

AUTUMN 2020

IGNITE

SPARKING PASSION FOR THE GOSPEL
ACROSS THE UK



A NEW ERA OF CHURCH?

NEW CHURCH GOES
OUTDOORS WITH A GAZEBO



ALSO

SHARING TESTIMONIES IN NEW PODCAST - THE FUTURE OF EVANGELISM IN A POST COVID-19 WORLD - COUNTIES ZOOM CONFERENCE - A TRIBUTE TO TOM BATHGATE

WELCOME TO IGNITE

These pages continue to reflect the Hope of the Gospel that is held out by Counties Evangelists and Church Planters across the UK.

As part of the Church in our nation, we too have been wondering what the future holds for gatherings large and small, both for worship, teaching and evangelism. Stephen McQuoid, General Director of GLO and a Counties Trustee, shares some reflections and questions that may help us as we pray and plan towards the future in our local context (page 20).

Many evangelists have found great freedom and opportunities opening up, and Jonathan Brain provides a great example in 'Gazebo church,' on page 10.

In this addition, we give God thanks for the past, as we reflect on the life and ministry of Tom Bathgate, who with his wife Madelene served with Counties for 61 years until the Lord called him home in the Spring. We also look to the future, as we welcome new evangelists in Cornwall and Oldham!

God is Good, and whilst we cannot be sure what the future holds, we remain confident in the One who holds the future.

Thank you for your support and prayers.

Martin Erwin,
CEO Counties



Counties exists to make Jesus known across the UK through our evangelists, exhibitions and resources, in biblically faithful and culturally relevant ways.

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COUNTIES CONFERENCES GO VIRTUAL

Almost 100 people gathered online to listen to Bible teaching, worship and pray together for Counties Family Day this year.

The usual gathering was cancelled due to social distancing measures but that didn't stop people meeting virtually.

Counties evangelists, trustees and staff were able to catch up with friends they were not able to meet in person. The time included sung worship together, teaching from Counties trustee Steve McQuoid, breaking into smaller 'Cluster Groups' for fellowship and prayer, and ministry updates from Counties.

With the weekend supporters conference postponed in October this year, plans are now in place to hold an online gathering via Zoom with updates, teaching, worship and cluster groups. The online event will take place on Saturday, 31 October, 9.30-11.30am. We would love you to join us for this event.

Email office@countiesuk.org for a link to the meeting if you wish to join in.



STORIES TO CELEBRATE 125 YEARS OF COUNTIES

In less than four years, Counties will be celebrating its 125th anniversary and we would like your help in gathering stories from the earlier days.

Counties Chair of Trustees, Richard Canham, said: "We would like to celebrate the Lord's goodness to us over all these years. It would be wonderful to hear of churches who were involved with Counties that go back to those early days.

"Maybe even a list of names that have been converted through our evangelists both past and current."

Counties was sent a letter recently from Albany Church in Enfield about the early days. Richard continued: "The letter refers to missions in Counties assemblies in the early days and mentions both John (JH) Brunton and Mr Maneelie – who perhaps is WJ Menely. Both are mentioned as Counties evangelists 1899-1945 in Brian Mills' book for the Counties Centenary, 'A story to tell'.

"It seems wonderful to me that 121 years on, we still enjoy wonderful fellowship between Albany Church and Counties!"

If you have any stories to share, please email helen.rimmer@countiesuk.org

DATES FOR THE 2021 DIARY

COUNTIES FAMILY DAY 2021

Saturday 26 June
Gloucestershire

LIVING THE PASSION CONFERENCE

Friday 22 – Sunday 24 October
Daventry

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

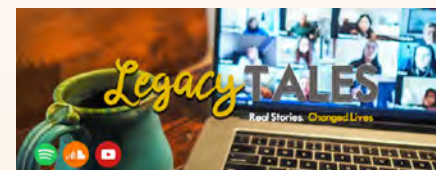
Counties has welcomed four new trainees to its Evangelist Training Programme and two new students to its TEAM programme.

Jackson Turner, from Leeds, Aaron Shah, from North Shields, Liz David, from Cardiff and

Jonny Gios, from Kendal, all join as trainee evangelists. And students Zac Whitehouse, from Swansea and Ruth Chisholm, from North Devon, join TEAM.

