

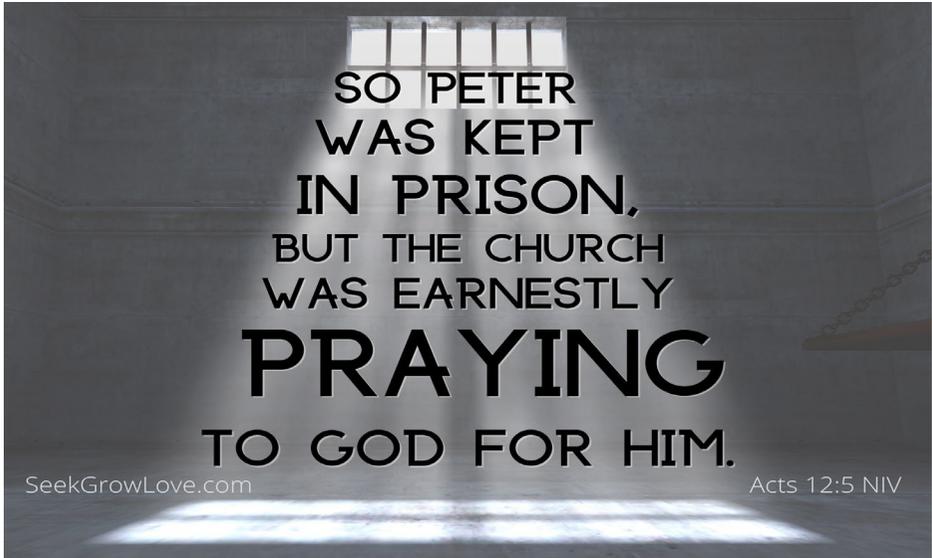
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empowered
Life with the Holy Spirit

Church at Home

Sunday 18th July 2021



We meet at The Salvation Army Hall Sunday 10.00 am.

Also 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 and select **Church on YouTube**

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

Ramsgate ZOOM 8651865167

AND DVDs of the service are available for those who would like them



What's happening at Ramsgate Salvation Army?

Sunday 18 th	10.00 am	Prayer at the Hall (Join by ZOOM)
Sunday 18 th	10.15 am	WORSHIP at Salvation Army Hall
Sunday 18 th	11.30 am	ZOOM fellowship
Sunday 18 th	12.00 noon	NO Sunday School
Sunday 18 th	4.30 pm	ZOOM Children's Church Kids Club (up to 11 years)
Sunday 18 th	5.00pm	Youth Church
Monday to Friday	(6.30am-9am)	Breakfast Drop-in (street homeless only)
Monday 19 th		 Little Fishes Toddler Group 9.30am – 11am
Monday 19 th		Carl, Jacqueline and Douglas in court
Monday 19 th	7.00 pm	Corps Council
Tuesday 20 th	7.00 pm	ZOOM Bible study Mercy Seat week 4
Wednesday 21 st	2pm – 4pm	“Summer in the Garden” (see page 6)
Wednesday 21 st		Divisional Advisory Board
Friday 23 rd	(10am - 12 noon)	War Cry Ministry Ramsgate
Friday 23 rd	(10am - 12 noon)	Food Bank
Friday 23 rd	all day	Carl and Heather at Divisional Welcome
Sunday 25 th	10.30am	Sunday Worship



There is a full day of activities on Fortress Radio. <https://www.fortressradio.online/listen-now.html>



And don't forget Songs of Praise Sunday 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

Beryl Furlong	Sunday 18-July
Grant James	Tuesday 20-July
Gwen Wren	Tuesday 20-July
Rodney Wilkening	Friday 23-July
Mary Martin	Sunday 25-July
Gay Boyden	01-August
Leanne Gomm	01-August
Melanie Goldfinch	04-August
Claire Harden	13-August
Sandra Miles	13-August
Kate Barrett	17-August
John Horn	7-August
Patricia Turner	30-August

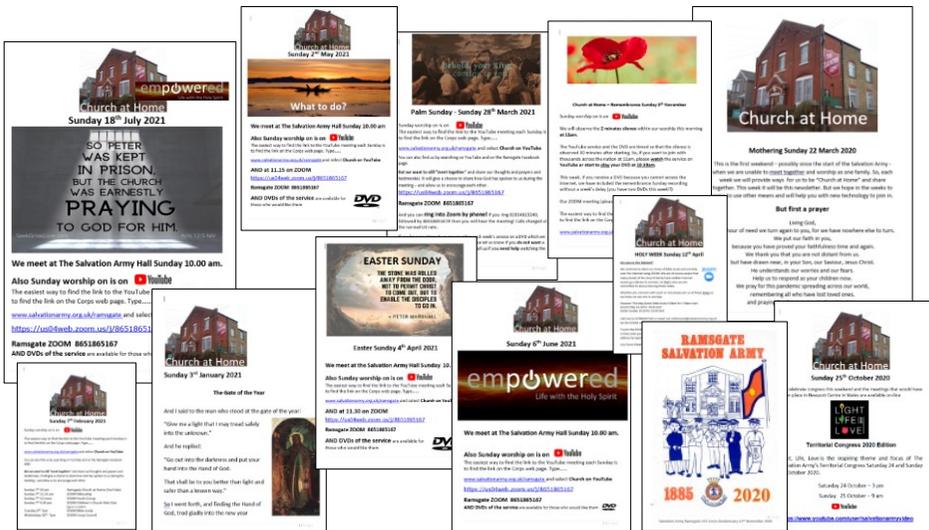


Prayers please for

Continued prayers for **Rita**, sister of Anna, **Jean Mayton**, **Cnris**, a friend of Gay, **Sam**, step mum to Hollie, **Grant** and **Al** and **David** and **John** McCairn all waiting for medical treatment. For **Archie**, Lisa and Scott. For **Paul** and **Sue Taylor**. For **Tara** and for **Angela** and **Jean S** who are all due tests and examinations and await results. For all those suffering from **Long Covid** – which include some in our church family. For Debbie as she continue to self-isolate before entering QEQM this week for her second hip operation



