

Living with the pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has touched all our lives. In the space of a few short months it has changed the way we live, the things we value and the way we do church and mission. In this Newsletter we reflect on what the lasting impact of the coronavirus crisis could be, and on what the Spirit may be saying to the churches.

Emma Ineson, Bishop of Penrith, writes about some of the new things she is seeing, and asks the churches to listen carefully to what God is saying before we un-mute ourselves.

How things have changed! If you'd told me just a few short months ago that I wouldn't go into a church for over two months, that I wouldn't drive my car for the same length of time, and that I would attend the College of Bishops' (Zoom) meetings in my slippers, I would scarcely have believed you. And those are the lighter outcomes of living with the Coronavirus pandemic.

Far more significant are the thousands who've died, families who haven't been able to attend funerals, the impact on the economy and livelihoods, and the fear and grief that have become part of all of our stories. The words 'seismic' and 'unprecedented' have been over-used, but they do come close to what we want to say. Several commentators have suggested that the themes of exile might be an appropriate framework with which to understand this time, and there's certainly a sense of needing to learn to 'sing the Lord's song in a strange land' (Psalm 137).

So what changes have we seen in the country as a whole? What are some of the things that we'll need to consider as a church as we emerge from lockdown? What lessons have we learned? And what do we want not to forget as we come to terms with a 'new normal' which might last months and years?

“... 1 in 4 young adults aged between 18 and 34 watched or listened to an online or broadcast act of worship,”



A new kind of worship space

With our church buildings closed for worship, many church leaders have been either live streaming or recording worship from their own homes (never before have so many clergy home bookshelves been on such public display!). One of the abiding images of the lockdown was the Archbishop of Canterbury presiding at communion on Easter Day from his kitchen table. We have had to re-examine the interplay between sacred and secular.

Worship at home is nothing new. Jesus said, "When you pray go into your room and close the door". The earliest churches met both at home and in the temple. Susanna Wesley led her children in worship from her kitchen, and that golden thread continues in what we do today. But the difference is the reach of these homespun services. Research suggests that that 1 in 4 young adults aged between 18 and 34 watched or listened to an online or broadcast act of worship, one fifth of whom say they have never gone to church. The challenges as we emerge from lockdown will be to continue to gather in, literally and metaphorically, our new 'fringe'.

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Listen before unmuting



The new heroes

Heroes no longer wear capes and underpants over their tights. Our new heroes wear scrubs and hospital uniforms. We've found ways of honouring them in rituals that involve going outside at 8pm on Thursdays and clapping and banging saucepans. Someone has said that our new religion is the NHS. Status has been turned on its head. No longer are the rich and powerful considered the most important in society. That honour goes to 'key workers' who stack our supermarket shelves, drive our delivery lorries, and empty our bins.

The first shall be last and the last first. But we need to watch our language and what it says about the way we value people. Even the term 'key worker' could be loaded to suggest the others are not so 'key' (clergy rarely get a mention in lists of heroes, for example). As Emily Maitliss pointed out in her startling intervention one night on the news, the pandemic is not a great leveller. Some are more affected than others, and disproportionately more BAME people have died of the virus than other groups. What values do we attach to various people and groups with our language?

New connections

Time and distance have taken on different meanings. I had two meetings back to back on one day - one with my local leadership team, the other with some people in Minnesota USA. Both, on Zoom, looked and felt exactly the same. Our horizons have both shrunk (I've not been further than a few hundred metres from my front door for two months) and expanded at the same time. New connections are being

formed in these days, using technology we barely knew what to do with before all this.

The striking UK Blessing Song, a collaboration between 65 different church groups, moved us to tears and showed us what is possible when God's Holy Spirit brings unity, connectivity, in his church.



A new voice

Overheard in a Zoom meeting: "I couldn't find where I was to un-mute myself!". We could be very quick to unmute ourselves after this pandemic, speaking loudly and insensitively about what God has taught us through it and what we should all do now. It will be important that we as a church don't speak too

"We must continue to listen, to God and to those with whom we have formed new connections."

soon or too arrogantly. We must continue to listen, to God and to those with whom we have formed new connections.

As we emerge into a new normal, as we take down our harps from the willows, and begin to sing again, let's take time to reflect on what God has been showing us. The air is cleaner, we've discovered new rhythms of living. We must listen to those for whom grief and loss are all that the pandemic has left, but we must also look for the new opportunities we have been given. The Word of God has not been in lockdown, and it will not return to Him empty.

