



The Good Shepherd

Four Marks

**Parish Magazine
September 2021**



The Gospel

**Christ died for sins once for all,
the righteous for the
unrighteous, to bring you to God
(The Holy Bible)**



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Other Ministries at The Good Shepherd

Rev. Howard Wright leads the Discipleship (with Val Lucas) and Mission ministries; TBA: Prayer ministry; Chris McGrath: Worship ministry; Rev. Jonathan Rooke: Pastoral ministry.

The Vicar's Letter



Belief is a funny thing. Typically, we understand that belief affects behaviour. For instance, if we believe that a vaccine will give us protection against Covid-19, we will get a vaccine – surely? Well, apparently not. Not even everyone who thinks the vaccine is a good idea has bothered to get one or, as is recommended, two.

John's Gospel is written that we might believe (John 20:30-31) but for Jesus, as John records, and as we're about to see in the second half of the Gospel, believing does require consequential behaviour, otherwise it's not really believing at all.

John through the first 13 chapters of his account of Jesus' life has clearly demonstrated that Jesus is God among us. He starts in chapter one with the declarations that the Word is God and that this Word has come and lived among us. For the next twelve chapters he has hammered home that this is creator God, living with his creation and that he has come to give us life.

It is difficult for us when we are familiar with the stories and used to spectacular personalities and special effects on TV to really grasp how vast God is and how staggering that he would come live among us and die for us. The Jews had expected it but still couldn't believe it. Colossians has a go at summing this up with the words, "For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Colossians 1:16-17.

But Jesus, through John, challenges us to grasp the hugeness of this and believe. God is so beyond our wildest imaginings and yet he is here, among us. And more, he invites us into relationship with him forever. To believe in something so overwhelming, must affect our behaviour.

So, do we believe? And if so, how is believing affecting us? Over the coming weeks we will hear more about how we respond to God's love and, unsurprisingly, we will hear how this will lead us to grow deeper in God and larger in mission as individuals and as a church.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard". The script is cursive and fluid.

Finance Report from the Treasurer

Results for the year to July 2021

A brief over-view of the church finances after the first seven months of the year:

	January to July 2021			Whole Year 2021	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Forecast	Budget
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Income:	129.5	131.5	-2.0	207.7	221.7
Expenditure:	131.5	138.6	-7.1	231.6	239.8
Deficit:	-2.0	-7.1	+5.1	-23.9	-18.1

On the face of it a relatively encouraging “not-quite-as-bad-as-feared” picture, since the deficit year-to-date is not as high as predicted. However...

The most significant feature this year has been the overall downward trend in donor contributions. This is explained by people leaving the village, and/or the church, or choosing/needing to reduce their regular donation amount for personal reasons. To date we have seen a reduction of around £25,000 on an annual basis, which represents over 11% of total income. The revised forecast above reflects this change and the impact can be seen in the worsening deficit prediction for the year. Note that most of the difference between actual and budget figures is explained by lower expenses to date – the rate of return to normality from the pandemic makes it very tricky to forecast accurately and how rapidly the activities in COGS can recover, but there are encouraging signs that this is in process now.

This significant downturn in income has prompted the PCC to consider what options there are in order to address the growing imbalance between income and expenditure. The obvious one is to review the established COGS policy of tithing 10% of all donated income to outside missions, which is understandably keenly supported by *some* of the congregation. But for this policy to continue one has to pose the question: “What other ideas can you suggest to redress the unsustainable over-spending of our resources?” It is important to note that there is also, within the congregation, a number of people who are *not* supporters of

this long-standing policy, and who would prefer for their contributions to be used to support the vital in-house "mission" work provided by our Youth, Children and Family activities.

Please talk with me, Howard or any member of the PCC if you would like to register your reaction and ideas.

Thank you all for your continuing generosity.

David Craigen.

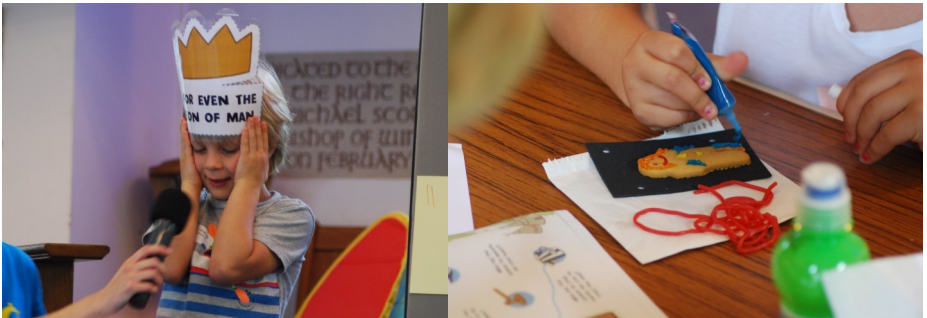
Jill and Bill Davis

Congratulations to Jill and Bill who celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary recently with a Service of Renewal of Vows at The Church of the Good Shepherd. They were joined by many family and friends; and are seen here with Howard Wright.



