

# HEY JUDE!

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST JUDE'S CHURCH, WOLVERHAMPTON  
APRIL, 2020

**"The church building is empty, and so is the tomb!"  
Rejoice!!**



## IN THIS ISSUE

\*Overcoming our fears. \*Gratitude - A Bleeding Heart. \*Time was our garden was a pleasant place. \*Back to the Cross. \*Somewhere in time and place. \*I'd shut up if it was me. \*On the Cross. \*The Lost Art of Lamenting. \*J Team is Alive and Well!

RECEIVING, LIVING AND SHARING CHRIST AS LORD  
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As we come to the end of our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year we find ourselves unable to gather as church because of Coronavirus lock down. We are to, “Stay at home, protect the NHS, and save lives.” Our battles over Brexit, that filled the news last Easter, feel long gone. Now we are battling against a virus sweeping the world, and it is calling for unprecedented restrictions on our life and liberty. Leisure and group sport activity is stopped, even the Olympic games in Japan are postponed. The pressure to save lives and end the life changing impact of this virus is bringing out the best and worst in people. The very best in people is seen in doctors and nurses, despite inadequate personal protection, putting their lives on the line as they attempt to bring healing to very poorly people. It is seen in the ingenuity and co-operation between all sorts of professions and trades to create vast new temporary hospitals ready to treat the sick. It is seen in people finding all sorts of imaginative ways to support and offer encouragement to one another, and even to strangers. The news is full of many feel-good-stories. But there are also, sadly, stories of terrible selfishness. The hoarding of food and essential goods causing shortages, tricks to con people out of money, and the vandalism of supermarkets that restrict the quantity of goods we may buy.

Whether we respond to our present crisis with acts of kindness or selfishness we all, if we are honest, have an underlying feeling of anxiety. All of a sudden, we are being made to wonder what life will be like at the end of lock down. Will we be able to bounce back, as our Prime Minister encourages us to think, or will society, and many of the activities we have taken for granted and grown to love, be changed? Those of us, who for now remain in work, are probably more optimistic. But for those in the leisure industry, or a business that cannot be run from home, their concern will be growing. Even with the unprecedented financial support from our government, their future does not look good. The impact of Coronavirus goes way beyond the medical sphere into the realms of our social and economic structures.

Anxiety is unpleasant but it is part of life. It is a natural response to stress. It can create a positive stimulus to energise us in response to a challenge, but equally it can produce a degree of paralysis – the lethargy of the proverbial rabbit caught in car headlights. When we feel life is in crisis, we will at some point be overwhelmed and freeze. When that happens, where can we go for help? The bible, it is good to know, has help to offer (it offers much more, but when we are in crisis it offers help). It tells us that we are made by a God who is concerned for each and every one of us and that he is the one who shapes our world and our lives (Psalm 139:13-16). We are not here by chance, and the events of life, even our times of pain and crisis, do not happen by chance. God allows us to face calamity because this is what can cause us to look for him. He is always around, but it is easy for us to ignore him when it feels that life is going well without him. CS Lewis, the author of the children’s Narnia stories, puts it like this, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pain.”

God wants us to listen to him because he has something very important to tell us. He wants us to hear that he would like a meaningful relationship with us. He is like the good father we all want (Matthew 6:9), he is the epitome of love (1 John 4:8), and he wants us to know this for ourselves. But we would rather believe the lie that we are

masters of our own destiny. Times of crisis remind us we are not. No one saw Coronavirus coming, and no one is prepared for it, and no one knows where it is going to take us. We are vulnerable. That is not a failure on our part. God has made us this way. He has made us to be needy people, he has made us to need the love of others, and the love he has to give.

The bible tells us God has shown his love for us. In Jesus, he clothed himself in our vulnerability. He became like one of us (that is the message of Christmas). He entered into our world of dependence so that he could demonstrate to us what it looks like to place ourselves in the hands of God, even when it looks like the outcome is going to be awful. This is what we see Jesus doing throughout the story of his life found in the New Testament Gospels. In return for his healings and teaching and kindness and desire to be true to his Father in heaven, he faced, not ever growing acceptance, but ever growing opposition which eventually led to his betrayal and crucifixion. On the evening before his death, knowing what was to come Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup (*may this pouring out of my life unto death*), be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39).

