

The Link



July 2020



Shanklin United Reformed Church www.shanklinurc.co.uk

View From Number 10



You have not been this way before...

As Joshua prepared God's people to cross the river Jordan, he instructed them to follow the Ark of the Covenant so they would know which way to go - since they "had not been this way before" (Joshua 3:4). The Ark represented God's presence among them so in essence they were being told to keep an eye on the Lord and where he was leading them. Interestingly they also had to keep a social distance from the Ark – 900 metres in fact!

He goes on to say: *"Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you"* (3:5). They can't have imagined that God would stop the river in full flood! Today, none of us have walked this path of global pandemic and a public lockdown before. As we begin



to emerge from various restrictions, everyone is on edge and wondering what is safe and if we will suffer a second spike if things move too quickly. Over the last three months, many Christians have turned to prayer earnestly and we must now continue to seek God's presence and guidance as we moved slowly forwards not quite knowing what is around the next corner.

These are times when we are asked to rely on the advice of scientists and medical experts and our political leaders – but more than anything else, we need to keep our eyes and ears open to the Lord. Let's continue to pray for those who have to make big decisions for people across the UK, and indeed for other nations that are in similarly critical phases, but let's also seek revelation from on high to help us navigate these uncertain times.

The Lord Almighty is with us – the God of Jacob is our refuge – therefore we will not fear! (from Psalm 46).

Can we express such confidence in these testing times? I was reading the other day at the end of Mark 4 where Jesus slept in the

back of the boat while the disciples fought with a furious storm on Lake Galilee. They woke him, and when he had rebuked the wind and stilled the waves, he asked them why they were afraid – where was their faith? Can we trust in the Lord utterly and completely in these times that seem to be equally out of control?



We do need faith and we need to keep our focus on the Lord and seek his presence every step of the way – in each small decision we make day by day, week by week – as individuals, as households and as a church family as we try and work out what is appropriate, and when, in terms of life and worship together.

Please do pray for the Elders as we meet together online and pray for wisdom and guidance as we watch the changing landscape and weigh up all the advice that is being circulated. We have certainly not been this way before and it can feel both oddly calm and turbulent at the same time. But we know God is with us, and we know who holds the future: –

“I know the one I have faith in, and I am sure that he can guard until the last day what he has trusted me with.” (2 Timothy 1:12 CEV)

With love and best wishes



Prayer of Saint Richard of Chichester - from 13th Century

*Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits thou hast given me,
for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
and follow thee more nearly, day by day.
Amen.*



Prayer

Tuesday Prayer at 19:30 is now held via Zoom using the same account as for the live service broadcasts – see opposite page.

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 incurs 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.

**A call to weekly prayer
for the United
Reformed Church**

Until 9th July



Pray4URC
Thursdays 8:15 - 8:35

The United Reformed Church

Hosted by



Group for Evangelism And Renewal
within the United Reformed Church

We have got used to Clapping for Carers at 20:00 on a Thursday so please make time to join in prayer at 20:15 for around 20 minutes.

Please join Brian and the GEAR team via this link:

www.gear.org.uk/Pray4URC



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

it's on a Monday this month!

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



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.



Sundays at 11:00

Tuesdays at 13:00

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

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/ShanklinUnitedReformedChurch>

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 (an alternative line)



Follow the instructions and when prompted for the meeting:-

ID: press 324 266 5584 then #

for Participant ID: just press #

for Password: press 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 Pete Dawson facilitating the online technology.

Audio and video recordings of our recent services can be found on our website at:

www.shanklinurc.co.uk/sermons

Many thanks to Pete and Colin for making all this possible

Christ in You

I have been trying to understand Colossians 1:27 “Christ in you the hope of glory” and Jeremiah 31:31 just thrilled my heart.

“The day is coming”, says the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. This will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors”....”They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife”, says the Lord.

“But this is the new covenant that I will make with the people of Israel on that day”, says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people”...”I will forgive their wickedness”...I will never again remember their sins”.

The heart (not tablets of stone) is the proper seat for the laws of God and the Gospel and the grace of the Lord Jesus. But because the heart is so deceived, it is only possible for the new Covenant to be fulfilled IN CHRIST in the life of the believer.

God says ...I will put my instructions in you, I will make a new covenant with you, I will write, I will forgive. Jeremiah is prophesying about New Testament times, when the Lord will write his laws upon the hearts of the individual, and when there will be a “new man”, a change in the behaviour and the inner nature of the person. This, I believe is partially what “Christ in you the hope of Glory” means.

Carol Williams

It's Official!

Studies have conclusively revealed the most effective way to show other people that you are a real Christian!

See if you can guess:

- A gold crucifix worn on a chain around the neck.
- A wooden crucifix worn as a badge
- A silver fish (ichthys) worn on a chain around the neck
- A gold fish (ichthys) worn as a badge.

Answer on [page 25](#)

Not Able To Get To The Shops In Person?

I know some of you, like me, will not be going to the shops in person at this time, for a variety of reasons. Although there are many options for delivery available, for some things, it isn't easy to choose, especially if you do not have internet access.

If you are looking for a greeting card for example, Miriam S makes and sells beautiful cards on a variety of themes. Give her a call on 07891 935221.

If you are needing someone to select a card, write a greeting in the card and post it for you, Elizabeth Hodges can do this. Liz has a business known as Card Basket and has been to some of the events at Ryde URC as well as being known to me personally. Liz has Traidcraft and some Christian cards in her selection and she can order Traidcraft items for you, too. Liz is on Facebook under Card Basket but can take requests by phone. 07772 394504

We have now been told to wear face masks on public transport and some people choose to wear them elsewhere. Some places are selling these at extortionate prices but you can make these yourself or, if you can't, please, contact Tracy B 07791 390707.

