



# Church at Home

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021**  
**DOUBLE EDITION**

Sunday worship on is on  **YouTube**

The easiest way to find the link to the YouTube meeting each Sunday is to find the link on the Corps web page. Type.....

[www.salvationarmy.org.uk/ramsgate](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/ramsgate) and select **Church on YouTube**

You can also find us by searching on YouTube and on the Ramsgate Facebook page.

**But we want to still “meet together”** and share our thoughts and prayers and testimonies. It will give a chance to share how God has spoken to us during the meeting – and allow us to encourage each other.

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8651865167>

## **Ramsgate ZOOM 8651865167**

If you have no internet we are providing each week’s service on a DVD which we will deliver to you. Please let us know if you **do not want** a DVD each week. Also tell us if you **need help** watching the DVDs we are sending.



## What's happening for the next two weeks at Salvation Army Ramsgate?

Carl and Heather are on **holiday** next week so there are some changes to the normal programme.

Of course, we are not going away – but we have lots of holiday that we must use before the end of March.



Hence a **two-week newsletter** with service details for the Divisional Service which will be on **YouTube** on Sunday – and our own service next Sunday.

Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> 10 am	Divisional Service on YouTube – details below
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> 11.15 am	ZOOM fellowship
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> 12 noon	<b>NO</b> ZOOM Youth Group
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup> 4.30 pm	<b>NO</b> ZOOM Children's Church Kids Club (up to 11 years)
Monday to Friday (6.30am-9am)	<b>NO</b> Breakfast Drop-in (street homeless only)
Tuesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> (10am - 12 noon)	<b>NO</b> Food Bank
Tuesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> 7pm	ZOOM Corps Council Meeting
Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup> 7.30 pm	ZOOM DHQ "In conversation" see below
Friday 26 <sup>th</sup> (10am - 12 noon)	<b>NO</b> Food Bank
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> Worship –	Ramsgate Church at Home (YouTube)
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> 11.15 am	ZOOM fellowship
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> 12 noon	ZOOM Youth Group
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> 4.30 pm	ZOOM Children's Church Kids Club (up to 11 years)

### Carl and Heather return from Holiday

**Carl is on a training course Tuesday and Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> March**

Monday to Friday (6.30am-9am)	Breakfast Drop-in (street homeless only)
Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> (10am - 12 noon)	Food Bank
Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> 7pm	ZOOM Bible Study

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> 7 pm  
Friday 5<sup>th</sup> (10am - 12 noon)  
Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> 9am

ZOOM Corps Fellowship  
Food Bank  
ZOOM Churches Together Prayers  
SA Ramsgate ZOOM Code  
**Next Delivery of Newsletter and Papers**

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February  
Live from 09.55am  
<https://youtu.be/XFB3G0-I38U>  
The link will also be on the  
Ramsgate web site as  
normal.



The next DHQ 'In Conversation' evening will focus upon Fresh Expressions and takes place on Wednesday 24th February at 7:30pm. The zoom code is 827 0502 7154 pass code: 881446



There is a full day of activities on  
Fortress Radio.

<https://www.fortressradio.online/listen-now.html>

**And don't forget Songs of Praise Sundays at 13.15pm**



**Maggie** is available with the constant prayer line where you can call or text for prayer. You can contact her on 07840 753 603



Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

## **Birthdays**

Major Eileen Parkin                      Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> -March

## **Prayers please for**

**Captain John Garbutt** who is very unwell at this time.

For **Joyce Hill and Helen** as they return to health, for **Mo's dad, Ossie** who has returned home from hospital but still needs our prayers.

We continue to pray for **Grant** and **Al** and **David** and **John** McCairn all waiting for medical treatment. For full recovery for **Kate**. For Tracy's dad **Ivan**.

Continued prayers for **Paul** , son of Hazel, who has two more treatment sessions and for **Archie**, Lisa and Scott.

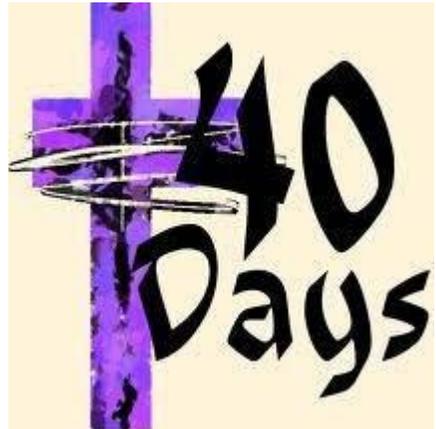
For **Steven**, the grandson of Kate's friend Madeleine

**Chris**, a friend of Gay, who is unwell at this time. For the peace and healing that only God can give.

We will follow the reflections and prayers prepared by Lyndall Bywater from the UK Salvation Army Prayer Network material.

Lyndall introduces the teaching by writing....

This is a carefully-constructed rhythm of centuries-old prayer practices leading you through seven different themes. all drawn from Jesus' own journey after his baptism. All are designed to help you to engage with those themes in prayer, reflection and action.



If you were journeying into the wilderness, you'd need a set of disciplines to keep you strong and sane, and the same is true of the spiritual journeys we make. As you journey through these themes the prayer practices of silence, meditation, fasting, walking, connecting, journaling and prayerful reading will stretch different sets of 'prayer muscles', helping you stay focused and grow stronger. And the story of Jesus will help you move from being Spirit-filled to being Spirit-empowered

### **WEEK ONE: PACKING UP**

The best journeys deserve good preparation. This week we think about the things which happened to Jesus just before he left to journey into the wilderness (Luke 3:21-37), and we consider how we might prepare for our own Lent journey.

### **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup>**

We begin our Lent journey in deep gratitude for all that God has done for us over the years of our lives so far. Sit in silence for a few minutes today, allowing your thoughts to roam over the many ways you've experienced the goodness of God. Take delight in remembering.

### **Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>**

Jesus didn't set foot in the wilderness until he knew who he was. 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased' (Luke 3:22).

Those were the words the Father spoke over him at his baptism, and they must have become even more precious as he trudged through the wilderness.

Meditate on a Bible verse today – one that has meant a lot to you in the past. Carry it around in your mind (and even in your pocket), calling it to mind in each situation you face.

### **Friday 19<sup>th</sup>**

Luke chose this moment in Jesus' story to tell us his family line (Luke 3:23-37). It's as though he imagined Jesus stepping out into uncharted territory, consoled and inspired by the earthly family God had placed him in.

Connect with some of your family today – whether blood relations or 'chosen family'. As you pray for them, send each a message thanking them for the blessings they've brought into your life.

### **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>**

What did Jesus pack for the journey? There's no way to know, but we can do our own 'packing', before we set out. What have you learnt over recent months? What new gifts have you received? What old blessings have you rediscovered? What do you know God is telling you to hold on to in this season?

Do some journaling today, writing down five things you want to take on your Lent journey.

### **Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>**

We assume Jesus travelled his wilderness journey alone, but it's notable that it began in a public place with lots of onlookers (Luke 3:21). It's easy to get caught up in our own concerns, but the people around us are on a journey too, and we all need the encouragement of fellow-travellers.

Go for a walk with friends or family today. Talk to each other about the journeys you're on and where you'd like to have got to by Easter.

### **WEEK TWO: SETTING OUT**

'Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness...' (Luke 4:1). This week we think about leaving home, embarking on a new journey and being led to unexpected places.

### **Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>**

We begin this week's reflections with some reading. As you read these words, sung by the hobbit Bilbo as he sets out on a journey at the start of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, notice what stirs in you.

'The Road goes ever on and on down from the door where it began. Now far ahead the Road has gone, and I must follow, if I can, pursuing it with eager feet, until it joins some larger way where many paths and errands meet. And whither then? I cannot say.'