LEGACY TALES - NEW PODCAST

A new podcast filled with real-life testimonies has been produced by Counties Swansea evangelist Paul Davies. Find out more about Legacy Tales: www.legacytales.pauldaviesonline.com to watch/listen.



counties CONNECT+ STAY CONNECTED WITH VIDEO DEVOTIONALS

Thousands of people have been tuning in to watch Counties new weekday video devotionals and weekly magazine show on YouTube and Facebook.

The digital resources - Life Connect and Church Connect - have been produced to help encourage and equip Christians and churches to dig deeper into the Bible, evangelism and topical issues.

One follower shared: "Thank you so very much for these videos. You have encouraged my passion in Jesus to try, with

the Holy Spirit, to show the wonder of the Lord, to help to enthuse the older and often weary folk in our church (which is most of us!). We so need His refreshing and vision and faith to believe He will answer our prayers at the right time.

"God bless you and your ministries, for Jesus' sake."

The videos can be viewed on www.youtube.com/countiesconnect and Counties Facebook page.

A TRIBUTE TO TOM BATHGATE BY THOSE WHO KNEW HIM BEST

Tributes have been made to much-loved evangelist Tom Bathgate, who served with Counties with wife Madelene for over 61 years.

He went to be with the Lord in February after suffering from cancer and a thanksgiving service was held in March at Twydall Evangelical Church in Gillingham.

Tom was married to Madelene and they have three sons, six grandchildren, one in Heaven, and six great grandchildren.

Madelene shares how she first met Tom: "Tom and I met in a Counties tent at Ash, in Surrey, where the evangelist was Jim Bathgate. My friend Anne, (who went on to be our bridesmaid) and I cycled out to Ash after school, about ten miles from Woking where I lived. It was my first contact with Counties Evangelistic work, as it was then.

"The next evening, we went again on our bikes for the meeting (a 20-mile round trip) to find that the evangelist's youngest brother, had come down on holiday from Edinburgh. From that day my heart was captured, it was truly love at first sight – for me! Unfortunately,



he was short sighted or something and didn't notice me, how very sad!

"Remember, this was in the days when girls didn't say 'Hi, I like the look of you.' So what did I do? I started praying that, somehow, we would meet again; nine months later we did, rather unexpectedly, and this time Cupid's aim was straight, and Tom experienced what I had, it just took him longer!

"So began a year's courtship by letter; he was in the R.A.F in the north of Scotland doing his National Service and I was down in Woking. We wrote to each other every day for a year. All this culminated in our marriage on March 23 1957. So began our great adventure together, for that's what it truly has been. Two years after our marriage, the Lord called us into full time service for Him and we joined Counties and came into the county of Kent."



Senior Dorset evangelist Stephen Gillham remembers Tom and Madelene when they arrived into the Counties family in July 1973. He said: "I admired Tom for his faithfulness in spending most of his time in the Kent area serving the Lord so faithfully, always open to an opportunity to bring the Gospel and a consistent hard worker who served the Lord so well for so many years."

Richard Canham, Counties Chair of Trustees, said: "My first recollection of meeting Tom and Madelene was back in the 1990s, about the same time as I joined Counties as a trustee, when I was on a business trip in Dunfermline in Scotland. I was traveling back to Edinburgh Airport when I saw a yellow AA sign referring to a 'Bible Exhibition.' I turned off the main road and found it to be in a local church.

"To my surprise it was the Counties Bible Exhibition which was the predecessor to the Life Exhibition. As it happened, it was being hosted by Tom and Madelene and I was able to get a personal tour from them and enjoy their fellowship, as I always did."

Counties CEO Martin Erwin shared this

story about Tom at the thanksgiving service: "The fact that Tom's heart was always as an evangelist, is well born out by a more recent incident that Madelene shared with me. On a visit to a local shopping centre, Tom was approached by a lady selling cosmetics from a table in the mall.

'Is there anyone special in your life?' she asked him.

'He's got you now' thought Madelene.

'Yes,' said Tom 'he is the Lord Jesus Christ.'

'Maybe you misunderstood,' replied the lady.

'No, I understood perfectly' replied Tom, 'and once I tell you about my Saviour, I will tell you about a special lady, and I may just buy something from you for her!' Ever the evangelist.

"Today, Tom, as a faithful servant, a worker in God's great Harvest field, has arrived home and heard his Saviour say, 'Well done good and faithful servant.' May God raise up more workers in Kent to serve Jesus in the harvest field!"