Please ask for help if you need it. There are contact details in The Link and on Lifeline.

Carole Smith

In This Month In History

1st July 1997: Hong Kong handed over to Chinese control. Hong Kong was handed back to the Chinese authorities - ending more than 150 years of British control.

14th July 1989: Paris in 200-year-old revolutionary fervour. Hundreds of thousands of revellers took to the Paris streets to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the storming of the Bastille.

6^h July 1952: London's trams trundled into history. After nearly a century of service the tram made its final appearance in London.

30th July 1935: Books for everyone. Penguin paperbacks are launched to make books affordable to all, creating a revolution in publishing.



Why do we need to know who we are in Christ?

After my last article, you might find yourself asking ~ **Why is it so important for me to know who I am in Christ?**

In the following devotionals, Neil Anderson explains that without this knowledge we are bound to struggle in our Christian walk ~ **because what you do is determined by who you are!**

If we are certain of our heritage, our hope and our calling, we will naturally seek our Father's face and see him at work in our everyday lives ~ for He is the Source of all Hope.

Father God, thank you that by your grace I am your child. Help me to daily seek you and see you in all things.

Robin

Hope for Today and Tomorrow (25th May 2020)

"What marvellous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we're called children of God! That's who we really are ... that's exactly who we are: children of God. And that's only the beginning. Who knows how we'll end up! What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we'll see him—and in seeing him, become like him. All of us who look forward to his Coming stay ready, with the glistening purity of Jesus' life as a model for our own." (1 John 3:1-3, The Message)

As children of the sinful first Adam, we were obstinate and ornery, helpless and hopeless, with nothing in ourselves to commend us to God. But God's love overruled our unloveliness. Through Christ God provided a way for us into His family. As God's adopted child, you have been given a new identity and a new name. You're no longer a spiritual orphan; you're a son or daughter of God. Romans 8:16, 17, tells us, "*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow*

heirs with Christ."

If you're beginning to think you are someone special as a Christian, you're thinking right - you are special! Your specialness is not the result of anything you have done, of course. It's all God's doing. All you did was respond to God's invitation to be His child. But as a child of God, in union with God by being in Christ, you have every right to enjoy your special relationship with your new Father.

How important is it to know who you are in Christ? There are countless numbers of Christians who struggle with day-to-day behaviour because they labour under a false perception of who they are. They see themselves as sinners who hope to make it into heaven by God's grace, but they can't seem to live above their sinful tendencies. Why can't they live the victorious Christian life? Because they have a misperception of who they are in Christ.

But look again at the hope-filled words of 1 John 3:2,3. What is the believer's hope? That he will someday be changed into Christ's image? That's part of it, but that's only a future hope. What is your hope for today and tomorrow? That you're a child of God now! You must see yourself as a child of God in order to live like a child of God. The blessed hope for the believer is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Thank You, Father, for the glorious hope of being Your child. I want to live in the security and blessing of that reality today.

Understanding Who You Are: (2nd April 2020)

"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God." (Romans 8:14, NIVUK)

I enjoy asking people, "Who are you?" It sounds like a simple question requiring a simple answer, but it really isn't. For example, if someone asked me, "Who are you?" I might answer, "Neil Anderson".

"No, that's your name. Who are you?"

"I'm an American".

"No, that's where you live".

I could also say that I'm five feet nine inches tall and a little over 150

The Link - July 2020

pounds - actually quite a little over 150 pounds! But my physical dimensions and appearance aren't me either. If you chopped off my arms and legs, would I still be me? If you transplanted my heart, kidneys or liver, would I still be me? Of course! Now if you keep chopping, you'll get to me eventually because I'm in here somewhere. But who I am is far more than what you see on the outside.

We may say with the apostle Paul that we "recognize no man according to the flesh". But we tend to identify each other and ourselves primarily by physical appearance (tall, short, stocky, slender) or by what we do (plumber, carpenter, nurse, engineer, clerk).

Furthermore, when asked to identify ourselves in relation to our faith, we usually talk about our doctrinal position (Protestant, evangelical, Calvinist, charismatic), our denominational preference (Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Independent), or our role in the church (Sunday school teacher, choir member, deacon, usher).

But is who you are determined by what you do, or is what you do determined by who you are? That's an important question, especially as it relates to Christian maturity. I subscribe to the latter. I believe wholeheartedly that your hope for growth, meaning and fulfillment as a Christian is based on understanding who you are - specifically your identity in Christ as a child of God. Your understanding of who you are in Christ will greatly determine how you live your life.

Lord Jesus, I know I am complete in You. Don't allow me to fall back into fleshly attributes today in an attempt to impress others or You.

Seeking God's Face (17th April 2020)

"My heart says of you, "Seek His face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek"
Psalm 27:8 (NIVUK)

"If the sun is shining in the morning, I'll do it". "If he's there when I open the door, I'll know he's the one". "If I pass the class on world missions, I'll be a missionary. If not, I'll be a local pastor".

We all know better than this, but it's amazing how often scenarios just like these pop into our minds. Such propositions are referred to

as 'laying a fleece' before the Lord or 'seeking a sign'.

