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# St John's Mission Newsletter

## Reaching out at home and overseas

Mission Sunday 4th October 2020



Let's start with a positive! At a local level Charlton have at last been taken over by a Danish American businessman called Thomas Sandgaard. As fans will know the last few years & months have been desperate with the club facing possible administration or even extinction.

- Please give thanks and pray for Thomas, the club, the staff & players in this new era

Please continue to pray for chaplaincy. During Lockdown the players got used to Bible studies with me on Zoom. This season I have been back in to the Training Ground until one player tested positive for Covid and restrictions were re-imposed. Staff and players still need someone to talk to though, about so many issues, so please pray for the opportunity to do this, either remotely or preferably in person

Having started positively there are still so many uncertainties being faced at the club and in football generally. I was recently on a call with a chaplain at a National League club (part time) where the players had been told that without fans allowed in they could no longer exist so they were told to look at other clubs. Macclesfield Town have already been wound up and 40% of League 2 clubs are facing administration.

Please pray for football & sport in general facing these challenges. The effects of losing a local club are devastating - loss of jobs at the club, a knock on effect on the local community, loss of local business, a sense of loss and bereavement for fans. We cannot underestimate the part that participating in or watching sport plays in the mental & emotional health of our nation

With Covid restrictions in place in sport this presents a real challenge for chaplains in offering pastoral & spiritual care to people. Some are operating remotely, a few are back involved face to face at their clubs. I know from my experience how staff need to talk and are much more likely to do this if they see me around rather than having to pick up the phone.

Please pray for clubs to find a way to allow their chaplains back in to their clubs. I believe chaplains are essential workers, needed more than ever with the mental, emotional & spiritual needs that people are facing.

October 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> is the Sports Chaplaincy UK annual conference. For obvious reasons this year it is online and we have people attending from all around the world. We will be looking at a number of issues including ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), the challenges of doing chaplaincy at present and how we can be carriers of the Hope and Compassion of Jesus. Natalie Andrews the National Sport and Well-being Project Lead for the Church of England will also be speaking.

- Please pray for all those attending and presenting and particularly for all the technology involved to work well
- Pray specifically for Day 2, Wednesday, when I will be leading on *Diversity - Race & Disability: Challenging Prejudices & Building Hope*. I will be taking a devotional based on Jesus encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well and then interviewing a diverse panel on this theme

**Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**

**Matthew 28:18-20**



**Greenwich Youth for Christ**  
**Update by Joe Crisp-Hihn, Director**

With the charity having spent the majority of lockdown furloughed, we returned to work in September, full of energy and determination. Our main goal was re-establishing groups and rebuilding relationships with young people. This however, has not been particularly straight forward in light of Covid-19 concerns and restrictions. Schools have changed policies on external visitors and running after school projects, certain venues have needed re working or are just unsuitable to allow for social distancing and everything needs to be more thoroughly planned and considered.

Although despite these challenges, we are hugely grateful that youth work is able to continue as it is exempt from the current "rule of 6". Churches, where possible want to keep working in partnership and open their doors to vulnerable young people in the community and schools are looking for alternative provision we can provide, limiting our contact to one year group at a time.

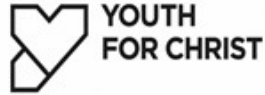
In a time of uncertainty, we are encouraged by the words from Proverbs to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on you own understanding, in all your ways submit to him and he will make straight your paths." Things may look slightly different to what we have become used too and as things continue to change, it becomes more important than ever that we rely on God to guide our decisions, provide a clear path and direct our organisation.

- Please pray for good communication with local schools, for opportunities to work effectively with them in reaching vulnerable young people and sharing Christ's love.
- Please pray for local churches, that they would be flexible and resilient as they continue to support young people in their community.
- Please give thanks and pray for Lauren Crisp-Hihn, who after nearly 10 years of working as Greenwich Youth For Christ's girls worker, has left the organisation, she will continue to work and serve young people and schools locally.
- Please pray for discernment, patience and faith as we trust in God to guide our path and decisions in this unfamiliar time.

Mission Newsletter

Produced on behalf of the St John's Mission Committee

October 2020



### Youth For Christ, Neil O'Boyle, National Director

"All change, all change." Since the beginning of lockdown, those familiar words have not been heard by Neil because he hasn't been on a single train, but he has certainly felt the realities of that play out whilst leading Youth for Christ over the last 6 months.

"Circumstances may have changed, but the mission remains the same." This has been the tagline and vision statement for the last few months and as the days and weeks go by, it continues to be. With over 8 million young people suddenly behind locked doors or not accessible, Youth for Christ had to quickly adjust to finding more innovative ways to reach young people, whether online through our digital evangelists, by providing thousands of teachers with virtual RE lesson plans, or helping hundreds of church youth groups to keep going with material. We pushed on with our prisons work and where able, we were allowed to help schools which had to remain open for essential workers. We have since taken all of our learning, made adjustments over the summer and as we enter a new season of uncertainty, we remain committed to sharing Jesus with young people while working hard to keep staff and young people safe in the process.

