

Issue 4
January
2021

Pastor Steve's Thoughts

A Happy New Year!

As I sit here writing this all the snow has melted and the weather forecast is for the temperature to rise again.

Over Christmas locally we moved very quickly from tier 2, to tier 3 and then into lockdown. I look at the world around me and see that the world is still very much in the grip of the pandemic but other issues are continuing to rage and worsen around the world.

The one thing that I love is that there is always hope. No matter what we see or experience, no matter what is happening around us or within us there is always hope. Why? Our hope isn't in this world. Our hope isn't in the people of this world. Our hope isn't based on the circumstances around us. Our hope is never changing. Our hope is the same yesterday, today and forever. Solid, constant and secure. Our hope is in God who will never leave us nor forsake us.

This world needs Jesus. I want to see God's kingdom here. I want to see this world around us look more like the kingdom of God. I want to see the world around us changed for Him...and it can! We can see the world change for Him and we all have a part to play in that. We all have a world changing role in seeing God's kingdom here. All we need to do it look up, pray, connect to God, engage Him, be led by Him, by His word and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Trust in Him and step out and act...just as Jesus would. All the strength we need we already have in Him within us.

I know the world around us looks a little crazy right now. It will until we see Jesus return! So let's get on with making it look more like the kingdom of God. Invest in your relationship with God, listen to the Holy Spirit, and step out in word, faith and His power and we will see the world changed for Him and for His glory!





Jennifer and I also pray you all have a Happy New Year despite continued covid restrictions.

In this issue is a reminder of many of the events that happened over Christmas at Riverside plus articles from our elders, Chris, Elaine, Phil and Debbie. In addition from Liz Craven, Joe Page, Gerry and Claire about Just Love @ Clementines etc.

I wish to thank all who have contributed to this publication.

Les the Ed

Hope 2021



Hope is one of the themes Pastor Steve is asking us to consider at the beginning of the new year 2021.

In the border, just outside our patio window, is a clump of hellibores. In the Autumn I clear the old growth away and there is very little to be seen yet miraculously, despite the cold, damp and dark of November and December, at the

beginning of January new shoots appear and very quickly the flowers appear and start to hold up their heads.

This for me is a real sign of hope that Spring is on its way!

Just next to the hellibores is a tub containing Winter flowering pansies and Spring bulbs. These pansies have survived the rain, frost, ice and snow of the Winter months and now they are joined by the first shoots of the emerging Spring bulbs.

For me more signs of hope.

Psalm 121 asks the question,

"Where does my help come from?" Answer "My help comes from the Lord".

We can also ask "Where does my hope come from". Answer. "My hope comes from the Lord"

I often find myself singing "My life is in you Lord, my strength is in you Lord, my hope is in you Lord"

The hellibore and the pansies remind me that this is so true.

Jennifer



Christmas on the road.

In December 2019 a conversation turned into an idea which turned into a small brass band (about 8 of us) visiting a few pubs and local events to play Christmas carols.

In September 2020 the same people started to think about what to do for Christmas 2020. After a conversation with Steve it eventually led to the plan for an interactive, outdoor nativity and carols which would tour the streets of Bewdley.

We hoped that people in the church would jump at the chance to invite us to their street, and we weren't disappointed!

So we've visited 8 places in Bewdley, Wribbenhall and Franche and Hoobrook. We've had brass band music, community participation (every nativity needs a Mary, a Joseph, shepherds and wise men!), carol singing, mince pies, mulled wine and a lot of fun.

It's been a great way to bring the true message of Christmas to the community!

Tim Scarborough



December was a really busy time. With preparing the usual church services for Christmas and all the Christmas hampers. We also took Christmas on the road and took a short nativity and carol service to eight streets across the Wyre Forest. Not only that but we managed to take a longer version to Jubilee Gardens on Christmas eve as well.