The term fleece comes from the account of Gideon. In Judges 6, Gideon is called by God to deliver Israel from the Midianites. Gideon questions whether God is even for Israel (verse 13), and he doubts his own ability (verse 15). So, he asks God for a sign (verse 17). God gives him one, and then tells him to tear down the altar of Baal. Gideon is afraid to go during the day, so he goes at night.

Then he questions again whether God will deliver Israel. This time he puts a lamb's fleece on the ground. If God will deliver Israel, then the lamb's fleece will be wet in the morning and the ground around it will be dry. The next morning it is so. That ought to satisfy him, right? Wrong! Wanting to be sure, and hoping that God won't get too mad, Gideon asks Him to do it again, but this time with the opposite result (i.e. the fleece dry and the ground wet). Not exactly the stuff heroes are made of. But God answers Gideon's request and then He reduces Gideon's army down to 300 men!

The whole point of the passage is that God, not man, is the deliverer. God chose a man desperately seeking assurance and reduced an army down to nothing so that the victory would clearly be His. The fleece wasn't a means of demonstrating faith; it was just the opposite. And it certainly wasn't used to determine God's will. God had already told Gideon what to do. Gideon was questioning the integrity of God, just as we do if we ask for a fleece when God has already shown us His will. "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign" (Matthew 12:39). As God's people, let's seek the face of God.

Lord, forgive me for the times I have looked for sign instead of seeking Your face. I commit myself today to walk only in the faith revealed in Your Word.

God Works in the Ordinary (7th May 2020)

"...be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5)

A devout Christian heard an urgent news report on his radio that a flash flood was within minutes of entering the peaceful valley where he lived. Immediately he went to his knees and prayed for safety.

The Link - July 2020

The words were still on his lips when he became aware that water was gushing under his door. He retreated to the second floor and finally onto the roof of his house.

While he sat on the roof, a helicopter flew by and the pilot asked over the loudspeaker if they could lift him off. "It's not necessary since I have the Lord's protection," he replied.

Moments later the house began to break up and he found himself clinging to a tree. A police boat, braving the waters, approached him for rescue, but he assured them that the Lord would save him. Finally, the tree gave way and the man went to his death.

Standing before the Lord, he asked, "Lord, I'm glad to be here, but why didn't You answer my prayer for safety?"

The Lord responded, "Son, I told you over the radio to get out of there, then I sent you a helicopter and a motorboat!"

Nowhere in the Bible are we given the idea that God works only in the extraordinary. Much of the time He supernaturally works through His created order. Many people think God is present only when there is a miracle and that He leads only through signs and wonders.

There are people who always look for a sign. They walk by sight, not by faith. To them, God is only present in the miraculous. God was 'really' at the church service if something unusual happened. Many desire and look for 'visitations' from God.

But how does that square with God's omnipresence and the fact that He will never leave us or forsake us? Isn't God at every church service? Since God created the fixed order of the universe, would you expect Him to work primarily within that fixed order or outside of it? If God gave us a watch, would we be honouring Him more by asking Him what time it is or by simply consulting the watch?

Lord, forgive me for looking for signs when I only need to trust Your Word and live by Your promises.

The Source of All Hope (11th June 2020)

"Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, the help of my countenance, and my God" (Psalm 43:5)

Sometimes the depression resulting from a seemingly impossible

situation is related to a wrong concept of God. David wrote: "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long will my enemy triumph over me?" (Psalm 13:1,2 NIV). Had God really forgotten David? Was He actually hiding from David? Of course not. David had a wrong concept of God, feeling that He had abandoned him to the enemy. David believed a lie about God, and consequently he lost his focus. His situation seemed hopeless, and hopelessness is the basis for all depression.

But the remarkable thing about David is that he didn't stay in the dumps. He evaluated his situation and realized, "Hey, I'm a child of God. I'm going to focus on what I know about Him, not on my negative feelings." From the pit of his depression, he wrote: "I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation" (Psalm 13:5 NIV). Then he decided to make a positive expression of his will: "I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me" (verse 6). He wilfully moved away from his wrong concept and its accompanying depression and returned to the source of his hope.

If Satan can destroy your belief in God, you will lose your source of hope. But with God, all things are possible. He is the source of all hope. You need to learn to respond to hopeless-appearing situations as David did: "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, the help of my countenance, and my God" (Psalm 43:5).

If Satan can't destroy your concept of God, then he will seek to destroy your concept of who you are as a child of God. He can't do anything about your position in Christ, but if he can get you to believe it's not true, you will live as if it's not, even though it is. The two most important beliefs you possess are who God is and who you are as His child.

Above all, Father, help me focus continually on who You are and who I am in Christ, and to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Neil Anderson
Freedom in Christ Ministries
Daily Devotionals
Used by permission

The Godpod

In their recent newsletter there were many helpful words, some of which I felt led to share with you.

God is Never in Lockdown

*"There are many times in history where society and the Christian Church have had to adapt and persevere in war and peacetime, disorder and prosperity, persecution and trial. Through it all **Jesus** remains the **rock** of our **salvation**, the **Father** still holds us each in the **Palm of His Hand** and the blessed **Spirit of God** still indwells and sanctifies His people. God is not fazed or taken by surprise by any world events and there is nothing that can thwart His eternal plans. He does not have to rethink His strategy like an earthly general or business director, God is **never** in lockdown nor can be and the Gospel is never shut down and chained so that the work of Christ is halted or the word of God nullified.*

A Prayer for the Church; Ephesians 6:18

***Pray at all times** - on every occasion, in every season - in the Spirit, with all (manner of) prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding on behalf of all the saints (God's consecrated people). From Amplified Bible*

***Pray that** Christians would be wise and discerning in how they can best help and serve during the lockdown, with love to a world in darkness, that we would be willing to be examples of Christ's love for us by sacrificially serving our church families as well as neighbours according to their needs; for boldness, clarity, strength and upholding for our leaders.*

Please continue to pray for the work of the Godpod and that it will not be too long before the bus can be out in our towns again, supporting our Island community.

