



Dear Friends

Felicity and I hope that you are keeping well...

Just in case you had not heard, on the advice from the EFCC and in line with other faith groups, we are suspending our church meetings until (prob) Easter. All meetings in the SSC have also been suspended. These are unprecedented times in our nation, unheard of in fact and we all need to do our part to try and stop this virus from spreading.

As far as the WECC is concerned, we have been predominantly open as a church fellowship since 1662/ 1706. We have seen world wars, major national and international incidents, a church rebuild...and always remained open- but not this time. (and we thought that Brexit was bad...) Needless to say, we are still operating and functioning as a church fellowship, *as the church is the people not the buildings*. We have joined with other local groups in the Wivey and the 10 parishes area to co-ordinate a 'faith not fear' community response, so we will keep you informed about that.

From a spiritual perspective: May I offer some thoughts.

I believe we are under some sort of 'spiritual attack', with the very basis of our values and (Faith) standards being challenged. When I have been praying about these things some thoughts came to mind: One was the serpent issue in The Bronze Snake **Numbers 21:4-9**. I personally believe that the current virus is a '*serpents bite*' and the remedy and cure for this 'bite' is exactly the same as in the OT...and as we turn to Him, He will heal us...

And secondly, this may be a prelude to revival or renewal. I think that the enemy is trying to bring down our society and faith life, as he knows that the Lord of the Heavens is on the move: *a fresh outpouring of God's Grace, mercy and forgiveness may happen soon*. By doing so he thinks that if he shuts us down, then God won't move. **Not true: 'As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.'**" Genesis 50:20" ("no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD" Isaiah 54:17)

As we find ourselves in a difficult season right now, find encouragement through this reminder: God will turn it around for good. He is faithful to His Word. He will see us through, don't ever doubt it. We will step out to the other side of the darkness. And who knows, many lives may be affected for the kingdom's sake, because of our difficult season of struggle.

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And so, if this is true, then we need to prepare, pray, be positive and be affirming.

As I quoted on my Facebook page: **'This is a temporary storm that will indeed blow over, and it will usher in a coming move of God. Let's take hold of God in the midst of this crisis, and let's shine like lights in a dark and frightened world.'**

Even though we are not meeting on Sunday, we still need your financial support please. e.g. We are losing upwards of £900 per month by not using the SSC alone. We do still have pastoral and church commitments to fulfil. Therefore, if possible, please continue to tithe and to give/support to the church.

You can do this via a bank transfer (details attached) or if you are passing by either in the Manse mailbox or hand to us. (this will be in confidence) We can gift aid all donations - don't need to be in the yellow envelope. Thank you for your support.

Ten Radio: If you are able to receive 10 Radio then there will be a new regular church service at 10am each Sunday morning. This week it will be Rector Martin presenting, then me hopefully next week (29th March) *Put your clocks forward that weekend too.!*

Finally: If you need anything, if we can help then please let us know. We need to keep in touch by phone on a regular basis, and if you have internet access, by FB and email.

Please use Sunday morning as your time of personal worship prayer and reflection. It would be so easy to replace that time with God by doing something else, gardening, washing- whatever. I plan to be sending some prayer points and some thoughts during the weeks before...to encourage you. ☺

Be assured of our prayers at this time. **Be people of faith not fear.** We will get through this.

Blessings:

Martyn and Felicity.

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The story in **Numbers 21:4-9** was certainly familiar to Nicodemus. (John 3:16)

4 They travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea,^[c] to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; 5 they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “*Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!*”

6 Then the **LORD** sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.

7 The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the **LORD** and against you. Pray that the **LORD** will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

8 The **LORD** said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.”

9 So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

The people were complaining—again. They had Manna and then quail to eat, shoes that did not wear out, water in unusual places, but they lived and prospered and yet they complained, and moaned again.... Life was better than slavery, but still they complained...

And so, they rebelled against God and Moses, and it took Moses to intercede for them with God. God told Moses to form a bronze snake, put it on a pole, and whoever was then bitten, could look at the bronze snake and by **faith** would live... Truly miraculous... a **flat-out miracle**, in fact.

So, what can we see here?

It is a story of sin, for the nation rebelled against God and has to be punished. The Nation in the wilderness was once again complaining and rebelling against God.

So, God sent fiery serpents that bit the people so that many died.

It is also a story of Grace. Moses interceded for the people and God provided a remedy. He told Moses to make a brass serpent and lift it on a pole for all to see. Any stricken person would be immediately healed.

It is also a story of faith: when the people looked by faith, they were healed.

Perhaps you already know that the verb ‘**lifted up**’ has a dual meaning: to be **crucified** (John 8) and to be **glorified and exalted**.

*So, simply put, the **Cross of Christ** was not the **end of His glory**, it was the **means of His glory**’. (Acts 2:33) So much as the serpent was lifted up on that pole, so the Son of God would be lifted up on a Cross. Why?*

To save us from Sin and death.

You can perhaps imagine in the camp of Israel, their human solution to the ‘serpent problem’ was by attempting to kill the serpents, taking medicine, pretending they were not there, forming a committee, passing anti-serpent laws, or climbing the nearest tree, or whatever...

But the real **answer** was in looking **by faith** at the **uplifted serpent, on the pole**.

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One might say, that the whole world has been **bitten by sin**, (as we read Genesis that is true) and the "wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

God sent His son to die not only for the nation of Israel, but for the **whole world**

At our new birth God remakes our souls and gives us what we need, again.

New eyes so we can see by *faith*.

A new mind so we can have the *mind of Christ*,

New strength so we won't *grow tired*.

A new vision so we won't *lose heart*.

A new voice for *praise* and new hands for *service*.

And most of all, a *new heart*.

A heart that has been cleansed by Christ.

For God so Loved...

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"Your Pastor has never pastored a church through a pandemic before.

When he opens, people are going to say he should have closed. When he closes, people are going to say he should have opened.

When he does not shake hands people are going to say he needs faith. When he shakes hands people are going to say he's foolish.

He's going to make some difficult decisions to protect the flock considering everything from your spiritual growth to legal liabilities that you aren't even thinking about.

Every Pastor believes that they pastor the most amazing group of people.

Remember this:

No one wants things to go well at church as much as your Pastor(s). Your Pastor needs your prayers and support right now."

10 Radio Details: Given the suspension of public worship gatherings which is currently in place, I thought you might like to know that 10radio, the community radio station for Wiveliscombe and the 10 parishes and surrounding areas of Wellington and Bishop's Lydeard will be commencing a local act of worship to be broadcast on Sundays between 10.00 and 11.00 a.m. and repeated on

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Wednesdays at 11.00 a.m. It can be received on the radio at 105.3 fm and/or is streamed on the internet by following the link at www.10radio.org

<<http://www.10radio.org>>

We are calling it "The Home Service" as it is meant to be just that - bringing worship into people's front rooms. The first half an hour or so will be an act of worship and devotion with hymns, songs, readings a short address and prayers. The second part of the hour will be an opportunity to communicate church notices, share requests and dedications and to hear faith stories from those in our local area.

The first "Home Service" will take place this Sunday and will focus on the theme of Mothering Sunday and led by Revd Martin Walker, Rector of the Wivey group and Judith Swann. Ordained and Family Church Leader.