**The Rt Revd Dr Emma Ineson
Bishop of Penrith**

"There needs to be a resurrection of our common life, a new normal, something that links to the old but is different and more beautiful. We've gone through so much and we are seeing so much common spirit and attitude coming through. We mustn't lose that. I'm immensely hopeful that we can be a happier and more wonderful country, and a better world"



The Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

A Sanctuary Day for our Times

If ever there was a time to pause and to ponder this is it.



We might say that the coronavirus pandemic has changed everything. Bob Dylan's iconic song about cultural upheaval in the 1960s sounds strangely familiar today; the very times are a-changing. When the virus has done its worst and run its course, and even while it is still at large, we would do well to pause and

to ponder. Not only to survey the mess that it has caused in us and around us, but to spot the traces of the Holy Spirit's work and to catch the whisper of what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Which is why we are launching what we might call a Covid-19 Sanctuary Day.

Two of the Bible's images of the Holy Spirit have caught my attention over these last few months. The first is of the Spirit hovering over the earth while it was "*formless and empty*" and "*darkness was over the surface of the deep*" (Genesis 1:2). It is a strong, engaging picture of the Spirit

brooding like a bird over chaos and disorder; seeing it, we might say embracing it, ready to shape it into something new and "*good*". As someone has put it, the Spirit's work in creation is "to bring about the change from chaos to cosmos, from disorder to order, from confusion to harmony, from deformity to beauty, from oldness to newness."¹

"... if we are listening, we hear the sound of God on the move."

The second image is of the Spirit as wind in Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. The picture is equally powerful. The work of the Spirit is sovereign, as free as the wind, blowing "*wherever it pleases*"; "*indescribable, uncontainable, all-powerful, un-tameable*"². The Spirit is also as unseen as the wind. We hear the sound of the wind but have no sight of where it comes from or where it is going. But there's the point.

ReSource Sanctuary Day

Space to process the experience of the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown

A Day led by a ReSource Minister for your church or group, when we can meet again. Or four sessions that you can enjoy in your own home, or Zoom group, from the materials on our website

Space to review, reflect and respond

Session 1: Seeking Sanctuary

God sees us and knows us

Session 2: Looking Back

Life and loss in a strange land

Session 3: Looking Up

What is the Spirit saying to the churches?

Session 4: Looking Forward

Leaving behind or taking with us?

Space to listen and to pray

Please let us know if you would like to book a ReSource Minister to lead a Sanctuary Day like this. Or please access the Sanctuary Day material in the Resources section of our website, from July.

www.resource-arm.net

We "*hear its sound*". Be it in a gentle breeze or a ferocious storm, the Spirit stirs the airwaves around us and, if we are listening, we hear the sound of God on the move.

Which is why we are launching a Covid-19 Sanctuary Day.

We need to pause, to ponder and to process, in the presence of God. What is the brooding Spirit shaping for good in our lives and in our churches from the unformed mess of the pandemic and the lockdown?

And where do we hear the sound of the *ruach*, wind of the Spirit, blowing through our churches to fill our sails and re-set our course?

We need some sanctuary time, to ponder these things and to pray, before we settle back into familiar ways, and miss the moment.

Kevin

Kevin Roberts
Director of ReSource



¹ Raniero Cantalamessa: *Come, Creator Spirit*

² Chris Tomlin: from his song *Indescribable*

What is the Spirit saying to the churches?

These are times of both upheaval and opportunity for the church. Tectonic plates are shifting in our national life, and church life is being re-shaped before our eyes. So what will worship, discipleship and mission look like in what many are saying will be a new-normal when the crisis is over? And as we contemplate the changes ahead, what is the Spirit saying to the churches?

Tim Montgomery, from the Diocese of Liverpool, finds God's word for the church today in an ancient text, and in a calling that God has put on his people in times past when things were about to change.

The word is 'wait.'

In the midst of many words being offered during this season - many beginning with 're' - we must simply wait.

*Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.*

*If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.*

*I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.
I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.*

*Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.
He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.*

Psalm 130. A song of ascents.

Wait on God and wait for God.

Psalm 130 is my go-to passage for waiting. One of the fifteen 'Songs of Ascent' it would have been sung in ancient days as pilgrims climbed the hill to the holy city of Jerusalem as well as by the priests as they ascended the steps to the temple to offer worship each day.