Monday Club

Throughout August we've been getting together every Monday for Monday Club to explore the life of Jesus together through games, stories, craft and music. We've had so much fun learning about how Jesus made a way for us to be friends with Him. Our thanks go to everyone who has been involved – the team who volunteered their time, the parents who joined us for the tots sessions and / or the picnics after each session, and the children who came along and made it so much fun!



Small Groups in The Good Shepherd

Small groups are an integral part of The Good Shepherd and feedback suggests that spiritual growth, biblical understanding, evangelistic opportunities and fellowship are valued by those who attend. Small groups are encouraged to invite new people to join their groups, especially new members joining COGS. If groups become too big, then help, if necessary, is given to form a new group from the existing one.

Small groups can be formed naturally from church members working together, sharing activities or from a common goal. Those feeling called to facilitate a group are encouraged to come forward at any time and those wanting to join a group can contact Howard, Matt or Val. There are no hard or fast man made rules as to the makeup of small groups; we trust in God, he seems to know what's best for us.

Small Groups follow our vision, mission and values.

Our Vision: Responding to God's Love

Our Mission: Growing Deeper in God

Through Jesus Christ by prayer, praise, worship, Bible study and fellowship with one another.

And Growing Larger in Mission in the power of the Holy Spirit, through evangelism, social action, support of missionary activity and using our God given gifts and abilities.

Our Values : To fulfil our vision, our mission and become like Jesus, we are aiming to be a God-focused people full of grace, joy, hope and generosity.

How do Small groups do this?

Small groups are one of the ways COGS vision, mission and values can be mobilised. The organisation of small groups is based on the resources of Celluk ministries www.celluk.org.uk.

The groups are encouraged to meet regularly and follow the structure suggested by Celluk. This four way structure of welcome, worship, word and witness allows group member to fellowship in a safe environment providing familiarity, participation and spiritual growth.

The suggested structure:

The Welcome

The welcome question, game or exercise is simply to get everyone involved. Group members are acknowledged as they actively

listen to one another. The welcome is short, snappy and should take no longer than 15-20 mins. It is a time of getting to know one another and bonding.

Worship follows, this isn't confined to singing and there's no pressure on groups to become musicians. YouTube clips, the use of scripture, objects, pictures are all ways of connecting with God.

The Word is next and a theological qualification or degree in teaching is not required. The theoretical understanding is given through the sermon and the group members are encouraged to discuss the application of this to their individual lives. We are all involved in ministry whether in our families, works places or through specific roles in church and discussion based on personal experiences is encouraged. Support for one another in our application of the word is the essence of the small group. A time of ministry may naturally follow the discussion and praying, laying on of hands, pictures, prophecy and words of knowledge may follow.

The last **W** can be challenging, **the Witness**, celluk suggests, should be the climax of the evening. Growing larger in mission through evangelism, social action, our ministries, gifts and abilities is discussed here. The group is able to hold each other to account on becoming workers in the harvest, support and advice with each other on relationships being made with non-Christians, even creating group opportunities to invite neighbours and non-Christian family members and friends to participate. Many small groups are already involved in evangelistic activities such as homes for the elderly, pastoral support, messy church etc. The witness section is a time to support and pray for growing of the kingdom.

Division of labour

Everyone in the group is encouraged to lead part of the small group meeting. Working together roles are assigned each week and members are encouraged to grow their gifts. There is a very useful pamphlet called *Help! I'm leading part of my cell meeting* by Trevor Withers of cellukministries. Copies are available from the Small group supervisor (valalucas@gmail.com). Each group requires a facilitator who keeps a watchful eye on proceedings, keeping everyone on track with the evening and very occasionally attending training meetings (no more than three a year) and receiving e mail communication from the leadership team.

[For more information: valalucas@gmail.com]

Worship News

We're going live!

At last – and who could have possibly guessed it would be close to 18 months since we packed away the keyboard, microphones and all the cables as we entered our first lockdown. But, as I write this in early August, the Covid numbers are falling, foreign travel is opening up and the worship team at COGS are excitedly planning live bands in church again.

Creating online worship has been not only an incredible learning experience, but also a privilege for many of us to be able to serve The Good Shepherd community and contribute to the weekly online service.

I remember, back in March 2020, how incredulous Howard and I were the first time Matt showed me a video clip he had created with four musicians playing at the same time on one video. How could this be done with the limited time available? How could we create a playlist each week? But perseverance and curiosity payed off, and both Matts (Senior and Wettone) have been working tirelessly to create the recordings we have shared on the website each week.