### **Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Luke tells us that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness (Luke 4:1). Does that mean Jesus set out without knowing where he was going, or did the Spirit overrule his plans? If you're the sort of person who likes to be in control, it can be hard to let the Spirit lead you.

Fast from one of your regular daily activities today – a meal, a TV programme you normally watch or your time on social media. See where the Spirit leads you in the time you free up.

### **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup>**

Whether he'd planned it or not, the wilderness must have felt like a daunting destination for Jesus, yet Luke tells us he emerged transformed – in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14).

Do some journaling today about a time in your life when you found yourself in a place you didn't want to be. How did you get there? What did God do in you? How were you different afterwards?

### **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup>**

Forty days is a long time to be away from home. The Gospels make it clear that Jesus loved people and parties, so he must have missed being with his loved ones.

Take time today to connect with someone who is away from home. Ask how they're doing and ask how you can pray for them. Hold them in your prayers today.

### **Friday 26<sup>th</sup>**

'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland' (Isaiah 43:18-19). These words would have been familiar to Jesus. What might they have meant to him as he journeyed into the wilderness?

Meditate on these Isaiah verses today. What do you learn from them as you set out on your Lent journey?

## **Saturday 27<sup>th</sup>**

If you gave God an hour of your day, where might the Spirit take you? Go on a prayer walk around your local community today, but don't plan your route in advance. See where the Holy Spirit prompts you to go, and pray for each street you walk down. You could invite a few friends to go on their own prayer walks, then compare notes afterwards to see where God led you all.

## **Sunday 28<sup>th</sup>**

Luke tells us that Jesus was 'full of the Spirit' and 'led by the Spirit' (Luke 4:1). It's difficult to be filled or led when we're rushing around. As we come to the end of this week of reflecting on 'setting out', let's open a space in our lives, sit still and welcome the refreshing, renewing Spirit of God.

Spend ten minutes in silence, holding an empty cup in your hands. Each time your mind wanders, bring it back by focusing on that empty vessel ready to be filled.

## **WEEK THREE: LETTING GO**

'Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wild. For forty wilderness days and nights he was tested by the Devil' (Luke 4:1-2, The Message ).

The wilderness may well be the place where we come face to face with all that is most destructive to us, but it's also the place where the Spirit can purify and refine us.

## **Monday 1<sup>st</sup>**

Jesus was tempted. Jesus, who preached and healed, saved and was raised from the dead, was as human as we are, and he was tempted to do things that would put up barriers between him and the Father.

Is there something in your life which you've chosen but which has become a barrier between you and God? In your journal, write a letter to God, the Father who loves you so much, telling him how you feel and asking for help to find your way back to him.

## **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Addiction can be described as being in the grip of a habit that's stronger than you are, and those who live with addictions often feel oppressed by darkness and hopelessness.

For your prayerful reading this week, look up some information about local addiction services and read it through slowly, stopping to pray whenever the Spirit prompts you to.

## **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Is there something in your life which feels like it's stronger than you are – maybe a fear, an addiction, a coping mechanism or a feeling of hopelessness? So often we end up shut away in shame, but we all

have our struggles and we don't have to face them alone. There's great power in talking and praying together.

Connect with someone you trust this week by telling them what you're struggling with. Ask them to pray for you regularly, and agree to pray for them too.

## **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup>**

Jesus was tempted by the Devil, but some of the testing came with the circumstances. There were no creature comforts, no reassuring company, none of the familiar pastimes – nothing to make the desert more bearable. We only know how much we depend on things and people when they're not there.

What are you depending on too much? Find a way to fast from it today

– or maybe for the coming week. Take time to stop and pray, asking God to help you develop new, healthier habits.

### **Friday 5<sup>th</sup>**

If you know someone who's battling addiction, you may have found it difficult to know how to pray for them, especially if the battle has been a long, drawn-out one. That's where silence can be very helpful.

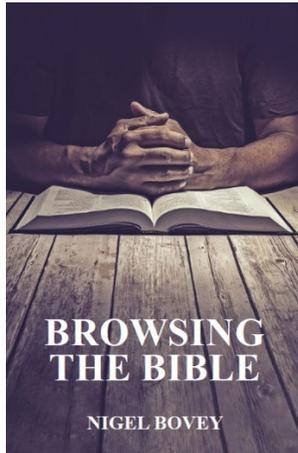
Spend time today sitting still in silence, holding that person in your mind. Don't try and form a prayer or think of a solution; just picture their face and imagine you're sitting together at Jesus' feet.

### **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup>**

Another word we use for temptations and dependencies is 'idols'. Idols are things which have come to have too much power and authority in our lives. When we demote them, we find real freedom.

Find three or four stones/bricks to represent 'idols' in your life which you want to topple. Walk to a quiet place, carrying them with you. Notice how heavy they feel. When you get there, lay each one on the ground as a sign of your desire to be free. Then walk home without them and enjoy the feeling of lightness.





Captain Mavis shared how valuable the new book by Nigel Bovey has been to her and encouraged us to consider getting a copy.

The Salvation Army web site says,

'To many people, the Bible is a complete and utter mystery ... It's like an iceberg. It's a thing of beauty, but actually content wise, a lot of people know little about what it has inside.'

In *Browsing the Bible* Major Nigel Bovey gives chapter and verse on the Scriptures, a concise overview of all 66 books. Each entry offers supportive context, highlights significant themes and ends with a crafted prayer. *Browsing the Bible* can be used as a helpful springboard for individual study, online church groups, a signpost for sermons or even a brief introduction to the Bible for new Christians who aren't sure where to begin.

**Paperback £8**

We have some copies on order so let Carl know if you would like to buy one.

## Thoughts from Major John

### Morning Prayer

#### Prayer

The night is past and the day lies open before us. Let us pray with one heart that as we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you, now and forever. Amen.

I have been enjoying on YouTube the daily morning prayers from Canterbury Cathedral. The above prayer which comes near the beginning of the prayers, captured my attention and imagination. The thought that 'the day lies open before us' seemed a little strange at this time of extended lockdown. Our activities and the ability to go out and about and to see friends is much restricted. One day can be very much like another, we hear people refer to 'Ground Hog Day' when the days just seem to repeat each other, and life can get rather tedious. The prayer reminds us though, that we have the 'gift of this new day'. We need to be thankful to God for the gift of each new day, for the gift of life.

'May the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you'.

The following hymn is one we love to sing and a favourite at Friendship Club.

Morning has broken  
Like the first morning,  
Blackbird has spoken  
Like the first bird.  
Praise for the singing!  
Praise for the morning!  
Praise for the, springing  
Fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall  
Sunlit from Heaven,  
Like the first dewfall

On the first grass.  
Praise for the sweetness  
Of the wet garden,  
Sprung in completeness  
Where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight,  
Mine is the morning,  
Born of the one light  
Eden saw play.  
Praise with elation,  
Praise every morning,  
God's re-creation

Of the new day. Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965)

Scripture Lamentations 3 verses 22-24.

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. **They are new every morning**; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.'

## Time to Smile

A very elderly couple were both having trouble remembering things, and their doctor told them they might want to start writing things down to help them remember.

Later that evening, while watching TV, the old man got up and asked, 'Do you want anything while I'm in the kitchen?'

'Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?' 'OK, he said'. Don't you think you ought to write it down?' she asked. 'No, I can remember it' he replied. 'Well, I'd like some strawberries on top too. Maybe you should write it down, so has not to forget'.

'No, I can remember he insisted'. 'You want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries on it'. 'I'd also like some whipped cream, write it down' she said.

Irritated, he said, 'I don't need to write it down. I can remember it! Ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream. I've got all that, for goodness sake!'

