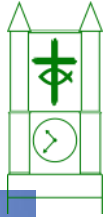


The Link

June 2020



Shanklin United Reformed Church www.shanklinurc.co.uk

View From Number 10



Good News People...

Since I wrote at Easter for the May magazine, we have all got rather used to the changing pattern of life and have also come to realise that it will be some time before we see anything like normality.

It would seem that churches will not be sharing in worship in any familiar fashion for some long time, as social distancing measures are kept in place - the very opposite to the biblical concept of *koinonia* – the Greek word usually translated as fellowship.

We may feel deprived and on the back foot but must be mindful of the reality that our lockdown is nothing compared to what others are suffering around the world. Whilst some may have concerns over jobs and finances, most of us are still under a safe roof and have clean water, food to eat and reliable sanitation. Many in the world have no hope of self isolating as they haven't any personal space. Christians in lots of countries where they are in the minority are suffering even more than most, as they do not tend to get much of the help and resources that are on offer.

Isolation can have a real effect on our mental health, so please make an effort to look out for people. We have done our best to keep in touch with everyone via the weekly *Life Line* communication and other ad hoc calls and messages. Please continue to uphold those of us who are working to bring worship online to you every week and the team of Elders as they seek to give good leadership.

Let's all take inspiration from Paul and Silas singing their hearts out in the Philippian jail. God can move mightily in the most unexpected ways! We must keep our eyes on the Lord and not let our heads drop as we struggle on through this very odd season. The building may be closed - but the church should remain open in every sense of the word, and we must be seen as good news people.

The church must reflect the life and example of its Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We should be sacrificial, generous and giving people, not just seeking to protect ourselves through this crisis. We must take

responsibility for the whole community and be especially concerned for the most vulnerable. We can't do things in all the usual ways but we must be creative and willing to be used however God leads us. Do pray and ask him how you can serve....

As we try to look out for others, please don't be afraid to let us know if you need any help and support,

With love and best wishes,



Prayer

Tuesday Prayer at 19:30 is now held via Zoom using the same account as for the live service broadcasts – see [page 5](#).

It has been great to have a good number sharing together each week - do please join us if you are able – you can ring in from an ordinary phone, which is a normal landline charge.

Do continue to use our Prayer Chain if there are urgent and important issues that need prayer. Phone Hazel on 865181 or Jean on 863850 - and do consider joining this if you are around at home.



Everyone is encouraged to pray at 20:20 on the 20th of each month in 2020 for 20 minutes!

it's on a Saturday this month!

Pray that God will give many opportunities to speak about Christ
Colossians 4:3

Church Refurbishment Update

As a result of the generosity of members of the fellowship (thank you) and of the Wessex Trust (who have allowed us a 25% grant towards the cost) we now have sufficient monies to carry out the refurbishment of the church ~ not only the main worship space but also all areas which are in need of repair (e.g. the bookshop, the prayer room, access stairs to both the balcony and the basement etc.).

We will carry out the works to our main worship area in the first instance (including the balcony) then assess other areas in need of renovation.

This involves preparatory work allowing access to our under-floor area (which houses part of our heating system and electrical connections), and we have begun this work in the last few days.

The main refurbishment comprises painting the worship space and finally replacing the carpet. We hope to be able to begin the works during “lockdown”, whilst the church building is closed, and are currently discussing options with the contractors who will be doing the work. We expect to have completed this stage by the first week in September and perhaps before!

Your Property Team will be supervising & overseeing the work, led by Malc, Brian and Robin . If you have any questions or issues you would like to raise, please contact Robin in the first instance

The Property Team



Live Streaming of Talks and Prayers

During this period when we cannot meet for worship, Brian continues to speak by Facebook Live – just search for Shanklin United Reformed Church.



Tuesdays at 13:00

Sundays at 11:00

You don't have to be a Facebook user to access a Facebook Page – just click on this link and it should take you in...

www.facebook.com/pg/ShanklinUnitedReformedChurch/videos/

Tune in and watch – and feel that sense of togetherness during the live broadcast. If you are Facebook user you can share your greetings and thoughts on the screen as it goes along.

Those not on the internet can also access the audio feed via the Zoom Video Conferencing facility on their ordinary phone line:



If you want to phone in to listen, please dial:

02034 815240

or 02030 512874

Follow the instructions and when prompted for the meeting:-

Meeting ID 324 266 5584 then #

for Participant ID just press #

Password 936536 then #



Please pray for this to be really effective and for Brian and the team to adjust to the challenges of communicating through these means and for Peter Dawson assisting with the online technology.



Who I Am in Christ

Last month Neil showed us that, as God's children, we are called to be saints. Perhaps we do not always feel and act like that, but it is important to acknowledge what God has done for us; to take hold of the freedom He gives us and therefore to see who we really are in Christ. To achieve freedom, we have only to accept that which we know is already true ~ God's Word!

Brian recently spoke of us sometimes not fully appreciating who we are as co-heirs with Christ and the power that this brings. In Christ we are Secure, Accepted and Significant and here are some biblical truths which confirm this. Why not choose two or three from each section which particularly resonate with you and study the passages

Robin

Loving heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die for my sin so I may have eternal life. And thank You that in Christ my need for identity, significance, security and a sense of belonging is met because:

I am Secure...

I am free from condemnation (Romans 8:1-2)

I am assured that all things work together for good (Romans 8:28)

I am free from any condemning charges against me
(Romans 8:31-34)

I cannot be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39)

I have been established, anointed, sealed by God
(2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

I am hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3)

I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected (Philippians 1:6)

I am a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20)

I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a self-control (2 Timothy 1:7)

I can find grace and mercy to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16)

I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me (1 John 5:18)

I am Significant...