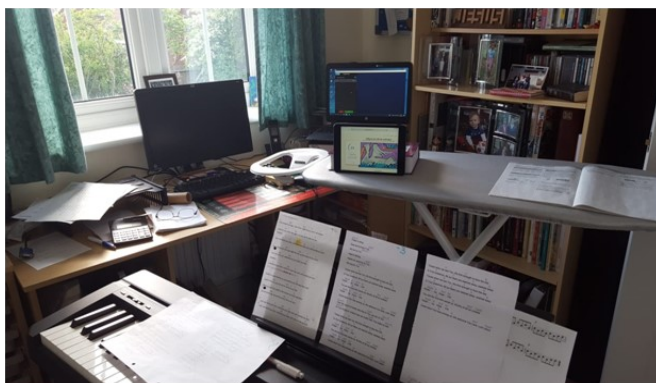
Matt, Matt, Helena, Howard and I, the worship leaders, are incredibly grateful for the support of our teams. Each team member has received very basic recordings of the songs and has had to devise a way of listening to them whilst recording themselves on another device!

Anything goes when you need to improvise!

It has not been easy creating makeshift recording studios in our own homes and there have been many heart-wrenching failures: a doorbell, a dog bark, collapsing music stands, flat



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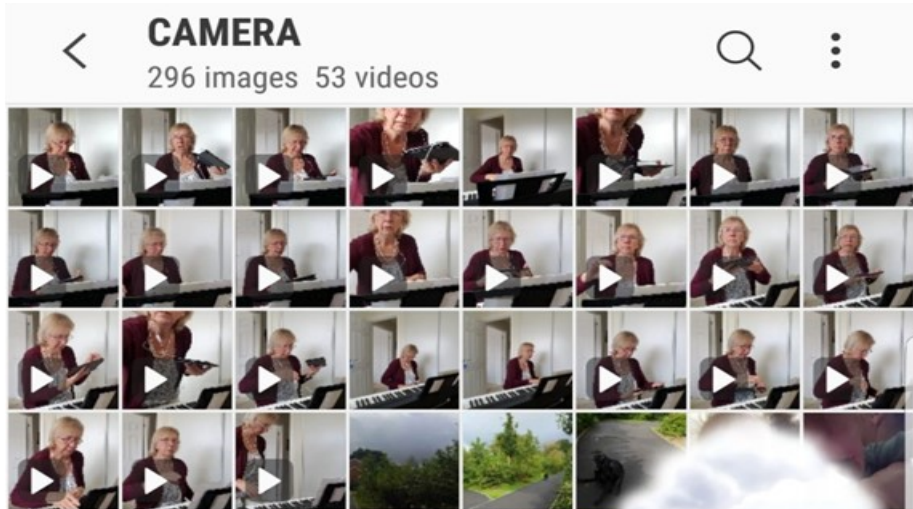


Responding to God's love

batteries, too much sun, and not enough daylight; not to mention wrong notes, wrong chords or wrong words; but we have had a lot of laughs along the way.

Sometimes, it took so many attempts to get it right!

When the bands return to the church building, don't be surprised



to find some of the faces are different.

A few of our regular members will be continuing to isolate for a while longer, which we completely understand, and we look forward to them re-joining us in the future.

We must also say farewell to some of our band members who do not live locally, but have continued to support us. Many thanks to Jasmine (Bath), Michelle (Cumbria) and Hannah (Nottingham) for their contributions from afar!

We are also delighted to be welcoming some new faces to the band and would love to hear from anyone else who would be interested in joining the worship teams as musicians or vocalists, and also on the technical side assisting with the Audio/Visual equipment. Full training is available and it really is not as daunting as it might look. Please feel free to contact me or Matt in the church office for more information, or speak to any members of the team.

I look forward to seeing you in church soon.

Chris McGrath, Ministry Leader, Worship.

How to Hear the Holy Spirit

1. Hear the Holy Spirit when you Focus on the Word

One of the most effective ways to improve your ability to hear the Holy Spirit is by focusing on God's Word. In John 15:7, Jesus said, "But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!"

How do you know when you have been focusing enough on the Word? The Holy Spirit talks to you through it! He directs your thoughts as you go about your day. He brings it to your mind when challenges arise, and helps you know what to do.

2. Hear the Holy Spirit when you Listen to God's People

The Holy Spirit isn't only speaking to you; He's speaking to all of God's people. Sometimes those people have received a message from the Lord for the church. Other times, the Holy Spirit uses those people to share a special message specifically for you. By listening to trusted faith ministers and even Spirit-led friends and family members, you can hear the Holy Spirit's direction.

3. Hear the Holy Spirit when you Listen in Prayer

Do you find yourself doing all the talking in your prayer time with the Lord? If you never get quiet enough to listen, how will you ever hear what the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart?

