

Dear members and friends of the Mission Church,

Welcome to our somewhat different Prayer / Newsletter for April 2020. I trust you are all coping well with the present challenging situation. If you need pastoral support or practical help please contact either myself or Steven or both and we will do all we can to support you. Our contact details will appear at the end of this letter.

During his teaching about prayer in the sermon on the mount Jesus said this 'When you pray go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen, then your Father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you'. I suspect many of us have secret petitions and longings during this current difficult season. Anselm - a former Archbishop of Canterbury in the 11th Century responded to Jesus teaching about prayer in this way, addressing himself he said; 'Come now, little man, turn aside from your daily employment, escape for a moment from the tumult of your thoughts. Put aside your weighty cares, let your burdensome distractions wait. Free yourself for a while for God, and rest awhile in Him. Enter the inner chamber of your soul, shut out everything except God and that which can help you in seeking him, and when you have shut the door seek him. Now, my whole heart, say to God, 'I seek your face Lord, it is your face I seek'.

Our current circumstances are bewildering and perplexing. It's difficult for us to navigate a way through this that makes sense, yet the Lord still calls us to pray and remain faithful to him and to his word. I vacillate between two extremes when I think of the impact of the coronavirus; Firstly, that there is no explanation or answer about why these sorts of things happen and secondly, that the Lord knows what he is doing and he calls us to seek him and trust him completely throughout these present mysteries.

The last time that I spoke in the Mission I referred to the Psalms of Lament and of how many of them there are in our Psalmody as well as the book we refer to as The Lamentations of Jeremiah. It now seems to me to have been a timely and appropriate reference! Lament evidently has a place in God's purposes for us. We lament together because we don't get this and are profoundly saddened by it. Psalm 88 is an instructive and helpful insight into this. It begins with despair and death and ends by saying that 'the darkness is my closest friend'. These scriptures can be deep and troubling but yet have traces of reality in them. Anne Lamott says this about Lament; 'Nothing heals us like letting people know our scariest parts. When people respond to your cries and laments and look at you with love, it's like they are holding the baby of you'. I truly believe that the Lord wants to 'hold the baby in us.'

In my daily reading this morning I was reading from 2 Kings 18 + 19. I was gripped by the story; The King of Assyria, called Sennacherib, was planning to invade and conquer Jerusalem. King Hezekiah referred to it as a day 'of distress and rebuke and disgrace' and similar to when children come to the point of birth and there is no strength to deliver them. A model story for our times! Hezekiah then went to the temple and prayed, 'O Lord, God of Israel enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You made the heavens and earth! Give ear O Lord and hear, open your eyes O Lord and see, listen to the words of Sennacherib. Now, O Lord our God deliver us from his hand so that all the kingdoms on earth may know that you alone O Lord are God'. The Lord knew what was going on and encouraged intercession in the situation. He heard and answered the prayer of Hezekiah and shared with the prophet Isaiah a 'word' about the future in much the same vein as 'This too Shall Pass'. This being the title of a book by Julia Samuel which has become very popular. It's content is about stories of change, crises, and hopeful new beginnings, we are all praying for that. As well as the 'word' the Lord gave Isaiah the prophet to Hezekiah a sign. I was amazed and thrilled by the sign! Please read it and see if you recognise it.

'This year you will eat what grows by itself, the second year what springs from that, but in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above'.
2 Kings 19 v 29 + 30

Verse 30 was the scripture that the Lord spoke to me at New Year which would colour the Mission life throughout 2020. You can imagine how thrilled and filled with hope I was by this.

To maintain our collective prayer life we plan to continue meeting on ZOOM each Wednesday at 7pm. Wednesday 08 April will be when we pray to 'immerse' the Mission in prayer for the month.

Our Mission of the month for April is Christian Solidarity Worldwide. Many missional organisations including CSW are finding coping with their work exceptionally difficult in these challenging times. SU for example have had to put their staff on furlough until the summer. I'm aware that CSW is facing real challenges that need our prayers. Dochas, Suresh, and others have been in touch requesting prayer and practical support because they are finding it very hard to make decisions and function in the ways in which they have functioned hitherto. Please remember all our partner missions in your prayers. All their work is important and needs sustaining.

April is usually when we celebrate Easter. It's interesting to note that the first Easter didn't happen in a church building. It happened outside an empty tomb while the disciples were sequestered in a house, grief-stricken, wondering what was happening. This Easter may turn out to be a much more biblical celebration than we have been accustomed to. I'm looking forward to our online Easter service and I know from many of you that we are incredibly grateful to Andrew, Steven and Bethany for providing us with this weekly facility. It's great that we are able to continue with our current series Voices from the Psalms and reach out way beyond our usual network of people.

Matters carried over from March that continue to need our prayers;
Our mission of the month for March which was LatinLink

Thank you for your prayers for me, it was a real joy for me to be involved in the DCFC missions weekend and to share there about our work with the Syrian families. It was also super to link up with another organisation called SAT7. I recommend that you explore what they do for Jesus in the MENA nations.

Dates for your diary and for your prayers during April;

Fri	03	12:30 pm	City pastors prayer time by ZOOM
Tue	07	09:15 am	Local pastors and church leaders prayer time by ZOOM
		7:00 pm	Deacon's meeting by ZOOM
Wed	08	7:00 pm	Immerse the Mission in prayer for the month of April by ZOOM
Sun	12	11:00 am	Easter service on FB live, Christ is risen!
Fri	17	7:30 pm	City - wide prayer Gathering by ZOOM or praying at home

If you wish to chat through some of these issues or needing help in any way, please contact myself (Hector) on 01224 89750 or hectorimackenzie@yahoo.co.uk or Steven on 07754914340 or steven.themission@gmail.com. Steven can also help set you up on ZOOM.

I hope that you are all aware of the hexagons project. Please join us and let us create a work of art, worship and blessing together. Contact Anne Wilma (awlouden@hotmail.com) for further information or for more hexagons if you need them. Meantime, Keep informed, Keep safe and Keep praying. Anne and I read these words this morning; 'The prayer of the upright pleases the Lord'. The biblical encouragements for us to pray are many!

With warmest blessings on behalf of the Elders,

Hector

You're invited!

Join us every

Sunday at 11am on



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