In the worst life had to throw at Jesus, he trusted himself to the love of God. And that proved to be a worthwhile thing to do. For on the third day after his death he rose up to new life. He showed that following his Father’s will, even into death, is ultimately the best thing to do. He was not a failure. He had not done a foolish thing to trust in the love of his heavenly Father. He was the first fruit of the everlasting Kingdom of God, the new life we all hope for (1 Corinthians 15:20). Through trusting in God’s love Jesus vanquished the ultimate source of our anxiety, death itself. Now, we can no longer say, “God doesn’t understand what he expects me to do” for in Jesus, God passed through the valley of the shadow of death. He has borne our anxiety and grief and sorrow.

Jesus said of himself before his death, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” (John 11:25-26). Each Sunday we remember and celebrate the moment when Jesus’ words were seen to be true. As the prospect of death looms from the deadly Coronavirus, are we ready to trust him over this great anxiety? Will we entrust our uncertainties over the future, and even our death, to him? He is ready to bring us through it, if we are ready to trust him. We can do this by responding to his kind offer. “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” (Matthew 11:28-30, *The Message* translation). What will it take for you to listen and take up his kind offer?

When we take up Jesus’ offer of rest that brings calmness from anxiety, we are not completely immune from feelings of anxiety, but we do have someone to whom we can take our fears, and have him calm them. We do this through prayer. This is how the bible describes the impact this type of prayer has on our life: “Don’t worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with

peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.” (Philippines 4:6-7). When we remember to pray in this way we will no longer be like a rabbit caught in car headlights. We will become more like Jesus, and be able to show the depth of God’s love and kindness to others in this time of trial.

Consider Christ, that he could trust his Father  
In the garden of Gethsemane.  
Though full of dread and fearful of the anguish;  
He drank the cup that was reserved for me.

My Lord and God  
You are so rich in mercy.  
Mere words alone are not sufficient thanks.  
So take my life, transform, renew and change me  
That I might be a living sacrifice.

### **Kanj Nicholas**

(The poem below forms a daily intention that I have set for myself during this anxious times when fear grips my heart. I wrote it with my husband, Johann in my mind. He is a medic working on the front line & my worries & fears for his life are very real. I also dedicate it to all my family & dear friends who work for the NHS as well as those who I don’t know, who put their lives at risk everyday! It is also for all the key workers who continue to work in this crisis to help our lives to keep going.

This gratitude comes from a little plant called the Bleeding Heart. A plant that grows in a shady spot in my garden & fills me up with joy, when it appears every spring.)

#### **Gratitude - A Bleeding Heart**

A heart that bleeds  
And aches for the world  
Head bowed down  
By the weight  
Of the pain  
A Bleeding Heart  
In my Garden grows  
Echoes the sorrow  
That’s buried deep

This little plant  
With it’s gentle heart  
As she sits there quietly  
In a darkened place  
It’s fine to feel this way  
She whispers to me  
It’s ok to be sad  
And to let it be seen

But look at me  
I still stand  
My head is bowed  
Yet I still stand  
And you will too  
She gently speaks  
A quiet whisper  
That touches my grief

The gratitude I feel  
As the day breaks  
Is in this little plant called  
The Bleeding Heart  
My heart fills with thanks  
For the heart shaped plant  
That grows in my garden  
In a quiet, dark place.