When you pray, spend some time praising God for His goodness and thanking Him for all He has done for you (Psalm 100:4). Then ask Him for what you need (Philippians 4:13). After that, get quiet. Prayer is not a one-way conversation. Make sure that you give the Holy Spirit a chance to speak. He may bring a scripture or song to your mind. He may bring a person to mind that needs prayer. Or He may give you direction for your day or even an answer for a prayer request.

[G. Copeland.]

The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation.

D. L. Moody.

I [said Jesus] am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. John 10:11, 14.

Mission of the Month: The Alton Food Bank

The Alton Food Bank continues to feed Local People in Crisis, reaching a landmark figure in April this year of distributing 100 tonnes of food since November 2011, when it was first set up.

As a word of explanation: the donations are "weighed in" at the Warehouse & "weighed out" in kilograms in the bags containing food basics to feed a person or family for three days, which are taken to the Distribution Centre in Market Square. In November 2021 it will be the 10th Anniversary and, sadly, due to the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic –the need to help people and families in crisis continues.

The manager and trustees are extremely grateful for donations, and thank you for your continued generosity. Do look on the Food Bank website to discover what items might be needed in the warehouse and requested by the Manager, Ian Dane.

Ann Leahy, The Good Shepherd's representative.

Light looked down and saw darkness

Light looked down and saw darkness, "I will go there", said Light.

Peace looked down and saw war, "I will go there", said Peace.

Love looked down and saw hatred, "I will go there", said Love.

So Light came and shone.

So Peace came and gave rest.

So Love came and brought life.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

[Source: John Bell, Iona Community.]

Psalm 23: A version of [by unknown author]

For Thou art with me: that's Faithfulness!

Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me: that's Discipline!

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies:
that's Hope!

Thou anointest my head with oil: that's Consecration!

My cup runneth over: that's Abundance!

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
that's Blessing!

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord: that's Security!

Forever: that's Eternity!

Faiths and Sects, a Short Summary

Scientology

The Church of Scientology maintains a wide variety of beliefs and practices. The core belief holds that a human is an immortal, spiritual being (thetan) that is resident in a physical body. The thetan has had innumerable past lives, some of which, preceding the thetan's arrival on Earth, were lived in extra-terrestrial cultures. Based on case studies at advanced levels, it is predicted that any Scientologist undergoing auditing will eventually come across and recount a common series of events.

Scientology describes itself as the study and handling of the spirit in relationship to itself, others, and all of life. Scientologists also believe that people have innate, yet suppressed, power and ability which can be regained if cleared of unwanted behaviour patterns and discomforts. Believers think they reach their full potential when they understand themselves in their true relationship to the physical universe and the Supreme Being.

Writer, L. Ron Hubbard, was Scientology's founder.

[Source: various.]

The Christian Gospel

God reveals Himself in many ways; including in creation, in the prophets and apostles, and supremely in Jesus Christ.

- God became a man in Jesus Christ.
- He lived the perfect life that we couldn't live.
- He died on the cross the death for sin for which we should die.
- Three days later he rose from the grave, so proving that he is the son of God.
- He offers forgiveness of sins – past, present and future sins (Hebrews chapters 9, 10) – and eternal life to all those who repent and believe.

Those who do:

- become children of God (John 1:12),
- have sins forgiven; but not forgetting to turn to God when you do (1 John 1:9),
- Have prayers answered (Mark 11:24),
- a new spirit and power to live a transformed life (2 Cor 5:17),
- and have no need to fear death (Hebrews 2:9).

- and find proof in relationship with God because Jesus is alive.
-

When God signs a peace treaty, it is signed for perpetuity. The war is over, forever and ever. Of course we still sin; we still rebel; we still commit acts of hostility towards God, but God is not a co-belligerent. He will not be drawn into warfare with us. We have an advocate with the father. We have a mediator who keeps the peace. He rules over the peace because he is both the Prince of Peace and He is our peace.

We are now called the Children of God, granted in blessing to those who are peacemakers. We have peace. This is our possession, the road guaranteed for us by Christ.

The Old Testament is the record of a God who is patient in the extreme. The Old Testament is the history of a persistently stiff-necked people who rebel time after time against God. The people became slaves in a foreign land. They cried out to God. God heard their groans and moved to redeem them. He parted the Red Sea to let them out of bondage. They responded by worshipping a golden calf.

R. C. Sproul, from *The Holiness of God*.

Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

This was developed in 1978 and has proved extraordinarily valuable ever since. This statement was developed in response to a growing departure from the belief in Biblical inerrancy in the church which cropped up in the 60's. The statement was drafted at a conference by a group of 268 participants representing various denominations, seminaries, colleges, and churches across the USA. The result was a unified stance on the subject that would set the standard for years to come.