Off he went into the kitchen. Twenty minutes later the old man returned and handed his wife a plate of bacon and eggs.

She stared at it for a moment, looked up and said, 'Where's my toast?'

During a family communion service in church two little boys went up to the altar rail with their parents. As the minister passed along the line, giving bread to the adults and blessing the children, one little boy looked hungrily at the at the bread. His brother whispered, 'Go on, give him a bit, it's his birthday!'

### Quiz

1. In medical terms, what does an ECG stand for?
2. Which canal linked Liverpool to London?
3. Which dessert is named after a ballerina?
4. In Scrabble how many points is the letter J worth?
5. Which word links a TV show with space launches?

### Around the UK

1. Where is the national library of Wales?
2. What is Cambridge's county cricket ground called?
3. In which county is Pontefract racecourse?

4. Where is the Royal and Ancient Golf Club?

5. Which town's football ground is farthest away from any other?

**Anagram.**

What is the only English anagram of ADVERTS?

<p><b>Quiz</b></p> <p>1. Electrocariogram 2. Grand Union Canal 3. Pavlova 4. Eight 5. Countdown</p> <p><b>Around the UK</b></p> <p>1. Aberystwyth 2. Fenner's 3. Yorkshire 4. St Andrews 5. Carlisle</p> <p><b>Anagram</b> The only English anagram of ADVERTS is STARVED.</p>
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Our old chairs are now in use in a school in Gambia.

A friend who works for a homeless project in Margate asked me if we ever had any furniture that could be used in his home village.

Who could have imagined that children 3500 miles would be blessed with what we no longer needed?



# The Salvation Army

## South East Divisional Worship Sunday 21 February 2021

### Words of welcome     Linda Herbert

Good morning and welcome to our online Divisional Sunday Worship. Here in the South East Division, today we start a series of monthly meetings. These meetings will be designed to unite us and inform us, to encourage and build each other up.

In many ways, these days are requiring us to dig deep into our mental, emotional and spiritual reserves. We cannot underplay the nature of the negative impact that the pandemic has had and is having on us. At DHQ each and every day, in each and every week, we hear stories of sadness and stories of joy which reach us from your corps. We commend you, because in a very Scriptural way, you have been 'rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep' (Romans 12: 15).

Today we want to come alongside you and without underplaying any of the real struggles you face as individuals and as fellowships, we want to share the Good News of Jesus with you and to encourage you to be bearers of that Good News.

Here are some words from the prophet Isaiah

"But I will reveal my name to my people, and they will come to know its power. Then at last they will recognize that I am the one who speaks to them.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news. The good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns.

The watchmen shout and sing with joy,

for before their very eyes they see the Lord returning to Jerusalem. Let the ruins of Jerusalem break into joyful song,

for the Lord has comforted his people.

He has redeemed Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 52: 6 – 9)

Whilst these words are to the people of the Old Testament day, they are words to us today. The good news is that Jesus came to earth to bring us Good News!

He brings us the Good News of a new and purposeful life in Him and for that journey of life, He brings us peace, He brings us joy, He brings us comfort - because He is our God and we are his people.

So, in our suffering or joy, through our tears or laughter, we declare that God is with us and that He is our God. Let’s share in a song together based on those words from Isaiah – Our God reigns.

Song Our God reigns

How lovely on the mountains are the feet of Him, Who brings Good News, Good News.

Announcing peace, proclaiming news and happiness, Our God reigns, our God reigns.

Our God reigns, our God reigns, our God reigns, our God reigns!

You watchmen lift your voices joyfully as one, Shout for your King, your King.

See eye to the Lord restoring Zion, Our God reigns, our God reigns

Our God reigns, our God reigns, our God reigns, our God reigns.

Waste places of Jerusalem break forth with joy, We are redeemed, redeemed  
The Lord has saved and comforted His people, Our God Reigns, Our God Reigns

Our God reigns, our God reigns, our God reigns, our God reigns. Ends of the earth, see the Salvation of your God,

Jesus is Lord, is Lord.

Before the nations He has Bared His Holy Arm, Your God Reigns, Your God Reigns.

Our God reigns, our God reigns, our God reigns, our God reigns.

In these next moments of our meeting we are going to take some time for quiet reflection and prayer. In these days, more than ever, we take comfort from the Good news of Scripture to increase our faith and trust in God. I want to remind you of a verse from the book of Hebrews found in Chapter 5 from The Message paraphrase. It says, “Now that we know what we have – Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God, let’s not let it slip through our fingers. We don’t have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He’s been through weakness and testing, experiences it all – all but sin. So, let’s walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give.”

The Good news is that our God is not remote or removed from the things of today. He sees, He knows, He feels, He understands all that you experience this day. And so, in the quietness of your homes, just as you are, with all that makes up life for you at this moment - you can ‘walk right up to him’ and seek and find and claim all that you need - His presence with you – His power within you. And so we can sing – ‘For this, I have Jesus.’

Song For the joys and for the sorrow

The best and worst of times. For this moment, for tomorrow,

For all that lies behind.

Fears that crowd around me, For the failure of my plans.

For the dreams of all I hope to be, The truth of what I am.

For this I have Jesus, for this I have Jesus, For this I have Jesus, I have Jesus

For the tears that flow in secret, In the broken times.

For the moments of elation,

Or the troubled mind.

For all the disappointments, Or the sting of old regrets. All my prayers and longings, that seem unanswered yet.

For this I have Jesus ....

For the weakness of my body, The burdens of each day.

For the nights of doubt and worry, when sleep has fled away.

Needing reassurance,

And the will to start again. A steely-eyed endurance,

The strength to fight and win.

For this I have Jesus .....

### **Prayers**

Jesus, we join our hearts to you, for it is you who goes before us, it is you who is in the midst of our troubles, grief, despair, loneliness or pain.

Jesus, we join our hearts to you,  
for its you who walks beside the widow, the orphan,  
the poor and hopeless.

Jesus, we join our hearts to you, for it is you who is beneath us,  
carrying the wounded, the homeless,  
the outcast, the dying.

Jesus, we join our hearts to you, for it is you who reigns above,  
who see the earth filled with love and beauty, yet shrouded in darkness.

Jesus, for being beside us, beneath us, above us, in us and around us, we give you thanks.

And as a further affirmation and prayer, I invite you to pray with me a Celtic morning prayer.

Christ as a light, illumine and guide me  
Christ as a shield, overshadow me  
Christ under me  
Christ over me  
Christ beside me,  
On my left and my right.

This day be within and without me lowly and meek, yet all powerful.  
Be in the heart of each to whom I speak. In the mouth of each who speaks to me.

This day within and without me lowly and meek, yet all powerful.

Christ as a light  
Christ as a shield  
Christ beside me  
On my left and my right. Amen.

We have the huge privilege and opportunity now to pan out from our own worlds into the international world of The Salvation Army to our Self Denial video. It's been wonderful to be transported into the Salvation Army world of other lands over this past couple of weeks and this week we journey to see and hear something of the work of The Salvation Army in Bangladesh. At the conclusion Anita, our Divisional Youth Specialist will pray for this work and for our Self Denial appeal this year, before sharing an update on her work within the division.

The Missionary Appeal Video (week 3)

### **Prayer Anita Gellatly**

As we continue to think about our giving to this year's Self Denial appeal 'Rebuilding Hope and resilience together' to support Salvation Army mission and ministry in countries around the world. Today we are going to focus our prayers on The Salvation Army in Bangladesh.

Father God we bring to you in prayer Captains Richard & Heidi Bradbury and their children Luke and Neeve as they minister in Bangladesh.

We are so thankful for all the work with communities that is already taking place.