Jane H

Source [JCWGVVA](#) Newsletter
Used by permission

The newsletter can be read in full at: www.godpod.org.uk/?p=571

Jordan Project to Help Traumatized Refugees Flourishes Online During Pandemic

Bible Society of Jordan has completed its first online trauma healing group, which shows that despite the challenges facing many Bible Societies during the coronavirus pandemic, new God-given opportunities are also being grasped.

'I am filled with gratitude and joy as I share with you, dear ones, the news of the completion of our first online trauma healing group!' said Haya, Project Co-ordinator at Bible Society of Jordan.

'What a privilege it is to be living in an age where we are not bound by a lockdown or curfew, but are able to reach the people of our communities and connect and share with them through technology,' she added.

Haya's message echoed that of other Bible Societies, such as in Egypt and in the Holy Land, that said they were embracing technology and social media to turn the time of lockdown into one of growth and outreach.

'It's a time where we are exploring every way possible to minister and serve the people,' Haya said of the work in Jordan, which helps Syrian, Iraqi and other refugees and locals find healing through the word of God.

'I know this is just the beginning for us. I pray for an end to this pandemic in the world but meanwhile, let us enjoy watching God work in his ways. Blessings to all of you!'

Please pray for the Bible Society of Jordan and the great work that is being done to help those traumatized by war in the region.

Also please pray for Bible Societies worldwide as they investigate new ways of continuing Bible mission during the pandemic. Some are struggling and are completely reliant on contributions and prayers.

We might be living in a time of uncertainty but one thing we know is that our God is unchangeable in his faithfulness.

Source: Bible Society

Saving God's People from Starvation - Project Joseph

A **plague of locusts** (said by some to be of biblical proportions) is devastating crops and livelihoods in **Africa** and **Asia**. Many thousands of already marginalised and persecuted Christians are among those facing severe food shortages as vast swarms of locusts cause catastrophic loss to crops.

As well as sweeping across much of **East Africa**, 30,000 acres of land have been ravaged in **Sindh province**, in a scale of invasion almost unheard of in **Pakistan**.

This is one of the poorest rural regions of Pakistan and thousands of Christian farming families are facing severe food shortages. The cotton harvest - an important cash crop - was also devoured by the insects, leaving many without income.

Christians in regions where they are despised and discriminated against are especially at risk at times of food crisis.

Ramoo, like most Christian farmers in Sindh province is a 'sharecropper' and receives only 50% of the income his crops make, with the rest going to his landlord. At least 50% of his precious rice and tomato crops were devoured by the swarm, halving the already meagre income his family has to survive on.

Many farmers have been forced to sell their livestock and household possessions to buy food and other basic family needs. Many are living on one basic meal a day.

The affect of locusts is **so** serious that even a small swarm of a third of a square mile can eat as much food as **35,000** people would in a single day - how devastating!

The work of controlling the spread of the locusts through insecticides and aerial spraying was hampered during April because of lockdowns caused by the **Coronavirus** pandemic. The two plagues are now jointly affecting vast areas of Africa and the Middle East.

Can we help save the lives of at least some of our brothers and sisters at this critical time - **firstly**, by praying for them in their great

need. So often it is the poor and marginalised who suffer most in times of crisis and so if you felt moved to help, **Barnabas Fund** recently launched '**Project Joseph**' to bring practical relief to our brothers and sisters in the Lord, who have been left hungry and overwhelmed. Do ask if you would like to know more - **Barnabas** would welcome any gift, but for example **£6** could provide **20kg of maize** in **Kenya**, **£8** - **15kg of wheat** in **Ethiopia** (where **seven million** people were already at risk of food insecurity due to drought and conflict) and **£15** could provide **30kg of rice** in **Pakistan**.

You can read an article in full about **Project Joseph** in the latest edition of the Barnabas Fund magazine, which can be downloaded at: <https://barnabasfund.org/resources/>,

Thank you for your prayers for the Body of Christ worldwide that is persecuted and for whom this **Covid-19** crisis is even more critical - may they know our dear Lord upholding them, whatever their circumstances and may we remain faithful in reaching out to them, as we are able.

We still have all the wonderful resources coming from **Release**, **Open Doors**, etc - do let me know if you do not have access to them (☎ 864379). However, for those with internet access, here are some useful web addresses:

Barnabas Fund: <https://barnabasfund.org/>

Release International: <https://releaseinternational.org/>

Open Doors: <https://www.opendoorsuk.org>

Sadly the prayer group is in lockdown at present, but prayer continues!!

Every blessing

Jane H



Source: [Barnabas Fund](https://barnabasfund.org/)

The Roots of Our Faith

(continued from the June edition of The Link)

Roy and Melodie Wilson

With the permission of, and thanks again to, Clifford Denton, we are republishing parts of two other articles he has written, as well as including an excerpt from our 'Israel Revealed' discussions by Arni Klein. These three portions speak eloquently for themselves ...