The statement approached the issue from two angles, first asserting the divine inspiration of Scripture by God, then the inerrancy of Scripture based on its divine inspiration.

[Source: <https://justdisciple.com>]

Church is back in the building at 8am and 9.30am Sunday, and the 9.30 is streamed online for home viewing at the time and later in the week on Youtube.

No need to book. Check the website for latest details.

The Coffee on Zoom is at 11am, the 7pm Service on Zoom. COGS Kids Online, Messy Church at Home, Alpha Online, and COGS on YouTube. Church is open daily for prayer.

For Morning Prayer & Compline: email d.l.bush@mac.com

Giving to The Good Shepherd

This can be done via the "Donate" button on the Church website.



Small Groups

For further information contact Val Lucas, the ministry leader for small groups (01420-561139).

Prayer Chain

If you have any urgent requests for prayer through the Prayer Chain, please email Matt Senior, or Howard Wright (howardwright.cogs@gmail.com, 01420-563344).

Pastoral Care

If you would like to hear from a member of the Team or you know of someone who would, please contact the team leaders, Debbie Norgate (84534) or Gilly Cobb (544404), or Howard Wright (01420-563344) or Matt Senior.

Resource Sharing Network (RSN)

The Resource Sharing Network (RSN) will accept and circulate requests from the Church Family – for themselves or for family / friends. Money is not to be part of requests. Email cogs.rsn@gmail.com to go on the circulation.

Giving to the Church of The Good Shepherd

This can be done online or through the Church or Church office.

Donate



“Let us go to the house of the Lord.”

Psalms 122.

Five Lessons from the Pandemic

1. We are not in control as much as we think we are.
2. God will allow whatever is needed to draw us closer to Him. God’s heart is for relationship. As a triune God, He is constantly in relationship. As Creator, He longs to be relationship with His creation.
3. Always be ready to move for God. Being comfortable is not what God desires for us. Cruise-control is not how God wants us to move through life.
4. Always be ready for God to move. We stay alert not only because we know the devil is prowling, but because we know God is moving. We wait for instructions. When He says go, we go. When He says stay, we stay.
5. Prioritize first things first. God and His kingdom should be of utmost importance.

[Y. Bonesteele, shortened from <https://lifewayresearch.com>]

The first statement of the Westminster catechism reads: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.”

Our world has changed for better or for worse. It is for us to find truth and beauty for today, constantly re-applying the truth of God’s word to our own time and our contemporary situation.

The Christian church has no provision for animal sacrifices anymore because it has no need for sacrifice. To do so now would be to insult the perfection of Christ’s sacrifice.

Hans Rookmaaker.

Spurgeon's Daily Devotional

"God is jealous"

Nahum 1:2



Your Lord is very jealous of your love, O believer. Did he choose you? He cannot bear that you should choose another. Did he buy you with his own blood? He cannot endure that you should think that you are your own, or that you belong to this world.

He loved you with such a love that he would not stop in heaven without you; he would sooner die than you should perish, and he cannot endure that anything should stand between your heart's love and himself. He is very jealous of your trust. He will not permit you to trust in an arm of flesh. He cannot bear that you should hew out broken cisterns, when the overflowing fountain is always free to you.

When we lean upon him, he is glad, but when we transfer our dependence to another, when we rely upon our own wisdom, or the wisdom of a friend – worst of all, when we trust in any works of our own, he is displeased, and will chasten us that he may bring us to himself. He is also very jealous of our company. There should be no one with whom we converse so much as with Jesus. To abide in him only, this is true love; but to commune with the world, to find sufficient solace in our carnal comforts, to prefer even the society of our fellow Christians to secret intercourse with him, this is grievous to our jealous Lord.

He would fain [happily, gladly] have us abide in him, and enjoy constant fellowship with himself; and many of the trials which he sends us are for the purpose of weaning our hearts from the creature, and fixing them more closely upon himself.

Let this jealousy which would keep us near to Christ be also a comfort to us, for if he loves us so much as to care thus about our love we may be sure that he will suffer nothing to harm us, and will protect us from all our enemies. Oh that we may have grace this day to keep our hearts in sacred chastity for our Beloved alone, with sacred jealousy shutting our eyes to all the fascinations of the world!

[Source: <https://www.studylight.org/daily-devotionals>]

Praying for the Persecuted Church by Countries

Source: Barnabus Fund, February 2021

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is undergoing a process of growing soft Islamization. Radical Muslims have taken control of most of the small businesses, and Islamic money - mainly from - Turkey is funding most of the educational institutions. Christians comprise about 25% of the population of this vast Central Asian Republic. Many are from a Russian background, but some are ethnic Kazakhs who have converted from Islam. Protestant Christians, especially those from a Muslim background, are regarded with great distrust.