For all those working for The Salvation Army as they minister to people in the remote areas and in the city, we pray they will show God's love. Father, we claim your protection over them, will you strengthen and guide them.

We remember those who are experiencing suffering for their faith. For those who struggle to find acceptance in their own communities due to prejudice or ignorance.

For families torn apart with illness and now the effects of COVID.

For vulnerable children who can't access education, child labour, trafficking, early childhood marriage, physical abuse and exploitation.

The women and their children who find themselves in brothels.

For those trying to earn a living to pay for their children's schooling and keep their family alive.

For all those facing persecution, conflict, violence, poverty, injustice, joblessness and homelessness.

For those who lack basic necessities such as clean water, food, shelter and medical care, as they seek to serve and use their gifts to build community and care for others.

Father will you help us support in prayer and financial support of our family of God in Bangladesh.

In your name we pray. Amen.

**Youth Update Anita Gellatly**

Good Morning

An update of what has been happening and is on offer for the Youth.

- Youth monthly Zoom - hosted by the Youth Band Team. Join for conversation, fun and devotion – the second Friday evening each month.
- Student Tea & Toast – a place for uni students to catch up with each other in conversation and pause for thought – first Tuesday evening each month.
- Wellbeing Wednesday – a space to share with others and chat through the Wellbeing journal together – first Wednesday evening each month.
- The LGBTQ+ training resource for youth leaders will be available soon. This is aimed to equip youth leaders and help people to have healthy conversation, pastoral support around sexuality and identity and to equip our young people to feel loved and part of a compassionate community.
- ‘Street based’ youthwork is a new network group on Facebook. Youth workers and Corps leaders who are interested in, or already participating in forms of street- based youth work – outreach and detached will find the weekly content and training helpful to educate, equip and bring insight.
- Cell material – please do use this great resource.
- UPBEAT - The 6-week course started on Monday 11th January 7pm. There are 6 boys signed up; please pray for them as they share, learn and grow as individuals and as a group as we look at mental health and wellbeing. If you have young people interested, please get in touch.

- Made-to-be This is a girl's well being course which is also available to run on- line. Please get in touch to find out more or visit the Youth & Children's website to browse all their resources.
- Monthly 'Hot Topics' - first Sunday evening of each month. So far Hannah Clifton has shared on 'Doubt' and this month Lizzy Kitchenside from Addlestone shared on 'the environment and climate change'. We have more videos lined up and would encourage others to get involved and share to create good conversation.
- Youth Survey – a survey is being sent out this week. We want to hear from the young people and make informed decisions about “what next!” Please do encourage young people to fill out the survey.
- Wellbeing/self-reflection journal – Behind the (Face)Mask - is a journal to help you think about how COVID and life in lockdown is affecting you, for better and for worse. It is full of exercises and tips that can help you in ALL areas of your wellbeing. The journal can be used on your own, with a friend, a mentor, a parent or as a youth group. It is designed for 11-25-year olds, but those of you who are a bit younger may find it helpful to use it within in a group setting. It is a great tool to help you stop and think how you are actually feeling at the moment. If you haven't received a copy of this excellent resource, please get in touch.

I also have an electronic copy of the leaders support guide if you would like a copy. The journal covers each area of wellbeing: Physical, Emotional, Intellectual, Environmental, Social, Occupational and Spiritual. I pray this resource will encourage good conversation around wellbeing with God at the centre

Song Build your Kingdom here

In our hearts again. Increase in us we pray, Unveil why we're made.

Come set our hearts ablaze with hope. Like wildfire in our very souls.  
Holy Spirit, come invade us now.  
We are your Church, we need your power, in us.

We seek your Kingdom first, We hunger and we thirst.  
Refuse to waste our lives, For you're our joy and prize.  
To see the captive hearts released. The hurt, the sick, the poor at peace,  
We lay down our lives for Heaven's cause.  
We are your church, we pray revive this earth.  
Build your Kingdom here, Let the darkness fear.  
Show your mighty hand, Heal our streets and land. Set your church on fire,  
Win this nation back.  
Change the atmosphere,  
Build your Kingdom here, we pray.  
Unleash your kingdom's power, Reaching the near and far.  
No force of hell can stop, Your beauty changing hearts.  
You made us for much more than this. Awake the kingdom seed in us.  
Fill us with the strength and love of Christ. We are Your church,  
We are the hope on earth.  
Build your Kingdom here, Let the darkness fear.  
Show your mighty hand, Heal our streets and land. Set your church on fire,  
Win this nation back.  
Change the atmosphere,  
Build your Kingdom here, we pray.

### **Words of Thanks**

We say thank you to Anita for sharing with us today and for all that you bring to your role as our Divisional Youth Specialist, so many are benefitting from your ministry in these days.

We would also like to take the opportunity this morning to say a huge thank you to all our corps officers, leaders, and to all of you who are engaged in ministry in one way or another in corps and community throughout the division. It's a diverse ministry that this division has to people of all generations and none of it happens without effort, energy, love and compassion and it is truly inspiring.

Mark and I would also publicly convey our thanks to the great team at DHQ that we get to work with on a daily basis. We recognise it's so much more than a job to you, again it's a ministry, and we don't take for granted your commitment to our team values and the passion you have to serve.

Now it's over to Major Chris Sands who is part of our DHQ team. In these days Chris is found clocking up the miles in his van and amongst other things he is distributing food to corps from the Food Hub and from the many contacts he is making in these days. Chris is going to tell us about the photography challenge which we are issuing for this series of Divisional meetings before Louise our Divisional Secretarial Support brings the Bible Reading to us.

### **Photography challenge Chris Sands**

Over the next few months we would like to involve you in our series of Divisional Sunday worship gatherings with a photography challenge. Quite simply we would ask that you send us a photograph you have taken. It might be a scene from your garden or something that you have seen whilst out on a walk which has captured your attention, inspired or blessed you. We will then compile these into a presentation for use in our worship. Please email them directly to DHQ to [caroline.marshall@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:caroline.marshall@salvationarmy.org.uk) by Friday Monday 8th March for inclusion in our Divisional worship of Sunday 21st March. Don't forget to include your name and the corps you are from!

This month the pictures have been supplied by the DHQ team and set to a piano arrangement of 'Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise.'

We look forward to receiving your photos within the next couple of weeks!

**Bible reading Matthew 9: 35 – 38 Louise Finch**

**The Workers Are Few**

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

**The Message from God’s Word Mark Herbert**

God morning. It’s great to be on your screen again today. If this is the first time you have connected with us, I hope it won’t be the last.

Hands up if you have already had your vaccination? Brilliant. Looks like quite a number of you. Hands up if you put your hand up thinking that I could see that you had put your hand up?

As we begin to move out of winter and towards spring, we are all having a growing anticipation that the time for us to gather together in worship again in our buildings might just be getting closer. Hands up ... no, let’s not do that again! But as that day dawns, as a Corps, where will you start? How will you do it? What will it look like?

One Sunday a month for the next four months, we will offer this opportunity to come together as a Division in worship. As we do so, I want to make a bold claim: The four verses of scripture that we will reflect upon over the next four months, if acted upon, will change your life and that of your Corps:

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and illness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'

These meetings are planned under the heading of 'Sow What?'

We will reap what we sow but we also know that whatever we sow takes time to be ready for harvesting. In addition, we need to remind ourselves we have a generational God – 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and all who followed'. In the same way, in our Salvation Army context – 'Great the heritage they left us'. 'Sow what?' asks the question, 'What will our legacy be?' To babies born in our Corps, to children who find Christ in our Corps. For people of all ages, 'Sow What?'