Congratulation to **Jasper** for achieving a distinction at GRADE 6 Double Bass



The weekly “church at home” newsletter has allowed us to share the Sunday Meeting as well as much valued information and inspiration to the corps family. This is the last edition that will be delivered to you and its is a good time to thank the people who have made our lockdown ministry possible

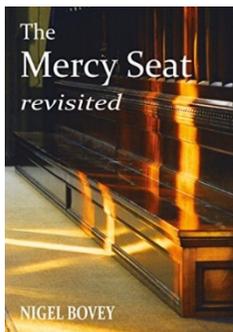
Our weekly contributors – John and David and occasional sources, Jacqueline, Chris, Mavis, Sandra, Hollie, Anne, Ben and Eileen.

Our regular drivers, Tara and Angela, Jason, Paul and help too from Sandra and Jasper, Nick and Nicole. **For print production** – Steve and occasionally Bill and Leanne

For Maggie’s prayer line.

Each week we have produced 110 newsletters and delivered these across the district with DVDs where requested and the Army weekly papers. Additionally, over 40 activity packs for our younger readers have been produced each week by Heather and delivered along with copies of Kids Alive.

We also thank Joy, Jacqueline, Tracy, Ellie and Claire for their work over ZOOM for Sunday school, Kids club and youth cell.



ZOOM BIBLE STUDY (TUESDAY at 7pm)

We have really enjoyed understanding more about the history of the mercy seat – from the Ark of the Covenant to our use of it today.

Some of the questions we have asked are

1. What, if anything, is unique about Salvation Army worship?
2. How would you describe the mercy seat?
3. What should the mercy seat be used for?
4. When and why do you use the mercy seat? If you don't, why not?
5. At Ramsgate, how reluctant are people to use the mercy seat?
6. At Ramsgate, to what extent is the mercy seat regarded as a special place?
7. What is the benefit in making a public response of the mercy seat rather than responding to God privately?
8. How convenient is it to be able to use the mercy seat at anytime during worship?
9. What pressures are there on the meeting leader not to invite people to the mercy seat?
10. What pressures are there on the congregation to respond or not to respond at the mercy seat?
11. What helpful alternatives to the mercy seat are there?
12. How content would you be for creative response to replace the Mercy seat altogether?
13. Does the Mercy seat have a future. Would you miss it if it were to go?

Please try and join on Tuesday at 7pm – Major Bovey is a great teacher, and you will enjoy and learn so much from his ministry. Even if you have not been able to join so far you will benefit greatly from this time

the Post- Quarantine Church

The logo consists of the text 'the Post-Quarantine Church' in a black, sans-serif font. The text is overlaid with several thick, wavy lines in various colors: green, orange, blue, red, and purple. To the right of the text is a red shield-shaped logo with the words 'THE SALVATION ARMY' in white, arranged in a circular pattern.

The government in England announced the end to restrictions on 19th July.....but ask us to be *responsible*.....

What does this mean for Sunday worship on 25th July?

It means we are going to do all that is practical to make you feel safe and able to attend.

(Crucially we are waiting for guidance from THQ and will be discussing the best approach at Corps Council on Monday)

What we can say is

1. We will ask you to stay away if you are feeling unwell.
2. We will continue to take your temperatures before you come into the hall.
3. You will be free to wear a mask or a shield if you would like to – no one should feel awkward if that is what they want to do.
4. We will continue the intensive cleaning before the services.

5. We will ensure the main hall is well ventilated.
6. There will be areas where the chairs will be well spaced if you would prefer to sit away from people.
7. When the band is able to play we will ask them to use bell covers (at least for the next few weeks)
8. We **may** ask you to wear a face mask when you sing. Singing is possibly the single biggest means to spread droplets (and the virus if present) and a mask will reduce this risk.

We hope that as the vaccination rates continue to rise the infection rate will fall again and we can relax “what is responsible” even further.

Newsletter	This is the last weekly newsletter with the printed Sunday service that will be delivered. We will replace it with a monthly newsletter and deliver to those who are unable to come to worship. We will ensure that your Salvation Army publications are delivered as well.
Weekly bulletin	We will return to a weekly bulletin for those who attend the meetings. This will be available on-line for those who can access it.
YouTube	Today is the last pre-recorded YouTube service.
DVD	We will stop the production of the DVD with the pre-recorded service. ** see below
ZOOM	We will discuss the future of ZOOM. We expect that some meetings may continue in the way.
Live stream	For those unable to meet for worship we will experiment with live streaming of the service. We do not have the correct equipment to do this professionally (yet – we are praying) but hope what we can do will provide a connection for those who

cannot – or are not ready to - come to gathered worship. We will record this and produce it on DVD** for those who cannot access the internet.