I am the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-14)

I am a branch of the true vine, Jesus, a channel of His life (John 15:1, 5)

I have been chosen and appointed by God to bear fruit (John 15:16)

I am a personal, Spirit-empowered witness of Christ (Acts 1:8)

I am a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16)

I am a minister of reconciliation for God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

I am a fellow worker with God (2 Corinthians 6:1)

I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6)

I am God's workmanship, created for good work (Ephesians 2:10)

I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12)

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! (Philippians 4:13)

I am Accepted...

I am God's child (John 1:12)

I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)

I have been justified (Romans 5:1)

I am united with the Lord and I am one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17)

I have been bought with a price; I belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

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I am a member of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:27)

I am a saint, a holy one (Ephesians 1:1)

I have been adopted as God's child (Ephesians 1:5)

I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18)

I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins (Colossians 1:14)

I am complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10)

Our Essential Identity (10 Apr 2020)

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26)

Adam was created physically and spiritually alive. He possessed eternal life from his first breath and enjoyed God's abiding presence in the Garden of Eden.

Furthermore, unlike the animal kingdom that operated by divine instinct, Adam was created in the likeness of God with a mind, emotions and will, giving him the ability to think, feel and choose. No other created being can make that claim.

After creating Adam, God said, ***"It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18)***. So, He created a suitable helper for him: Eve. They both enjoyed a sense of belonging to God and each other. Not only that, God gave them a purpose: to ***"rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth" (Genesis 1:26)***. Adam and Eve didn't have to search for significance; they had it in their relationship with God. And because God was present with them, they lived in perpetual safety and security.

Eternal life, identity, purpose, significance, security and a sense of belonging are all attributes of mankind created in the image of God. Adam and Eve experienced these attributes in full measure, and we were destined to enjoy them too.

But when Adam sinned, he died spiritually and forfeited everything God had provided. Being separated from God, Adam's glowing attributes became glaring needs. As children of Adam born separated from God, we come into the world with these same glaring needs. We

wander through life striving to make a name of ourselves, looking for security in temporal things, and searching for significance apart from God. Is it a hopeless quest? No! We are able to fulfil these needs by establishing a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Everything Adam enjoyed in the garden before he sinned is now at our disposal.

Neil Anderson
Freedom in Christ Ministries
Used by permission

Good News - Summer 2020

We have just received the **special summer edition** of this excellent newspaper. It is addressing the situation of Covid-19 with a very helpful lead article '**Peace in the Storm**' and an **80th anniversary tribute** - '**The Real Miracle of Dunkirk**' and another on '**Derby Dam Deliverance**' when villagers believed prayer stopped a dam disaster.

Those who are receiving 'Lifeline' during lockdown days will get a copy in their mailing, but if others of our church family would like a copy - these are excellent to share with family, friends & neighbours when the circumstances allow, then I will be very happy to post one to you. It's not available to read online.

Blessings, Jane H

Connection Quiz

1. What was the armed combatant who entertained audiences in arenas during Roman times?
2. Who was the queen of Egypt who died in 30BC?
3. What is the name of the French island to the north of Sardinia?
4. What event originated in Greece but now alternates every two years (in theory!!), between Summer and Winter?
5. And what is the connection between the answers to questions 1 - 4? Think literature.

Answers are on [Page 31](#)

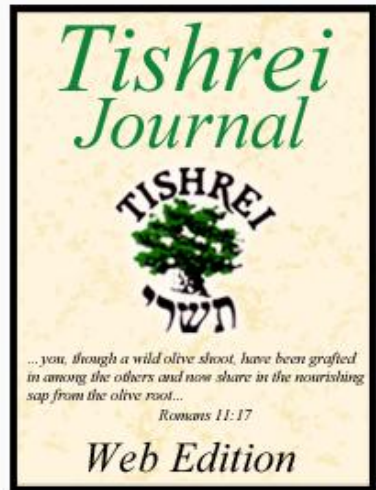


The Roots of Our Faith

(by Melodie and Roy Wilson)

Having experienced the wealth of going through 10 sessions of 'Israel Revealed', as a small group (by the way, we certainly aim to host further groups), we believe that we in the Church are, in fact, impoverished – and susceptible to deception – when we do not build on the foundations (roots of the olive tree as referred to in Romans 11) established for us by God through the lives of the Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and when we do not walk in the truth that we are grafted in – as wild olive branches – to this natural olive tree alongside our Jewish brothers and sisters who now recognise Jesus the Messiah and are re-grafted natural olive branches.

When Eileen suggested that we share a sample of the highly recommendable teaching of Tishrei (a publication founded by Clifford Denton see <https://www.tishrei.org/journal.html>) to expand our understanding as Christians on what really are the roots of our faith we were really amazed to read the following, which sounds to us to have been prophetic, considering the fact that there have been many confirmations that God has been working in His Body worldwide through the present pandemic to prepare us for change:



First published in Tishrei Vol 1 No 1, Autumn 1992, Clifford Denton writes:

“Let me first make a clear statement. Unless a fellowship or a believer responds to the call to be grafted properly into the Saviour (John 15:6), which is symbolised by being properly grafted into the same olive tree as the Jewish believers (Romans 11) then, in the coming days, there is the danger of being seduced by growing deception. Deception may be harder and harder to discern, so the time is now, to explore and rediscover the roots of our faith I want to

make just a few comments in this our first edition of Tishrei.