Including Jubilee Gardens on Christmas Eve we were able to share the story of the birth of Jesus Christ with over 360 people over the course of December. It was a real joy and at each location that we turned up at people greeted us warmly and were so engaging and encouraging. There was a real sense of community spirit and hope as communities got to hear of the greatest event in human history, the birth of Jesus Christ and all joined in and sang of this event too.

It was so much fun and we loved getting to share and bring some hope of Jesus to these communities.

The brass band was able to play at all locations except one, but we still had brass music at that location and people still joined at the event.

We even held one event on the 23rd December in 40 mph plus winds and driving rain, but 25 plus people still turned out in the cold and wet and joined in. It was certainly an evening I won't forget.

I want to extend a massive thank you to all who booked us to come to their street. All who shared a story of what we were doing for Jesus. Thank you to all who helped, from the brass band to the marshals. You all got involved and were essential. Thank you! And a massive thank you to Tim Scarborough who was key in bringing it all together. What a great Christmas at a difficult time! Loved sharing the gospel with so many people!

Pastor Steve

A Message To Riverside

From Chris, Phil, Elaine and Deb



Thank you for re electing us for the next 3 years.
We do not take our positions lightly and strive to keep God
at the centre of all we do.
We all appreciate you as a church family for your love and prayers
that spur us on as we move forward with Riverside.

2020 has been an extraordinary year with obvious challenges that the Pandemic has brought. Church has completely changed to how it was at the beginning of 2020. Never could we have foreseen how this year would unfold.

Although we have felt sad at not being able to see everyone collectively on a Sunday we can really see the positives from having time to step back and look at 'church' through new eyes

Liz and Steve have amazed us with their love, enthusiasm, care and heart for each person at Riverside and we would like to take the opportunity to thank them here Their adaption to church in a completely new way and in such a short space of time has been inspiring They have managed Zoom meetings, Sunday morning church and prayer meetings live by FB /Youtube and have adapted church to continue to function in so many ways It's a privilege to work with them as a leadership team.

We have met on a weekly basis since the first lockdown in March to pray and plan for Riverside in the coming weeks and months ahead This has been via zoom, in the garden, the back room at Riverside and we have even had an elders meeting in the library at Just Love @Clementines albeit socially distanced and with face masks on!

The future leadership of the church is very much on our hearts and we are praying into this actively looking in the next 3 years to strengthen the team for the future.

Please pray into this for us.

God bless.

Chris, Phil , Elaine and Deb

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:20 and 21

Since this article was written Phil and Debbie contracted Covid19.

Phil is well on the road to recovery but Debbie is still poorly.

Please continue to pray for her speedy and complete recovery.

Just Love @ Clementines

Some of you may not be aware that Just Love @ Clementines has not only been a house in previous years, but has also been home to many businesses such as a butchers, a bakery and a small tea room, so the building has always played a part in serving the community.

Derek and Gerry Mills bought the building in 2004, which was then a small tearoom on the ground floor and the owner lived in the property above. They purchased it with a view for it to be Derek's office. This never came to fruition and it was turned into bedsits and the nurses from Summerdyne Nursing home rented them.

Nine years ago Gerry was working as a teaching assistant at a school. The office secretary lost her husband and Gerry and two other colleagues offered to do the funeral wake for the family. It was at this wake that Gerry and her colleagues were asked for their business cards, as they assumed that they had their own catering business! Gerry went home and suggested to Derek an idea of converting number 4 High Street into a business where Gerry and her colleagues could run a coffee shop.

During the summer of 2010 Clementines Coffee Shop opened! It was not long after serving in the coffee shop that Gerry met several people who attended Riverside Church.

An invitation from Debbie Beadle to Gerry to attend a Christmas Service led both Derek and Gerry to join Riverside Church and becoming born again Christians.

The business became very successful serving the Bewdley community and customers always said they felt loved.

After 3 years the business was sold to a new owner and Gerry went onto new projects.

Gerry always felt that it was not the end for her and Clementines.

In November 2019 Riverside Church suffered the huge loss of one of their congregation, Ralph Sherwood, who had been attending Riverside Church from the beginning.

