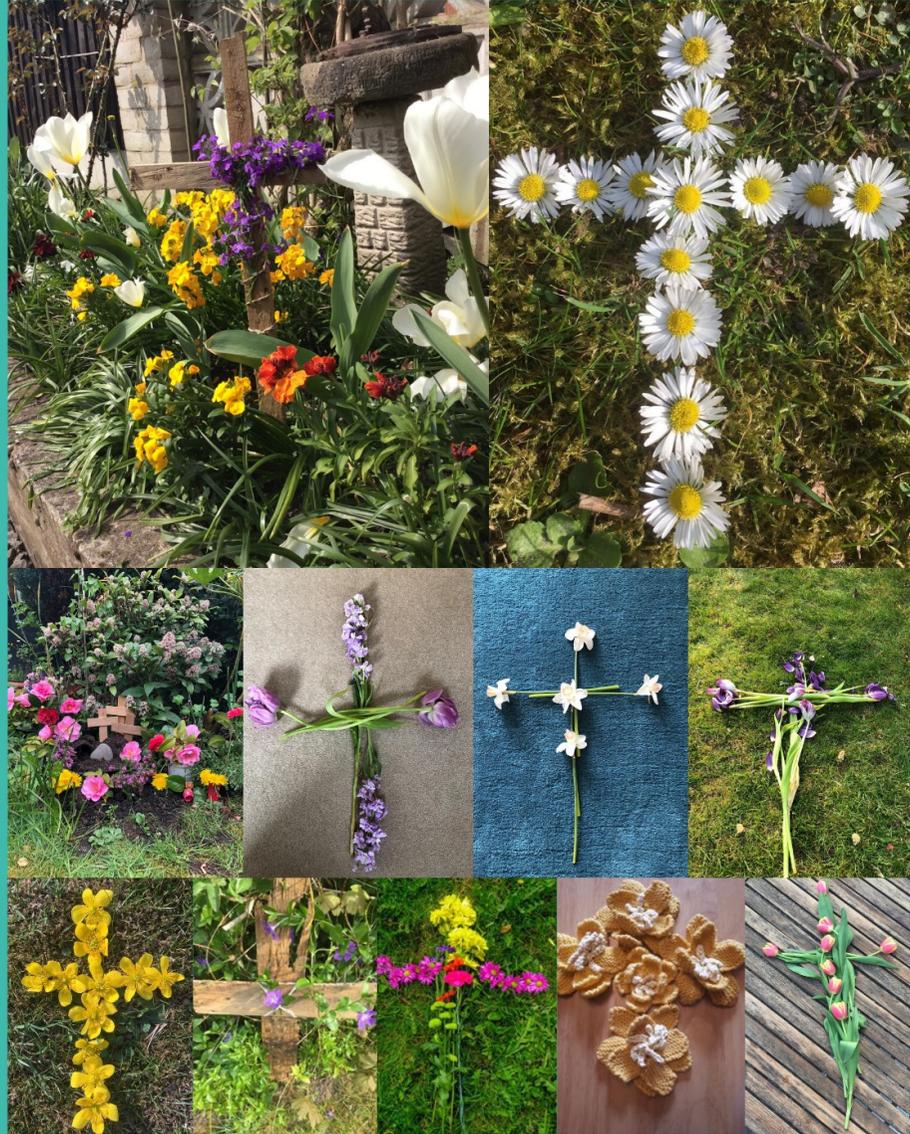


Salford Methodist Circuit



Circuit Magazine

Edition 2 - May 2020

Thoughts From Isolation

I'm writing this on a Thursday morning at 10.00 am. It could be any day. I am sitting writing in our conservatory, and I am still in pyjamas. This is life's current rhythm: get up, eat breakfast, turn to the laptop, and do whatever needs doing. I am very glad we are socially isolating in the springtime. Our conservatory has no heating, and so is known as the "walk-in fridge" in the winter. But with the first warmth of spring, we dust it down, and move in there. It's a lovely place to sit, with the garden around us, and is a real sun trap. When high summer comes it can be a bit overwhelmingly hot, but there is a fan, and the door tends to be open. So I'm sitting here, with my feet up, and wondering what to write.

Lockdown was such a shock to us all at the beginning. To be deprived of family and friends, our church companions, our usual rhythm of life and activities, toilet rolls, rice, pasta and flour was extremely unsettling. But much more of a struggle was the "thing" that has brought us to this place, this virus travelling around the world at a great rate, taking down those that got in its path. Every news bulletin brought more bad news, more anxiety, more fear. Where is this taking us? How will it affect us? Are we safe where we are? Are those we love safe? And who will the next victim be? The first week or so were full of these concerns and many more.