Look at verses 37 and 38:

37 Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'

There is still lots to do. The harvest is plentiful. If you want to do great things for God? Pray and persevere. Look at these four verses and you will see all the places Jesus went, you will see all the things he did. But still there are sheep without shepherds – still there are things to do. What are we going to do about it?

This is for everyone. What Jesus has done on our behalf - His death, burial and resurrection is for everyone. The promises, purposes and power of God can be accessed by everyone. Everyone is everyone. We all have a place in the promises, purposes and power of God.

There is lots of talk about, when we get to gather again together in worship. It's an important conversation to have. But I want us to talk just as much as reaching out to others as we do about coming together.

I believe our Corps can be healthier, stronger, more exciting places to be. Our God has always been faithful, and He is not going to stop now.

This sermon is not about you doing more – if anything, I want you to do less. As soon as we can open the doors, I urge you to make it a phased return. Only do what you are really good at. Save your strength for what really matters. If we are going to reach the people that no one else is reaching, we have to do the things that no one else is doing. If we go back to the way things were, we would have missed a huge lesson – let's rise up and do better. Faith is the new normal.

What your Corps and the Kingdom of God needs from you is that you bring your gifts, skills, passion to the Lord. Too many people don't pursue their calling because they are surrounded by others who aren't.

'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few'.

Throughout history God has spoken. He is a communicating God. He always has been and always will be. When people hear from heaven, they are rarely the same again. Why?

Often with the call comes the challenge to give up the thing we love the most for the God who loves us even more.

The picture that Jesus used of the harvest was one that his disciples would fully appreciate. They knew the importance of the harvest to the farmer and to the community. The word 'plentiful' places a strong emphasis that time is of the essence. The farmer would hire anyone available to bring the harvest in – if he didn't the crop would be lost.

Time is running out; the workers are few. The subtly of the Greek word used speaks much more of the workers availability than his giftedness.

It's time to pick up your calling and run with it again. Did you know that if God said it, it will be done? No matter what else happens, the mistakes you make, the circumstances you are in. If God has spoken something over you, it will come to pass. So, keep believing God for your dreams. God opens doors that no one can shut and shuts doors that no one can open and both of a gift from God.

How can we make this happen in our lives?

Let me introduce you to a new word, it is not a rude word, but it is a made up one. The word is APEST. This word takes our calling and empowers it, enables it.

Could you imagine if there was only one colour available in the whole world?

Imagine if it was the colour red. What would everything look like if it was painted red? The sky ... red.

Flowers, plants, trees ... red.

Every room in your house painted ... red.

Every item in your wardrobe a dashing shade of ... red.

What would the world look like if everything was red? If it was all the same colour?

Of course, there's nothing wrong with the colour red. It's just very ... red! And what can sometimes be considered to be a bright and vibrant colour, when it's by itself, becomes a bit bland and loses its potency.

The picture that the Bible paints for what the Church should look like is one that is technicolour, vibrant and exciting. In the New Testament, we're told

the Church is called to be one body: united, strong, together. At the same time, the Church and the people who make it, aren't called to be the same. We're made, shaped and gifted differently and we bring our different colours to the painting. It is this what makes the Church come alive in abundant technicolour.

The letter to the Ephesians tells us that this diversity is expressed in 'APEST': Five expressions of colour and difference. It tells us that the risen Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit gifts to the Church APEST. Apostles, Prophets, Evangelist, Shepherds, Teachers. Take a look sometime at Ephesians 4. This is for everyone – all people.

The Apostles: the darers, the risk-takers, the adventures, the entrepreneurs. Those who push the Church ahead to new frontiers.

The Prophets: the justice seekers, the seers, the intuitive, those who understand where we are, can see where we're heading and call us back to our purpose and destiny.

The Evangelists: The relational, the communicators, the salespeople and the storytellers,

those excited by Good News and who can't wait to reach out with it with others.

The Shepherds: The carers, the nurturers, the guides, those who welcome in the outsiders, gather in the saints, give good advice and a warm embrace

The Teachers: The wise, the philosophers, the theologians, those who provide instruction and insight into the truths of God of the Scriptures and help us to grow up into the disciples we're called to be

Serving through the APEST lens, then, is about churches recovering and retrieving the biblical vision for what it means to be part of the family of God.

Get used to hearing the word APEST. Look out for the information video that is on its way. We currently have 53 soldiers, adherents and officers from across the Division gathering online every other Monday evening to look at the implications for APEST in their lives and Corps.

Who amongst us are the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers, we need you all to grasp how God has created you and where you fit because the harvest is plentiful, and we need you working to your strengths! This is for everyone. Everyone is everyone.

Look out for details of the next course.

Email [APEST@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:APEST@salvationarmy.org.uk) We will get back to you.

‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few’.

This is about making yourself available to serve and taking hold of what God has given you to understand it, develop it, use it and together we will be engaged in the mission of God here on earth.

As you step into a new week, remember God loves you. God is with you. God is for you. God is over you. God is kind. God is merciful. God is good. God is on the throne. God knows what we don't. God sees what we don't. So, trust God.

And I'll put my hand up for this one!

And to God alone be the honour and the glory.

### **Song Take my life and let it be**

Take my life and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee. Take my moments and my days,  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move At the impulse of thy love;

Take my feet and let them be Swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice and let me sing, Always, only for my King.

Take my lips and let them be Filled with messages for Thee.

Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I withhold. Take my intellect  
and use

Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine, It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart, it is thine own, It shall be thy royal throne.

Take my life love; my Lord, I pour At thy feet its treasure-stored.

Take myself and I will be Ever, only, all for Thee.

**Song When I was lost you came and rescued me**

When I was lost you came and rescued me, reached down into the pit and  
lifted me.

Oh Lord, such love;

I was as far from you as I could be.

You know al the things I've ever done, but Jesus' blood has cancel ed  
everyone.

Oh Lord, such grace

to qualify me as your own.

There is a new song in my mouth, there is a deep cry in my heart,  
a hymn of praise to Almighty God – Alleluia! And now I stand firm on this  
Rock,

my life is hidden now with Christ in God,

the old has gone and the new has come – Alleluia! Your love has lifted me.

Benediction Dawn Robinson

May God the Father prepare your journey. Jesus the Son guide your footsteps.

The Spirit of Life strengthen your body. The Three in One watch over you,  
On every road that you may follow. Amen

Email your pictures to [Caroline.marshall@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:Caroline.marshall@salvationarmy.org.uk)

**Next Divisional Meeting Sunday 21 March 2021**



Be still and gently pray: ***I place myself in your presence O Lord***

When you are ready, trace the path with a finger (use the hand that you do not write with). Just let your thoughts come to the surface and let them flow.

**Jesus is with you every step of the way. You are never alone. You are always loved by God.**

When you reach the centre consider your thoughts.

Stay in the centre for a while and spend some time in prayer and reflection receiving God's love and blessing.

When you are ready, return along the same path. Return gratefully and prayerfully.

As you exit the labyrinth, give thanks and praise to God.

***Glory be to the Father and to the son and to the Holy Spirit as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.***

If you keep a prayer journal write down words, symbols, phrases to acknowledge and remember this time of prayer.

# Worship at Home 28 January 2021

Our Lenten prayer

Calm your heart and mind by slowly reading, or saying out loud, the following prayer:

Loving God,  
in our sufferings and joys,  
in our relationships and daily lives, we ask that your kingdom come.  
Open our eyes to your presence, open our ears to your call,  
open our hearts to your love,  
open our ways to your will,  
open our actions to your compassion ,  
open our pain to your peace,  
and, in doing so, open our world to your hope. In the name of Jesus,  
Amen

## **OPEN OUR EYES TO YOUR PRESENCE**

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,  
Open the eyes of my heart.  
I want to see you, I want to see you.

