



## Newcastle City Temple Connected

Reimagining Church Together

### Dear Friends

On Wednesday I was privileged to attend an online Mission Conference hosted by the Salvation Army but led by members of the LICC (The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity) <https://licc.org.uk>. It was the introductory stream of the Frontline conference. A conference which seeks to explore how God's sent people can take their place in God's mission within their everyday lives.

The LICC have produced a 6 part course, called 'Life on the Frontline' which I would love to explore within the corps at some point during the next 12 months; here's the precis to the course...

*Whoever we are, as Christians, we each have a 'frontline'.*

*Your frontline is the place where you spend much of your time, where you meet people who don't know Jesus. It's the place God has called you, the place of possibility and potential. We may be old or young, healthy or infirm, employed or not – we still have a 'frontline'. A place God has put us.*

*Often though, we don't see our frontlines in this light. But just imagine what the impact might be on our neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools – on the whole nation – if we could help each other make a difference for Christ in these places. Imagine how God could work through you, right where you are.*

At the start of the first session we were asked to think about how we as a corps have responded to Covid -19; in other words - what have we been doing?, how have we been active?

In breakout groups we then described things like on-live worship, zoom activities, the delivery of periodicals, worship bulletins, craft materials and welfare packs, pastoral phone calls, the provision of food parcels and meals etc.—In other words we thought about our respective corps as a collective body of worshippers rather than recognising the activity and personal contribution of each individual member - and the fact that we can each represent Christ wherever we are.

Many church goers, including salvationists have expressed their frustration over recent months at not being able to do anything! How refreshing and how challenging it was to hear the leader share this response which he had found in a 'tweet' on 'twitter' as to how *'the church'* could respond to the question 'How have you responded to the Covid pandemic? - what have you been doing ?, how have you been active? - in other words *where have 'God's people' been able to practice the presence of God?*

And this was the response...

*'Our church has been teaching the children of essential workers and those who are the most vulnerable in society. Our church has been caring in Care Homes for those who are completely isolated and very fearful. Our church has been nursing people on the ward learning new skills under immense pressure. Our church has been working in GP surgeries, under new conditions trying to help patients over the phone. Our church has been working in warehouses, working for the big factories and now suddenly they are essential workers ensuring that the food gets to people's doors. Our church has been working on production lines. Our church has been neighbours going to the shops for those who live around them. Our church has been volunteering with the NHS. Our church has been working from home. Our church has been educating their children. Our church has been shielding themselves for their own sake and the sake of wider society.'* Letter from Church

I share this with you today - because I think it does us good to be reminded that God has a purpose and a plan for each one of us. All are valued, all are loved - there isn't one of us who cannot influence the world for good - even during - no, especially during a pandemic. Whatever your contribution *'key worker', home schooler, thoughtful neighbour, the friendly voice at the end of the telephone, committed pray-er, the one who stayed home and shielded themselves - for their own sake and others,* Thank you!

Together - 'We are the Church'!

Together we already have and will continue to make a difference!

**With every blessing**

*Major Liz*

# NCT SA Connected

Reimagining Church - Let's Worship Together



**SUNDAY:** 14th February 2021

**Theme: LOVE BEYOND**

**Key Text:** 1 John 4:11-21

For our self denial reflections we are being encouraged to reflect on 1 John chapter 4, verses 7-21; and Dr Rick Warren said "God wants to change our lives through his Word" In the bible James writes, "Don't just listen to God's Word. You must do what it says" (James 1:22). "What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? ... I will show you my faith by my good deeds" (James 2:14, 18).

As important as it is to read our Bibles - we need to do so with the understanding that it ought to shape and inform our lives. As we read the bible the relationship which we have with God ought to be strengthened and it should make a difference to who we are and how we live and act.

Today is St. Valentines day - In the Catholic church, Valentine was venerated as the patron of love, and so what better day to focus our attention on God - who is the source of all love.

In an online blog called '*At the table with April Fiet*' I read these words;

*1 John 4 contains one of the most startling claims in all of Scripture, but it is one that we have heard so often that perhaps its boldness is lost on us. We have to keep in mind that the name of God was so precious to the Jews that they would not speak it. God's image was so precious and vast that it was not to be depicted in graven images. When God is spoken of throughout the pages of the Bible, it is most often done in metaphor. The writers of Scripture were far more comfortable talking about what God is like than they were to try and say with certainty who God is. But here, in 1 John 4, that carefulness and hesitation is thrown to the side and John writes, "God is love." God is love, and because we are made in God's image, we are to love God and love our brothers and sisters.*



*God is love. Three words. But, apart from this truth, we have no hope at all. Without God, there is no love because love begins with God. Love begins with God, and love comes from God. While we were still sinners, God sent Jesus to save us because God loves us. Love is central to who God is, and as people created in the image of God, it has to be central to who we are, too. In fact, in 1 John 4 verse 8 it says, "Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."*

1 John 4:11-21 has an overarching set of inter-related truths.

Firstly that God is the source of all love.

Secondly that in response to God's love for us we should love others; and

Thirdly as we love others, God's love is brought to full expression within us.

God is love. The greatest expression of God's love is that the Father sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. All who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. 1 John 4:11 says, "Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other." Verse 17 says ; "As we live in God, our love grows more perfect" and in verse 12 - "His love is brought to full expression in us".