“THE LORD HAS GIFTED ME WITH AN EVANGELISTIC HEART, AND HE WANTS ME TO USE IT FOR HIS GLORY AS AN EVANGELIST”

Trainee evangelists Jacquie Bodman and Lee Marsland have completed their training programme with Counties and are now fully-fledged evangelists. Ignite meets them to find out more...

Jacquie Bodman lives in Camborne with husband Tim, who is pastor of Camborne Community Church. As well as a Counties evangelist, Jacquie is also the Children, Youth & Family Worker at the church.

Why did you decide to join Counties?

Counties approached me about training as an evangelist and once I had discussed in depth why they had and what they were offering to do to train me, I was left in no doubt that the Lord had brought us together and that it was His will I trained with Counties.

What have you learnt as a trainee evangelist?

So much, but the main thing I have learnt, is that the Lord has gifted me with an evangelistic heart and that He wants me to use it for His glory as an evangelist, to share His Gospel message and bring people to Him. I hadn't seen myself as an evangelist before as I had a preconceived idea of who they were and what they did. Counties has opened my eyes to all the different ways to evangelise and taught me so much in how to work in the gifting God has given me.



Jacquie and Lee

What have been the highlights so far?

The time spent training together with others on the Evangelist Training Programme has been a real highlight, both with the in-house Counties training and with the Emerging Evangelists Institute, run by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. It's been great to share together and encourage one another, not only in the 'classroom' but in all sorts of environments. And also to be able to spend time with those training us and chat with them and learn from them.

Any challenges?

Speaking at the Connect Conference was a real challenge as originally, I

thought it was Tim (my husband) and I doing it together, so I was going to let him do most of the talking! Then to find it was only me speaking and then when we got to the venue, to find it was a sell out so had been moved to the main hall, it was all a bit overwhelming. I had never done anything like that before.

However, the Holy Spirit was amazing, He just took over and spoke through me which was a real relief and He gave me a such a joy in my heart from the whole experience, it was wonderful!

What does being a 'full time' Counties evangelist mean to you at a local level?

I will be able to use so much of what I have learnt through the training and hopefully teach it to others. I particularly see how I can use it in helping our local church to continue to grow, but I look forward to working with other churches in the local area and maybe helping them with outreach.

The training will also assist with rolling out the Neighbourhood Chaplains scheme in this area and will help me with organising events to speak to local church leaders about Neighbourhood Chaplains. The hope is that they will catch the vision and join in with this ministry. Lastly, the ongoing support and training as a full time Counties evangelist will help me in developing a speaking and preaching ministry within the local area. So, I am very excited to have become a fully-fledged Counties evangelist!

Lee is the Community Pastor at Impact Community Church in Oldham. He's married to Lesley and has a heart for reaching the lost in his community.

Why join Counties?

I decided to join Counties because I instantly fell in love with how passionate Counties is about Jesus and equipping evangelists.

What have you learnt from the training with Counties?

I have learnt so much on training various ways of engaging people with the Gospel in ways I wouldn't have even thought of before and how important family is especially in ministry.

Any particular special moments from the training?

There were many great highlights but the one that really stands out is serving with Franklin Graham in Blackpool and ministering on the streets - seeing people getting saved and making a new life-long friend.

How you found anything difficult?

The challenges for me were overcoming the fear of driving on the motorway. I had to drive on the motorway to get to training, but God really helped me there and my confidence kept growing and growing.

How will being a Counties evangelist help you in your local ministry?

Being a full-time evangelist means so much to me and I believe will create more opportunities to partner in preaching the Gospel and seeing my ministry develop more and more.

SURFING THE NEW WAVE OF CHURCH

A gazebo-style outdoor church has been launched in a Wiltshire village after requests from neighbours, all done whilst still observing social distancing regulations.

Wiltshire evangelist Jonathan Brain, who lives in Chippenham, explains: *"I was under my car fixing it when a neighbour passed by, saying I'm always fixing cars - how we laughed! She said how much another neighbour was missing going along to church, I said that if folk wanted, I could run a church that weekend. I put out a WhatsApp message to all the neighbours saying that anyone was welcome and left it at that!*



"On the Thursday night I had a strange dream that only featured a gazebo - that's it! On the Friday morning a friend rang up and asked if I wanted a gazebo, then another friend asked if I wanted a gazebo!