To see you high and lifted up,  
Shining in the light of your glory.  
Pour out your power and love,  
As we sing holy, holy, holy.  
Holy, holy, holy,  
I want to see you.  
(song 270 *Paul Baloche*)

**Psalm 16: 11**

**You will show me the path that leads to life.  
your presence fills me with joy and brings me pleasure forever.**

As we come to worship together, we are setting this time apart to focus on God. We are making a time to rest in the presence of God and in the joy that that experience brings us. At the start of this service, let us have a moment of silence as we calm our thoughts and focus on the presence of God. He is always with us.

Only by grace can we enter,  
Only by grace can we stand;  
Not by our human endeavour,  
But by the blood of the Lamb.  
Into your presence you call us,  
You call us to come.  
Into your presence you draw us,  
And now by your grace we come,  
Now by your grace we come.

Lord, if you mark our transgressions who would stand?  
Thanks to your grace we are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.  
*(Song 471 Gerrit Gustafson)*

**O God of all goodness,  
you welcome us, forgive us and heal us.  
You seek us out from places where we have hidden from you.  
You crown us with steadfast love and mercy.  
Reveal yourself to us in this moment.  
So that we may praise you:  
Praise you, O God!  
Bless your holy name!  
Amen.**

**Come into his presence with thanksgiving in your heart.  
And give him praise;  
Come into his presence with thanksgiving in your heart,  
Your voices raise.  
Give glory and honour and power unto him,  
Jesus, the name above all names.  
*(Song 331 Lynn Baird)***

Jesus, name above all names,  
Beautiful Saviour, glorious Lord.

Emmanuel, God is with us,  
Blessèd Redeemer, living Word.  
(*Song 82 Naida Hearn*)

**Dear Father God,  
We know you are always with us.  
We know that only you give purpose and fulfilment to our lives.  
You bring true joy.  
As we come to you today -  
Open our eyes to see you,  
open our ears to hear your voice,  
open our hearts to feel your love,  
open our minds to know your will,  
Open our will to make you King of our lives,  
And Spirit, move in our lives, to show others your way.  
We ask this through the powerful name of Jesus.  
Amen**

Light of the world,  
You stepped down into darkness,  
Opened my eyes, let me see  
Beauty that made this heart adore you,  
Hope of a life spent with you.

*So here I am to worship,  
Here I am to bow down,  
Here I am to say that you're my God:  
You're altogether lovely,  
Altogether worthy,  
Altogether wonderful to me.*

2 King of all days,  
O so highly exalted,  
Glorious in Heaven above;  
Humbly you came  
To the earth you created,

All for love's sake became poor.

And I'll never know how much it cost  
To see my sin upon that cross.

*(Song 114 Tim Hughes)*

#### Film 4 - Philippines

Hello and welcome to the fourth of our films for this year's Self-Denial Appeal.

This week I'll be talking to Merlinda Boone in the Philippines territory. Merlinda is now based at Divisional Headquarters, but she's worked in Anti-Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, for the best part of a decade. She featured in The Salvation Army's Helping Hand appeal films from last year. Our Self-Denial money doesn't directly support Anti-Human Trafficking work, but it does help fund some of the infrastructure that makes it possible.

That means people like Merlinda can visit groups, including corps so that people are more aware of the risks to themselves, their children and their wider family. And the risks are very real. When wages are low and jobs are scarce, the offer of good money for working abroad is difficult to resist, the reality is often forced labour and exploitation. Her team also support survivors of trafficking, as they return home, and reintegrate with their families. Sounds to me like Merlinda has got a lot on her plate, but it turns out that's not all she does.

Hi Major Merlinda, can you hear us?

Yeah, hello, how are you?

I'm doing really well thanks, how are you and where are you?

I'm here in General Santos City that is somewhere in the province of South Cotabato in the Philippines. So, I am the Divisional Secretary for Programme and Youth in Mindanao Island Division Philippines Territory.

Wow that is a really long title I hope you can get that on a badge somehow. So can you tell me a bit about what your role involves?

As a Divisional Secretary for programme, I am the overseer of the corps

programme in the division as well as the youth department and I have also an additional role as the national contact person for modern slavery and human trafficking so that is another challenging role.

2020 has been a big year for our world, what's it been like on your side of the planet in the Philippines?

The Covid-19 pandemic really brings dramatic change in the way we are used to living. Like for example in the corps, especially here in Mindanao because not all of our comrades have internet connections and we only use messenger - just for text but we don't have face-to-face worship especially for youth activities because 18-year-olds and below are not allowed to go out from their homes.

Okay, people under the age of 18 are not allowed out of their homes, is that what you said?

Yes, below 18, they should stay at home from March until now, that is one of the government restrictions. So we have also what we call now Sunday lockdown, so nobody is allowed to go out every Sunday. So meaning to say we don't have worship on Sunday but we rely on online house worship, but this December we start now with face to face and 50% of the congregation can attend.

Well that's good that things might be easing. What's the impact of the coronavirus pandemic been on modern slavery and human trafficking?

Our Department of Justice has recorded almost threefold cases, especially on online sexual exploitation of children. So our cases really show a dramatic rise. So right now there is an ongoing online awareness campaign about online sexual exploitation to protect the family and our children you know so most of their time is on the internet.

So, it's great to see the Philippines really spearheading the Army's response to this in your part of the world. What does resilience mean to you in these days?

Yeah, we Filipinos are really resilient people. Just recently we had this typhoon Ulysses that damaged a lot of regions especially in the national capital regions where there's been a lot of floods and really it is so hard but we have this smiling spirit that we can still smile amidst the storms, amidst the many struggles that are happening around us.

That's really encouraging to us. What would you say the things that you are learning about yourself and life because the coronavirus pandemic?

We learned a lot. When I was in my corps, in the little corps I had a little vegetable garden at the back so every Monday I go around with my comrades and bring them some vegetables and our neighbours who are also struggling for their daily needs. They would also knock on my door and say "Major could I have this? Can I ask for your papaya, for your other vegetables because we need to survive." And that was real, I'm thankful for that opportunity you know to extend help and also to show practical love to my people because we are also challenged but, still, we cannot stop helping others.

So, we're just really grateful that we could have this time together all the way from London to the Philippines. Yes, God bless you and God bless the Philippines territory.

Yeah, thank you so much, it is an opportunity, and I am so happy to be part of what you are doing God bless you Captain Ben thank you.  
Okay bye.

Bye.

In next week's film, I'll be making a call to Pakistan, and talking to Fozia Columbus.

**Almighty God,**

**We praise you that you are everywhere. We thank you that people have listened to your call and obeyed you and are sharing you with others all over the world. We thank you for the work of the Salvation Army that is going on worldwide. We pray for the many projects that are happening and ask you to bless them, to provide all they need and protect them.**

**This morning we particularly think of the work in the Philippines. We pray for those who have been affected by the typhoon and strengthen them as they need to repair and rebuild.**

**We pray for all the people that have been deeply affected by the lockdown and pray for their safety and well-being. Heal and comfort those that are suffering. Come close to them we pray.**

**We pray you will protect the vulnerable people from the danger of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Strengthen the work that is being done to stop this.**

**We thank you for the resilient spirit that many Filipinos demonstrate. We praise you that the Christians are strong in faith in the midst of adversity. Richly bless them and keep them close to you. Empower them we pray. Even though they are unable to meet to worship, may they know your presence with them and know the support of their Christian brothers and sisters too.**

**We ask this in your powerful name Jesus,**

**Amen**

**Song by children of Officers in the Philippines: Way maker**

You are here, moving in our midst. I worship You. I worship You  
You are here, working in this place. I worship You. I worship You.