**Brian Yates**

Time was our garden was a pleasant place.  
I remember when we first moved in;  
With what eager anticipation we would look each day  
For eruptions wondrous from stores underground  
Which held them captive there'  
Since winter's icy blasts had signalled a time of rest.  
Captives until the sun's promised rays procured their release,  
Or they escaped too early when their lives  
Were threatened by the waking world around.  
In summer the garden was a playground for young minds.  
A stadium where soccer, cricket and tennis their  
Annual championships did hold, or just a place to camp.  
And where the laurel and the holly hedges both  
Became spectators who did compete  
As needed by competitors or fans,  
Whose screams and laughter  
Hung on the hazy air and echoed all around.  
In Autumn the leaves came scurrying down  
Anxious to make a winter bed  
Before fell down the white eiderdown of snow  
Filled by the floating flakes of feathers,  
Forming a landscape silent as the grave.  
But now the garden like a prison feels  
And a silent assassin stands on guard  
Ensuring that I dare not leave this place.  
Creation continues on its path towards perfection.

So what has changed? Not the garden  
But letting the outward circumstance  
Dictate my inward being, and blind my eyes  
To the beauty which surrounds us,  
And reveals the hope that we have in God.

**BACK TO THE CROSS**  
FIRST I FACED THE CROSS  
FOURSQUARE, FEARFUL

SECOND SHOULDERED IT  
SORE, STRUGGLING, STUMBLING

CRUELLY I CARRIED IT  
COLLAPSING

WITH HELP I HOISTED IT HIGH  
HATEFUL AND HOLY

AT LAST, MY BACK TO THE CROSS  
PALMS PIERCED, PAINED

ALONE IN TORMENT,  
MY FATHER'S BACK TO ME

SOAKING UP SIN  
SO MUCH SIN

FINALLY  
IT IS FINISHED

FATHER, FORGIVE  
**Algy 2001/2**

**Somewhere in time and place**  
Somewhere in time and place  
An event beyond time and place

Somewhere in a hard cold world  
A soft warm moment of hope

Some time in eternity  
A new beginning

Somewhere in a lost world  
A new signpost  
A new way  
**Algy 2001**

### **I'd shut up if it was me**

So what's the matter with this guy,  
Does he want to live or does he want to die?  
If he don't shut up they'll hang him high,  
They'll nail him to a tree –  
I'd shut up if it was me.

When you get right down to it, what's their beef?  
He isn't a killer, he isn't a thief,  
Yet he's willing to die for some belief  
In a God you can't even see –  
I'd shut up if it was me.

They're looking for a leader,  
He's got no gun,  
To kick out the Romans –  
That don't sound like fun  
If he stands up his supporters'll run,  
And they'll nail him to a tree –  
I'd shut up if it was me.

**Algy 2013/14**

### **ON THE CROSS**

On the cross I was naked, flayed raw,  
Even my innards exposed.  
My shame was absolute.  
The Lord of Life, dying in agony,  
Scorned, a laughing stock.  
Behold the man indeed!

At that same moment,  
In another dimension closed to earthly eyes,  
I was clothed in radiance  
My wounds more than healed, more than dressed,  
More, even, than blessed,  
But sanctified as the source of man's salvation,  
The keys to man's prison, doors flung wide for ever.

Beyond the cross I was clothed in radiance  
Flayed raw, even my innards exposed  
My joy was absolute.

**Algy Feb '05**

## **The Lost Art of Lamenting**

*Brian Titton*

I wonder, how would we react if we had heard David express his feelings in psalm 139:19-22? Or Jeremiah- after hearing or reading Lamentations at the time he wrote them? Or if we had heard the writers of psalm 44 and 88 express their feelings as they did?

Would we have rebuked them for being negative? Would we have laughed at them because they were “having a bad day”? Would we have told them to “snap out of it” and “experience the joy of the Lord”? Or, hopefully, would we have welcomed them as men who were trusting God, but fully human?

In the forty five years that I have been a disciple of Jesus Christ, I have witnessed, and been on the receiving end of some of the above bad responses from people in the church. I would submit that this is due to a lack of lamenting – absent from so many parts of the Body of Christ.

Now we have so much to rejoice about. Jesus Christ is God come down as a man. He has dealt with our sins, and ensured that we can have a love relationship with God. We also have the ever present help of God the Holy Spirit. Added to this is the wondrous prospect of Jesus returning and getting rid of all the pain, sorrow, illness etc forever.