"So, on the following Sunday we had our first 'Gazebo Church' and amazingly fifteen or so came - they all asked for it to continue and straightaway organised a cake rota! Songs were sung, prayers were

offered, and two Bibles were asked for, as well as one more gazebo offered! Hugely positive comments have been received."

Jonathan has since invested in a larger gazebo to accommodate the unpredictable British weather, ensuring safety and distancing measures are in place. He continues: *"We'll carry on with 'gazebo church' as God directs, and circumstances allow in these strange days. We're*



all enjoying meeting together come rain, shine, or wind, and we hope to continue as long as people want and we're able. He says, "One neighbour even questioned my faith when I suggested calling it off because of the weather!"

"The relationships have been so easily built out in the open air under a non-threatening gazebo. We have been astounded and surprised at the ease of this new church springing up. It would appear that buildings are not that important after all!"

Small evangelical Gospel-filled house fellowships could easily sprout from this first shoot of growth."

"This has been a most extraordinarily unexpected blessing, like a surfer catching a wonderfully memorable wave immortalised in a photo. May God have all the glory. May there be far more of Him and far less of me."



Jonathan continued: "We're all getting used to this brand new, old-fashioned, early church, Acts 2 way of doing things! God's plans are always consistently much better and easier than my finest plan. I need to just wait on God and be ever ready to do only what He says. He has a plan where He wants to take this.

"This has been a most extraordinarily unexpected blessing, like a surfer catching a wonderfully, memorable wave immortalised in a photo. May God have all the glory. May there be far more of Him and far less of me."





A CHURCH IS PLANTED IN THE HEART OF ONE OF THE UK'S LARGEST COUNCIL ESTATES

A once thriving church which sadly declined over the years to a membership of just seven, is being revitalised with the support of Counties Planting Network.

Built in the 1930s, Ely Gospel Hall in Cardiff used to have around 400 children attending Sunday School every week. As the years went by and the need for God dwindled in the community, the Hall closed with the remaining members maintaining a large building.

But the members never give up hope and in March this year handed over the keys to Counties Cardiff evangelist Clive Cornish. The Gospel hall is

now being transformed into a new venue with a new name 'REFLECT Community Church and Centre' thanks to the vision of evangelist Clive, with the support of Counties Planting Network.

It is hoped the church plant, based in the heart of the housing estate, can be used by the local community for various activities including a stage school, a coffee shop, children's groups and youth clubs.

The building is currently undergoing renovations with the help of a team of volunteers to fix issues such as dry rot and damp and installing new toilets, a new kitchen and a total electricity rewire.

Clive shares: *"Ely is one of the biggest council estates in UK and is known for its drug and crime culture. Unfortunately, Ely has struggled to leave behind its bad image and to date the shadow cast over it through some rough years still hovers over it, it's not as bad as many think though."*

"The Gospel hall is situated on the main road through Ely and is in a prime position to meet many needs of community. Fiona and I moved to Ely 23 years ago believing that God had called us to the area. Our hearts desire has always been to see a church building that the community could use - using the facility that God had provided, not just for the benefit of the saved, but for the benefit of the lost."

"It's so easy to think it's ours when it isn't. It's His building, His work, His plan, His money and we are His people!"

"For Fiona and I, after so many years waiting on God, still believing He had a plan but no idea what it was, the current signals tell us that God is doing something now, and we have no questions why it has taken so long, just thankful that we are a part of it. God is going to do something good at

REFLECT."

When the hall closed in December last year, Clive met with the then leader of the hall, Colin Browning and asked if he could have the keys. A few months later, the keys were handed over from Western Counties – a Christian trust which hold the deeds to the property.

Clive continued: *"What membership REFLECT will have when the doors finally open, I have no idea! But believe me I'm praying a lot about it. There will be more than two, so God will be there with us as we begin loving a lost people."*

"There are high hopes for the new church plant to be a focal meeting place enabling us to reach people where they are with the Gospel. It's going to take prayer, time, and a lot of hard work. The vision has already caused some headaches, rotted windows needing to be replaced and whole rooms needing to be gutted of all wood panelling, and ceilings pulled down due to damp."

"Each step taken opens up more work needed to be done that was unseen by the naked eye. I am persistently repeating to volunteers: 'there is never a pressure, this is God's work, let's leave the pressure to Him, He's the one carrying the responsibility.'"

"It's so easy to think it's ours when it isn't. It's His building, His work, His plan, His money and we are His people! If it becomes ours, we make it what we want, to suit ourselves."