YP newsletter This also finished this weekend. We are planning some summer activity workshops and a return to Kids Club and Sunday school in September.

Other Activities We will be discussing this at Corps Council next week and hope to give you more news very soon.



Hi everyone,

You may or not know that I had a full liver transplant at King's College Hospital on 19th November 2020 and after my recovery and shielding for six months, I am now back at work.

Without a doubt, the surgeons and the nursing staff, saved my life and in return I have promised to raise some money by taking part in the Great Hospital Hike on 18th September 2021. Please give whatever you can.

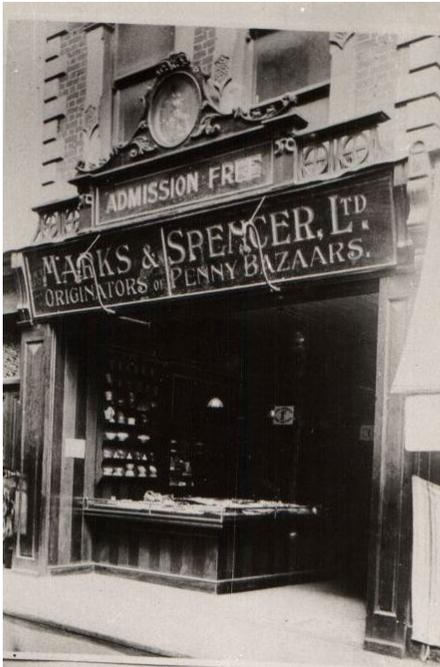
I have a justgiving page which is

www.justgiving.com/greathospitalhike2021-stevecatlin

Even if you only donate 1 pound to support the King's Liver Unit and myself, I would be so grateful. My sincere thanks to you all. Steve

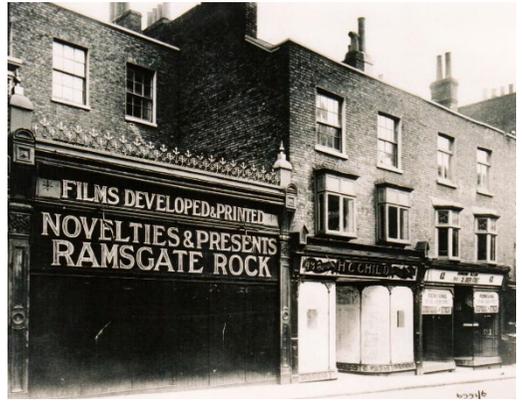
(Carl adds – if giving over the internet is something you would prefer not to do then please pass your gift to me (in a marked envelope “Steve’s fund raising”) and we will send the gift on your behalf)

From the David Richards Collection



Marks and Spencers Penny Bazaar opened 1912 until 1930, when a larger new store opened higher up the High Street.

Interesting to see that it states *Admission Free*



These buildings were demolished to make way for the new Marks and Spencers.



Inside 1950s

Sore closure

3rd February 1990

RAMSGATE

Dear Customer

We are sorry to have to tell you that this store will be closing permanently after trading on Saturday, 3rd February.

We understand that this may cause inconvenience to our loyal customers but assure you that this decision has not been taken lightly.

Nowadays we need larger and more modern stores to display our growing range of goods properly. The expenditure needed to bring this store up to the required standard both on the sales floor and behind the scenes in staff quarters would mean that we could no longer trade satisfactorily.

Our larger nearby stores at Canterbury and Margate will offer you a wider range of St Michael merchandise.

We thank you for your support in the past and hope that Marks & Spencer can look forward to your continued custom in the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Forshaw
Manager

MARKS & SPENCER

From Major John - My Pilot

The sight of the orange and black Pilot Boat is quite a familiar sight to anyone around the coast of Ramsgate or Broadstairs.

I always think it is quite a sight as it cuts through the sea and on stormy days crashes through the waves sending a white foam high into the air and over the boat. The boat goes out into the channel to take the pilot to the large ships. He is transferred to the ship, to pilot it safely up the Thames Estuary and into port with its precious cargo. We saw the chaos caused when one of these great ships comes to grief and gets stuck or runs aground only a few weeks ago on the news. In the days when chorus singing was a feature of Salvation Army meetings one of the choruses that was often sung, particularly at testimony times was...

I have a pilot who guides me
Night and day;
Through cloud and sunshine I trust him,
Come what may.
Dangers may threaten but I never fear;
I'm full of confidence while he is near;
I have a pilot who guides me
Along life's way.

Corps pianists like David would have been able to rattle it off at the drop of a hat!

A song written for songsters some years ago picks up the same theme. The words were by R. Proud and the music by Leslie Condon. The title was 'Why should I fear?'

Why should I fear life's raging sea
While in thy hands the worlds are held?
Lord, I would cast myself on Thee,
For thou alone canst pilot me
To shores where storms are quelled.

My little barque is all too frail,
And would but drift upon the swell.
Give me the faith strong to prevail,
Though surging billows here assail;
I there with Thee shall dwell.

Soon I shall see yon beacon light
Gleam from the harbour on the shore.
I'll reach that land that has no night,
And join to sing with loved ones bright
Thy praise for ever more.

No storms alarm, for Thou art near;
Thy presence courage gives, and cheer;
No raging seas may overwhelm;
My pilot, My Pilot, Thou art at the helm.