“This is to encourage our readers and to suggest that there is a way forward that is not beyond us. Even the idea of a scholarly journal is too much for some Christians to take, let alone study up on all the history and theology that is drawn into focus. Nevertheless, we must affirm that it is the Holy Spirit who will lead us into all truth, and He has managed to minister to each of us at the point of our need up to now, so I do not think that He will fail us in the next phase of history. Furthermore, we are called into a body with a range of complimentary ministries and gifts.

“Thus, in the coming days of restoration, more than ever before are we going to need to live as a body. The day may be coming where smaller and more intimate fellowships will consolidate their life of faith together, making use of homes, devoting themselves more deeply to each other. This is how it was in the early church. This is a picture for fellowships across the world rather than for any particular country. However, we must be open to variety and individual characteristics of cultures to be retained, which are not contrary to disciplines of our faith.

“Nevertheless, surely, we must not cling to the past, particularly where dryness and staleness, even rottenness has entered our experience of lives as believers. This will require a teachable spirit to be abroad in the Church, in every believer. It may lead to repentance, particularly from pride, and possibly from anti-Semitism and other forms of racism, as we seek to emerge from a parochial view of Christianity, and even a past heritage. There may be a time when the existing structures of denominations are too rigid to hold what God would lead believers into. In short, there must be an openness to change.

“Openness to change will raise up many questions, and it is in the asking of questions that momentum grows towards reformation – even revival. Indeed, I would suggest that revival in the established Church will be in the context of recognising what God is doing in the world, particularly in Israel. How else can God revive and bless and bring increase?” ...

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“We are to be properly grafted into the olive tree alongside our elder brother, the Jew. It is a family that we come into by adoption, so it is time to live as if this were so”...

“Am I exaggerating the importance of this? Think back to the time of the return from the exile at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. This is the main focus of Scripture and, therefore, history at the time. There were many people in the world in many other countries, but God was working through Israel and very little else is recorded in Scripture.

“Today we are living in a time of even greater fulfilment. If Scripture were being written today, I suggest that it would seem as if the main focus would be the gathering of God's people for salvation. For the Jew, that is first in terms of a return to the land. On this particular return, however, the Gentile world can also be included in what God is doing, and there will be a last and major harvest as the work is completed.

“The focus on the (*Jews*) return to the land and the establishment of a properly rooted company of believers, worldwide, is the major priority in the world and in the closing phases of history.

We must acknowledge this priority by taking whatever action is necessary to be properly rooted together, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and according to His revelation. For His is the sap which sustains both trunk and branches.”

Again, Clifford Denton writes on 10th Apr 2015 in *Prophecy Today* (though first prepared for Tishrei) – Christianity's Relationship with Israel and the Jews:

“The Tanakh (Old Testament) bears witness to Israel's chosen status, and follows its history through all of its phases. When the Nation was divided after the time of King Solomon (2 Chronicles 10), and following the exile of the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 17), Judah, just one of the Twelve Tribes, came into prominence.

“Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah) came from this Tribe of Judah, and thus from the background of both Israel and Judah. When the Gospel went out across the whole world, Gentiles were called by faith into the Covenant family.

“Parting of the Ways: For nearly 2000 years, since the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Jews have been dispersed across the world, but have not lost their national identity. Meanwhile, however, various Christian theologies have emerged which have re-positioned the Christian Church as a distinct entity from the Jewish world, severing links between them.

“The faith of Jesus and the Apostles was solidly based on the Hebrew Scriptures and Second Temple Judaism. Earliest Christianity was one among the many Judaisms of the first century. Neither Jesus nor the apostles attempted to break away from their heritage and form a new, different, religion. Indeed, the break of the Church from its true roots has had immense consequences, as we shall see in future studies.

“The end of the 20th Century and beginning of the 21st have marked a new era of re-discovery. Israel has become a territorial nation again and so Christianity’s roots are being re-assessed. Was the break from the Jewish world unnecessary? If so, in what way is the Church linked to Israel and the Jews?”...

“God has preserved the Jewish people despite the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and all the pogroms, anti-Semitism and even the Holocaust of recent history. God has been faithful to his Covenant promises, and biblical prophecies relating to Israel and the Tribe of Judah are being fulfilled before us today.”...

“The departure of the Church from these roots has had serious consequences over the years. One is that distance has grown between Christians and Jews, so much so that, whether by default or design, Christians have contributed to the anguish of Jews over the centuries. One consequence of the Christian Church restoring its true roots is that Jewish/Christian relationships will be strengthened again. This is not the only reason for this course of study but it could be a major fruit.

When we study the separation of the Church from the Synagogue and enter into the issue of Jewish/Christian relations, many will find that their old assumptions and pre-conceptions suddenly need to be reconsidered.

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“For some it is a wake-up call, for others a prompt to repentance, but chiefly it is an opportunity to go forward more securely to the time of the Messiah’s return, conscious of our place in the Olive Tree of Romans 11 and the One New Man of Ephesians 2.”

As if to underline the above, on 20th May 2020, Issachar Ministries emailed the following as part of their “Wednesday Word – a Word of Warning from Clifford Hill” (which you can also find in Prophecy Today <https://prophecytoday.uk/comment/editorial/item/1856-the-valley-of-jehoshaphat.html>)

“I believe God (is) calling for repentance in all nations where the sins of humanity have reached the 'tipping point' that is incurring inevitable judgment. God hates the shedding of innocent blood through the millions of babies that are being aborted. And he hates the greed, violence and injustice that is driving the world economy, whereby millions go to bed hungry every night while others live in luxury. The message I am hearing is that **it is only repentance and turning that can stop the plagues (Covid-19 and locust plagues) from devastating the nations.**

But the supreme measure by which God judges the nations is the way they treat Israel, God’s covenant people, **because that is a measure of their attitude towards God himself.** They hate Israel because they hate God: and Israel and Jerusalem symbolise God in the minds of millions of people. Just as the Nazis blamed the Jews for all their misfortunes, people in many other nations today still do the same. The nations persecute Jews because the nations are in rebellion against God.