From Clifford's article on 16th April 2015 in Prophecy Today (first prepared for Tishrei): Christianity, Israel and the Jews II: **The Olive Tree**, we read:

"In Romans 11, the Apostle Paul uses the metaphor of an olive tree to teach about God's Covenant family. In the preceding chapters of the Book of Romans, so strong is Paul's message about inclusion of believers from the Gentile world, that one might consider that the Christian Church has replaced Israel. Hence, from chapters 9 to 11 there is a re-balancing of the picture. This confirms the continuing place of the physical descendants of Israel in the Covenant purposes of God.

"Replacement Theology is the term that is given to the view that Christians replaced Israel as God's Covenant People. Replacement Theology teaches that the failure of Israel has resulted in their total rejection - so that God could make a fresh start on a New Covenant plan. This is very subtle and has contributed to the loss of the Church's deeper identity and an unnecessary rift between Christians and Jews. A study of Romans 11, therefore, helps us in the quest to restore an understanding of the relationship between Israel and the Christian Church"

"The Olive Tree and God's Covenant - By using the symbol of the olive tree in Romans 11, Paul shows that the destiny of the faithful of Israel and of the Gentile world is bound together. The Christian Church has emerged from the same background as the faithful remnant from Israel.

The olive tree has some remarkable characteristics that remind us of God's Covenant family:

It is not an especially beautiful tree, but has nevertheless received much admiration from artists. Its roots are strong and can survive in a hot, dry climate and in rocky soil.

Olive trees are well-known for their long life, more so than most fruit trees. Centuries-old olive trees can still bear fruit, and produce tender shoots around their roots.

The fruit of the olive is either eaten or pressed to make olive oil. It is interesting that the word 'Gethsemane', the name of the garden where Jesus went before His betrayal, means 'olive press'.

Olive oil has, for thousands of years, been considered a source of wealth. It is useful for cooking, lighting lamps, ceremonial anointing and for medicinal purposes.

We can assume that, in the choice of the olive tree for the metaphor in Romans 11, Paul knew his readers would draw associations between these characteristics. This would help them understand about the root and branches of Israel and the whole Covenant family of God joined together as one body with one heritage, one character and one fruit.”

In 'Israel Revealed' www.israelrevealed.org Arni Klein shares this powerful understanding of **grafting in connection with the olive tree**:



“Friends of ours once asked a non-believing horticulturalist about the natural process of grafting branches from a wild olive tree into a cultivated tree. His answer adds some weight and dimension to our discussion.

“The cultivated tree is planted by design, while the wild tree is the product of something akin to a bird dropping an olive in a field somewhere, which gives birth to a lone tree. In order for fruit to come forth, there must be cross-pollination. In other words, lone trees don't produce olives. They appear in

The Link - July 2020

every way as other olive trees, right up through yielding olive blossoms, but they will never produce olives. When a farmer wants to increase his production of olives and has no more place to plant more trees or he doesn't want to wait all the years for a tree to grow to maturity, he does the following:

“The process begins with cutting off the healthy fruit-bearing branches of a cultivated tree and laying them on the ground at the base of the tree. (How strange that must appear to the tree. After all, it was bearing fruit.)

“Next, branches are taken from a wild tree and grafted into the very place where the cultivated branches were cut off. (Imagine what these branches must be thinking: "Some were cut off to make room for me. For sure, I must be of greater worth. Or else why would it have been done?")

“The new branches being from a different tree, they would of course have a different DNA. Being that their sap is obviously different from the sap of the cultured tree, it stands to reason that they would not identify it as being theirs. Logically, the wild branches would not make an effort to draw the sap of the cultivated tree. Consequently, the natural tree needs to literally force its sap into these wild branches.

“Why was it that natural branches needed to be cut off? Why was it not enough to just make a hole for the wild branches? Consider the fact that if the wild branches would not have been grafted into a place where there had been a branch, there would not have been the capillary structure to bring the sap into the wild branch. The tree just knows to pump sap out into the capillaries, whether the branch is wild or natural. (Transferring this from trees to men, Scripture says that if the Jews had never experienced a hardening in part, the Gentiles could never have come in. In light of this, Paul admonishes the Gentiles to be neither ignorant nor arrogant).

“For three years after the wild branches are grafted in, the state of the tree continues without alteration and without any visible fruit.

“The farmer then drills holes alongside the grafted-in branches and inserts the cultivated ones (that were cut off to make room for the wild ones). These branches have been lying on the ground for three

years. How dry would they be? Surely no one would consider them to be of any use other than firewood (like the dry bones of Ezekiel 37).

“In the words of the horticulturalist, from a purely agricultural perspective an amazing thing takes place. The engrafted cultivated branches become “jealous” of the wild branches, begin to miraculously draw the sap, and come back to life!

“For another three years the tree still bears no fruit, as both branches continue to feed together on the sap of the cultivated olive tree.

“Then, in the seventh year, all the branches bear fruit together. As strange as it may seem, the fact is, if the natural branches are not grafted back in, the entire tree will die! It is also clear in Scripture that the removal of the veil from the eyes of the Jews is life from the dead for the Church. (Romans.11:15)”

We conclude with some of what Clifford writes for 24th April 2015 Prophecy Today (first published in Tishrei): Christianity, Israel and the Jews III: **Romans 11**:

“A balanced understanding is of great importance here. As we discussed in the previous article, imbalance has contributed to replacement theology and its consequences. Imbalance of other kinds is possible too in our quest to understand the relationship between the Christian Church and Israel.

The God of Israel remembers his Covenant promises to Israel, but these promises are only fulfilled through faith in Jesus the Messiah (Yeshua HaMashiach). There is one way to salvation for both physical descendants of Israel and those called to faith from the Gentile world. This too must be kept in balance.