As a family, like all families, we have experienced elements of chaos, while equally enjoying a slower pace of life. Jake had to complete his MA online and unexpectedly moved from Chicago to Arizona (where his wife Grace's family live). He has only just received his work permit so he can now start to look for work, but like the UK it isn't an easy time to find employment. Lucy planned to head to Mexico for 6 months with YWAM but at the last minute had to change plans due to Covid-19 and is now a student at Regents Bible College studying for a degree in Applied Theology and youth work (and is loving every bit of it). Molly started college and is studying Early years education, and Maisey is now in year 10. Joy is in her final year of studying for her counselling degree and is able at this point to continue to attend lectures in person along with counselling online and via telephone. Neil's mum became seriously ill over this season and we thought at one point she may not recover which would be difficult in any season but without anyone being able to visit her in hospital it was a challenge. We are so grateful though that she has recovered, and the family overall remains healthy. We remain constantly grateful to St Johns for its commitment, love and prayers for us!

#### Please pray for

- Neil as he continues to lead Youth for Christ through a pandemic where access to young people has many restrictions.
- Joy and Lucy as they are both studying, and for Jake who is in need of a job in America.
- Molly and Maisey as they adjust to the demands from school and college (like every other young person) with the huge changes in schedules and major restrictions to connecting with friends.



### Japanese Fresh Expressions update by Simon & Minako Hall

Since our last update in January 2020, the Japanese Anglican Church (South East London) has continued its work through the main monthly meetings. When lockdown started in March, we moved our face-to-face meetings at St Hugh's Bermondsey to online Zoom meetings. The aim of this Fresh Expression of

Japanese church is still to proclaim the gospel to Japanese people living (mainly) in South East London. Where possible, we have been meeting in person in smaller gatherings at social events to maintain a sense of community. The fortnightly Thursday meetings at St John's Blackheath have also needed to move to an online setting but remain an established fixture, looking at the Japanese bible together. Minako has now completed her studies for the Bishop's Certificate course in Southwark.

As ever, if you know of Japanese near where you live, please let Minako know.

#### Please remember us in your prayers:

- for the leaders to be equipped as servants of God
- for those attending the two groups, that they might find their own faith
- for spiritual growth and God's guidance
- for growth of the existing two groups
- for reaching out to Japanese people who have not yet acknowledged Christ as their saviour."



### Greenwich Street Pastors - Caring Listening Helping

#### Update by Christine Legg

With the advent of lockdown, Greenwich Street Pastors have been unable to go out on the streets of Woolwich on a Friday night. We are discussing trialling

two hour periods, ending at 10pm and hope to start this soon. GSP patrol the streets of Woolwich on Friday Nights. We remain a force for good on the streets as we are there to Care, Listen and Help. We can help in situations where other organisations are seen as threatening. We are able to assist people in a number of practical ways, providing space blankets, water, snacks and in colder weather, gloves, socks and hats. Giving out information on how to access the Food bank and WSUP. For many, just stopping and having a conversation helps them feel less lonely and know that someone cares about them. A few Street Pastors are helping as Journey Makers outside Woolwich Station, encouraging people to wear masks and helping them with any concern travelling. The September training started together in church for two weeks but has now had to continue online. If you are interested in knowing more about being a Street Pastor, caring, listening and helping people, please speak to Christine Legg, Valerie Lester or Philip Landergan.

#### For your prayers we would ask:

- Please pray for all of our Greenwich Street Pastors; for those in self-isolation; for those still working (some of whom are key workers) and those working from home.
- Please pray for Clayton, as he endeavours to initiate a Street Pastors branch in New Zealand. This was put on hold during the NZ confinement, but now that this has been lifted, his endeavours will begin again.
- Please pray for all the rough sleepers/homeless people that GSP meet on a regular basis in Woolwich. We hope that they have been found, at the very least, temporary accommodation whilst this virus crisis is so prevalent.
- Please pray for all the small business owners in Woolwich who have been forced to close – we pray that they will be able to rebuild their businesses in time and in particular for PJ, his wife and two sons.
- Please pray for those we help and for those who are lonely, that through conversations they come to know God's love for them.



### London City Mission, Alan Black Director of Studies, Deputy CEO

We estimate that one in three Londoners are unlikely to ever hear the gospel because they do not have a Christian friend to introduce them to the hope they can find in Jesus. These include people living on social housing estates where the church is not well represented, people from other faith backgrounds, or people who are 'living on the edge of society'.

London City Mission has just completed a major restructuring so that in future our missionaries will increasingly be used to train and equip churches to reach out to these people. At present we partner with 80 churches in disadvantaged areas and train around 25 other churches a year. Please pray that in God's grace, our new focus, structure and roles will see that number significantly increase over the years and the result will be will be flourishing and growing churches on council estates and among minority ethnic communities, equipped and active in evangelism to the least reached.

**Please pray for** the Training Department I serve in as we seek to train our staff over the next two years in the skills of missional leadership and mobilisation for urban cross cultural mission in London.