Many of these nations not only hate Jews, they also hate Christians and many Christians are suffering intensely, even to martyrdom, at their hands. It may be that God is now calling time upon these purveyors of hate and violence who show no mercy to those who love Jesus as Lord and Saviour.”

To Be Continued Next Month

Clifford Denton's text used by permission

United Church of Zambia



An update on the support from the URC in Wessex to the people of the Lusaka Presbytery of the UCZ.

Last month, I expressed my own thanks and that of Bishop Chomba and the Lusaka Presbytery for the funds contributed by local churches and the willingness of the Wessex Trust to provide matching funding. This allowed an initial gift of £10,000 to be sent to Zambia in mid-April. Transmission of those funds has proved to be a tortuous process and the need in Zambia is great. Although the number of infections from covid-19 in Zambia are relatively small (146 cases and 4 deaths at the time of writing) the restrictions on daily life that have helped achieve that low level of infection have wrought havoc. As previously reported this disruption coming on top of the effects of drought has driven up the price of basic food-stuffs.

For the Church the impact has been dire, their ability to function financially depends on immediate cash flow and with congregations unable to meet money has immediately dried up. The generosity of the churches on the Wessex Synod has continued, although many I know will be facing financial challenges of their own, and contributions have continued to come into the Synod Office. Gifts from churches and individuals have brought another £10,000 and at its meeting today (May 7th) the Wessex Trust agreed to extend its matched-funding so that cover the full amount. We are therefore preparing to send a further £20,000 to Zambia, probably in two instalments.

It means that, as things stand, URC Wessex will have made gifts to our sisters and brothers of the United Church of Zambia of £30,000. If you have been considering a gift but have not yet acted it is not too late and the Trust has agreed a small further margin for match-funding should it be required. These are unprecedented times and the churches of the Wessex Synod have responded with unprecedented generosity, on behalf of those with whom we are linked in the Lusaka Presbytery I thank you most sincerely.

Nigel Appleton, *Zambia Link Co-ordinator for URC Wessex Synod*

Joy on the Menu in Lebanon

Mission Update - *“We pray that ‘Reconcile’ creates a positive atmosphere of reconciliation and forgiveness among refugee children”*



A teenage boy helped the clown pack up his material and put it in his car after a performance to entertain refugee children in Lebanon. 'Do you remember me?' the boy, aged about 16, asked the clown. 'About six years ago you taught us how much God cares for us and listens to us when we talk to him about things that scare us. Now I rely on God when I am in a difficult situation.'

The clown, a man called Wissam Rajha, who uses the stage name 'Billy Cookie', was amazed when the boy recounted the show in great detail.

We would not be able to share this wonderful testimony if your generous gifts and powerful prayers had not helped transform this boy's life in the first place.

And he is not the only one to have turned to Christ. The Bible-guided trauma healing projects such as 'Reconcile' that your regular giving enables are having a huge impact among Syrian and Iraqi refugee children living in Lebanon, a country where there are about 1.5 million refugees. Children who are full of despair, having been forced out of their homes, or even having seen those close to them killed, are being encouraged through 'Reconcile' to exchange hate and fear for hope and love.

A Billy Cookie performance is part of the 'Reconcile' programme that tours refugee camps and schools for underprivileged Lebanese children. It might be full of fun with magic tricks, puppets and games, but at its core is biblical storytelling revealing Christian values of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Thirty-six visits were made to refugee camps and public schools last year, reaching more than 8,000 young people. Each one heard the word of God and was given a portion of Scripture to take home with them. The Bible portions focused on reconciliation, healing and

forgiveness.

Your kind support through Bible a Month is ensuring the 'Reconcile' programme is having a strong, lasting impact in Lebanon, as shown by the teenage boy's testimony above. Thanks to your gifts thousands more children will be reached this year.

"We pray that the 'Reconcile' programme creates a positive atmosphere of reconciliation and forgiveness among refugee children," Wissam says.

Prayer Pointers

- Ask that Wissam will be given energy, inspiration and protection as he continues his ministry for the children who are growing up in very difficult conditions in these refugee camps.
- Pray for the other leaders involved in this programme and that they will gain courage and wisdom by reading the *Arabic Peace & Justice Bible*.
- Pray that 'Reconcile' will help heal the wounds of trauma suffered by these youngsters and that it will continue to change lives for good in the region.
- Ask the Lord to be a guiding light of peace and forgiveness to more and more children in these camps and all who witness the show.



Source: [Bible Society](#)
(used by permission)

Finance Report

As we have not had a Church Meeting for a while, I thought I would let you know how the church finances are holding up.

Maintenance Fund: stood at £16,223.62 at 30th April

As you will know, we are looking to refurbish the interior of the Church and so far £17,450 (including Gift Aid) has been pledged for this work and this is being placed in the Maintenance Fund as it is received.

This, along with the Grant from Synod, means we should be able to complete all the work without needing to use any money from the General Fund which is great news.

General Fund: stood at £14,858.88 at 30th April

Currently the General Fund is looking quite healthy, partly due to a very generous one-off gift received in April.