Time to Smile

Standing at the door after the service the minister asked a small boy if he had enjoyed the service. Back came the reply: 'The music was fine but I thought the commercial was too long'.

A rather long-winded preacher was dealing with the prophets one by one. 'And where shall I put Isaiah?' he shouted. A little man on the front row said 'He can have my seat, I'm going home for my dinner!'

One of the questions in an R.E. exam at a C.of E. High School was: What does a Bishop do?

One child wrote; 'Move diagonally across the board'.

A husband and wife bound for a holiday in Majorca were waiting patiently in the airport lounge. Suddenly the husband said, 'You know, darling, I wish we'd brought the piano with us'.

'Don't be ridiculous!' exclaimed the wife. 'Why on earth should we have brought the piano?'

'Because I've left our tickets on top of it,' replied the husband.

Quiz

1. Which gas was discovered in 1774 by Joseph Priestly?
2. Bogota is the capital of which country?
3. Which everyday steel was invented by Harry Brearley in 1913?
4. Who invented 0 and 100 as freezing and boiling points of water?
5. In which country was the battle of Arnhem?

Hobbies and Leisure

1. Who is the only known unmarried person in Cluedo?
2. In which month would you go to a Burns Night celebration?
3. At which stately home would you see trees laid out in the form of troops at a famous battle?
4. How is the former Museum of Ornamental Art in London now known?
5. Which cathedral has ceiling decorations designed by 'Blue Peter, viewers?'

Anagrams

What is the only English anagram of WRONG?

What is the only English anagram of SUBLINEAR?

1. Oxygen 2. Colombia 3. Stainless steel 4. Celsius 5. Netherlands

Hobbies and Leisure

1. Miss Scarlet 2. January 3. Blenheim 4. Victoria and Albert Museum 5. York Minster

Anagrams

The only English anagram of WRONG is GROWN.

The only English anagram of SUBLINEAR is INSURABLE.



Summer in the Garden

As we cannot meet in the hall for Friendship Club and Lunch club (because of the extension of the Covid restrictions) – we are opening the garden at the Salvation Army house for several Wednesdays in July and August.

You will be able to meet your friends, enjoy some food, ice cream and strawberries and we can **worship** in the open-air. Hopefully we will have some surprise guests too!

Numbers will be limited to 15 people but because we will open on many Wednesdays you will definitely be able to come – and if you want – come several times.

Please phone Carl – or drop him a note with the days you would like to come to “Summer in the Garden”

We are going to increase the numbers allowed after 19th July

Wednesday 21st July 2pm – 4pm

Wednesday 28th July 2pm – 4pm

Wednesday 18th August 2pm – 4pm

Wednesday 25th August 2pm – 4pm

If the weather is bad we may need to cancel as we do need to sit outside.

3 Brindle Grove Ramsgate CT11 8BN –

The loop bus stops at The Racing Greyhound – just a short walk away – Carl will provide details as required.

Sunday Worship 18th July 2021

Opening Prayer (based on Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18)

Holy God,
your faithful love toward us never ends!
It is as sure and dependable as the sky over our heads.
We praise You!

We've gathered together in this place to offer you our worship and our thanksgiving; to declare to any who will listen that You are our God, and we are Your people.

May Your Spirit be at work among us as we worship, opening our eyes to the light of Your presence in this place.
To You alone, Faithful Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, be all glory and honour, now and forever.
Amen.

Song Number 277

Thine is the Kingdom, Lord,
Thou art the King of kings;
Thy realm enfolds the universe
And Heaven its tribute brings;
Though evil forces seem
On earth to hold the sway,
Thy loyal peoples wait in faith
To hail thy crowning day.

2 Thine is the power, O Lord,
Nor Heaven nor earth can break;
The oceans move at thy command,
The stars their courses make.
Thou canst the breath of man
Bestow or canst withhold;
Of all the wonders of thy power
No tongue has ever told.
Arch R. Wiggins (1893-1976)

Thank you Lord God for the opportunity of worship,
for the freedom to be amongst your family
meeting together in your house,
and in the warmth of your embrace

Thank you that in worship we can put aside,
the uncertainties of this world and rest
upon the certainties of the Kingdom,
for your promises are not changeable
as those of a politician might be,
but immovable and eternal

Thank you that we can bring to your feet
all the hurts and fears that trouble us,
and leave them there,
knowing that your strength and assurance
are all that we require

Thank you that as we draw near in worship,
we are transported
from a world of concerns and fears,
to a place where we can be at peace in your presence,
find healing, wholeness and refreshment.
Thank you Lord God for the opportunity of worship

Amen

Who breaks the power of sin and darkness?
Whose love is mighty and so much stronger?
The King of glory, the King above all kings
Who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder?
And leaves us breathless in awe and wonder?
The King of glory, the King above all kings

This is amazing grace
This is unfailing love
That You would take my place
That You would bear my cross
You laid down Your life
That I would be set free
Oh, Jesus, I sing for
All that You've done for me

Who brings our chaos back into order?
Who makes the orphans a son and daughter?
The King of glory, the King of glory
Who rules the nations with truth and justice
Shines like the sun in all of its brilliance
The King of glory, the King above all kings

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
Worthy is the King who conquered the grave
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
Worthy is the King who conquered the grave
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
Worthy is the King who conquered the grave
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
Worthy, worthy, worthy
Josh Farro / Phil Wickham / Jeremy Riddle

Speak this out aloud

Lord, I choose to praise and worship You today.