“Paul’s letter to the Romans has been held up as his theological masterpiece. In it, he sets down a comprehensive understanding of God’s Covenant community fully and finally revealed in Jesus. In Chapter 11 Paul explores the way God is drawing together his Covenant family from all nations. However, this chapter does not stand alone - we must consider it in relation to the previous chapters of Romans.

The Link - July 2020

“The key issue in Paul’s day was a new move of God, whereby Gentiles, through faith in the Son of God, were included in the Covenant family. Chapters 1 to 8 are used by Paul to bring understanding to what God has done through the New Covenant. In chapters 9 to 11, Paul then balances this focus on the Gentiles by exploring God’s continuing purposes for Israel.

“In Romans 11, believing Jews and Gentiles are seen as branches of the same body. Paul shows that God had already called many Israelites to faith and also has plans to call others in the future.

“The ongoing plan, according to the promises given to Abraham, is that through grace there will be some from every nation in that family and an ongoing inclusion of some from the Tribes of Israel.

“Since the time of Jesus there has been a partial blindness on the nation of Israel regarding God’s purposes in and through Jesus the Messiah, yet God still has a plan and a purpose according to all that he has promised. Paul asks: “I say then, have they [Israel] stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! (Romans 11:11-12)”

“Paul sees a door of opportunity for the Gentile world opened by God. He is clear that he has been called as an Apostle to the Gentiles, but the Gospel to the Gentiles is not at the expense for God’s ultimate plan for Israel.

“Paul’s ongoing love and concern for his physical family, the biological descendants of Jacob (Israel), is also very clear. He looks forward to the time when God will restore believing branches of Israel to himself, and though branches were cut off like branches cut from a tree, they can be grafted in again.

“Those who have been brought from the Gentile world into the family of God must realise they were brought into an existing family, just as a branch is grafted into an olive tree. They must recognise fully what God has done by their inclusion and not think that they have become a new family. Rather, they are a new part of an old family.

“Particularly, by knowing this they must not boast but be aware of

their position. They must in all humility understand that God has ongoing plans for the Israel. An implication is that Christian branches can also be cut off unless they are drawing the true life of the olive tree and producing true fruit, becoming what the deep soil and nourishment of Covenant history intended them to be.

“When Paul first used the metaphor of the olive tree there were misconceptions about the relationship of the new Christians in Rome to the roots of their faith. This may have been the reason for the clear exposition in his letter to the Romans. Be that as it may, the letter has also been bound into our Bible as a teaching for all generations.

“Despite this, however, there has been neglect of chapters 9-11 of Romans (even in some Bible schools), so that the tendency of Christians through the centuries has been to misunderstand the roots of their faith.”

We quote the following ourselves, to highlight the fact that Paul reminded the Gentiles of the debt we owe to the Jews: Romans 15:27 AMPC, “They were pleased to do it; and surely they are in debt to them, for if **these Gentiles have come to share in their [the Jerusalem Jews'] spiritual blessings, then they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.**”

In the 16th June Wednesday Word from Issachar Ministries, they write:

Let us not forget that whilst all of us who love Him and long for His appearing want to know our Lord better, what ultimately counts is that He knows us! (Matthew 7:21-23; 25:34). Our Father in heaven has so much to share with us and loves us so much, that we should examine ourselves by asking Him, ‘Is there anything in me that makes it uncomfortable for You to be with me?’

The Israel question is one such area!

Giving

As would be expected, our monthly offerings are down significantly as we miss much of the cash offering from visitors and others who don't give regularly.

Have a 'Heart'!

As a church we have been receiving copies of the 'Heart' newspaper - a bi-monthly paper based in

Sussex. There are some excellent and informative articles and insights from many Bible teachers and comment on current events in the light of Scripture.



If you usually pick up this paper from church, we have copies available and would be happy to let you have one ((864379).

This current edition has a thought provoking article - '**This is a Wilberforce moment**' - '**Social care & Covid-19: crisis or opportunity?**' by Steve Fouch, Head of Communication at the Christian Medical Fellowship - **so timely**. Another item is '**Prayer Points in a time of plague**' - **really helpful**. Also very challenging is the article '**NHS cares, God cures**' by former NHS worker Femi Omotoyinbo, a Christian philosopher and member of the International Society for Philosophers and an associate fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society. To quote the last two paragraphs:

The weekly cheering for the NHS made people feel good, but it could not bring health. Unfortunately, we do not need psychological palliatives or even a vaccine. Our whole land needs healing. So why don't we take time every Thursday at 20:00 to humble ourselves, pray and seek God's face with repentant hearts?

Politicians are confused, science has broken our hearts and wealth has proved worthless. Let us turn to the only one who can turn the tide, calm the storm and give us the times of refreshing (Acts 3:19).

Heart also brings lots of positive and encouraging news - so here is some to share!

Good News in Brief

Bibles Flying off the Shelves: *The Bible has experienced a dramatic surge in sales as readers search for hope amid the pandemic. One US publisher had a 62% increase in April compared to last year.*

Spike in Online Conversions: *The number of people seeking online information about knowing Jesus has increased since the Covid-19 outbreak, according to three of the largest online evangelism ministries (Global Media Outreach, Billy Graham Evangelism Association and Campus Crusade for Christ). Meanwhile, one in four UK adults have tuned in to online services, and one in twenty have started praying.*

Medical Staff Praying Together: *A Christian doctor working in intensive care told Christian Medical Fellowship, "[I'm seeing] huge openness from [my] colleagues. Several are praying with us at 19:00 having never prayed in their life before."*

Christian Marriages Improving Under Lockdown: *In a survey of over 1,000 Christians, 86% said that their marriage relationship or relationship with their partner had improved, and that there had been fewer arguments and 'less irritation'.*

Individual subscriptions can also be made if desired by going to www.heartpublications.co.uk/product/single-subscription/, where you can pay online or download a pdf order form that you can send off by post or alternatively by telephoning 01903 209383.