Pray that the Church in Kazakhstan will be given courage to continue to spread the gospel and remain steadfast when suffering persecution by the authorities. Pray that the restrictions on religious freedoms will be removed.

Nepal

The church is rapidly growing in the former Hindu kingdom of Nepal, which since 2008 has been officially a secular nation. In the early 1950s there were virtually no Christians in the Himalayan country, but today it is estimated there could be as many as 1.5 million believers, or about 5% of the population, 85% of which is Hindu. A growing religious nationalism has taken root in the country, with demands to return to a Hindu State.

For prayer: lift up the Nepali church that is growing in spite of opposition. Pray that pastors and other Christians will have wisdom and boldness in sharing God's Word. Ask that Christians will stand firm in their faith, knowing that the Lord is an ever present help in times of trouble.

North Korea

North Korea is probably the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian. The closed country is under the despotic rule of President Kim Jong-un and strict communist control. Some Christians in North Korea have been executed for the "crime" of owning a Bible, and tens of thousands have been incarcerated in political labour camps where they are abused, tortured, and worked to death. Christians are singled out for the worst treatment in the camps.

Pray for daily grace for Christians, who are in danger every moment. May all who are facing death, torture and abuse in labour camps know God's sustaining power.

Bible Translation in 2020

Sixty six language translations finished for use by 707 million people

2020 will forever be marked in the history books as the year of COVID-19. Yet, even in the darkness of a global pandemic, the light of Bible translation work shone brightly as Bible Societies around the world completed Scripture translations in 66 languages used by 707 million people.

These include first Bible translations in 46 languages, with a potential reach of 13 million people. Also, six language groups received the full Bible for the first time – five in Africa and the other in the USA, where the Deaf community celebrated the completion of the American Sign Language Bible.

First New Testaments in another 11 languages which are used by four million people were also completed. Two of these – the Epie and Ogbia New Testaments – were launched by the Bible Society of Nigeria.

“As I receive this Epie New Testament today, I am the happiest person,” smiled Elder Iwo Samson Famous, an Epie speaker in Nigeria. “For a long time we have been struggling with the English Bible. We can now read and understand.”

“... it was like we lacked God’s presence, but with it we have reached the promised land,” said John Okolubo. “This New Testament in our mother tongue will aid literacy and encourage our youth and others to understand the Word of God,” said Ogbia speaker John Okolubo.

In Vanuatu – one of the few countries almost untouched by the global pandemic – translation started four decades ago, only to be disrupted numerous times by cyclones which destroyed homes, livelihoods and, on some occasions, parts of the translation work.

In the wake of Cyclone Pam in 2015, the translators even had to live in tents for months, but the translation manuscript was safe, having been secured in a plastic container just before the cyclone hit.

Finally, on October 26 2020, Hano-speakers in Angoro village in the north of Pentecost Island welcomed the long-awaited first New Testament in their language with traditional songs and dances.

Among the new Bible translations published in 2020 were two of South Africa's 11 official languages – isiZulu, spoken by 12 million people, and Afrikaans, spoken by more than seven million people. The Bible has been available in isiZulu since 1883 but the most widely-used version today was published in 1959.

The number of languages with the full Bible topped 700 for the first time in August 2020 – a significant milestone for global Bible translation work that provided a rare moment of celebration during a tough year.

Now, at the start of 2021, the full Bible is available in 704 languages used by 5.7 billion people. Another 825 million people have the New Testament in their language, and 450 million people have some portions of Scripture.

1.5 billion people still do not have the full Bible in their language and still do not have the Bible in their own language. They are without the comfort of Scripture as they navigate the storms of life. That is why the task of Bible translation is so urgent.

[Source: <https://www.eternitynews.com.au>]

The Chosen (TV series)

The Chosen is a television drama based on the life of Jesus Christ, created, directed and co-written by American filmmaker Dallas Jenkins. It is the first multi-season series about the life of Christ, and season one was the highest crowd-funded TV series or film project of all time.

The series' creators stated that they had hoped to distinguish the new series from previous portrayals of Jesus by crafting a multi-season, episode-based story. The series portrays Jesus "through the eyes of those who met him."

In addition to VidAngel and its own app, the series airs on several streaming services, and on DVD.

The cross that we must bear is to take God's Word (which is His will) and exalt it above our own will in each situation every day.

Andrew Wommack.

