.

“Great is Thy faithfulness,” O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
“Great is Thy faithfulness, “ Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

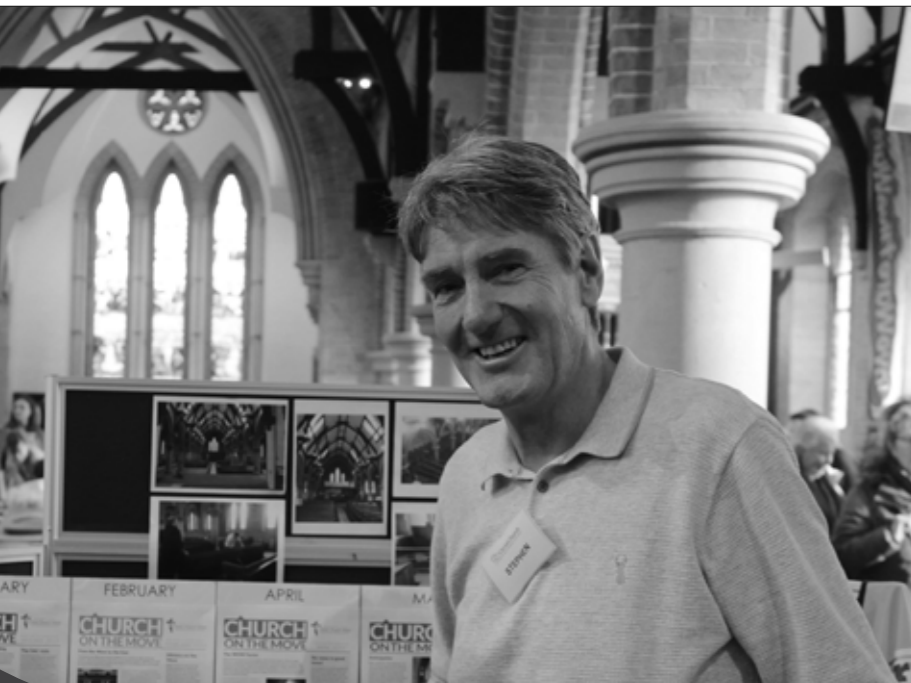
“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
“Great is Thy faithfulness, “ Lord, unto me!

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
“Great is Thy faithfulness, “ Lord, unto me!



from
Lizzie Castle



A Different Perspective



from
Sam Woodward

Have you been enjoying the church's pre-streamed footage loop? Ever wondered how it was done? Here's the story behind it...

Our Autumn sermon series has been looking at faith in three dimensions: Up, in and out. However, viewers arriving early to our Sunday 10:30am live-streamed services will have seen a different perspective: the view from above, thanks to a six-minute sequence of drone footage which we air just before the live service starts. The video loop, which is accompanied by gentle guitar music performed by Jessie Dipper, enables viewers to know that their web-browsers are working, that their speakers are

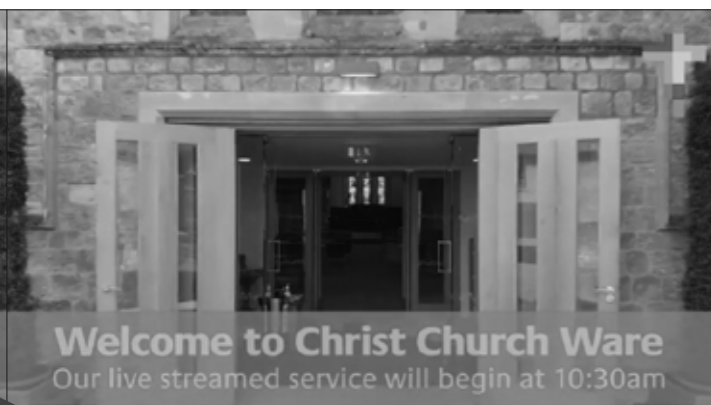
turned on, and that they've come to the right place to be welcomed as part of our growing online congregation.