## Following Jesus where the need is greatest, update by Ann Hill

*Tackling plastic pollution:* Tearfund and other organisations are calling on the UK Government to set plastic pollution targets in the forthcoming Environment Bill. A mandatory reporting of reduction targets for plastic packaging and plastic pollution would enable progress to be monitored. Tearfund has also been lobbying Coca-Cola, Nestle, PepsiCo and Unilever to reduce plastic pollution. Single-use plastic packaging is particularly problematic in poorer countries where waste is not collected and communities have no choice but to burn it or live amongst piles of it.

*Beirut port explosion:* More than a quarter of a million people were made homeless by the explosion. Tearfund and its partners in Lebanon are distributing thousands of hot meals, as well as vouchers to enable those most in need to buy food and essential household and hygiene items. Partner churches are giving emotional support to families and some are providing shelter for those who have lost their homes.

Many throughout Lebanon are suffering hardship from an extended economic crisis and hospitals are struggling to cope with Coronavirus. About a quarter of Lebanon's population are refugees from the conflict in Syria. Many fear that the new Government, however well-intentioned, will be unable to operate without interference from those with vested interests.

*Plague of locusts:* Ethiopia and Somalia are in the midst of the biggest invasion of locusts in 25 years – and Kenya and Uganda are experiencing the worst attacks they have seen for 70 years. Swarms devastate crops which is dreadful for families who rely on farming for food and income. Tearfund's partner organisation (Friendship Support Association) has obtained funding from the Scottish Government to provide thousands of affected people with cash support.

Please pray for:

- steadfastness in our striving to protect the planet
- God's comfort to those in Beirut who are grieving the loss of loved ones and for those who have lost everything, and that the new political leadership will have the courage and wisdom to implement much-needed reforms
- give thanks that funding has been found to help farming communities who have lost so much from the locust swarms.

### Update from the Medhurst Family

Rachel and Bene, with their three children Eden (7), Judah (5) and Shiloh (3), were due to go to India at the end of July where Bene and Rachel have been appointed to begin work as volunteers at Hebron School in the Tamil Nadu. Hebron is a Christian International School that primarily exists to educate children from Christian worker/NGO families living in Asia. Due to Covid 19 it has been impossible for the Medhursts to travel to India yet as no new work foreign visas have been issued during this time and all schools in India remain closed. In faith, Rachel and Bene packed up and moved out of their home and gave up jobs and children's school places in order to be ready to leave for India as soon as visas become available, but as yet it has not been possible to even begin the application process. Until this week! By the time you are reading this, the application for their visas will have been submitted - praise God!

"We received the following in an email from the Hebron school this week: *"We suggest that you encourage praying family and friends to pray earnestly as you apply for your visas. Even under normal circumstances the process can be random (what happens today can differ from what happens tomorrow) and frustrating. Be patient and pray for God to act even when things look very grim."* So please do pray for us!

We have now been living out of suitcases for nearly 2 months, staying wherever God provides accommodation (4 different UK counties so far!), home-schooling the children and trying to embrace the adventure of the unknown. We have been so blessed by how God has been encouraging and providing for us during this time but **please pray for:**

- our visas to be granted and flights to become available in God's perfect timing
- continued provision of all that we need as we wait
- our children to remain settled and secure even in all the moving around
- Hebron School, as staff teach online (from all over the world!) and as they strive to safely bring back all staff and students over the coming weeks and months



## Mara Diocese in Tanzania , Elizabeth Fleetwood

### Nursery school Porridge

This scheme provides porridge every morning to the 9 Nursery schools set up by the Mother's Union. Children come to school hungry and the provision of porridge helps them to concentrate which gives them a greater advantage in their education. We know that these children are more advanced in their learning when they move on to Primary school.

It would appear that Tanzania and the Mara Diocese have not been too affected by the Pandemic, malaria though, is an ever present threat for all the population.

Please pray for

- *Bishop George and his leadership team in the diocese*
- *For the Mother's Union*
- *For the health of the children especially for protection when going to school*



## Neema Crafts, Ben & Katy Ray, Iringa Tanzania

We are all keeping well here thanks, even though there are zero Covid-19 restrictions in Tanzania

Please could people pray for the following:

- Praise God no one at Neema Crafts seems to have got sick from Covid19!
- Pray for the country to find a way to cope with having very few tourists this year and for some time to come. And that the upcoming elections in October could happen peacefully.
- Praise God for the skills and ability of our artisans that they have been able to adapt to different products and ways of doing things - our carpenters are now making bespoke furniture, our tailors making PPE and our cafe is now catering much more for Tanzanian clients.
- Pray especially for our tailoring department to receive more large wholesale orders - we had a couple for aprons last month which were a God-send
- Praise God for the new volunteers Chloe and Joe Chettleburgh who have booked their flights to come in early November.
- Pray that God will use their skills and personalities powerfully at Neema especially regarding the marketing of our new webshop and possible shop in Dar and elsewhere.
- Please pray that Chloe and Joe and Katy and I would receive our work permits and visas easily this year (not guaranteed) as we have begun the process of applying.
- Praise God that we can celebrate my 40th birthday this coming weekend (27th) with friends without restrictions and for our family who are all healthy and well at the moment.
- Zaki and Alessia are enjoying life at their tiny International school and they both did really well at the recent sports day. Please pray that their education doesn't suffer from us being out here but instead can give them a wider perspective.