Gerry was then contacted by Ralph's son, Dave Sherwood, asking her to organise the wake. Whilst preparing food on the morning of the funeral with several people from church they started discussing with Pastor Steve several ideas with regards to new ventures for the church and buildings and businesses were discussed.

It was then that Pastor Steve mentioned that Clementines Coffee shop business was for sale and Gerry informed him that she owned the building and previously had run the business. The church pursued this venture with excitement.



It was then that Gerry and Claire Beadle collaborated with a vision to re-open Clementines as a Christian Coffee Shop to serve the Wyre Forest community. Their vision was to create a warm and loving environment with a view to grow God's Kingdom and also a place for our Riverside family to feel at home in. As God has His hand on many things, even through a pandemic, He enabled us to open Just Love @ Clementines.

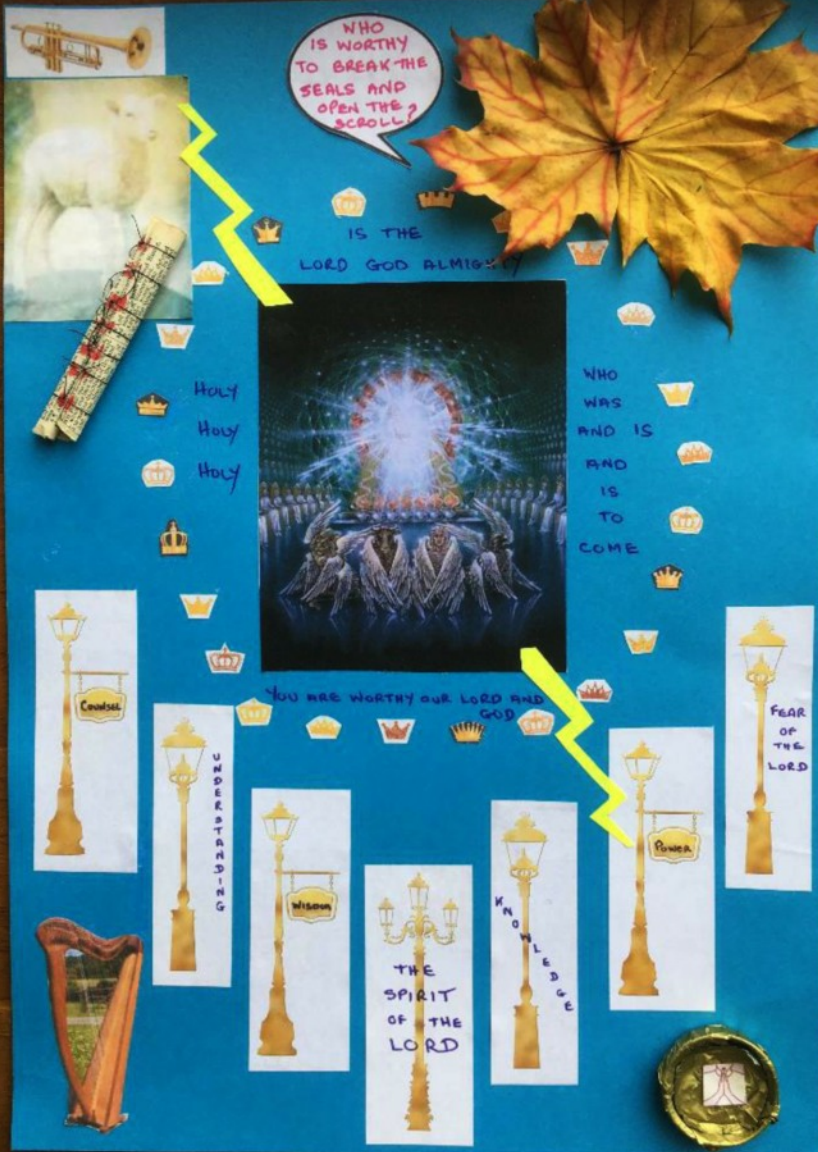
Even though we have only been open for a short while, we are definitely seeing evidence of God's love being shared. We have had customers tell us that they "feel" that the atmosphere is "different somehow". We have had several customers asking us and the volunteers about Riverside church and how the coffee shop came about.