Pieces of Evidence for the Real, True, Historical Resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah

1. There are four ancient biographies of Jesus. They were all written by eyewitnesses and/or based on eyewitness testimony. They were written and circulated while many other eyewitnesses were still alive. These biographies all say that Jesus rose from the dead. These biographies are supplemented by letters written by eyewitnesses while many other eyewitnesses were still alive. These ancient letters claim that Jesus died by crucifixion and that on the third day Jesus rose from the dead.
2. Pagan and Jewish writers report that Christians believed Jesus rose from the dead.
3. Many of the principal eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus died because of their claim that Jesus was resurrected. Their lives would probably have been spared if they recanted.
4. The eyewitness story told by John is very important. We know that John clearly understood the difference between telling an historical story and telling a story overflowing with symbol and metaphor. Why? Because he wrote two books, one that very clearly claims to be historical (The Gospel of John) and one book that is more about symbol and metaphor (The Book of Revelation).
5. The historical evidence shows that: the grave was empty; the grave clothes were neatly left behind; the stone enclosing the tomb was rolled away; the body of Jesus was never found; the grave had been guarded by Roman soldiers; and no one ever claimed to have stolen the body.
6. There are (not counting Paul), eleven recorded times that Jesus appeared to people proving that He was resurrected. These appearances were to: men and women, individuals, couples, groups, and at least one crowd. None of these witnesses believed that Jesus would rise from the dead before He rose from the dead. All of them knew him before His death, so they knew He was the same Jesus who died on the cross.
7. In the very place where Jesus died and was buried there was an explosion of growth in the Christian movement – which was centred on the claim that the grave was empty and that Jesus had truly risen. The growth happened in the face of hostility, opposition and persecution from civil and religious leaders.

8. The death and resurrection of Jesus was not a random event. Jesus predicted that He would die by crucifixion, be buried, and rise from the dead. His prediction that He would die from crucifixion is very significant. He could not control that. Crucifixion was a means of death reserved to the imperial Roman authorities.

9. The death and resurrection of Jesus also took place in the context of centuries of prophecy that such a Messiah would come from God, and die and rise. Jesus Himself claimed that His life, death and resurrection was a fulfilment of these prophecies.

10. His life, death and resurrection took place in the context of a body of writings that have proved for millennia to be wise and insightful about the human condition.

[Source: <https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org>]

God Says

- Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. Isaiah 41:10
 - Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matt 28:20
 - Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. Hebrews 13:5
 - Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them. Matthew 18:19-21
 - You remain the same and Your years will never end. Hebrews 1:12
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Agapé Love

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

(Romans 13:8)

The Heidelberg Catechism

The Heidelberg Catechism (1563) was composed in the city of Heidelberg, Germany, at the request of Elector Frederick III, who ruled the province of the Palatinate from 1559 to 1576. The new catechism was intended as a tool for teaching young people, a guide for preaching in the provincial churches, and a form of confessional unity among the several Protestant factions in the Palatinate. An old tradition credits Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus with being the coauthors of the catechism, but the project was actually the work of a team of ministers and university theologians under the watchful eye of Frederick himself.

The Synod of Dort approved the Heidelberg Catechism in 1619, and it soon became the most ecumenical of the Reformed catechisms and confessions. It has been translated into many European, Asian, and African languages and is still the most widely used and warmly praised catechism of the Reformation period.

[An example, it being the first in the list:]

The Lord's Day (1)

Q & A

Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own — 1

but belong, body and soul, in life and in death — 2

to my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ. — 3

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, 4

and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. 5

He also watches over me in such a way — 6

that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; — 7

in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. — 8

Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life — 9

and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him. — 10

References:

1. 1 Cor. 6:19-20

2. Rom. 14:7-9

3. 1 Cor. 3:23; Titus 2:14

4. 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:2

5. John 8:34-36; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:1-11

6. John 6:39-40; 10:27-30; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:5
 7. Matt. 10:29-31; Luke 21:16-18
 8. Rom. 8:28
 9. Rom. 8:15-16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14
 10. Rom. 8:1-17
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Q & A

Q. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

A. Three things:

first, how great my sin and misery are; 1

second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery; 2

third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance. 3

References:

1. Rom. 3:9-10; 1 John 1:10

2. John 17:3; Acts 4:12; 10:43

3. Matt. 5:16; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 5:8-10; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet 2:9-10

[Source: <https://www.crcna.org>]

There is a fountain filled with blood

Drawn from Immanuel's veins;

And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,

Lose all their guilty stains:

Lose all their guilty stains,

Lose all their guilty stains;

And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,

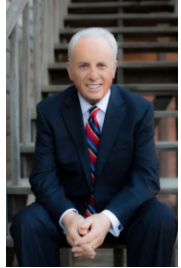
Lose all their guilty stains.

[William Cowper (1772), first verse.]

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.

Revelation 4:10.

Receiving Christ's Wounds



"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me." (Matt. 5:10-11).

The persecution you receive for proclaiming Christ is really aimed at Christ Himself.