Jane H

*Source: [Heart Publications](#)
Used by permission*

It's Official!

Show other people that you are a Christian!

Answer: None of them. **Jesus Himself says how it can be done.**

John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

All Who Are Thirsty

At the church's online service on **Pentecost Sunday** I was asked to bring some prayers of intercession. As I was pondering on this in the preceding week, I felt the Lord lay the following on my heart to share and for any who were not online that Sunday, I do pray it will be a blessing and encouragement to you:

All Who Are Thirsty,

All who are weak,
Come to the fountain,
Dip your heart in the stream of life.
Let the pain and the sorrow
Be washed away
In the waves of His mercy,
As deep cries out to deep.
(We sing)

Come, Lord Jesus, come. (x4)

Holy Spirit come. (x3)

1164 *Brenton Brown & Glenn Robertson*
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CCLI Song Number: 2489542

A Songs of Fellowship Worship Resource
CCL Licence number: 40715

In this very challenging time of Covid-19... to whom can we go, who will refresh us or strengthen us when we are feeling weak, fearful?

Jesus says: "Come to the Fountain."

He is the **source**, He is the **Alpha and Omega**, the **Beginning and the End**... the one in whom all things come together... and He says, "**Do not be fearful**, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom...

Rest in Me, Seek Me... let **My Holy Spirit strengthen you**... empowering you to be strong for others, to show my Constant Abiding Love, to show My Mercy, to reveal My Father to you.

Don't delay, do not waste your energies on things that are passing

in this life... invest your energies in the things of the kingdom... and then you will find true rest for your souls.

For those of My dear followers who feel weary and inadequate for the days

Come Afresh to Me

Be filled afresh with My precious **Holy Spirit**

The wells of salvation never run dry... The life giving flow never runs dry... Open your hearts to receive.

Yes, you will be missing the closeness of fellowship with you brothers and sisters and I love to hear your worship when you gather, but **know this**, it will be even sweeter when you can gather again and in the meantime, **My presence** is with you...

I long to have that intimate fellowship with you, **day by day**.

Come, dear children, come.

Come to the fountain - that you may never thirst again - let My Living Water flow over your soul - **I am all you need...**

- **Dear Church family**, as you read and weigh those words, I pray that they will resonate with many.

With **so** much love and **so** missing being with you all!

Jane H

Connection Quiz

1. What was destroyed by fire in Hong Kong harbour in 1972, during major restorations?
2. In the 1970s, which brand of beer was said to 'work wonders'?
3. Which actor played Trigger in 'Only Fools and Horses'?
4. Which song was a No.1 hit in 1990 for the Steve Miller Band, after it was used in a commercial?
5. And what is the **connection** between the answers to questions 1 - 4?

Answers are on [Page 35](#)



FOCUS

News of our Christian Brothers and Sisters who are being persecuted in Syria

World Watch List No. 11

Coronavirus: Another Crisis for Pastor George's Church in Syria

You might remember Pastor George in Qamishli, NE Syria. Open Doors shared his story last autumn, when Turkish armed forces entered the north east of Syria. Thousands of you prayed for and supported Pastor George and his congregation and the many persecuted Christians who had to flee their homes. Now, a new crisis has come to Qamishli.

“Normal Life Is Almost Non-Existent”

The levels of difficulty differ across the country, but the worst hit area is the north east. The local economy hasn't recovered from the events of autumn 2019, and lockdown restrictions have hit them hard. The authorities imposed a 16-hour curfew in the region: nobody is allowed out between 14:00 and 06:00.



Pastor George distributes aid to members of his church

“Covid-19 has a big impact on Qamishli; normal life is almost non-existent,” Pastor George explains. “The number of poor people has increased. Especially those people who are daily labourers who, if they don’t have work each day, receive no wages. The need to provide for their family, and especially their children, is bigger than ever. Due to the restrictions that prevent the virus spreading, the damage is huge on those families who were already needy in Qamishli.”

There is great fear about what will happen if the virus spreads in Syria, and particularly in the north east, because the health system was almost completely destroyed by the war. There simply isn’t the infrastructure or medical supplies to cope if a large number of Syrians need treatment. The lockdown is necessary to prevent it – but the effects of it are still really difficult.

Ministers are exempt from the lockdown restrictions in Syria, and so people like Pastor George are able to help with visiting people and distributing the vital aid they receive – and they can also give out food and food coupons from the Good Shepherd Centre, the Centre of Hope funded by Open Doors, for those able to make an essential trip.

“At first we stopped distributing relief packages. But when we saw the increased need, we restarted the distribution. We gave people food and washing detergent coupons,” says Pastor George. “Our church saw that now was a time to stand by the people, support them and show Jesus’ love in difficult times.”

“The Needs Are Overwhelming”

Thanks to your prayers and giving, Open Doors partners have been distributing emergency food in the area for a long time. There had been plans to reduce emergency aid in 2020, turning attention to increasing the longer-term programmes to help Syrian Christians become self-sufficient. The economic crisis and the lockdown mean that’s no longer the best option.