You know how to break through the difficulties in my life.

I choose not to be overwhelmed with circumstances, but instead I choose to behold your beauty and greatness.

I choose to say blessed be Your name. You are my victorious God.

I will praise Your name and proclaim Your salvation day after day.

I will declare Your glory among the nations,

Your marvellous deeds among all. I will sing to the Lord a new song.

Amen

There was a time when the sayings of David Brent were more famous than Shakespeare – and if you don't know who I'm talking about – he was born in Stratford upon Avon in 1564 and considered to be the most important English writer.

Far less obscure is David Brent who said

“If your boss is getting you down, look at him through the prongs of a fork and imagine him in prison.”

So to help this morning you need to hold a fork up and look at me through the prongs.

It is really disappointing because I am supposed to be filming this from inside a police cell. What I found though is that it is a bit more difficult to get into the custody suite – than it was to get onto a boat in the harbour. Despite lots of telephone call and emails – and a very sorry police inspector it is not to beso not this week – but I'm determined – I just need to work out the most painless way to be arrested!

We said previously the church seemed to go through extreme seasons – there were periods of peace where the church could work freely – and then periods such as we are about to see – where persecution is intense, and members feared for their lives. And that is not metaphor – James had been killed under the instruction of Herod – and when he saw how the Jews supported the persecution of the church – he decided to attack the head of the church – so ordered the arrest and death of Peter.

As we listen to the story – write down the miracles that you see unfolding – and because I don't want to spoil the ending – try to predict what will happen

Miracles

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Acts 12 Peter's Miraculous Escape from Prison

12 It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. ² He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. ³ When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

⁶ The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

⁸ Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. ⁹ Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.”

¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!”

¹⁵ “You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.”

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. “Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this,” he said, and then he left for another place.

¹⁸ In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

Song Number 241

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me who caused his pain,
For me who him to death pursued?

Amazing love! how can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

2 He left his Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite his grace,
Emptied himself of all but love
And bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me.

3 Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray;
I woke; the dungeon flamed with light.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

4 No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine.
Alive in him, my living head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Miracles

1 The arrest was the day before the feast of unleavened bread so Herod could not try and kill Peter until the festival was over.

2. Peter was due to be executed the next day – but was able to sleep so soundly – free from fear

3 Angel entered cell and shone a bright light – but the guards did not respond

4 Angel struck Peter to wake him up – and pulled him to his feet but the guards did not respond

5 The chain fell off – but still the guards did not realise what was happening or do anything

6 Angel spoke to Peter to tell him to get dressed – but the guards did not respond

7 They walked past the first guard post – unchallenged

8 They walked past the second guard post - unchallenged

9 When on the street they walk up to the main city gates – gates made of iron – and they opened of their own accord

10 He returned to the house – where possibly a few days before he had been arrested – with no fear that he was in danger

Band piece: Jesus answers prayer arranged by Kenneth Downie

When I talk with Jesus, bring to him my care,
With his own sweet comfort, Jesus answers prayer.
Song 979 Ivy Mawby (1903-1983)

And is this miracle 11?

The church who had been praying for him knew that God would answer their prayer and were ready to welcome Peter in as soon as the escape was completed!

Dr Stuart Briscoe suggests that we are supposed to be rolling in our seats with laughter at this story – saying it is the most amusing part of the whole of the Book of Acts.

And if you haven't got the joke yet, here is another with exactly the same twist in the tail!

This is of a church who object to a casino being built next door to it. They object at planning, they protest during building, and on the day it is opened, and the first customers stream into the building to gamble away their money, they start a 24 hour prayer – determined to carry on until the casino is closed.

Well, this did not go unnoticed, and the owner of the casino became more aware of the opposition from the church – and then one week after the church had been praying continuously 24 hours a day there was a lightning strike and the casino was struck and burned to the ground – leaving nothing but a pile of smouldering ash.

Outraged the casino owner took the church to court to sue them and accused them of destroying his business.

The church of course denied this – saying it had nothing to do with them.

So the judge had to decide what to do.

He said it's odd that a casino owner who does not believe in prayer believes that prayer has closed his casino.

Its more odd still, that a church that has been praying the casino would be closed does not believe that God has answered their prayer.

This is what Luke thinks is so amusing – the church has been praying for seven days – constantly – 24 hours per day – praying for Peter who faces certain death. And God hears their prayer – and they don't believe it

Peter is left on the doorstep and has to keep knocking to be let in – because they are a church that has been praying for Peter and do not believe that God has answered their prayer.

Let's just pause a bit. Why were they praying 24/7?

Have we ever been so anxious about a situation that we have prayer for 24 hours?

Let alone 7 days of 24 hours?

Is this what an empowered church should do – the issues in our world – the situation our corps family face?

Will we pray so earnestly – that we pray constantly – without ceasing?

When I was on cadet placement at Chatham, the corps were led to pray against human trafficking and decided to pray for 3 days – constantly – that's 72 hours – I was asked to organise this – and I found it hard to get people to volunteer to

come – even more difficult to come and pray at 2am or 3 am in the morning – but not in Peter’s church – constant prayer by the whole church.

Do you want to be part of a church that is so devoted to its members that it will pray like this – I do! – and I really want us to consider if this is another call from God for us to be an empowered church – that we don’t give up - but pray with real conviction.

But what were the church praying for?

We can’t doubt their sincerity – but what was it they were asking?