Clive Cornish

Clive has already been encouraged by the way God is working through the provision of volunteers and non-Christians wanting to join when the church opens later this year. He said: *"There have already been good things happening. Firstly, the Covid-19 lockdown began a week or so after the keys were handed over and the timing was perfect for us, as we could begin to work at the hall."*

"A local man Brad, who I saw at the end of my walk around Wales with the cross last year, has been a helper at REFLECT. He has told me, 'life has just got better since I met you.' Well, we know it isn't me working in his life. Brad often says, 'for some reason I'm in a better place than I have been for years.' And asks when he can join the church and how does he become a Christian. My heart is aglow during these times."

"Another non-Christian volunteer is Mark. He was laid off work at the beginning of the lockdown and worked eight weeks, for five days a week, volunteering at REFLECT. He's asked if he could come to the church and do the sound management when it opens. God is worth leaning on because He knows the complete plan, we sometimes overthink things instead of leaving it to Him."

Counties Planting Network has been offering support and advice to Clive to help establish REFLECT Community Church. Clive said: *"I have constantly found support, understanding, and*



The Gospel Hall during refurbishment

grace. The experience within Counties for church planting, methods, planning, resources and simple guidance from those who have already gone through similar works is invaluable.

"We hope to make the hall a focal meeting place, enabling us to reach people where they are with the Gospel. It's going to take prayer, time, and a lot of hard work."

"It does make me feel so much more secure knowing the net is there, and the purpose is genuinely a heart to see God change lives, to save people. It's second to none. It hasn't been an easy road, but I can honestly say that Counties, for me, has been a lifeline to fulfilling the plan God has written for me, and this plan includes my wife Fiona, children, close family and friends. What a God! Lean on Him. Rest in Him."

For more information about Counties Planting Network, contact Tim Cracknell on 07975 994224.



Victor Jack

CHURCH PLANT CELEBRATES FIVE YEARS WITH BOOK OF TESTIMONIES

A church planted on a housing estate in Bury St Edmunds is marking its 5th anniversary with a book featuring testimonies from local people who have come to faith.

The idea came from Counties senior evangelist Victor Jack who has been supporting people over the years on their journey to Christ at West Road Church in Suffolk.

The book, 'Starting Over – a collection of testimonies', will also include the history of the church plant and will be used evangelistically through the church plus on the surrounding estates.

One of the people featured in the book is mother of three Sandra. Here's her testimony which features in the new book:

The first few years of Sandra's life was one of privilege until that is—on the day of her 11 plus exam—her much loved, 'hero' father died. Left with two brothers and a mother who was in

poor health and not coping, Sandra found herself raising her two brothers often without gas or electricity due to unpaid bills and no food on the table. Life was pretty miserable. She had to make her escape.



Hence Sandra married at 18 years old and went on to have two sons. Not long afterwards Sandra realised she was in an abusive and unfaithful relationship. So, with nowhere to turn, she went back home to her mum. Sadly, her mum was to die a few weeks later and once again she was alone, caring for her sons as well as two brothers.

For the next eight years Sandra got on with life. Today she admits she made plenty of mistakes but all she ever wanted was the best for her children. And then at last, a turn around. Sandra met and married Ed in 1978, and they had a third son. *"What a blessing"*, she says. *"Ed has been a great father and role model to all three boys."*

She settled into her good marriage, enjoying her career, first in law and later childcare. There was a nice home, food on the table and her sons were settled—or so she thought.

She discovered her middle son had become a drug addict. All too soon Sandra was in yet another battle, this time with cancer. To top this was the strain of having her youngest son fighting in Iraq. At times it seemed like too much to bear. At rock bottom, Sandra joined an Addiction Family Support group and learned how to stop being an 'enabler' to her addicted son but rather how to offer him the right kind of support.

As her son started his way out of addiction, he asked Sandra to come to his new-found church. The occasion was to be special as to her joy, he gave



his life to Jesus—a major step in his recovery. At first Sandra used to attend the church just to encourage her son. Then he challenged his mum to read the Bible. Soon Sandra found it was speaking to her too, especially the verse that says 'this is my beloved son whom I love' from Matthew.

In August 19, 2019, Sandra made her own commitment to Jesus, asking for his forgiveness for taking wrong roads in the past. She now runs her own support group for the loved ones of addicts and is an enthusiastic help and support to the church where both she and her son found faith. *"There will always be battles and blessings in life"*, says Sandra. *"But I no longer have to be in control and the now blessings far outweigh the battles"*.