The normal weekly/monthly giving for April was down by around 10%, which considering we are not meeting on a Sunday at the moment is perhaps not surprising. This is not as bad as it might have been as some people have been putting money through mine and Robin's letter boxes and putting money directly into the bank.

I would like to thank all of you, on behalf of the Elders and myself, for your ongoing financial support for the Church at this time and for the generous gifts for the refurbishment of the Church.

Thank you and God bless.

Colin Tamcken
Treasurer

If you normally give in the weekly offertory, please consider dropping your gifts through mine or Robin's letter box - 20 Victoria Avenue – or 25 St Paul's Crescent or if you use internet banking you could make a payment using the following details:

Account Name: Shanklin URC, Sort Code: 30-97-42, Account Number: 00011024

Reference - *add Surname and "Gift" if it needs to be linked for Gift Aid.*

Bible a Month



Did you know it costs around £10 to provide a Bible to someone? Join **Bible a Month** and help give the Bible around the world, changing lives, month after month.

Peiji's Story

The Church in China is growing faster than we can possibly imagine with around one million people coming to faith each year!

These new believers long for a Bible of their own but, for many the cost is too high. Around half of rural Christians in China still don't have a Bible.

Peiji had been a Christian for years but couldn't afford to buy a Bible. Instead she had to jot down things she could remember from Scripture on scraps of paper. She longed to have a Bible of her own to read and when our team arrived in her village Peiji's joy was plain to see. She clutched the Bible to her chest and lifted her face to the sky in pure joy.

Please help bring the life-giving message of the Bible to more people like Peiji across the world.

Just £10 can help translate, print and distribute the Bible, changing lives, for good.

Here's what your monthly gift could do:

Distribution - Those unable to buy a Bible for themselves can receive a free or subsidised copy.

Translation - Bibles can be translated to reach more people with the word of God.

Literacy - Literacy classes, audio and braille Bibles can be given to those for whom the Bible is an inaccessible book.

Engagement - The Bible can be brought to life and advocated for here in England and Wales.

You can join at www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/bible-a-month/bible-a-month-signup/

A Wonderful Answer to Prayer

In the early days of the **Prayer Group for the Persecuted Church**, much of our prayer was directed to the Soviet Union and its satellite states.

Romania was a country that was greatly repressive to Christianity - the wonderful man of God, **Pastor Richard Wurmbrand and his wife, Sabina**, spent long years in prison for their faith and were instrumental in alerting the western world to what was happening to the Christian church under communism.

Pastor Wurmbrand subsequently founded the ministry '**Christian Mission to the Communist World**' - now '**Release International**' and his & Sabina's very moving story can be seen on the DVD '**Tortured for Christ**' (do ask if you'd like to view this).

It was **such** a privilege to be part of countless Christian groups and believers in many nations of the world praying for our brothers and sisters in the old Soviet Bloc and **such** a thrilling time when the Berlin Wall came down and those who had been persecuted becoming free to practice their faith. We must, however, remain vigilant, because we are now at a time when there is more persecution than ever from many different sources and when our brothers and sisters in communist China have been facing increasing levels of restrictions and persecution for some time.

However, the following article is such an encouragement to persevere in prayer - do read this and be blessed & encouraged.

Praying for an Underground Bible School

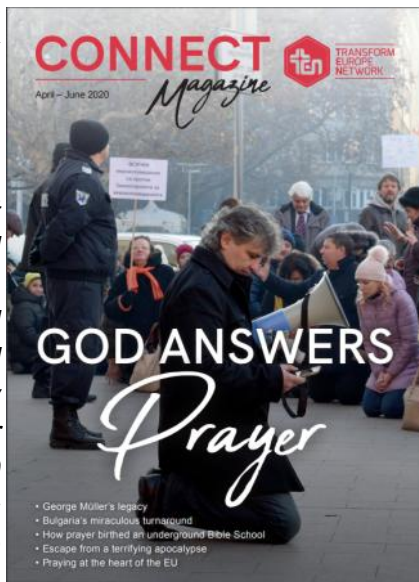
Prayer birthed an underground Bible school that eventually became the Emanuel University Oradea in Romania

During the darkest years of persecution under Communism, revival came to the beleaguered Second Baptist Church of Oradea during the ministry of pastor Liviu Olah. In the mid-1970s there were many months of fervent prayer and fasting and the Holy Spirit planted the vision for an 'underground' School of the Prophets to equip a new generation of men and women for evangelism, church planting and discipleship.

Fifty students enrolled for the first school and met in hiding. Away from the eyes of the communist secret police, the students gathered together in the mountains, in the woods or in homes during the night. Two years later, another fifty joined the school. They too experienced God's protection from the secret police and caught the vision. God also provided additional teachers and Bible study resources through the Slavic Gospel Association. Young evangelicals were on fire for Christ and His Kingdom. Soon, the floodgates were wide open for a new day in Eastern Europe and beyond. Finally, in December 1989 Communism lost the battle and the Iron Curtain fell.

With the demise of communism, the School of the Prophets emerged from the shadows as an evangelical theological seminary that was driven by the faith, fire and passion of the persecuted church. In 1990, Emanuel University Oradea was founded with nothing—no campus, no budget, no library and no faculty. By the grace of God, the underground Bible school became Europe's only government accredited Christian university to this day.

As an evangelical university, the vision expanded to train not only the next generation of pastors and missionaries, but also schoolteachers, social workers, musicians and business leaders for Romania and beyond. This year Emanuel University Oradea celebrates its 30-year anniversary with more than 2,800 graduates serving in forty countries around the world. Please continue to pray for the university, its staff, resources and students.



