

Dear Friends,

I write on what feels to me like the eve of remembrance tide. I'm not sure if there is such an official season, but it feels like there is unofficially! All Saints Day and All Souls day, are times to remember the faithful who have gone before us and the example they bequeath to us of life in Christ. Then Remembrance day on 11th to remember lives taken in war. I know myself I start looking towards Christmas at this time of year, and that reminds me of childhood Christmases, grandparents, and soon I'm not just remembering but wallowing in nostalgia!

Isaac Watts wrote:

Give me the wings of faith to rise  
within the veil and see  
the saints above, how great their joys,  
how bright their glories be.

Hope is a rugged reality in our Christian faith. Those Saints have yet much to teach to us. especially through the weird times we are living through.

I reflect that this last month, as the autumn has set in, how cross everyone is. We are fed up with the coronavirus situation. That anger seems to be coming out in more than the usual ways as people argue about churches opening, not opening, what level of risk assessment is ridiculous, how serious this pandemic is, and so many other viewpoints often just shouted. We need to express our feelings, but also reflect that we need to be kind to one another through the months that still lie ahead as lockdown may well need to be re-imposed, and families are starting to already be anxious about how much socialising we can do at Christmas.

I was led, I think by the Holy Spirit, to read a book called 'Resilient Disciples' by an Anglican Priest, Justine Allain-Chapman. I read it in the new year of 2019. It's a wonderful book that thoroughly explores what resilience is about, with deeply psychological insights, the experience of a pastor who just knows people, and full Biblical insights into resilience as it can develop on the journey of faith. I did wonder why I was reading it when life was going so well for my family and I. Then we had two cancer diagnoses in the family, and most of 2019 was spent on compassionate leave supporting Ruth and Ned through their awful treatment. I read the end of the book, which was about Easter, as Ned was having his surgery in early April last year.

It was, looking back, a gift of preparation as I often remembered and pondered what Justine had said about resilience on my journey through 2019, and since, through 2020 and the coronavirus pandemic that we have all shared.

Justine asked her readers to reflect on either their own experiences of suffering, change, and challenges faced in life, or to consider voluntarily undertaking an experience of the desert, as Jesus did just before his baptism and public ministry. We remember during lent that time of preparation, and willingly learning resilience.

The key, she said, to developing resilience was a willingness to change through adversity, either imposed by circumstance, or chosen by faith. She alluded to the steeling process of changing metal. To take a metal and heat it, put it under pressure, and bend it constantly into new layers, makes a strong and resilient material. One much better suited to future pressure. I remember

sitting by my son's bedside after his surgery, watching the nurses check him every half hour, coming on shift, going home again, the surgeon's visit, the long future list of treatment that he would be subject to, and then phoning Ruth to hear down the phone how her own similar treatment was going, supported by friends because I couldn't be with her. It felt like I was that piece of metal being heated, pressurised and stretched. I had no energy for anything other than spending most of my days drinking coffee and doing sudoku puzzles, I could do very little except sit and wait, watch, and wait. Praying was very difficult, and since that time, as we moved on very slowly, treatment worked, Ruth and I could be together more through her treatment, I began to reflect on what I'd read about resilience.

There are three qualities Justine identified as being shared by those saints who had developed resilience.

Firstly those who have coped. To cope is to struggle or deal with a difficulty or challenge with, according to the dictionary, 'some measure of success'. But it acknowledges how hard it is, a struggle is a challenge, and no-one says it's easy. The pandemic we are living through is a difficulty for us all in different ways. My daughter, a student, is trying really hard with her friends to keep safe in a city with a high incidence of covid cases, she's a student struggling with feeling blamed by the media for irresponsibly spreading the virus - this is tough! It's no less tough to be an elderly or lonely person desperately wishing your church would open when it won't because you desperately miss your friends, are fed up of not going out, and your mental health is suffering. Employers face real challenges of trying to keep a business going while making hard decisions when the finances just aren't there, parents with children - the list goes on. Let us never give up trying! As Churchill used to say during the war - KBO - Keep Buggering On. And, if it helps, even as a Christian, swearing is allowed! (best to keep it behind closed doors!)