After a successful first month, we had to sadly close for another short lock down due to the pandemic but we look forward with excitement and vigour to reopening our doors and serving and loving the community once again.

Claire and Gerry would like to say a huge thank you for all the support from our amazing volunteers and all the people from our congregation who support us by visiting Just Love @ Clementines.



Liz Craven and Revelation 4/5



Revelation 1:3

'Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it.'

It was one of Angela Clark's life group members who challenged Ange to tackle a bible study on Revelation. We met fortnightly on a Monday and always spent our time looking at Gods word.

Throughout last years covid summer we continued to meet with all the challenges that it posed to look at this complex book. We made it so far to chapter 7!

In chapter 1 we see the revelation of the Risen Christ, followed in chapters 2/3 by a call to examine ourselves and the church and to endure to the end. Then in chapter 4/5 we have this vision of heaven.

There was so much information to imagine that I felt compelled to try and express it in a way I could understand as you can see in the photo on the previous page.

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Imagine being John, invited to 'Come up here' to look through the door into heaven. I think the wonder and total majesty was revealed to us at one particular meeting when we were looking at this section.

As we sat in Ange's garden in wonderful sunshine and listened to a worship song called 'All hail King Jesus' the presence of God was tangible. We were all in awe of His Glorious Bigness. No wonder Pastor Steve talks about BIGGER.

So I challenge you to get your bibles out and take a look at chapter 4/5 of Revelation. See if you can spot everything. Mind you, you will need to use your own imagination to hear the angels numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousands times ten thousands!

I miss worshipping God together don't you? Won't we praise God when we can all meet safely together again? Maybe we will glimpse heaven that day! For now it's a bit like Good Friday, but we know Sunday is coming. Praise the Lord. I look forward to seeing you all this year. Meanwhile let's keep looking at Gods precious word.

Liz Craven

| A Message from Liz Craven About her Love for |

hope and kindness

For the last 10 years I have been involved in fundraising for Hope and Kindness. As a Barclays Bank pensioner I am in the privileged position of being able to apply for matched fundraising which means whatever I am able to raise the bank will match the amount pound for pound up to a total of £750. With the support of church and friends every year we more than achieve this goal.

My 'modus operandi' is a sponsored swim. Here is something I love which God has been able to use for good. I think there is something to learn here about our God. He made us and knows how to bring the best out in us even at my age at seventy one! Something so simple as swimming.

In 2020 Barclays Bank set aside some money to help in situations affected by covid. I was able to apply and the main difference between this and the usual matched fundraising. Now was there was no limit of £750. Normally I would approach people personally and this was not possible with corona 19.

I opened a '**Just Giving**' page, and told Pastor Steve.

Then I advised Terry & Judi Mott at Hope and Kindness in Kenya, followed by friends and family.

Due to covid I was unable to use the closed swimming pool, to practice, no personal contact so I couldn't rattle my 'bucket'.

Yet I succeeded in swimming 3/4 of a mile, then watched and waited.

Throughout November I kept looking at the gift money arriving in amazement. Up

and up it went! **Just Giving** would send me an email every time someone gave a contribution. The messages continued to come in.

Isn't God amazing?

But God knew the children at Hope and Kindness were unable to attend school because of covid.

God knew those children were going hungry as they are missed out on their two meals a day provided by Hope and Kindness.

God knew funds were low due to reduced sponsorship and lack of fundraising.

God knew the heart of all at Hope and Kindness and is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine.

God has led many to give an amazing total of £4739. The bank have now confirmed they will match this figure. The total income from this venture will be £9478 plus gift aid.

A truly wonderful outcome for Hope and Kindness and all involved.

God never fails to amaze me.

Thank you to everyone who supported this event. Thank you to Barclays Bank and thank you to the people in Kenya distributing the food because together we made it possible.