Contact office@countiesuk.org to find out how to get a copy of the new book.

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES - THE FUTURE OF EVANGELISM AND CHURCH IN A POST COVID-19 WORLD

by Stephen McQuoid



Few of us could have predicted the disruption caused by Covid-19. For many it has meant the tragic loss of loved ones and the stress of living with the virus. It also meant the shutdown of the economy and the isolation of lockdown. Churches have also had to move online and learn to adapt.

The questions we need to ask now are how should we reach our lost community in the post Covid-19 world and what should church look like going forward? Predicting the future in uncertain times is difficult, however I would like to venture a tentative answer to both questions.

Evangelism

Firstly, let us think of Evangelism in this brave new world. One interesting feature of the pandemic is that it forced many people to reflect on their mortality. Even now as restrictions are easing, the memory of newscasts announcing the daily death toll have left many feeling fearful. This in turn

raised within our culture a heightened interest in spirituality. It was estimated that over lockdown, up to 25% of the UK population prayed or accessed an online church service. Many churches found hundreds of people tuning into their weekly Sunday service and many Counties evangelists saw their ministries blossoming.

While we rejoice at this, we should

remember the lesson Jesus taught us in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13). As the sower scattered his seed (v.4), some fell on the path and some on rocky ground. The seed on the path was snatched away while the seed on the rocky ground sprang up but lacked depth so was scorched and died. It has been exciting to see all that has happened evangelistically during this pandemic with many genuine conversions. However, without an outpouring of the Spirit of God it won't last. We are at a crucial time and need to call upon God to draw people to himself before this spiritual interest is snatched away or simply withers.

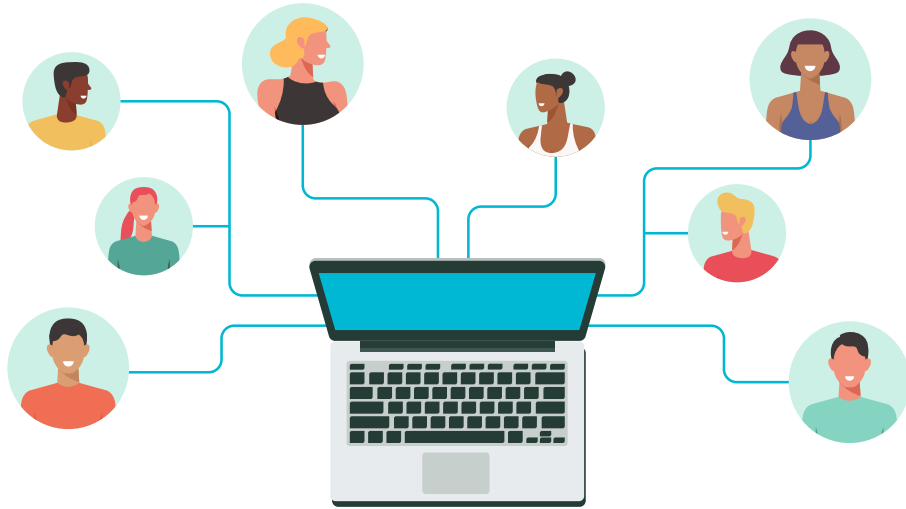
I also think we only have short time to capitalise on this situation. Eighteen months from now Covid-19 might become a memory and the national mood will change. For churches and

for Counties we therefore only have a short time to make the most of this potential harvest.

It should also be stated that even with this heightened sense of spirituality our culture remains as confused, superficial and distorted as ever. For a short time during lockdown many people began to appreciate the simple things in life like health, friendships, neighbourliness and having enough food to eat. The weekly applause for the NHS was a beautiful display of gratitude for what we have. However, no sooner had non-essential shops opened than our old materialistic habits reappeared. Clearly, the idols of our culture had not gone away!

Culturally we came to our senses again for a brief moment after witnessing the tragic death of George Floyd as a result





of the appalling behaviour of some Minneapolis policemen. We all felt the revulsion as we were reminded of the ugliness of racism, one of the most appalling human sins. Yet even the genuine righteous outrage that ensued was quickly seized upon by those wanting to point score so that the real winner was often not human dignity but identity politics. As Christians we should oppose racism and speak out for the weak and oppressed as Jesus did. But we do this because all people are made equal in the image of God and not because of a secular humanistic and anti-authority worldview.