Maybe they asked themselves this question :-

Was the death of Peter so certain?

I think we can give a clear answer. Totally certain. 100% certain. Peter was a dead man as soon as he entered that cell.

It was only Passover that extended his life. Firstly, Herod was barbaric – he is from a family line that was barbaric – the Herod that massacred all the male children in Bethlehem, the Herod who had John decapitated, the Herod who had Jesus put to death are all from this family of savage rulers who will do anything to keep power and destroy opposition. This Herod has James killed and realised how popular this made him

Secondly the guards on duty – this was not a token gesture – this was a guarantee he would not escape. From the cell there are two doors to the exit. Each door has a guard stationed at it. Peter is chained to two guards. This group of four guards is changed every 4 hours – there is no excuse for dozing to sleep- these short shifts ensure everyone is awake and there are 16 people in total responsible for stopping Peter’s escape – can you think of any ratio higher than this?

Peter will not escape. Peter will die.

What will you pray for?

At the hall on Sunday, we are going to pause here and ask this question –what would we pray for Peter? and the broader question –

What do we pray when we face the impossible?

I imagine we will answer something like this:-

Prayers that Peter will be brave, that Peter will not feel pain, that Peter will be able to glorify God through his death, that those seeing Peter die will be challenged by his bravery – that Peter’s family and friends will be comforted in their grief.

Why do we think this?

Simply because when Peter knocks on the door they cannot – will not believe it is him. Assuming he is already dead they conclude it must be his angel.

That is our challenge – can we believe God will do the miraculous?

Or do we settle for the compromise prayer that asks that we will be able to bear whatever it is that afflicts us.

How do we pray? Do we pray boldly?

Romans 12:12: Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

C H Spurgeon

Prayer is the breath , the watchword, the comfort, the strength, the honour of a Christian.

A prayerful church is a powerful church.

If you want power in prayer, you must remain in living, lasting, conscious, practical union with Jesus.

Prayer can never be done in excess.

If I feel myself disinclined to pray, then is the time when I need to pray more than ever.”

True prayer is measured by weight, not by length.

John MacArthur.

The Greek word translated bold is which means to be courageous, daring, dauntless. It speaks of acting without fear of the consequences.

Oswald Chambers

Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.

Joyce Meyer

Pray boldly, expectantly, specifically.

Max Lucado

If you only pray when you're in trouble; you're in trouble.
Prayer is the key to heaven; but faith unlocks the door.

Soren Kierkegaard

Prayer does not change God but it changes him who prays.

William Booth

“Work as if everything depended upon work and pray as if everything depended upon prayer.”

So what is this story teaching you?

Shackles by Mary Mary

Take the shackles off my feet so I can dance
I just want to praise you, I just want to praise you
You broke the chains now I can lift my hands
And I'm gonna praise you. I'm gonna praise you.

In the corners of mind
I just can't seem to find a reason to believe
That I can break free

Cause you see I have been down for so long
Feel like the hope is gone
But as I lift my hands, I understand
That I should praise you through my circumstance

Everything that could go wrong
All went wrong at one time
So much pressure fell on me
I thought I was gonna lose my mind
But I know you want to see
If I will hold on through these trials
But I need you to lift this load
Cause I can't take it anymore

Been through the fire and the rain
Bound in every kind of way
But God has broken every chain
So let me go right now

Take the shackles off my feet so I can dance
I just want to praise you, I just want to praise you
You broke the chains now I can lift my hands
And I'm gonna praise you. I'm gonna praise you

So what is this story teaching you?



Firstly we must be bold in our prayers and to expect the miraculous.

I want to pause a while and consider what the miraculous looks like today.

Just think again about what was happening in the cell. Bright lights, shouting, hitting of peter, breaking chain – and the guards saw or heard nothing – their eyes and ears were closed

Listen to what happened to Brother Andrew – the founder of Open Doors who spent many years smuggling bibles across the Iron Curtain into the communist eastern Europe – an act that would lead to arrest, imprisonment and possibly death. It was very risky

One story recounts an incident when Brother Andrew approached the Romanian border in his car—which was packed with illegal Bibles.

He could only hope the border guards were moving swiftly and not paying much attention, which might allow him to pass through undetected.

But just as he was hoping this, Brother Andrew saw the guards stop the car at the front of the line. He watched, in anticipation, as the vehicle’s owners were forced to take out all of the car’s contents and spread them on the ground for inspection.

Each car that followed received the same treatment, with the fourth car’s inspection lasting the longest. The guard took a full hour to sift through it, including removing hubcaps, taking the engine apart, and even removing the seats.

“Dear Lord,” Brother Andrew remembers praying, “What am I going to do?”

As he prayed, a bold idea came to Brother Andrew. “I know that no amount of cleverness on my part can get me through this border search. Dare I ask for a miracle? Let me take some of the Bibles out and leave them in the open where they will be seen.”

Putting the Bibles out in the open would truly be depending on God, rather than his own intelligence, he thought. So when the guards ushered Andrew forward, he did just this. "I handed him my papers and started to get out. But his knee was against the door, holding it closed."

And then, the almost unbelievable happened.

The guard looked at Brother Andrew's passport and abruptly waved him on. "Surely thirty seconds had not passed," he remembers.

Brother Andrew started the engine and began pulling away, all the while wondering if he was supposed to pull over so the car could be taken apart and examined. "I coasted forward, my foot poised above the brake. Nothing happened. I looked out the rear mirror. The guard was waving the next car to a stop, indicating to the driver that he had to get out."