Praise God - indeed what a wonderful outcome!

Source: [Transform Europe Network Connect Magazine](#)
(previously Slavic Gospel Association)
Used by permission

A Story of Healing

– 'Those Who Look to Him Are Radiant!'

*Aki (not her real name), an Eritrean widow living in Ethiopia listened intently throughout three days of discipleship training, led by a **Release International partner** to a group of Eritrean Christians. Many of those who attended the training, which was held in a small Ethiopian town earlier this year, were pastors, but all were in some type of Christian ministry. Aki was one of seven women there.*

Eritrea is a small country on the Horn of Africa and is sometimes known as the North Korea of Africa because of the repressive regime and persecution experienced there by Christians. The training was an opportunity to strengthen these Eritrean Christians in their faith, to help equip them for ministry, whatever their circumstances, and to resource them to deal with the trauma they have all been through.

During the training there were opportunities to share testimonies and Aki was encouraged to share her story, but she refused, saying that she would be too upset to do so. On the last day, cards, written by Christians in the UK and Holland, and beautiful gifts of crocheted crosses and felt hearts made by two Release supporters, were distributed and one of the Eritrean brothers led a time of worship. Aki lifted her head, hands and voice in worship and praised God! The joy on her face was so evident and at the end of the session she shared a few words of encouragement with the group. "When I'm worshipping, I forget about my trauma," she said.

A couple of days later, a small group of us met Aki and she shared her testimony. She'd been a Christian since her teens and as a young Christian she had joined the National Military Service in Eritrea, sharing her faith with her fellow soldiers as they fought on the Eritrean/Ethiopian border. She was engaged to a fellow Christian, a medical worker, who was also sent to the frontline and on separate occasions they were both wounded but recovered from their injuries. Two weeks after their wedding, her husband was sent back to the frontline and did not return for three years. During his first visit home Aki became pregnant with their first daughter, but it was at this time, in about 2002, that the government clampdown on

so many Christians in Eritrea began. Aki's husband was arrested for his faith and spent the next few years in and out of prison. By 2005, Aki had two young daughters, but her husband was arrested and imprisoned once more. She never saw him again.

Aki herself was arrested for her faith and kept in solitary confinement for four months. Then, at new year, Aki says that she was sexually assaulted by one of the prison guards. After 10 months in prison she was released, having experienced a breakdown. Aki was sick and depressed; eventually she was diagnosed with HIV, which she believes was as a result of the assault. She felt overwhelmed with shame. Aki's husband died in prison four years after his final arrest, but she didn't receive confirmation for another four years.

Last year Aki fled Eritrea with her two teenage daughters and is now trying to re-establish her life in Ethiopia. But as she shared her story with us, her head was bowed in shame. Gone was the joy from her face. Together we read David's words from Psalm 34:4

'Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered in shame.'

As Aki repeated these words out loud several times, so her head gradually lifted, the look of shame fell away; the joy returned. "You fought for Eritrea, so you must fight for the kingdom of God," challenged our partner who had led the training. "Your weapon is the sword - the word of God!" After praying together, Aki left us with this challenge ringing in her ears. We pray that she will keep her head held high, her eyes fixed on Jesus, and that she will indeed fight for God's kingdom! Please pray for Aki and many other Eritrean Christian widows like her; that they will be equipped to minister, whatever their circumstances and wherever they are.

Many of you will remember the **Release International's prayer campaign 'Pray 173'** when as a church we prayed for the 173 Christian prisoners who had been in prison for 10 years or more. Would you please continue to pray for strength and encouragement for the hundreds of Christians who have been imprisoned in the repressive country - thank you so much.

Source: [Release International](#)
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Meeting Jesus in Dreams

The following item from the **Open Doors World Watch List 2020** shows how for many believers from a Muslim background around the world, they have had a life changing dream and this has been how their journey of faith begins.

May we pray that this year during the exceptional circumstances of Ramadan being during 'lockdown' that there would have been many more having life changing dreams and visions of Jesus.

Often these dreams feature a man in white. Fouad was raised in a conservative Muslim home in the Middle East. Aged 21, he dreamed he was in a desert where he met a man in white. The man spoke, "Fouad, know your way." When he woke, somehow Fouad knew he had to get hold of a Bible, so he did. Then the man in white appeared a second time. This time he said, "Fouad, you are on the right way." The third time seemed less like a dream, and more like the apostle Paul's experience of being taken into the presence of God. When Fouad woke, he had tears running down his cheeks and he gave his life to Jesus.*

I am with you

Tofik was a prominent leader at a madrassa (Islamic school) in East Africa. After training for decades to become an imam, he built 16 mosques and banned Christian preaching in his town.*

Then one night, he went to sleep. And met Jesus.

"I saw Jesus very clearly telling me to follow Him. I woke up very startled. When I explained it to my wife, she was scared and said, "We are going to be infidels, so we need to pray." Returning to sleep, Jesus immediately appeared to him again, saying, "It's me. Follow me. There will be persecution in your life, but in the end you



will be victorious. I am with you.”

The dream came true. His neighbours and family seized his possessions, as they would do if he were dead. He was thrown into jail, but on his release he shared the Gospel, and more than 200 people turned to Christ. He was attacked again, his properties looted and burned. His attackers were jailed, but Tofik chose to forgive them so they were released.

“I saw Jesus clearly telling me to follow Him. I woke very startled.”