Returning to the parable of the sower we note that some seed fell among thorns (v.7) where the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth choked it. All the rubbish we see in culture distances people from the good news. These powerful cultural forces are not going to disappear. We must continue to talk about human sin and the need for transformation because at a time such as this our world does not need more social justice warriors, but rather evangelists to bring hope and change to a dying world (Mat.28:19)

Church

What about church in a post Covid-19 world? Perhaps the biggest lesson we have learned is that churches can offer teaching, worship and corporate prayer online, but cannot provide togetherness. It is fellowship that Christians most missed during lockdown and that is a key part of church life.

The New Testament tells us what

church should do (Ac.2:42 – Teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer) but not how those things should be done, so we have great freedom. Much of what we do may be legitimate, but it is more a product of church culture than biblically mandated. Could this be a time to recalibrate and rethink how we do church going forward? If so, the following are questions that might be worth reflecting on.

1. Do we need a 45-minute sermon each Sunday when during lockdown churches managed to offer quality teaching in just 25 minutes?
2. How many church services does a church actually need? Don't mistake activity for effectiveness, in the immediate future restrictions will make church services awkward and tiring. Less is more!
3. Fellowship is a key issue. Should churches rethink what it means for Christians to share their lives together?
4. Is the digital mission field something we should tap into indefinitely?
5. Given that the government does not see church as an essential service, what can we do to show church matters or how can we learn to be effective from the margins?
6. This crisis will not be the last. There may come a time when we face persecution. How do we build strong disciples who will flourish whatever the pressure?



HOW TO CONNECT BETTER WITH FAMILIES ONLINE

A huge amount of churches have added videos and resources online in light of social distancing measures over the last few months. West Midlands evangelist Paul Willmott shares ideas on connecting better with families using digital resources:

It's great to see that lots of churches have gone digital and are sharing resources to reach their communities. But it does bring two words to my mind: Content and Connection.

Content

Are we creating videos and resources that have good content? We obviously want to find good Biblical content along with some fun too. However, we can't simply replicate what we do in a live situation and then expect it to work in video. I have been filming assembly videos for my YouTube channel 'Paul at Home' these videos start with a puppet introducing the theme, then I retell an event from the Bible. Finally, the puppet returns to help present the teaching point to everyone.

I soon learnt that I couldn't just film

me presenting an assembly, I had to create an engaging video. Filming on your phone and simply editing on your laptop has limitations, but it is worth spending a little time to make things look engaging. If you don't have the technical know-how, is there someone else in your church that could help?

Schools who have used these videos have said, "we have started using your assembly videos, the staff have found it so useful." "Thanks for the links to your website and the weekly assemblies...we will definitely be using them." "It so lovely to hear

from you. The children, in my bubble, responded really well to your video and did a follow up to a question. Some lovely responses."

Connection

Are we helping to create point of connection? Some people have been feeling isolated and maybe feel like they have lost a place of connection. It is relatively easy to create or find videos that we can make available to our kids and families, but will that really keep their attention when there is so much other content to watch online. The one thing that we can offer is a real connection with the family of God. How can we go about that? We can be asking questions and encourage the viewers to chat about the subject in their homes. I have also been filming some fun puppet videos on the YouTube Channel 'Twist Online'. In these videos Twist has some fun, then he asks a BIG Faith Question, encouraging viewers to talk about the question at home.

With so much choice available and lots of Christian content around it's also good to encourage kids or families to talk about faith at home. It is in our questions and conversation that we can often find out faith is strengthened. My website twistonline.co.uk has short videos to watch, puzzle pages to colour and then deeper questions that you can chat through even some activities to try while you talk. Why not print off activity pages and post them to your children, we all like receiving nice things in the post, it might also help the kids engage with the content.

Creating online groups on social media for families so they can add their comments too gives another point of connection. Why not ask people to add their comments and videos. That way there is something of a two-way conversation. One children's worker at a local church runs kids Zoom meetings, one for 5-10s and the other for under fives. These have been mainly a time to connect with each other along with some Bible teaching and prayer.

During one of these video meetings one lad aged three was heard saying, "God is so beautiful!" You can see the photo him praying during one of these calls.