You are way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness.  
My God, that is who You are.

You are here, touching every heart. I worship You.  
You are here, healing every heart. I worship You.

You are here, turning lives around. I worship You.  
You are here, mending every heart. I worship You.

My Jesus, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness  
My God, that is who You are

Even when I don't see it, you're working.  
Even when I don't feel it, You're working.  
You never stop working. You never stop.

You are way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness  
My God, that is who You are.

## **2 Kings Chapter 6 : 8- 23 Elisha Traps Blinded Arameans**

<sup>8</sup> Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, "I will set up my camp in such and such a place."

<sup>9</sup> The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: "Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there." <sup>10</sup> So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places.

<sup>11</sup> This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"

<sup>12</sup> "None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom."

<sup>13</sup> "Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." <sup>14</sup> Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.

<sup>15</sup> When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked.

<sup>16</sup> "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

<sup>17</sup> And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

<sup>18</sup> As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, "Strike this army with blindness." So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

<sup>19</sup> Elisha told them, "This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for." And he led them to Samaria.

<sup>20</sup> After they entered the city, Elisha said, "Lord, open the eyes of these men so they can see." Then the Lord opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria.

<sup>21</sup> When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, "Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?"

<sup>22</sup> "Do not kill them," he answered. "Would you kill those you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat

and drink and then go back to their master.”<sup>23</sup> So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel’s territory.

### **Heather’s Thought HOW IS OUR VISION? OPEN OUR EYES, LORD.**

I got my first pair of glasses when I was 12. I had not realised I couldn’t see properly but my short-sightedness was picked up in a school eye-test. It was only once I had a pair of glasses and could see clearly that I realised my sight had been poor. What a difference they made. Everything looked brighter and clearer.

In our Bible passage today, there is much about sight and blindness and the key phrase I want us to consider is when Elisha prays, **‘Open his eyes. So that he may see.’**

He is referring to seeing the presence of God.

The passage refers to a time of continual skirmishing and fighting between Israel, the northern half of the people of God and Syria, their northern neighbour. Israel, at this time has a sensible king, King Jehoram who values Elisha, the prophet of the Lord as a trusted counsellor. In fact, this king has brought Israel back to the faith, and Elisha and the other prophets now enjoy the respect of the entire nation.

In this passage, the Syrian King discovers that somehow, all his plans and strategies for attack are being revealed to the King of Israel and the enemy are a step ahead. He suspects there is a spy amongst his men but is told that the informer is actually the prophet Elisha. Consequently, he decides to capture Elisha.

They would have known of Elisha and his many miracles and if he was able to miraculously know all their plans you would have thought they might suspect he would know about this one too but anyway they hunted Elisha and found him in Dothan, 12 miles north of the capital of Samaria. They surrounded the city at night and waited.

In the morning Elisha's servant, obviously a good servant as he was an early riser, sees that all around them the city is an army with horses and chariots and runs to Elisha for help. In a panic he asks, 'What shall we do?'

Elisha's answer is curious because he calmly says, 'Don't be afraid. There are more with us than with them.'

Elisha does not pray for God to save them. He prays for God to open his servant's eyes. A miracle happens and God reveals to the servant, mountains full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. God's power is all around Elisha protecting him.

"Seeing is believing" is the motto of the secular world. "Believing is seeing" is the motto of faith. Elisha believed in God's presence with him, he knew God was there protecting him, but he asks God to give his servant vision so that he would not be afraid.

A Christian lady was overheard explaining to a friend that when she is afraid, she calls out to God who she knows is with her and then she stops feeling so afraid.

The friend asked, 'If you know God is with you, why do you get afraid?'

We can only assume Elisha's servant did not have the faith to believe God was with them.

This morning we have sung and prayed a great deal about having our opened to see God's presence with us.

We know that God is omnipotent – present everywhere. The amazing thing is that, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus we can know the presence of God in us. We have the privilege to spend time with him. That is what God desires us to do. As John 15: 4 says.

**'Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me'**

When we invite God into our lives, his spirit lives within us. His presence is with us always.

**You will show me the path that leads to life; your presence fills me with joy and brings me pleasure forever.**

We discover that we desire God's presence in our lives more than we desire anything else.

Perhaps this is a prayer you would like to make for yourself.

**Open my eyes to see you Lord. I want you into my life. Please come in.**

Perhaps this is a prayer for someone you know who doesn't know Jesus.

**Open the eyes of \_\_\_\_\_ Lord so that they see you and invite you into their lives.**

Perhaps the prayer is for more awareness of God's spirit in our lives.

**Open my eyes Lord to see more of your presence in my life**

Elisha knew God was with him always, he was around him always. In fact, God was never apart from him and this gave Elisha a boldness to fear nothing.

Perhaps the prayer could be this.

**Open my eyes Lord to see more of your presence all around me.**

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made;  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:  
How great thou art! How great thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:  
How great thou art! How great thou art!

2 When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,  
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze:

3 And when I think how God, his Son not sparing,  
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in;  
That on the cross, my burdens gladly bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin:

4 When Christ shall come with shouts of acclamation,  
To take me Home, what joy will fill my heart!  
Then I will bow in humble adoration,  
And there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!  
*(Sing 49 Stuart Wesley Keene Hine)*

We may have ‘mountain-top’ experiences of God. Where his Spirit has moved us in a supernatural and powerful way. Remember Moses encountering God in the Burning Bush. I certainly haven’t experienced a burning bush but I have experienced special occasions where God’s presence has been overwhelming yet God is with me every day and I haven’t experienced that every day.

Andy Croft likens this relationship with God and us as being like a goldfish in water. God wants us to be close, God is the water, and we are the goldfish swimming in his presence. God is all around. He is there every day and being in his presence means our hearts are stirred by the spirit to see God in the everyday ordinary things.

**When have you seen God’s presence?**

**I wonder when we have failed to see his presence?**

To see God in everything we must keep focussed.

Taking photos now is an everyday thing for many people. Young people are forever snap-chatting or taking pictures all day long...but some of you of a certain generation will remember the days where you had to buy film to put in a camera. You then took 24 or 36 pictures, carefully choosing your shots. You had to then take it to Boots or some special photo shop and pay to have the film developed. Sometime later you would pick up the developed photos to see what you took. In the case of mine, they were usually out of focus, had thumbs or fingers in them, and came back with stickers stuck on them to point out over exposed to the sun, some were even blank! I just was not good at focussing correctly. Maybe I didn't spend enough time preparing the shot.

This time of lent perhaps is a good time to practising the presence of God. Ensuring our eyes are truly open This is spiritual discipline that helps us see and experience every moment as a gift of God and to be open and aware to God living in us. It, simply put, is a way we love God and stay connected to him throughout the day.

C. S. Lewis wrote, "We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito."

However often we become so preoccupied and so over-whelmed by the pace of life that we forget to look for God sightings in our day.

The discipline of practicing the presence is usually attributed to the seventeenth-century French monk Brother Lawrence who longed to maintain an ongoing conversation with God no matter what he was doing. As he worked in the kitchen, much of his time was spent on the mundane, yet he kept an ongoing conversation but silent conversation with God, that brought him much joy and transformed his life.

Here are some four quick ways to practice the presence.

1. Have a moment of quiet with God every day. Offer him the day.
2. Bring God to mind at regular times during the day. Be aware he is with you always.

3. Talk with God about what you are doing and as you do them, do them for God (Col 3: 23-25)
4. Try to see others through the eyes of God.