However, we still live in a fallen world where there is so much pain, sorrow, and hurt, and where, often, life does not make sense. Over the years I have noticed, in some parts of the Evangelical Church, a “triumphalistic” culture. It reminds me of that old song “Put on a Happy Face”. Sometimes those who can’t put on “a happy face” are rebuked for being negative, or trivialized, or treated in a patronizing way.

There is a lot in our world to lament about – the suffering of our nearest and dearest, the awful floods which devastated our land back in February, and, of course, the destruction to people’s lives caused by the coronavirus, and so much more.

Recently I heard a fellow Christian thank God that not more people were killed in the storms that hit England in February. However, this complacent and insensitive attitude fails to see that one human being killed in the storms is one too much. Life is not cheap. What about the family and friends of the person killed in the storms? To this day they are probably lamenting and mourning their devastating loss.

There is a world of difference between the negative moaning and complaining, as often shown by the people of Israel, on route to the Promised Land, and the lamenting of Jeremiah, David, and other psalmists – and the Lord himself.

I feel angry when only Psalm 139:1-18 is read out in churches, and the rest of the psalm is ignored. Sometimes I have heard it suggested that the psalmists often wrote as they did because they did not have the enlightenment of the teaching of Jesus and the New Testament writers. This would infer that their walk with God was somehow inferior. Yet David, who wrote most of the psalms, was a “man after God’s own heart”. With all his flaws, he really loved God. Would that we had the same love and devotion to God that David had! He wrote psalm 139 and verses 19-22 are in the word of God.

Could it be that the emotions expressed in these verses are too disturbing for our modern sanitized Christianity?

We need to allow our brothers and sisters in the Lord to be totally honest about how they feel, even if it shocks us, or at first we find it difficult to handle. Its then we will truly "carry each others burdens" and "fulfil the law of Christ".

### **J Team is Alive and Well!**

As I write this we are into our second week of "lockdown", and have already had our first home session of J team...

Phil has been busy being a virtual vicar, so I reasoned I could be a virtual J team leader. However, so as not to invade his carefully set up camera for You Tube posts, I decided to set up a WhatsApp group with our children, and to send a short bible study, quiz and craft idea by email each week for the children to do and send pictures and videos of.

I have been thrilled by the positive responses – and some of the lovely videos, pictures and prayers sent by the children. They are all stars!

For each activity they complete I am putting a token in a jam jar labelled with their names...the idea being that when this is over I will be able to give them their jars (having replaced the tokens with money) to buy their own prizes with.

It is a real privilege to be able to keep J team going in this way – and an extra privilege to have Deborah join me in planning the sessions! She is producing sessions for the 5-7 year olds, and I am focusing on the 8-11year olds.

We have had some people asking if other children can join us who are not part of St Jude's – absolutely yes!! We would love anyone who would like to join in to contact us with their email address, and if they have it a mobile number to join the WhatsApp group. If you know of any children who might be interested please do get in touch. You can ring or email Phil – or me on [nicky\\_is@hotmail.com](mailto:nicky_is@hotmail.com), tel 077 3439 5374

We are using The Good Book Company resource called "The Garden, The Curtain, and The Cross" showing kids the whole story of the bible from Genesis to Revelation, and why Jesus died and rose again. Lots of material to work on in the coming weeks!

Please do pray for our precious children and for parents trying to get their heads round home schooling and preventing their kids from getting stir crazy!

Pray for Deborah and I too as we plan the sessions, to have wisdom to share God's great love for everyone in relevant and exciting ways.

Thank you!

**Nicky Robertson and Deborah**

J Team also made a few cards for our elderly and sent them off, these were very well received. Well done J Team!!  
Here are some pictures from J Team:



There has also been an amazing show of love from people bringing in and dropping off food parcels for those who requested through the "Hello Neighbour!" fliers Phil and Nicky sent out. Each food parcel goes out with a little leaflet that carries a message of hope and love from our Lord Jesus Christ. It warms our heart to see such flow of love because it proves that **'the church building is shut, but the Church is not!'**