After six weeks, this has become our lives. We are still deprived of family and friends, but we've found ways to keep in touch: the telephone, Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype. We know we are still there for one another. We live in a bit of a bubble. Shopping has become an occasional venture into the outside world, fraught with anxiety, and followed by intense hand-washing. The "thing" is still very much out there. The sadness of this world is devastating to consider. Every single person included in the statistics is a person who was loved by others, a parent, grandparent, partner, child, relation, friend. The statistics are chilling, but the reality of individual loss for so many is overwhelming. Our gratitude to those working in the front line has brought our nation together in so many ways. How often have we heard the National Health Service criticised because it hasn't quite lived up to people's particular expectations on a particular day. But now, in this time, we have nothing but gratitude for those people who make the system work, and are pitting themselves and their skills against the "thing".

An old spiritual, that was adopted by the civil rights movement says "we shall overcome some day". We shall overcome this virus. There will be life after lockdown. There will be a return to a more familiar normality, perhaps not all at once, perhaps not as quickly as we might like, but it will come. And we will overcome "Covid 19". The very best minds on the planet are bending their attention to this purpose, and will ultimately succeed, though it may take time. We shall overcome some day. Those that this world has lost will not return. Sadness will be all around us; as well as the joy of the return of our freedom. Life may well be different. Church may well be different. Because these weeks and months of isolation are changing us all. We will be less complacent, less certain that tomorrow will be predictable, less inclined to assume, less ready to argue about things that are really not that important. And we will be more grateful, more inclined to appreciate what we have, more willing to love and accept, more open to life's possibilities.

Where is God? Where is God in this letter? Where is God in my life just now? And in yours? I can't answer that question for you, but I know where God is for me. I exist in an

ocean of God's love. In it I can float and rest and move, but I do not sink because in God I am buoyant - afloat - held up - upheld. Sometimes I try swimming against it. I am free to make my own choices, to test its limitations, to swim to the depths, or set out on a voyage of discovery. But it is clear to me, that no matter in which direction I swim, I never lose that buoyancy which God's love provides. Yes, there are times of overwhelming anxiety, and sadness, and frustration, and despondency. But none of those things take God out of the picture, or me out of the ocean of his love. Where is God in the midst of Covid 19? God is in the midst of it all, and surrounding every life with his love. God has never promised to protect us from suffering, or to end death for all time in this world; at least not yet. But our God, who in Christ suffered in extraordinary ways and died in agony on a cross, did so in order to free this world from separation from God, in this world and in eternity. God understands pain and isolation, suffering and loss. And God is there with us, every one of us, whatever our situation.

St. Patrick's prayer says this:

*I arise today through the strength of heaven;
Light of the sun, splendour of fire, speed of lightning,
Swiftmess of the wind, depth of the sea, stability of the earth, firmness of the rock.*

*I arise today through God's strength to pilot me;
God's might to uphold me, God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me, God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me, God's hand to guard me,
God's way to lie before me, God's shield to protect me,
God's hosts to save me afar and near, alone or in a multitude.*

*Christ shield me today against wounding
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in the eye that sees me, Christ in the ear that hears me.*

*I arise today through the mighty strength
Of the Lord of creation.*

May you too, exist in an ocean of God's love, today and every day!

Time I got dressed! I don't spend all day in the conservatory. There's exercise to be taken, domestic chores to be performed, eating to be enjoyed (probably enjoying food too much!), there are work-things to do that I can't do on a laptop with my feet up. Another day is moving onwards. Soon it will be evening and we will be out there clapping for the NHS with our neighbours. It will be time to watch a bit of television, drink my tenth cuppa of the day, and go to bed, to rest and be refreshed, ahead of another day. The cycle goes on. It's not normal, but it's OK. It's fine for now.

May God surround you, and bless you, in your every experience of this life, this day, and every day.

Rev Clare Stainsby

Being Repotted

I was given a sunflower seed and a small pot with soil in when I attended the Brownies one week a couple of years ago. It began its journey with me as I took it home and placed it on the patio at the manse. I moved it from one place to the other to find the right place for it to grow and believe it or not it **did** grow! Halleluiah! Then, as it grew, I was very hopeful until one day I opened the blinds and there on the patio it had fallen over. This was because a very inexperienced gardener (me) forgot that plants need repotting every so often. So a **BIG** pot was needed and it just so happened I had one and soil too. With love and care it was re-potted and I looked at and admired it. It was faced with the rain and the wind of the summer and often I just wanted to go out and rescue it. But, with the help of placing it in-between some other potted plants, it eventually grew into a fair-sized sunflower. The plants around it eventually died and one day I noticed that yes, my beautiful sunflower was literally on its last legs. The sunflower represented for me the joy of the summer patio I had managed to create ending. I grew some tomatoes too and when I picked the last ones and placed them in the fridge, I somehow didn't want to eat them. The subject of the Methodist Connexion magazine has been 'Letting Go with various people speaking about various ways to let go. Although we would like some moments in our lives to last forever we are reminded in Ecclesiastes 3 verses 1-2, "There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot".