Filmed in August and introduced when the new service schedule began in September, the pre-service loop shows our beautiful church and town from high above, which is a new experience for most of us. At the same time, we've also tried to make each shot symbolic as well as beautiful, as follows:

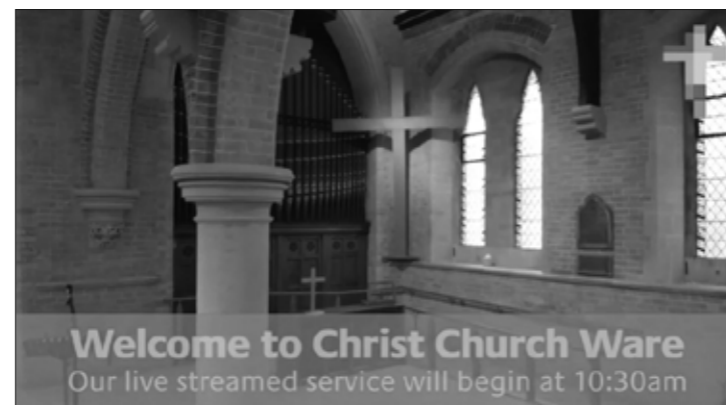
The church stands in the local community as a beacon of hope:



The church welcomes all, with wide-open doors to all visitors:



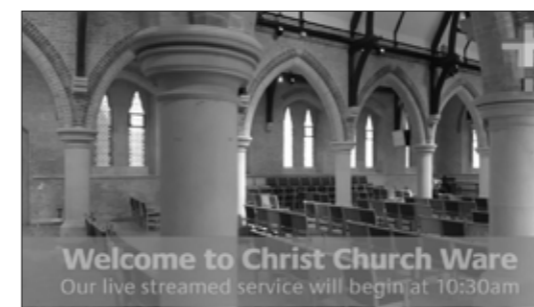
The message of the cross is central to our faith:



We preach the bible:



There is a space for everyone here, which is both safe and peaceful:



The drone used for filming was piloted by Ed "Maverick" Wells, who is a qualified commercial drone operator. However, even with his tremendous skill, one shot in the loop would be impossible to fly as shown. There's a moment when the camera flies from high above the church, and in one continuous shot moves through the west doors, flies steadily up the aisle, and stops to hover perfectly centred on the altar. Due to changes in the air stability between indoors and outdoors, piloting a drone through the doorway whilst staying centred on the altar in this manner would have been harder than getting a camel through the eye of a needle! The shot was, therefore, performed in reverse: starting at the altar and flying back out of the church. The footage was then reversed in the editing process, enabling the astonishing precision of flying through the doors.

"The drone used for filming was piloted by Ed "Maverick" Wells, who is a qualified commercial drone operator."

We hope that the unusual perspective is engaging, provides a talking-point for those inviting people to check-out our services online, and helps viewers to think in terms of different perspectives. Online services continue every Sunday at 10:30am, and are then available on YouTube to catch-up.

One big miracle...



from **Bill Griffith**

“My first encounter with God and the church was at seven years old when I joined the choir at St Andrew’s Church in Stanstead Abbotts”

Growing up, life was not easy for me. At just after three years old, I was put into a children’s home, and later went into foster care. My foster parents were stern and not very affectionate people. I had to do jobs like feeding animals, gardening and shopping which I hate till this day!

School was difficult for me too as I was not seen as normal and got teased a lot. I was dressed differently and had no parents to get involved with my school shows, football or sports day. I could not wait to leave school!

My first encounter with God and the church was at seven years old when I joined the choir at St Andrew’s Church in Stanstead Abbotts. I enjoyed singing the hymns at the morning and evening services and they were the highlights of my week! However, God and church didn’t come into my life again until many, many years later.

So, after leaving school at 15, I joined Westcliffe Engineering Company where I completed a five-year apprenticeship as a toolmaker. I then moved on to a few other companies before joining DW Windsor, a lighting company. It was here where I had the opportunity to gain different experiences in my life. I received my first promotion and became a purchasing manager, which allowed me to travel for work. This took me to countries like Canada and India, where I learnt what poverty truly is. I also had the opportunity to meet the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and Margaret Thatcher when I attended the Queen’s Award at Buckingham Palace with my manager. Yet, with all these experiences, I still felt that my life wasn’t all that good and that something was still missing.