Most of all thank you Lord for taking our 'bits and pieces' and making something beautiful out of them.

Liz Craven

Love Looks Like This hope and kindness

The money you donated went direct to **Just Giving** who forward it straight to Hope and Kindness. Because of this they have been able to purchase food without delay to replace the meals the children would normally have at school.

Hope and kindness help not only at their orphanage and school but also into the local community. It needs funds at this level to support them and the local community.

This food is being purchased and distributed with the money from the swim.

Praise the Lord. It has brought so much joy to Terry and Judi.

Liz received the following email from Terry & Judy in December.



Hi Liz, just thought I would give you an update on how things are going with the food distribution.

First of all this is a list of what is being given to most families:

To each home with 3 or more children:

- 30Kg of maize (£9),
- 14Kg of dried beans (£14),
- 14Kg of rice (£13),
- 5litres cooking oil (£5),
- 2 strips of bar soap (£1),
- Box of biscuits (£2)
- Water melon (£2.00)
- Pen, pencil & crayons (£2)
- Activity books (£2.00)
- TOTAL £50

These families depend on the availability of casual work and the wage is approx. £2 a day!

Homes with 2 children or less receive almost the same just slightly less maize and beans.

Judi & Terry

Hello, for those of you who don't know me, my name is Joseph. I'm 27 and I work at the Pioneer Centre.

One thing that I am currently worried about is that with this second lockdown we, at the centre, will most likely be saying goodbye to a number of people again.

There is a level of uncertainty in their future and ours at the Pioneer Centre. This isn't the first time I've been worried about what the future will entail for me, as have most other people at some point in their lives.

Before working at pioneer, I worked as a Teaching assistant at a Primary school. My role however was to be working one to one with two children over my three years there. The children who I worked with were very bright and could easily keep up with the work that was given to them, they just had trouble with behavioural and social issues, which I helped them with. I would have loved to have stayed with them throughout their school lives. It was a joy to see them progress through their issues as they overcame them.

Unfortunately over the three years my hours of work shrunk until my contract ended and I was out of a job. I'm sure that all or many of you have been in a situation like that before.

Fortunately God had a plan for me because several years before my older sister had gone to Uganda with BMS (Baptist Missionary Society) and she knew of an available place for the team that was going to Kolkata in India, a place I felt that God wanted me to fill.

At this time the furthest I had ever been was Scotland and I was a fussy eater. Having never eaten a curry before I wasn't filled with joy as I should have been and was worried.

Looking back now I can see that God was at work. That deep end push into the world was what I needed to grow. The memories, experiences, the people who I met and the stories that I heard will always be with me. I'd very much love to go back one day to continue to help the people and projects that I worked with, and also to eat the food over there again.

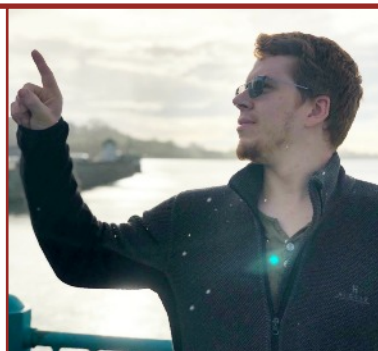
I still have massive urges to fly back just for a kati roll and I must thank God for curries, I may have a sketchy relationship with rice now, but I could talk for days about all of the Indian restaurants in Bridgnorth and how I would rank them all.

God has also not finished or will never finish with us.

Looking back again, I can see that once I left India God wanted me and still wants me to be at the Pioneer Centre. I may be worried about what will happen in the future, or even what will happen during 2021. God has plans and can still open doors while everything is being shut. It'll be sad to see some people leave the Pioneer Centre, but I fully believe that God has plans for whatever occurs for the guys leaving us, and just as God was there with me to and from India. He'll be with them now in their unknown future and ours at Pioneer.

We just have to trust Him and sometimes embrace the deep end push out of what we know into the unknown.