God had cleared the way for Brother Andrew to smuggle the Bible to Christians who had no access to God's Word.

In his book *God's Smuggler*, Brother Andrew provides countless examples where the eyes of guards, policeman and prison officers just do not see what is before their eyes – Only a miracle that meant bible pass under the noses of those entrusted to find them.

Song Number 316

At the moment of my weakness,
When my need for power is plain,
And my own strength is exhausted once again,
Then my Lord has made provision for the day of my despair,
And his precious Holy Spirit hears my prayer, my prayer,
Then my Lord has made provision for the day of my despair,
And his precious Holy Spirit hears my prayer.

Holy Spirit! Promised presence fall on me.

Holy Spirit! Make me all I long to be.

Holy Spirit! Holy Spirit!

Give your power to me O Holy Spirit.

2 When the darkness falls around me,
When bewildered and afraid,
When I feel the most deserted and betrayed,
Then my every need is answered by God's providential care,
And his precious Holy Spirit hears my prayer, my prayer.
Then my every need is answered by God's providential care,
And his precious Holy Spirit hears my prayer.

John Gowans (1934-2012)

And this story even more recent – from the testimony of brother Yun a Chinese Christian who refused to renounce his faith and preached to thousands in communist China. When you read his story in the book “The Heavenly Man” you’d be forgiven for thinking it was Acts chapter 12a

Chinese media was reasonably familiar with Yun because of his threat to authority, wanted status and his work within the Christian church.

He was the subject of many a public poster, had been arrested thirty times, escaped custody many times. When he was arrested and imprisoned in March 1997 his judge and the prison authorities were determined he would not escape - so he was sent to a maximum security jail in Zhengzhou, Henan.

The arrest was both photographed and videoed. Trying his luck as usual Yun had jumped from a window but this time injured his feet. Police then kicked and trod on Yun fracturing his legs and once inside jail in the course of innumerable interrogations and beatings his broken legs get beaten leaving him screaming in agony and the result was that his legs turned black and presumably would have gone gangrene needing eventual amputation.

His judge had in fact said to Yun when he admitted he would try to preach the gospel again if he escaped and was given the chance: “ You delinquent! I’m going to break your legs permanently so you’ll never escape again”.

Yun got known in the jail as the “crazy cripple” who was regularly carried everywhere by three prisoners designated to the job. His pain was so intense that to sleep at all he had to rest with his legs up against the wall. His situation and long term prospects were so ghastly that finally he felt let down by God.

Two months later on May 5th, a Christian prisoner in an adjoining cell gave Yun the message God intended him to escape which at the time seemed absurd - short of crawling out to be shot in the back it what could it mean given Yun’s personal condition and his jail?.

Rather than encouraged by the message it only brought out all of Yun’s gathering depression and triggered an intense argument with God based on passages of Jeremiah - when he reached a certain passage of warning and promise to Jeremiah Yun suddenly had an intense vision. He saw his wife, who had also been arrested, out of prison and making medicines. He asked her about her release; her only reply was to ask why not open “the iron door”. The vision ended there and Yun heard the voice of God say “this is the hour of your salvation”.

Acting on the instant in obedience almost blindly Yun did the only thing he could which was knock on the wall using the signal to be taken to the toilet for which he would have to be carried outside the cell.

Brother Xu appeared at his cell to carry him but promptly commanded him, before returning to his cell for toothbrush and bathroom regalia for himself: “you must escape now”. This was hardly feasible when crippled Yun would need to pass down through 3 floors with 3 iron gates each regularly watched by two armed guards, then cross a prison yard with a further guarded gate to the outside world plus the time was 8 in the morning when there was a lot of activity in the prison. Whenever a prisoner left a cell for anything a gate to the corridor was locked from the outside so there was no chance of exit.

No longer thinking how and why he is even moving Yun propels himself towards the first gate and because someone is entering it accompanied by one of the two guards of the gate he manages to slip through unobserved because a telephone suddenly rings temporarily distracting the other guard of the gate who runs off.

Moving down to the next floor Yun picks up a broom from the wall which makes him look like he's on a working job.

The next floor has an iron gate that is occasionally left open because a guard would always be on duty day and night beside it.

The voice of the Holy Spirit now tells Yun "the God of Peter" is his God and he must go through.

The guard is staring straight at Yun but somehow dazed with it so that Yun passes straight through this second gate after which no other guards either on the descent or out into the yard manage to see him as he carries his broom (or if they do they presumably decide he must be a worker).

Yun is still human and realistic enough to fear he must surely be shot in the back as he crosses the open yard in full view of the prison compound towards the main entrance yet still nobody sees or stops him. When he reaches the main gates these are mysteriously ajar. Just as he exits, a yellow taxi stops at the gates of the prison and he automatically gets in giving the address of a Christian family in the city he knows who will need to receive him and pay for the fare he doesn't have.

When he arrives at their home there is great excitement but minimal shock as the family had been told in a vision while at prayer the day before that Yun would escape and call on them as the first thing. Knowing this they had already arranged a secret hiding place for him. Meanwhile...

It's not long before alarm is raised road blocks are put up around the city, a hunt is on and Yun's escape is on the news but Yun has already left on a bicycle with a member of his protector's family steering him down small alleyways to avoid the blocks that were set up.