Dreamed the same dream

We could share more stories. Like the brother and sister, in a closed Muslim country, who each separately dreamed the same dream: of their dying father meeting Jesus. When they dared to share their experience, their whole family became Christians and asked for 50 Bibles so they could read more about their new found faith.

Dreams and visions, meetings with Jesus - it sounds like something out of the pages of the New Testament. But it's happening every day and night around the world and it's changing lives.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for appearing to so many people in their dreams. We ask that many more would encounter You and turn to You. Help them to find others who can truly lead them into new life.

** Named changed for security reasons.*

You can order a copy of the World Watch List for yourself at worldwatch.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/wwl20-top-50/ - it is not available as a download.

As well as information and prayer points for each of the Top 50 countries, there are a host of other features, stories, photos and need-to-know background information. There's also a removable, double-sided Top 50 map – one side of which is a family-friendly version.

Source: [Open Doors](http://OpenDoors.org)
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FOCUS

on our Christian Brothers and Sisters who are being persecuted in The Maldives

World Watch List No. 14

The Leader of The Maldives: President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih

How Many Christians Live in The Maldives?

There are only 452,000 people living in the Maldives, and it's estimated a few thousand of them are Christians – almost all of them expatriates, mostly working in the tourism industry. Maldivian Christians must keep their faith completely secret.

Why Are Christians Persecuted in The Maldives?

The constitution of the Maldives says that the nation is '100 per cent Muslim'. Given the dense population of the country, the close-knit communities are very alert to any deviation from the norm.

What Is Life Like For Christians in The Maldives?

The Maldives is a common holiday destination, but the idyllic beauty of this island nation hides an oppressive regime. It is almost impossible for Christians to meet together, and any Maldivians found to have converted would lose their citizenship. Owning a Bible can lead to imprisonment. There have been cases where spouses have only discovered after years that both of them were active Christians, as they had hidden their faith from one another.

Even expatriate Christians are closely watched by the government, and sharing the gospel with Muslims is illegal and can result in deportation.

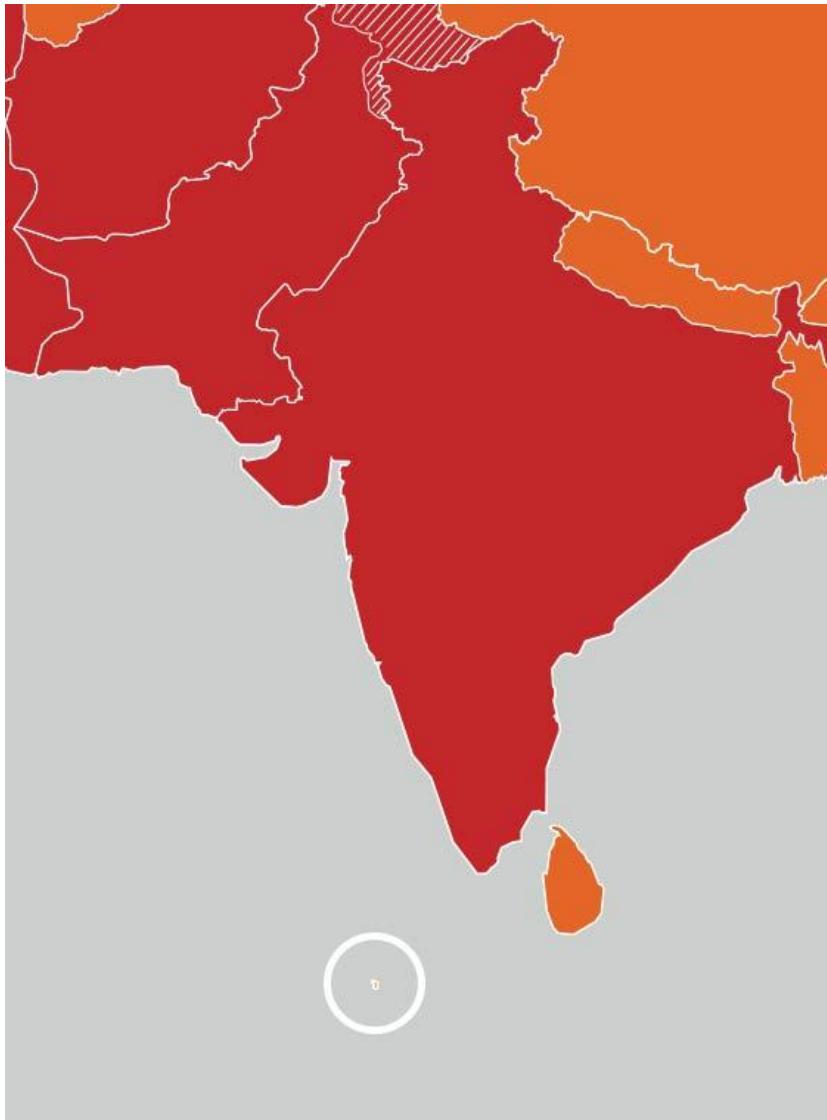
Open Doors calls for increasing prayer support from Christians around the world, particularly those of us who are able to meet together safely.

A Prayer for the Maldives

Father, we know that You are there in the Maldives, and that no regime is stronger than You. Please give opportunities for believers to meet with one another, study Your Word and share their faith, even when the opposition to this seems almost unbeatable. You are stronger than the opposition.

Amen

Source: [Open Doors](#) (used by permission)



The Puzzle Pages

Sudoku

A numerical placement puzzle!