I did let the joy of my summer sunflower go eventually and I must say it looked in a right sorry state by the time I did. It happened about the same time that my Uncle Bert died. I was honoured to be able to speak at my Uncle's funeral and then came the time when we had to scatter his ashes. He was in the Royal Navy and his wish was for his ashes to be scattered at sea. As my brother in law and I clung on to the side of the Royal Navy Life Boat as the waves rocked us from side to side we scattered the ashes. The sea welcomed Uncle Bert almost mimicking the wide-open arms of our Lord, as well as jumping and leaping with joy as it received him to his resting place. We encircled the spot and prayed and then we flew the flag. We each have moments in our lives that we don't want to let go of and we each have times when we know for us to be able to grow or regrow, we need to let go. There is a time for everything and we need to wait a little longer for the time that we are going through to pass. We will then, after however long it takes to recover, take stock of what we have just come through and may still be going through. Maybe even coming to terms with the differences in our lives. We need to have faith, hope and love in these times to help us through and the greatest of these is love, (1 Corinthians 13: 13) Let us love one another through this time and let us love one another as God is loving us today and beyond this time. Amen.

Rev Kim Ratcliffe



Christian Aid Week during the Covid 19 Pandemic 10th - 16th May

Normally at this time of year churches are gearing up to celebrate the annual Christian Aid week. Whether it's house to house collecting, coffee mornings, big breakfast events or envelope collections in churches, Christian Aid week is always a major boost of funds for this charity which is working around the world with many vulnerable people in a variety of situations. It's vital work that makes a huge difference in peoples' lives. This year the needs of the world have not gone away, but a new and dangerous challenge is facing people in many parts of the world, including ourselves. Christian Aid week will still happen, but not in the ways we usually spend it.

For those of you with internet access, you can use this link to take you to the Christian Aid Website for links to worship and daily reflection, and quizzes:

www.christianaid.org.uk/christian-aid-week

You can also find advice on ways to give at this time.

For those of you without internet access, you might like to use the prayer below, to pray for the world at this time.

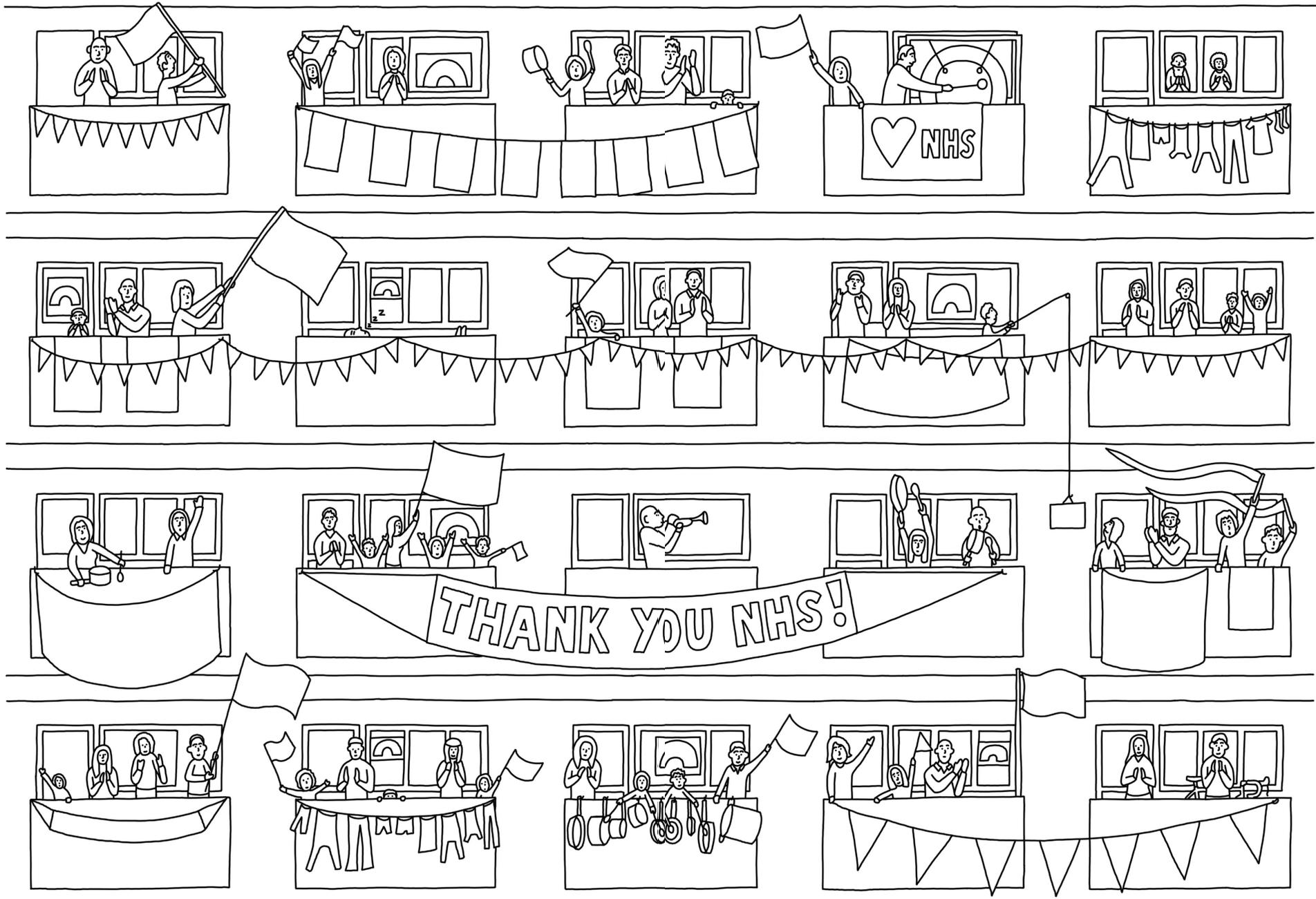
Everyone who usually gives something to Christian Aid: you might like to send a donation at this time, by whatever means you prefer. Or put something in an envelope that can be passed on to Christian Aid after the pandemic is over.