To watch Twist Online visit: <https://twistonline.co.uk>



JUST A MINUTE

WITH COUNTIES HEREFORDSHIRE EVANGELIST

GEORGIE DOWLING



Tell us a bit about yourself

I am married to Craig, and we have to two wonderful children, Noah is 7 and Bethany is 3. I am a full-time mum, home educator, pastor's wife, and love letting God take the reins and see what He has planned next.

What has been your favourite part of lockdown?

Spending more time immersed in God's presence, seeing what he is doing in my life has given me a new confidence and blessing.

What has been the most challenging part of social distancing?

I have missed seeing family and friends. I am a people person and I love conversation so have missed the face to face contact with others. Although we are able to see a few people, which has been such a blessing.

How do you balance being a Mum with devotional time/church?

I am thriving at the moment. We have home-educated our children before lockdown began which has been such a blessing. We love the fact that God is blessing us so richly, as a family, in spending so much time together. We have a devotional time as a family in the morning, and Craig and I have one every evening. We are being blessed in our church life as God is putting new things on our hearts. I guess we have found a balance in spending most of our day in God's presence. We worship with the kids at home, and they love to explore everything there is to know about the Bible.

What's your favourite Bible verse and why?

My favourite Bible verse is Philippians 4:13 which says, 'I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength'. This verse has always been my favourite for as long as I can remember. It shows us that our God is a mighty, powerful, awesome God. Notice it says 'all', not some, or a few, but we can do ALL things through the power of our incredible saviour. Trust in His might and He will never fail you!

What do you do to relax?

A coffee and a good book always fill me with a deep calm. I love to immerse myself in different books. I also really enjoy to crochet. I find it relaxing, and love to see what can be created from nothing.

What's so good about where you live?

We live on a farm in the Herefordshire countryside. Everything has been a blessing for us. From the little community that we have to watching buzzards and red kites in the fields. God finds ways every day to bring us more of His blessings.

Have you read any good books recently?

I have just re-read 'Miracle at the Higher Grounds Café' by Max Lucado. This is a fantastic story about forgiveness, kindness, love, and a knowing that God has His powerful hands over every moment of our lives. I would recommend this to anyone who loves to see the power of God shown through the weaknesses of human life.

YOUR LOCAL EVANGELISTS

NORTH OF ENGLAND

Tim & Charissa Cooke
Julian & Ella Gutteridge
Martin & Angie Korchinsky
Lee & Lesley Marsland
Matt & Nicola Rich
Rob & Sarah Watson
Phyllis Jenkins (Senior)
Jackson & Sarah Turner (ETP)
Aaron & Rachel Shah (ETP)
Jonny & Pamela Gios (ETP)

MIDLANDS

David & Lindsey Brown
Ivor & Angela Cooper
Tim & Katrina Cracknell
Craig & Georgie Dowling
Andy & Isobel Hodson
Paul & Vanessa Willmott
Roger & Hazel Chilvers (Seniors)
Ruby Powell (Senior)
Bob & Rita Telford (Seniors)

SOUTH EAST

Charles & Elizabeth Addoco
Shaun & Livi Almond (ETP)
Will & Lynne Andrews
Tim & Joy Ayrton
Mark & Amanda Bingham (ETP)
John Hardwick
Kim & Jo Hobbs
Tony & Ruth Hood
Colin & Linda Johnson
Caleb & Adanesh Mathewos
Andrew & Rachel Mugford
Madelene Bathgate (Senior)

AE – Associate Evangelist
ETP – Evangelists' Training Programme

Lionel Clargo (Senior)
Ray & Carol Dadswell (Seniors)
Wendy Iliffe (Senior)
Victor Jack (Senior)
Andy & Miriam Jelfs (Seniors)
John & Jane Martin (Seniors)
Betty Saunders (Senior)
Gladys Whittern (Senior)

SOUTH WEST

Jacque & Tim Bodman
Mike & Su Stange
David & Katie Symons
Steve Ellacott (AE)
Jean Campbell (Senior)

SOUTH CENTRAL

Jonathan & Heather Brain
Jamie Broadey (ETP)
Ian & Sally Carr
Gordon & Penny Curley
Steve & Dawn Loader
Stephen & Jean Gillham (Seniors)
Hettie Hall (Senior)

WALES

Clive & Fiona Cornish
Paul & Laura Davies
Phil & Sheila Davies
Janet Hawking (AE)
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Liz David & David
Bhakiaraj (ETP)

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