Have you ever considered how surrounded we are by weak expressions of love. We talk about loving certain kinds of food, television programmes, sports. We equate love with something that makes us happy or something that makes us feel a certain way, but love extends so far beyond all of that. We only need to read Paul's epistle on love (1st Corinthians 13) to realise how radical love is;



*<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails.*

**GOD is LOVE.** When Paul writes what LOVE is he is painting a word picture of what GOD is like. Love is unexpected. It often comes to us as the exact opposite of what we thought we'd get. Love is unafraid. It knows that when all is said and done, the One we will stand before is One who loves us. Love wins. Even in the face of struggle and adversity, love will win in the end.

### A prayer of love for this Valentines Day - based on 1st Cor. 13

Father God,

Thank you that you are a loving, gracious God. Thank you that you've offered us forgiveness and the gift of new life in you. Thank you that your love is perfect, it never fails, and that nothing can separate us from your love.

We pray that our lives would be filled and overflowing with the power of your love so we can make a difference in this world and bring honour to you. We ask for your help in reminding us that the most important things are not what we do outwardly, it's not based on any talent or gift, but the most significant thing we can do in this life is simply to love you and to choose to love others.

Lord thank you that your love is patient. Help us show patience with those around us.

Lord thank you that your love is kind. Help us to extend kindness to others.

Lord thank you that true love is not jealous. Help us cast aside feelings of jealousy or hatred towards others.

Lord thank you that your love does not brag and is not arrogant. Help us not to live with pride or arrogance, but to choose to walk with humility and grace.

Lord thank you that true love does not act unbecomingly. Lord help us to extend kindness instead of rudeness towards others. Help us to lay aside the critical tone and tearing down with our words, so that we can truly walk in peace.

Lord thank you that true love does not seek its own. Lord help us not to live selfishly, looking only to our own interests.

Lord thank you that true love is not provoked. Lord help us not to become easily angered. Help us not to be so quickly reactive, but instead slow to speak and slow to become angry.

Lord thank you that your love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Lord help us not to hold grudges, but to choose to forgive, even when it's difficult.

Lord thank you that your love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. Lord help us to love your words of truth, may we walk in your freedom and wisdom. Let it be what drives our lives and choices every day.

Lord thank you that your love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, thank you that your love never fails.

Help us to love as you love. Fill us with your Spirit so that we can choose what is best. We are weak Lord, but we know also, that even when we are weak, you are strong within us. Thank you that it's not all up to us. Thank you that you equip us to face each day with the power of your love, your forgiveness, and your grace. AMEN

## NCT SA Connected

Reimagining Church - Let's Worship Together

Continued...



### Suggested Songs for this week

Come let us all unite to sing, God is love (SASB 8)

You can't stop God from loving you (SASB 72)

My Jesus I love Thee (SASB 878)

### Suggested Songster Piece

Compelled by love <https://vimeo.com/250429921>

**This weeks Band Piece** - Chosen by Major Yvonne Dare, who writes;

"I had no difficulty in choosing a piece of band music to be shared with you this week. The first time that I heard the International Staff Band playing 'Prelude on Lavenham' at the Boundless Congress in 2015 it spoke directly to my heart and I have used it regularly since, both in my own personal devotional times and when leading meetings.

The music was composed by Geoffrey Nobes to accompany the moving and thought-provoking words of a hymn written by Nick Fawcett which eloquently reflects the times of questioning, doubting, darkness and uncertainty which confront us all at various times, and which are certainly prevalent in these days of pandemic when so many people are feeling anxious, isolated, uncertain about the future, and sometimes far from God.

As we listen to the haunting melody echoing the challenging sentiments of the hymn may we bring the things which are troubling us just now to our heavenly Father, making the prayer for ourselves,

*Help me, support me, Lord, help me get through.  
Lead me through darkness till light shines anew.*

so that we, in turn, will be able to point those struggling in our world to the One who holds the answers to life's questions."

Many thanks to Yvonne for her thoughts and choice of music, which has become a favourite of many. Two clips are provided, both played by the ISB, but with different visuals, both helpful in different ways.

<https://youtu.be/6XI6nNxjpow>

<https://www.facebook.com/theisb1891/videos/922375834843315/>

### **This Weeks Activities**

**Today:** As well as being the **2nd Sunday of Self Denial**, today is also '**Racial Justice Sunday**' and the newly formed Race Inclusion Working Group chaired by Colonel Jenine Main & Captain Althea Bawden have asked that we encourage people to view a video which has been produced to promote awareness of Racial Justice and can be viewed via the following link;

<https://vimeo.com/510549698>

This afternoon at 2pm members of the **Sunday School (CoGs)** will be meeting via Zoom & This evening at 6pm members of the **Youth Fellowship** will meet for their weekly catch up also via Zoom

**Shrove Tuesday:** 11am Weekly Coffee & Chat via Zoom - you might want to share with pancakes!

**Wednesday:** 1st day of Lent

**Thursday:** 7pm Heathers House Group will meet to study part 3 of 'From the Ram to the Lamb'

**HAVE A BLESSED WEEK & KEEP SAFE!**