So, each morning during this season I climb a hill and cry out to God for our world from the depths of my being, knowing that the Lord is attentive to our cries for mercy and forgiveness. At the top of the hill I sit and wait on the Lord contemplating the darkness of this season but watching for the light. And as I read the word of God and wait on him my hope is raised.



Jesus told his disciples to wait for the promise of his Father and the baptism of the Spirit.

This outpouring birthed the church and then the word of God was preached powerfully and spoken miraculously bringing repentance and restoration. There was a reframing of the culture as Jews and Gentiles were united in redemption and renewal.

I anticipate all those 're' words will be re-formed in the coming days. How and when we don't know, but we do know why.

Because our loving God is desperate for us to be **realigned** with him and his ways in order that his purpose through his Church might be **recovered**. In the coming days, the people of God will be **recalled** to Him and **recommissioned** to go and recall many people to **repent** and be **restored** to their loving Heavenly Father. The Church of Christ will be **reconstituted** to retell the good news and **reconnect** the world to the Creator and his creation. This will be a **revival**, a fresh baptism of the Spirit, **refilling** and **refreshing**. This will **reshape** the Church for the next season of Jesus' commission to go and make disciples.

But for now, we wait.

And in his Word we put our hope knowing that:

*"Since ancient times no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him."*

Isaiah 64:4

The Revd Canon Tim Montgomery
Missional Leadership Development Officer

Changing Church?



Annie McCabe tells us what life in lockdown has been like for St Luke's, Southsea, and describes how new shoots have begun to appear, when they were least expected.

I will always remember the day when as Vicar of St Luke's I put up the notice: *"This church building is closed, but the church remains alive*

and well." It felt such a significant moment and an emotional one. Just before I left the building, I stopped to pray.

"Father God, when the day comes that we can return to this building in which we have worshipped you in the past, may we return rejoicing in being together, and full of thanksgiving. In your mercy, may each one of us return safely. By your Spirit, may there be new members added to our number. And may each one of us have grown to trust you and rely on you more than we do today."

That prayer, together with the question posed by exiles in the past, resonated with those of us living in exile right now. *"How do we sing the Lord's song in this strange new land?"* (Psalm 137: 4).

So now two months into living in this strange new land of coronavirus lockdown, have we gained any insights in answer to the question? Here are a few of our reflections from Southsea:

The refiner's fire is burning

There was an initial flurry of activity to set up a new pastoral care team keeping in regular contact with the largest possible number of people in and around the church family. Over the weeks, relationships have grown in depth of trust and openness to prayer. There is also a noticeable mutuality in the conversations: no sense of anyone being a passive consumer. All of us have experienced some degree of trauma as a result of the coronavirus, even though the outward expression of it has varied. I have seen some of the dross in our character exposed and stripped down as the weeks have passed. The refiner's fire is at work.

Move of the Spirit calling people to seek God's presence

We, like so many other churches, have live streamed Sunday services and regular daily prayer. The services have adapted over the weeks. Our current sermon series explores

'Living well in exile.' We have launched 'Thrive' a new more interactive service for those new to worship. What will be the expectations when we return? Will the pleasure of worshipping in our pyjamas when it suits us override the desire to meet together physically at a set time?

Yet many have found a daily rhythm of prayer that they

have never experienced before. Some have joined in a church service for the first time and stayed. Many have realised the value of belonging to a Christian community afresh. And because the lockdown has not just been for a week or two, there has been time and opportunity for new habits to form.

The full picture is still emerging and yet it seems that, as in past generations, when the church of God is scattered, it leads to growth.

Exile - a passing phase?

Much has been written about exile; finding yourself and your community living in a way you did not choose and for a period of time that is indeterminate. Yet as Walter Bruggeman reminds us, there should always be something of the exile in the Christian experience of this world. Perhaps the deeper question with which we need to wrestle is whether the Church (both institution and people) had become a little too much at home with the ways things were.

Before we are tempted to rush to put everything back in its proper place and resume business as usual, we don't want to miss the opportunity to discern where the wind of the Spirit is leading us. It is a breeze we are keen to embrace and not shield ourselves from!

The Revd Annie McCabe
Vicar of St Luke's, Southsea



"... when the church of God is scattered, it leads to growth."

Online Church and Mission

A few years ago, I went to a global evangelism conference in London. I had no idea what to expect, and when I arrived, I didn't know what I was supposed to be doing. I walked into this amazingly plush hotel and saw a few people heading into a room. Naturally, I thought this was where I was supposed to be, so I followed. There was complimentary food and drink, so I grabbed a few things and made my way to a seat around a huge table.