Secondly, constancy in resisting destruction, or as another colleague of mine, as well as a Minister's widow I know says 'don't let the buggers get you down'. The point is, that whatever enables you to resist being destroyed, and enables you to live is the constancy to be sought, encouraged, developed, and nurtured. Our Christian story has at its heart a death and a resurrection, the resilience of God is shown in this - that even death could not destroy God, and that is the hope that we all carry. Even though it sometimes comes out as anger and frustration, and even blame, we human beings are trying through this pandemic to remain constant in not being destroyed, to keep ourselves alive, bright, resisting, and surviving. Some are even thriving under the stress of it. As we may be looking at another lockdown, and the possibility of a miserable Christmas, let's remain constant in our resistance. We will be bent, squashed, misshaped, but our strength lies in following Jesus through the desert, the persecution and the cross, and not allowing ourselves to be destroyed.

The third quality of those saints who develop resilience, is the one that I think enables us to thrive - it is when we can construct a new sense of who we are, and what our life is about. I once heard someone speak about marriage, and he shocked his audience by saying he had been married to seven different people. He then explained that his (one!) wife had been a student, a worker, a mother, a parent, a daughter, a midwife, a patient etc. Her resilience was in both the ability to give up a sense of self while also being willing to develop a new sense of self. Our sense of self is deeply rooted in the fact that we are creatures of God. We bear the divine spark and image within, and in Christ we always find a new expression of that fundamental reality. We must nurture the willingness to be re-formed if we are to develop resilience.

So, be prepared to change, try and cope, remain constant in resistance, and be willing to construct a new sense of who you are and what life is about. In Christ we can and will obtain the joy and glory of heaven. But for now it requires a lot of hard work at being His Disciples.

Your Superintendent Minister and Friend.

Rob Hilton

## CCLI Licence Requirements

As churches move to online worship it is important to check that your current performance licences cover the new ways of worship. The conventional licence held by most circuit churches does not cover streaming on the internet, this includes YouTube and Zoom services. If your church now offers this you must hold a Streaming Licence.

For more information visit: <https://uk.ccli.com/copyright-licences/>

Or contact Daniel Keen, Circuit Administrator, who can offer advice.

## New Circuit Website – [www.cheshiresouth.org.uk](http://www.cheshiresouth.org.uk)

To help you keep up to date with all the latest goings on in the Circuit we have redesigned the website to make it much easier to navigate and find the information you are looking for.

The website still has all the information about individual churches that it had before along with cloud access for those that use it. It now also features a page dedicated to worship during COVID-19 which features updated information on which churches are open and what other forms of worship are available. We try and keep this information as updated as possible but if you know of something missing or out of date then please contact Daniel Keen, Circuit Administrator, so he can update it.

## Bedtime story on Zoom

Pre-school and Primary age

7pm till 7.30ish

11<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> November

Come in your Pyjamas and bring a mug of hot chocolate

And join us for

A story from the bible or a story with a moral

Prayer and reflection time

Short talk from Grandad the puppet

Good Night and God Bless

For more info or the Zoom link please contact

[Kathryn-davies@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Kathryn-davies@hotmail.co.uk)



## Fundraising

The Circuit website has been updated to include a Fundraising page. This contains links to All We Can, MHA and Action For Children to enable you to donate to these charities during this time. If you wish to give all you have to do is visit the fundraising page and click on the link next to the charity you wish to donate to, JustGiving take care of the rest. At this time of year we would normally be holding collections for these charities which we are not now able to do so please consider making a donation to help those in need both in this country and further afield. Charities are one of the worst hit sectors in the pandemic as they have received no government help. You can donate anonymously or leave your details.

Please also keep giving your collection to your church. Each church has its own different systems in place so please contact your church representative to find out how. Even putting aside your collection each week so that you can give it when the church reopens will make a big difference. Even though church buildings are closed the church still has a large amount of costs.

## **Lego church on Zoom**

Primary aged children  
4pm till 5 ish 13<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> November



Songs, Bible story in Lego, Lego building challenge, Prayers  
Have your Lego box ready and let your imagination go wild  
For more information or the zoom link please contact  
[Kathryn-davies@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Kathryn-davies@hotmail.co.uk)



## **WHATS HAPPENING ON NORTH STREET NORTH ST, CREWE**

### **COMMUNITY COFFEE SHOP**

**OPEN**

**Mon – Fri 11.00am – 2.30pm**

*Drop in for light refreshments and find out what else is on offer*

*Please forward information to be put into the next Circuit Newsletter to Daniel Keen,  
[1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com](mailto:1108info.cheshiresouth@gmail.com) or phone **07598 580541** by Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>  
November – Thank you*