Girolamo Savonarola (1452, Ferrara - 1498, Florence) was an Italian Dominican friar who has been called the Burning Beacon of the Reformation. His sermons denouncing the sin and corruption of the Roman Catholic Church of his day helped pave the way for the Protestant Reformation. Many who heard his powerful sermons went away half-dazed, bewildered, and speechless. Often sobs of repentance resounded throughout the entire congregation as the Spirit of God moved in their hearts. However, some who heard him couldn't tolerate the truth and eventually had him burned at the stake.

Jesus said, "A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). Sinful people will not tolerate a righteous standard. Prior to Christ's birth, the world had never seen a perfect man. The more people observed Christ, the more their own sinfulness stood out in stark contrast. That led some to persecute and finally kill Him, apparently thinking that by eliminating the standard they wouldn't have to keep it.

Psalm 35:19 prophesied that people would hate Christ without just cause. That is true of Christians as well. People don't necessarily hate us personally but resent the holy standard we represent. They hate Christ, but He isn't here to receive their hatred, so they lash out at His people. For Savonarola that meant death. For you it might mean social alienation or other forms of persecution.

Whatever comes your way, remember that your present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory you will one day experience (Rom. 8:18). Therefore, "to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing" (1 Pet. 4:13).

[Source: J. MacArthur, gty.org]

Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIpoO0wY0Xk&ab_channel=SouthernSeminary

Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love, and pow'r.

Chorus

I will arise and go to Jesus;
He will embrace me in His arms.
In the arms of my dear Saviour,
Oh, there are ten thousand charms.

Come, ye thirsty; come and welcome,
God's free bounty glorify,
True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings you nigh.

Come, ye weary, heavy laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall;
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all.

Lo! The incarnate God ascended
Pleads the merit of His blood;
Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude.

[Joseph Hart, 1759.]

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

Jesus Restores a Demon-Possessed Man

Mark 5:1-5

To portray Jesus as intentionally seeking to deliver this man out of suffering is worth considering. There is no clear reason as to why Jesus is even in this area of the country at all. As N.T. Wright explains in his commentary, this area of the Gerasenes “had never really been Jewish territory ... it wasn’t Jewish land, and the people weren’t Jews. Why if they had been, would they have been keeping pigs?”

Just being in this non-Jewish area shows that Jesus is off the beaten track here, and this area near the graveyard was even more of a strange place to find him travelling. Wright goes on to say how “Graveyards were also considered places of contamination. For a Jew [at the time], contact with the dead, or with graves, made you unclean.” When we look at the setting of this chapter we see Jesus in the most out of the way, fringe zone of a gentile area, a place where we have no reason to expect to see him.

Yet, where we see suffering, we often see Jesus. Jesus’ arrival in the Gerasenes shows us how he breaks into the marginalized areas of our societies where those who are suffering have been left to languish. And when he breaks into these areas, he does so with the light of the Kingdom, the light that the darkness cannot overcome.

Knowing that Jesus is a deliverer and saviour to those who suffer in the margins, we know that as followers of Jesus we are called to be the same. We are called to carry the light of the Kingdom into the darkened corners of society, and to move with Jesus as he delivers the power of the Kingdom to those crying out for justice and mercy.

[Source: <https://www.redletterchristians.org>]

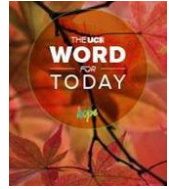
Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever.
Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever.

Psalms 136: 1, 3.

The Rewards of Kindness

I will draw water for your camels also.

Genesis 24:19



One day Abraham sent his servant Eliezer to find a wife for his son Isaac. Standing by a small town well, Eliezer prayed, "Let the woman who offers to water my camels be the one you have chosen." Suddenly Rebekah shows up and says, "I will draw water for your camels also" (see Genesis 24:13-14).

Rebekah had no idea that Eliezer would change her life. She didn't know that her act of kindness would open the door to great blessing. In the Old Testament it was customary to offer water to a stranger. It was called the law of hospitality. The Hebrews believed the words expressed as: "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:2).

But who on earth offers to water thirsty camels? One camel can drink forty gallons, and Eliezer had ten of them. That's a half-day project! Rebekah was generous to a stranger, seeking nothing but the joy of serving. What she didn't know was, these camels would transport her back to Isaac, make her his bride, shower her with great wealth and put her in the lineage of Christ.

So if you want to succeed, show up on time, stay focused, work hard, and be a problem solver instead of a problem causer. Live by Christ's instruction, "Go the extra mile" (see Matthew 5:41). The key to success in life is in doing not only what is expected, but in doing a little more. Yes, camels are obnoxious and ugly, but out of that ugly situation came the most beautiful thing that ever happened to Rebekah.

Bible in a Year: Job 11-13, Romans 16.



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To God be the glory, great things He hath done;

So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

(Refrain)

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

(Refrain)

[Fanny J. Crosby.]

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