“The church in Syria, like this church in Qamishli, could not see their congregations suffer from lack of security, shortage of food and the new health threat and do nothing about it,” says Mourad*, who

The Link - July 2020

oversees Open Doors partnerships in Syria. “The needs are overwhelming now, and we need our brothers and sisters who can support us now more than any time before.”

“The biggest need I see around me right now is the need of food,” says Pastor George. “We opened the Good Shepherd Centre only for two hours, to distribute food coupons, and around 80 families came.

“People are hungry. Some called me crying because they have no food for their children and families. Especially displaced families who have no relatives here – they can’t even ask to borrow money from anyone just to keep them alive until this crisis ends. I saw men, women and children crying of hunger; it’s tragic. We’re trying to help as much as we can with the means we have. We helped only 80 families, but the number of needy families is much higher.” Your support means the church in Syria can help more families – enabling the church to be the light of hope in the darkness of locked-down Qamishli.

Keeping Believers Together

Like everywhere else, including churches in the UK and Ireland, Syrian congregations are finding new ways to stay connected as a community, now that they aren’t able to meet in person for services. “We try to stay in touch, and we stay connected through WhatsApp,” says Pastor George. “I created a WhatsApp group including almost all members of the church. We have three meetings every week, every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday at 18:00.

“We have devotions and we praise and worship together. Everyone prays and shares their thoughts and feelings. At the same time, we share our prayer requests with each other and exchange the latest news. Many were encouraged that the church cares for them and keeps in touch with them.”

When asked what he and the church are praying for, Pastor George says: “We pray that the Lord would intervene to lift the epidemic away from our country Syria and off the world. We also pray for more help and support for needy people. We pray that this crisis would end as soon as possible to save many people from hunger.”

Please pray alongside Pastor George and his congregation – and give, if you can, to help reach desperate believers in Syria and across the world.

Every £56 could mean a Rapid Response Team can courageously bring emergency aid to a family of persecuted believers.

Please Pray

Lord, we join with Pastor George in praying that You would protect Syria from harm. We ask that You would enable vital aid to get to those in need, and that the Syrian church would be able to show Your love to all those in need. Give Open Doors partners protection and wisdom, we pray.

Amen

Source: [Open Doors](#)



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.

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

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				

Last Month's Sudoku - how did you do?

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

Across

- 1 What people from Germany call their country (11)
 7 Spindle through the centre of a wheel (4)
 9 Artists use this wooden frame (5)
 11 Hydrogen is one (3)
 12 When we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus (6)
 13 Composer of the 1870 ballet Coppélia (7)
 14 Capital of Wallonia region (5)
 15 Another name for The Netherlands (7)
 19 Worn on a finger (4)
 20 Worn on a foot (4)
 23 NZ city - and a Womble (10)
 25 Judi Dench is one *initials* (3)
 27 S American river - and a

- another Womble (7)
 28 A piece of writing (5)

Down

- 1 Capital of Saxony (7)
 2 Mozart's birthplace (8)
 3 What used to follow middle school on the loW (4 6)
 4 North London Premier League football team (7)
 5 Donald Duck's girlfriend (5)
 6 Paul Simon said you can call him this in the 1986 song (2)
 8 Not late (5)
 10 Lizard like amphibian (10)
 16 French for 'the' *f* (2)
 17 Administrative city of the Loire-Atlantique département (6)
 18 City in NE French region of Grand Est - or Mrs Reagan (6)
 19 Roses are... (3)
 20 Second ordinal compass point *initials* (2)
 21 'Ancient' 1964 film Carry on - (4)
 22 Chemical symbol for potassium iodide (2)
 23 Not lose (3)
 24 Polish for 'no' (3)
 26 Bromhidrosis is the medical term for this condition *initials* (2)

Sweets & Chocolates Quiz Answers

- from June's issue

1. After Eight Mints
 2. Maltesers
 3. Refreshers
 4. Quality Street
 5. Mars Bar
 6. Humbug
 7. All Gold
 8. Black Magic
 9. Ripple
 10. Snickers
 11. Dime Bar
 12. Bounty
 13. Yorkie
 14. Matchmakers
 15. Opal Fruits
 16. Wispa
 17. Minstrels
 18. Curly Wurly
 19. Drifter
 20. Lion Bar
 21. Walnut Whip
 22. Lemon Drop
-

Biscuit Anagrams Quiz

1. I BID LAGAR
2. KFC PAL JA
3. RIPE N GANGS
4. STEVE DIG I
5. SHIN VERSE WINE L
6. DEATH R BROS
7. A ROOM CAN
8. CHA TIRE
9. U BORN BO
10. SCRAM RUDE CAT
11. CIEN
12. MIME SORDED JAG
13. BOB OH N
14. ET FIN LONER
15. VILE HAT BOR
16. GAL FINED Y R
17. NIC NOLL
18. U STREAK FOR CHIT
19. Y THAN BEER
20. COURT NCO GIN

Cover Picture

This month's cover picture is of... Can you guess?

Taken during lockdown

Last Month's Crossword - how did you do?

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

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

Sunday 19th July

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 RMS **Queen Elizabeth** was destroyed by fire.
2. A Double **Diamond** was said to work wonders.
3. Roger Lloyd **Pack** played the part of Trigger.
4. The **Joker** was the No. 1 hit.
5. And the connection is... a pack of playing cards

When the pandemic is over, these are our activities

Sunday Services

Morning 10:30 Worship for the whole church family

- ➔ **Holy Communion** is 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

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