To solve it you need to fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3 x 3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

					4		3	8
		9			1		6	
	4		2	6		5	9	
		5		3	2			
		1	8	5			7	
9	8		6					
		2					4	
8	5	7		2		9		
1								7

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
						8						9
10												11
						12	13			14	15	
16			17						18			
									19			
20						21			22			
			/						23			
24	25							26			27	28
			29								30	
								31				
32									33			

Last Month's Sudoku - how did you do?

8	4	3	5	1	9	7	6	2
9	6	7	2	4	8	5	1	3
5	1	2	3	7	6	9	8	4
6	3	4	9	8	5	2	7	1
1	5	9	4	2	7	8	3	6
7	2	8	1	6	3	4	5	9
3	9	1	8	5	4	6	2	7
2	8	6	7	9	1	3	4	5
4	7	5	6	3	2	1	9	8

Across

- 1 Country known for the forested region of Transylvania (7)
- 8 *I've got a lovely bunch of...* (8)
- 10 Hairdressers place (5)
- 11 Used to refer to a thing (2)
- 12 Possess (3)
- 14 Woody perennial plant (4)
- 16 Blessings listed in the Sermon on the Mount (10)
- 19 Claim you were somewhere else, or TV channel (5)
- 20 Flightless bird (4)
- 21 An animal also known as ermine (5)
- 23 French for 'of the' *m* (2)
- 24 A lock company (4)
- 26 The city of love ♥ (5)
- 29 The last one in 26 across (5)

- 30 Adam's mate (3)
- 31 Round green vegetable (3)
- 32 City & county town of Cumbria (8)
- 33 They went salmon fishing here in a 2011 film (5)

Down

- 1 An edible fruit (9)
- 2 Smallest member of the EU (5)
- 3 A female member of a religious community (3)
- 4 You can open one at a bank (7)
- 5 Place where an incident occurred (5)
- 6 First aeroplane used by the Red Arrows (4)
- 7 - *the Gaul* (7)
- 9 Normally worn with a suit (3)
- 13 - - 40 (2)
- 15 *British* -, was a nationalised transport company (4)
- 17 NE Kent district council (6)
- 18 Samedi is French for... (8)
- 21 Southampton FC nickname (6)
- 22 *For the love of* - 70s sitcom (3)
- 25 Swedish pop group (4)
- 26 Head of RC church (4)
- 27 Fabric join (4)
- 28 Haricot is one (4)

Sweets & Chocolates Quiz

Can you identify the sweets & chocolates from these clues...

1. 9, 10, 11, 12
2. Mediterranean residents?
3. Like Heineken perhaps?
4. Good stretch of road
5. Mother's local
6. Insect can't sing
7. 100% Au
8. A cult practice
9. You sometimes get these in a pond
10. Slight giggles
11. Ten cent pub
12. Reward
13. Lorry driver's snack
14. Arranged marriage partners
15. Gem orchard?
16. Not Loud
17. Medieval entertainers
18. Norman Watts in a helicopter
19. Nomad
20. Big cats drink here?
21. Nutty punishment
22. Fallen fruit

Answers will appear in next month's edition of **The Link**

Cover Picture

This month's picture is of Pegasus Bridge, a crossing over the Caen Canal, and the café adjacent to it was the first house to be liberated on D-Day on 6th June 1944. Pegasus Bridge museum is nearby.

Last Issue's Crossword - how did you do?

T	O	P	C	A	T		A		B	O	N	N	
O		A		E		A	R	D	A	L		E	
U	N	D	E	R		P		V		E		R	
L		D		O	R	P	H	E	U	S		G	O
O		Y	E				O	R		S		A	
U	P		T	O	U	R		S		E	L	S	E
S			H			O	N	E		D	O		V
E	P	H	E	S	U	S				S			E
	O		R			T	R	U	M	P	T	O	N
A	R	U	N			B	R	A	N		A		I
	T		E			U		S		I	R	O	N
S	O	U	T	H	A	M	P	T	O	N			G

Please note that the **DEADLINE** for contributions for the next magazine is:

Sunday 21st June

Contributions can be emailed at anytime up to the deadline to the editor at:

sparks_family@btopenworld.com

Answers to This Month's Connections Quiz

1. The armed combatant was a **Gladiator**.
2. The queen of Egypt was **Cleopatra**.
3. The French island is **Corsica**.
4. The **Olympic Games** originated in *Greece*.
5. And the connection is... Astérix books www.asterix.com/en/

When the pandemic is over, these are our activities

Sunday Services

Morning 10:30 Worship for the whole church family

- ➔ **Holy Communion** on 1st Sunday of each month
- ➔ Café style **All Age Worship** is on the last Sunday of the month
- ➔ **Junior Church**, except the last Sunday of the month
- ➔ A **crèche** is available at the back of church

Evening 18:30 Shared Worship

Weekday Activities

Tuesday	12:00	Snack Lunch
	13:00	Bible Bite ministry, finishing at 13.45
	14:00	Prayer Meeting
	19:30	Prayer Meeting
Wednesday	10:00	Coffee, Bowls & Banter
Thursday	12:45-14:30	Cat_{UR}pillars Parent & Child Activity Session
	10:00-12:00	Cat_{UR}pillars Parent & Child Activity Session

Housegroups - Various daytime and evening groups meet for Bible study, fellowship and prayer

Minister: Rev Brian Harley



10 Dracaena Gardens, Shanklin PO37 7JQ



01983 862485



brianharley58@gmail.com

Day off: Saturday

Secretary: Robin Wightman



robinwightman@aol.com

Shanklin URC is a member of the Evangelical Alliance

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