When we are aware of the presence of God in our lives, like Brother Lawrence, it transforms us. Remember that verse from John15:4

**Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me'**

we bear fruit, good fruit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

We become better people. Perhaps because we become more aware of who we are and how much we need God

The light of God's presence reveals the dark places in our hearts – the sins we would like to conceal even from ourselves. The psalmist says, 'Lord, you have been our dwelling-place... You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in *the light of your presence*' (vv.1a, 8).

The longer we spend in God's presence the more the light shines and highlights our sin. The apostle Paul started out by describing himself as 'the least of the apostles' (1 Corinthians 15:9). Later on, he called himself 'less than the least of all God's people' (Ephesians 3:8). Finally, he described himself as 'the worst of sinners'! (1 Timothy 1:16).

It is not that he got worse; it is simply that, through the awesome power of God's presence, he became more and more aware of the light shining in his heart. That could seem very negative, but actually for Paul it was quite the opposite. His overwhelming feeling was gratitude and praise because no matter what he had done wrong, he knew that he was forgiven and could know relationship with God.

**Lord, thank you for the blood of Jesus, which cleanses me from all sin and unrighteousness. Thank you that through him I have access to the awesome presence of God.**

We also have the security to know that with God's presence around us all will be well. God protects us.

Elisha was not concerned for his safety; he didn't pray to be saved.

Extraordinarily, it is often the people who have gone through the greatest suffering who have the strongest faith. They testify to the presence of God with them, strengthening and comforting them in the midst of their pain. Betsie ten Boom, as she lay dying in Ravensbrück concentration camp, turned to her sister Corrie and said, 'We must tell them that there is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still. They will listen to us, Corrie, because we have been here.'

One billion people watched the rescue. On 13 October 2010 at 10pm (GMT) Jose Henriquez Gonzalez emerged from 2,300ft underground after being trapped for sixty-nine days when the San Jose mine collapsed in northern Chile.

It was originally thought that no one had survived the collapse, or that the thirty-three trapped underground would starve to death before they were found. Many of them had been atheists, agnostics, un-believers or semi-believers. Jose Henriquez Gonzalez was known as the 'evangelist' because he led so many of the others to faith in Jesus Christ. He formed and led a prayer group. With thirty-three tiny Bibles sent down by friends, he led devotions twice a day.

They testified to the presence of a thirty-fourth person. Nineteen-year-old miner, Jimmy Sanchez, said, 'There are actually thirty-four of us, because God has never left us down here.' Jesus was there with them. When they emerged out of the mine the rescued men were all wearing similar t-shirts. The shirts said on the front, 'Thank you, Lord', and on the back it said, '*To him be the glory and honour*'.

I know in my own life, when things have been tough or desperately sad, when tempted to think God had deserted me, God has drawn close to comfort.

A quote from the climber and adventurer, Bear Grylls, 'Faith in Christ has been the great empowering presence in my life, helping me *walk strong* when so often I *feel so weak*.'

And there is more.....

Let us consider what happens in the second part of our passage once Elisha's servant's eyes are open to the presence of God.

The story goes on to show how God saves Elisha and the whole nation of Israel.

Elisha prays that God will blind the eyes of the Syrian soldiers. The Hebrew he uses is more about confused sight rather than blind. When he greets the army, they were miraculously blocked from recognizing him and willingly trusted him when he offered to guide them to the man they are hunting. They could see well enough to drive their horses and chariots behind Elisha but miraculously were prevented from recognizing that he led them into the enemy land and the great walled city of Samaria. Once inside Samaria, Elisha prayed again and the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw they were in the enemy city surrounded by their enemies. Elisha advises the King of Israel to feed them. A feast was prepared and the kindness paid off - peace was ensured ....for a while.

When we have a greater awareness of the presence of God we become more involved in his bigger plans. God can use better people to make a difference in the world. He equips us for his work of saving the world. We have a desire like him to see souls saved. We can step out boldly, knowing he is with us on that journey.

### **Matthew 28 : 19-20**

**<sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

**Time of reflection How is our vision? Open my eyes, Lord.**

**Open my eyes to see you Lord. I want you into my life. Please come in.**

**Open the eyes of \_\_\_\_\_ God so that they see you and invite you into their lives.**

**Open my eyes Lord to see more of your presence in my life.**

**Open my eyes Lord to see more of your presence all around me.**

**Open my eyes so that I can be transformed by you.**

In this quiet moment, still, before your throne,  
Conscious of your presence, knowing I am known.  
In this quiet moment set my spirit free;  
In this quiet moment, make a better me!  
(Song 595 John Gowans)

**Dear Lord,  
Thank you that you accept us into your family  
Please search our hearts and make us fit to be in your presence.  
Forgive for the sin that you find there.  
Cleanse us O Lord. Fill us with your purity**

**Come and make your home our lives. Welcome.**

**Forgives us for times where we have ignored your presence in our lives,  
Help us to see your presence all around us.  
In the people we see, the places we visit, the music we listen to, the books we read, the work we do, the conversations we have.  
O Lord, help us to see you more and mor,**

**Transform us so that we can be used for your kingdom work.  
We give you all the glory, in your precious name,  
Amen**

Lord, I pray that I may know thee,  
Risen One, enthroned on high;  
Empty hands I'm stretching to thee,  
Show thyself to me, I cry.

*Show thyself to me, show thyself to me,  
That I may reveal thy beauty;*

*Show thyself to me.*

2 All that once I thought most worthy,  
All of which I once did boast,  
In thy light seems poor and passing,  
'Tis thyself I covet most.

*Give thyself to me, give thyself to me,  
That I may show forth thy power;  
Give thyself to me.*

3 Only as I truly know thee  
Can I make thee truly known;  
Only bring the power to others  
Which in my own life is shown.

Show thy power in me, show thy power in me,  
That I may be used for others;  
Show thy power in me.  
(Song 771 *Ruth Tracy*)

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart!  
Be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;  
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night,  
Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word;  
Be thou ever with me and I with thee, Lord;  
Be thou my great Father and I thy true son;  
Be thou in me dwelling and I with thee one.

3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;  
Be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;  
Be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower;  
O raise thou me heavenward, great power of my power!

4 Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise;  
Be thou mine inheritance now and always;  
Be thou and thou only the first in my heart;  
O Sovereign of Heaven, my treasure thou art!

5 High King of Heaven, thou Heaven's bright Sun,  
O grant me its joys after victory is won!  
Great heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all!

*Song 573 Irish 8th century, trs Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880-1931), rev Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860-1935) (alt)*

### **Benediction**

**Guide us by day and teach us by night,  
be near us so that nothing can shake us,  
make us always aware of your presence,  
show us the path that leads to life,  
let your Spirit fill us with joy,  
and let your service be our delight for ever.  
Amen**

## **Matthew 9: 35-38 The Workers Are Few**

<sup>35</sup> **Jesus** went through all the **towns** and **villages**, **teaching** in their **synagogues**, **proclaiming** the **good news** of the **kingdom** and **healing** every **disease** and **sickness**. <sup>36</sup> When he saw the **crowds**, he had **compassion** on them, because they were **harassed** and **helpless**, like **sheep** without a **shepherd**. <sup>37</sup> Then he said to his **disciples**, “The **harvest** is **plentiful** but the **workers** are **few**. <sup>38</sup> **Ask** the **Lord of the harvest**, therefore, to **send out workers** into his harvest **field**.”

# The Workers Are Few



ASK	HARVEST	SHEEP
COMPASSION	HEALING	SHEPHERD
CROWDS	HELPLESS	SICKNESS
DISCIPLES	JESUS	SYNAGOGUES
DISEASE	KINGDOM	TEACHING
FEW	LORD OF THE HARVEST	TOWNS
FIELD	PLENTIFUL	VILLAGES
GOOD NEWS	PROCLAIMING	WORKERS
HARASSED	SEND	