After 32 years at D W Windsor, I took early retirement and not long after, Neil and Margaret Pearce moved in opposite my house, and we

became friends. It was through them that I was reintroduced to the church and started helping out and volunteering for Love Ware Live Ware, Escape, MADD activities and a few others. I was really happy to be able to help and these activities allowed me to make new friends, one of whom was a big influence in getting me to attend services on Sunday.

With the encouragement of a church friend, I also decided to attend the Alpha course which started not long after the first lockdown. Not only did this course help me get through lockdown, but it also made a big difference to my life. Alpha opened my mind to who God is and helped me understand more about the Christian faith. It has also helped me to deepen my relationship with God and improved my prayer life.

Since then, I have had a real sense of peace and have realised that someone had been looking after me all my life, including the time when I escaped almost unscathed in an accident where I had been thrown off my motorbike after hitting a car at high speed and wasn’t wearing a crash helmet!

Looking back, my life hasn’t been that bad for me to get through the way I have. It’s been more positives than negatives. My life has been one big miracle!

fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
Isaiah 41:10



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Chapter & Verse

Jacob gives us a summary of Noah’s Ark, and why it is his favourite bible story.

Genesis 6-9 - God saves Noah and his family because he was the only one in the world that would listen to Him. God decided to send a massive flood that would last 40 days and 40 nights and that would destroy everything. He told Noah to build a massive boat called an ark and told him to get two of every animal on board. He told him that the animals would not eat each other.

When Noah had built the ark, and the animals and Noah’s family had gotten on board, God sent a world-engulfing flood.

For 40 days and nights, Noah was on the ark helping the animals. The flood had then started to stop, so he sent a dove to try and find land. Soon, the dove returned and Noah saw the direction the dove came from, and they all saw land. Their boat had reached the land. All the animals jumped off to discover the island and Noah’s wife had loads of children.

I like this story because it shows how powerful God is! I also like this story because Noah had lots of resilience to build the ark. He built the ark because he trusted God.



from
Jacob Wilson
(Year 5)

My Playlist



from
Andy Beer

"I have taught my four-year-old daughter, Sophie to sing The Seekers' *Morningtown Ride* by singing it to her every night at bedtime."

Music could always be heard coming from the Beer household when Andy was growing up. So, it is no surprise that he loves music too and has a rather eclectic taste...

My first song Growing up, my brother and I used to listen to our parents' vinyl records from the 60s. This gave me a lasting appreciation for The Seekers and The Beatles. One song that stands out for me is The Beatles' *And Your Bird Can Sing* from the *Revolver* album. It is cuttingly cynical and I love it.

My worship song *Blessed Be Your Name* by Matt Redmond was very much around when I came to Christ in 2003 and it takes me back to that time. The song also talks about "When I'm found in the desert place... Every blessing you pour out, I'll turn back to praise" reminds me of the rather difficult but worthwhile journey that I had coming to faith in Christ.

My love song *The Very Thought of You* by Al Bowly. I'm a big fan of 30s dance hall music and I think that with Al's unique voice, I could have chosen any of his romantic songs here. *The Very Thought of You* is such an innocent song about longing to see that special person that you have fallen in love with again.

My guilty pleasure *E-Vapor-8* by Altern-8. As a teenager in the early 90s, I was very interested in the rave music of the time but was too young to attend any of the large outdoor raves.

Harcove rave music was hard to obtain until some artists eventually crossed over into the mainstream charts. In my opinion, the best of the bunch was Altern-8. Of course, they were early pioneers of wearing facemasks in public. A close second for this spot is *One Man in My Heart* by The Human League because I like to sing the baseline "Ooo, la la... Ooo, la la..." when I'm washing the dishes.

My bedtime song Drawing again from my parents' 60s music, I have taught my four-year-old daughter, Sophie to sing The Seekers' *Morningtown Ride* by singing it to her every night at bedtime. It's about children being on the journey of sleep till the next day and it features a steam train! What's not to love?

My last song *Amazing Grace* (traditional version). This song shows the journey of faith, the acceptance that salvation is a gift from God, and the fact that we will all be united in praising God when we make it through to heaven. Not only will it cheer up those at my funeral, but it is also a good witness, which is important as my funeral is the last place I can witness to my non-believing friends and family.



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