Thank you. *Joe Page*



Christmas Hampers



At the back end of last year I was praying about how we could support families who may be struggling across the Wyre Forest. At this point I received a call from someone at Wyre Forest council who encouraged me to apply for a grant of up to £5,000 for food for families over Christmas. I honestly didn't think we would get it but the council contacted me a couple of times over this. I applied and very quickly the reply came back as a yes, we could have £5,000 to create 100 hampers for households across the Wyre Forest. We decide we would put in some church money too to make sure that these hampers would be as full and complete as could be.

As you can see from the pictures we were inundated with food for the hampers and had some great help from Bewdley Fruit and Veg shop next door to the church and Brian Sheehy who helped us get a large amount of fresh meat too.



On Monday 21st Liz, myself, Chris and Elaine Webb were at church greeting folk and helping them get their hampers into



their cars for delivery and so many people were blown away by just how much food we were able to include in one hamper. And since then we have received messages of thanks from across the Wyre Forest.

It was a real joy and privilege to be able to put together a project like this and we will be looking to do similar projects like this in the future

Reaching out to the vulnerable is what Jesus was all about and I loved the fact that we got to do this, as a church, in a real practical way this year. I would like to say a massive thank you to all who helped, prayed, encouraged, gave and delivered these hampers.



A real joy to bring some practical hope to people over Christmas!

Pastor Steve

Christmas on the road.



Christmas Carol Service in Jubilee Gardens



Pillow Gossip

A vicar was aware of a young man who gossiped a lot about people so he invited him to his church for a chat.

When the lad arrived the vicar asked him to climb with him up the stairs to the top of the church tower where he gave him a feather pillow.

As they looked down over the town the vicar said to the lad, "Tear open the pillow and shed all the feathers." The lad asked "Why?" The vicar said "Just do it and I will explain." The lad did and the wind blew the feathers all over the town.

The vicar then said "Now go down and collect all those feathers." To which the lad replied, "That's impossible."

The vicar replied, "That is what occurs when you gossip about people."

During her ministry to men incarcerated in South Africa's most violent prison, Joanns Flanders-Thomas witnessed the power of Christ to transform hearts. In 'Astonishing Grace' Philip Yancey describes her experience.

"Joanna started visiting prisoners daily bringing them a simple gospel message of forgiveness and reconciliation. She earned their trust, got them to talk about their abusive childhoods and showed them a better way of resolving conflicts.

The year before her visits began, the prison recorded 279 acts of violence against inmates and guards. The next year there were two.

Our Daily Bread 8th August 2020. 2 Cor 5:14-21.

Rest in Peace

A lady was opening a new business and one of her friends wanted to send her flowers for the occasion. They arrived at the new business site and the lady read the card, "Rest in Peace."

She was angry and called the florist to complain. After she had told the florist the obvious mistake and how angry she was, the florist replied.

"Madam, I am really sorry for the mistake, but rather than getting angry, you should imagine this. Somewhere there is a funeral taking place today and they have flowers with a note saying, 'Congratulations on your new location.'"

Josies Picture

HOPE

I pass through a field of stubble where wheat has been harvested. At a glance, it appears dry and brown, lifeless. On closer inspection, I see a few lush, strong, proud green shoots. The more I look the more I see until it is evident that, whereas I had considered all was dead and decayed, new life is springing up everywhere.

God is telling me to look deeper into Him where I would catch a glimpse of the amazing things He is producing from what looks hopeless. From situations that are impossible in man's eyes, God is working miracles, transforming old into new, bringing His promises to fulfilment.

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Two men were shipwrecked and swam to a small island. The minute they got there one started screaming and yelling, “We’re going to die. We’re going to die. There’s no food or water. We’re going to die.”

The second man was propped up against a palm tree and acting calmly which made the first man very angry shouting again, “There’s no food or water. We’re going to die!”

The second man replied, “You don’t understand. I make £100,000 a week.”

“What difference does that make?” The dumbfounded first man replied. “We’re going to die.”

The second man answered. “You just don’t get it. I make £100,000 a week and I tithe 10% every week. My pastor will soon find me!”

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