The city hunt is then made more difficult by the intervention of a sudden violent storm which brings on near darkness and torrential rain washing away traces which sniffer dogs could otherwise have used in pursuit.

It's only as he pedals the bike that Yun finally absorbs that his legs must actually have been healed, something a prisoner later said he had realized had to be the case when he saw Yun slip upright through the first of the three gates.

The communist authorities have been unable to explain how a crippled man managed to escape unaided from a top security jail –

But we know. The God of Peter is still working miracles

Who am I?

Who am I that the highest King would welcome me?

I was lost, but He brought me in

Oh His love for me

Oh His love for me

Who the Son sets free

Oh, is free indeed

I'm a child of God, yes, I am

Free at last, He has ransomed me

His grace runs deep

While I was a slave to sin, Jesus died for me

Yes, He died for me

Reuben Timothy Morgan / Benjamin David Fielding

So what is this story teaching you?

Firstly we must be bold in our prayers and to expect the miraculous

Secondly – we need to ask what imprisons us



I told you at the beginning that try as I might I could not get into a prison cell to record this sermon.

Few of us, thank God, have been in prison cells

Yet many of us are in prison

A meditation – empowered to be free

Lord, open my eyes and heart to your word this week.

The angel came to Peter and woke him up.

The angel released Peter's chains.

The angel gave simply instructions:

Put on your clothes.

Slip on your sandals.

Wrap your cloak around you.

Follow me.

The angel led Peter quietly passed the guard who imprisoned him.

The angel brought Peter to the open gate.

The angel stayed with Peter a little longer on the street before leaving.

So simple, Lord.

So clear.

I would think this scene would be noisy as a prison break out.

The plan of escape would be complicated and full of intrigue.

Instead, you quietly gave step by step instructions to Peter.

Lord break me free of what imprisons me.

Wake me up from my spiritual drowsiness.

Break the chains that bind my heart and soul.

Help me hear your simple guidance.

Dress me in your grace.

May my feet follow your steps.

Wrap your cloak of love around me.

Open my eyes so I can follow you.

Led me past those shiny things that distract my focus on you.

Bring me to your open door you have unlocked for me.

Stay with me as I venture onto the new path with you.

Such simply instructions.

May I follow your lead, Lord.



So what imprisons you?

You are not in a cell but you may as well be – because you cannot walk away from the things that bind you.

Do you know what they are?

It's a prison of deception because you appears to be free. But you cannot walk away from it. The thing you keep doing, the attitudes you have, the behaviour, the language.....

It's a prison of identity. It has a way of marking us, sometimes for life, with a label we wear forever. In this prison, no matter what you do people keep judging you – keep assuming you will mess up, tell you you will never change

It's a prison of attachment. We become bound to (addicted to) that which we pursue, even after we no longer want to pursue it – Paul said as much

For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate... For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing" (Romans 7:15, 18b-19).

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,

because the Lord has anointed me

to bring good news to the poor;

he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; (Isaiah 61:1, ESV)

In a spiritual prison, prisoners are set free in one of three ways:

1. The sentence must be served. Ninety days or ninety years, if you do the crime, the law says you do the time.....or
2. The debt must be pardoned by one having authority to do so.....or
3. The person bound must have a changed identity. If John Smith is imprisoned and it is later discovered he isn't really John Smith, he is released.

Here's where the news becomes gospel. Jesus Christ,
has entered the prison on your behalf!

He served in the sentence.

His Father pardoned the debt.

And you are given a new name.

Now Satan, the accuser, has no legal claim on you, to keep you in bondage. The prison has been opened! Will you walk out – or stay?

Prayers

God of Grace
In whom I put my trust
Be my rescuer when sins ensnare
The liberator of my soul



The still small voice that says
'Be free'

God of Love
In whom I put my trust
Be my joy and comfort at all times
The source of all my thoughts and words
The still small voice that says
'Rejoice!'

God of Peace
In whom I put my trust
Be my tranquillity in times of turmoil
The steadying hand in raging seas
The still small voice that says
'Be calm'

God of Power
In whom I put my trust
Be my confidence when faith is challenged
The sword and armour that protects
The still small voice that says
'Be strong!'

Song Number 243

Before the throne of God above,
I have a strong, a perfect plea,
A great High Priest whose name is Love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on his hands,
My name is written on his heart;
I know that while in Heaven he stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart,
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

2 When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,

Upward I look and see him there
Who made an end to all my sin.
Because the sinless Saviour died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God the just is satisfied
To look on him and pardon me,
To look on him and pardon me.

3 Behold him there! the risen Lamb,
My perfect, spotless righteousness;
The great unchangeable I Am,
The King of Glory and of grace!
One with himself I cannot die,
My soul is purchased with his blood;
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ my Saviour and my God,
With Christ my Saviour and my God.
Charitie Lees Bancroft (1841-1923)

Benediction

Go now
sure footed in faith
with eyes wide open
and waiting for God's glory
to surprise you
in unexpected ways
And the blessing of God
Father, Son and Spirit
Mystery, Sign and Hope
be with you
and those whose lives you touch
now and always
Amen
~ written by Rev Sandi McGill

Acts 12: 1-24

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

angel
cloak
escape
iron gate
light
soldiers
persecute
prison
sentries
walked

chains
death
guards
James
Mary
opened
Peter
Rhoda
sleeping
woke

church
door
King Herod
knocking
miraculous
Passover
praying
search
sword
worms



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