Within a few minutes, this guy started to speak; he launched into how many people attended his church. I nearly choked on my posh little sandwich as he told us that his congregation of thousands watched him on video across his entire country. I could hardly believe it, and my mind began to race. If they're watching him

on video, does this make him some kind of celebrity? How does he know people are growing? How can he possibly be missional? Are there other leaders who lead smaller groups? Does his congregation have the opportunity to understand who Jesus is?

What happened next was very embarrassing. A lady tapped me on the shoulder and spoke seven words I'll never forget.

"Sweetie, you're not supposed to be here," and at that, I made a swift exit.

Before the lockdown, I probably would never have entertained the idea of an online Church. Still, it's interesting to note that the concept of what we now refer to as 'online content,' has been standard in different ways for years. Starting probably with VHS tapes of preachers, and Billy Graham crusades broadcast in real-time. It's challenging to think that ministries in the past answered the questions I had in the conference. How do broadcast messages bear fruit? Local leaders coordinate them. How was Billy Graham's live streaming successful? He had a team of local leaders.

Since the Covid-19 lockdown the ministry I lead, Catalyst Youth Trust, has been producing online content for schools through YouTube. We've also been meeting with young

people in weekly groups, both for fun and for the more in-depth work of discipleship. We've also been posting daily online content on both Facebook and Instagram for young people to take in.

What I think is worth noting here is that although I'm currently the primary content provider for the ministry, I'd say I've only been truly successful when the content was designed for my own group of young people, and when the material was shared with a team of leaders who are committed to inviting other young people to take part.

Unfortunately, the online world is very complicated, and it can be dehumanising, leaving people feeling as if they're not good enough, or not connected enough. However, if we're going to be successful at online church in the long term, we need to keep this whole thing as simple as we possibly can.

Firstly, the online church needs good quality content providers. Not every church has to create it, but it has to be out there for people to digest. Secondly, we need to be missional. We can't substitute sitting in a building for sitting watching at home. Those who are mature are going to have to take responsibility for discipling more people.

"... as long as we keep things simple, and focus on relationships and Jesus, we'll do fine."

And thirdly, I think we need to understand that although we will get back to our buildings at some point, we should never stop meeting online. It's a real gift, and as long as we keep things simple, and focus on relationships and Jesus, we'll do fine.

Where the church lands in this new world of ours, I don't know. But I think that success will be found in both the relational mission model we've practised for years, and in embracing what the digital natives have been trying to show us now for several years.

John Prockter
Director of Catalyst Youth Trust



"Before the lockdown, I probably would never have entertained the idea of an online Church."

"The first native digital generation, Gen Z, is simultaneously creating and digesting a broad range of online content. They aren't content to watch; they make themselves part of the conversation. To Gen Z the idea of belonging to one single 'group' is alien, they're far more comfortable when they're free to find what they need from a range of people."

John Prockter

New Appointments 2020

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Canon Dr Alison Fleetwood as a new ReSource Trustee, along with four more ReSource Ministers to assist in the delivery of ReSource's public ministry. God is building a wise and experienced cohort of Spirit-filled leaders to shape and extend ReSource's ministry, and it is a pleasure to introduce the latest additions to the team.

Alison Fleetwood

Alison is a wife, mother, and GP, as well as being Healing Advisor for the Diocese of Carlisle and an honorary Canon of Carlisle Cathedral. Alison worships at St Thomas', Kendal and is also a member of Abbey, an emerging new monastic community. She is active in Freedom in Christ Ministries, too.

Alison says, "ReSource's vision and values make my heart sing! I seem to have gathered some experience along the way, particularly in the healing ministry, which I look forward to offering to ReSource. I'm delighted to be able to do this as a Trustee and I very much look forward to being involved in the next chapter of ReSource's ministry, and to this new role being a part of my own life."



Garrie and Jill Griffiths

Garrie and Jill live near Woodbridge, Suffolk. Garrie is a recently retired Vicar and Jill remains an active flute and piano teacher. They have ministered in traditional and renewal parishes for over 40 years, and still love serving God and his people!

Garrie & Jill say "We love to help people to fly: to come closer to God and let him loose in their lives. We long to see people and ministries transformed by God releasing the deep reality of his love in hearts and minds and in our ordinary, everyday living. In this way God blesses us, we bless him, we bless each other, and he uses us to bless those around us. We are thrilled to join the team of ReSource Ministers"



David O'Brien

David is married to Alison and has a son Josh. After ten years as a Vicar in Shrewsbury David moved last year to his native north west to be Vicar of St Thomas', Blackpool. He tells some of his life story in his book 'Northern Soul: Football, Punk, Jesus

David says "I love witnessing the transforming presence and anointing of the Holy Spirit as people are empowered, released and encouraged to do mission in their own local communities. Ever since my own dramatic and unexpected conversion and experience of the Holy Spirit, I have longed for ordinary people to experience God's life changing power. I look forward to the adventure and privilege of being involved in ReSource's ministry in little, local and ordinary churches."



George Fisher

George and his wife Joan recently moved to Eastbourne in retirement, after 13 years in the Diocese of Lichfield where George was the Director of Mission and Chair of the Diocesan Renewal Network. George experienced a significant work of the Spirit as a Curate in Conisbrough and while Vicar of St Thomas', Blackpool.

He says "I have loved working with churches of all sizes and shapes to encourage effective mission. I consider mission, discipleship and the work of the Holy Spirit to be inextricably linked and having tasted what happens in churches where the Holy Spirit brings life and it pours out into the local community, I am excited to be part of ReSource's vision of renewal and mission for the churches of our land."





News Items

Online Sermons, Home Group Studies, Blogs and Vlogs

At Pentecost we launched a set of eight 10-minute sermons on the Holy Spirit, designed for churches' online worship or for individual study, all accessed through our website and YouTube channel. The sermons come with study questions and can be used as a weekly series, or as one-offs on different themes.

In addition, we are delighted that Canon Alan Bing has written a six week Home Group study course on aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit, adapted for use by groups meeting by Zoom. This is the first of what we hope will be a number

of home grown courses hosted on our website and available free of charge. The units of the course can also be used for individual study. If you have a local course on aspects of renewal, discipleship or mission that might be suitable for our Resources Hub, do be in touch with us.

Since Easter we have also posted a Blog or Vlog on our website every Monday. The pieces are written by ReSource Ministers, Trustees and a variety of guests, and each one reflects on something current in the world or church, and explores what the Holy Spirit may be saying or doing. Do take a look!

Covid-19 Update

The ReSource staff are working from their homes while this is government advice during the current crisis. Post is collected from Meeting Point House twice each week and the landline is redirected to a member of staff. In other respects the routine work of the office continues as usual. We are currently trialling a new database to improve our supporter communications. The ReSource staff are keeping in good spirits and communicate on a daily basis by Teams, not least for pastoral support and prayer. The anticipated reduction in income from events has meant that James and Clare are now, sadly, working reduced hours.

Finance Update

We are delighted to have appointed Kevin Lawrence as our Trust Fundraiser for 2020. Kevin has worked successfully with churches and Christian charities over many years and we are pleased that he will be applying his fundraising expertise on our behalf in a consultancy role. The Finance Committee is currently meeting monthly to monitor the charity's finances and to make further adjustments to the budget as needed. We are grateful to all those who have increased their giving to help us through this current downturn in our events ministry. Some additional income from grant making Trusts will help us to keep our growth plans on course.

Intercessors' Network

I am delighted that Mrs Judy Creyke is joining the Intercessors' Network Core Team as a new Coordinator, working with Esther McCafferty as the Network Facilitator. The work of the Network continues to be a significant support to the work of the charity, and has been a source of huge encouragement during the period of the current lockdown, with a regular flow of words and scriptures that feed into the work of the Trustees, Director and staff. If you would like to join the team of intercessors we would love to have you! Please be in touch with the office for more information. Please email your own prayer requests to prayer@resource-arm.net

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Office Assistant

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Development Manager

Merisa MacInnes

Development Consultant

Kevin Lawrence

Fundraising Consultant

Giving to Resource

If you feel moved to give to the work of ReSource, thank you!

Single donations can be made directly into CAF Bank, *ReSource for Anglican Renewal Ministries*, account number 00032578 and sort code 40-52-40 or through the *CAF Donate* button on our website. Regular donations can be made by standing order, using the form available in the *Ways to Give* page of our website or from the office. Gift Aid forms are available on the website or from the office, as is information about how to remember ReSource in your will. Thank you!

Contact

ReSource
Meeting Point House
Telford
Shropshire
TF3 4HS

T: 01952 371300
E: office@resource-arm.net

 ReSource
 @ReSourceARM

Charity no. 1180394