And remember, although Christian Aid hold a week each year to promote their activities, they value donations at any time. So when we can, let's consider holding a few fund raising events or making collections in our churches to support this valuable work.

A prayer for a global pandemic

Loving God, strengthen our innermost being
with your love that bears all things,
even the weight of this global pandemic,
even the endurance of watching for symptoms of patiently waiting for this to pass,
watching while we pray, keeping our gaze fixed on you,
and looking out for our neighbours, near and far.
Instil in our shaken souls the belief and hope
that all things are possible with your creative love:
for strangers to become friends,
for science to source solutions,
for resources to be generously shared,
so everyone, everywhere, may have what they need.
May your perfect love that knows no borders cast out
any fear and selfishness that divides.
May your love that never ends be our comfort,
strength and guide
for the wellbeing of all and the glory of God.
Amen.





Irlam & Cadishead Foodbank

Since the beginning of lockdown, it was decided that we should abandon our cafe conversation space in recognition of social distancing and instead, we would adopt a referral and delivery model. Local schools, surgeries, CAB and ultimately the Spirit of Salford have referred clients and families to us. This means we are able to help those who find themselves, not only isolated at home with children and not able to work unfortunately but have limited funds to feed the extra mouths.

At Boundary Road, we are observing social distancing by having a husband and wife team picking the food from lists for 1/2/3/4/5/6+ people with either another husband and wife team or individual packing bags, then a driver volunteer delivers the parcel to the doorstep after phoning forward to alert the clients.

We have been blessed by the generosity of not only the local community but also the business community who have supported us with food and cash. Trussell Trust have been in constant support for all the foodbanks and have made an arrangement with Tesco to give regular donations of food to all the Trussell Trust foodbanks which does help. Even our own Manchester United and Manchester City Football and Supporters' Clubs have donated to the Trussell Trust Funds and from which we have benefited.

It has become obvious that some of the enquiries we receive are from people who are confused and somewhat panicked by the new situation and we have been not only a listening ear but have been able to signpost them to other agencies ie CAB who are better able to help change their circumstances and offer them choices they were unaware of.

Generally the people we help are very grateful and in turn we are very grateful for the help and support we receive from all quarters.

Liz Thornley

Dial-a-Prayer Service from the Methodist Church

The Methodist Church has launched a new 'Dial-a-Prayer' service.

This free service allows anyone with a phone to hear a recorded prayer from the President of the Methodist Conference, which will be updated weekly.

Listen to a prayer: **0808 281 2514**

You can also listen to a weekly news update from the Methodist Church, either by downloading 'The Methodist Podcast' or by calling free on **0808 281 2478**



Keeping in touch

Our website - www.salfordcircuit.org.uk - will continue to be updated with news, resources and other bits and pieces; so keep an eye on that.

We are on Facebook (facebook.com/salfordcircuit) and have recently joined Instagram (@salfordmethdistcircuit), so if you are on either social network, follow us to see what we are up to, and share posts with your friends.

We are sending a weekly email from the Circuit, with the details of online worship, news from around the Circuit and further. If you don't already receive it, you can sign up at www.salfordcircuit.org.uk/mailing-signup

If you have received this magazine by post, but do not have access to email, please can you let Matt know so we can add you to the emailing list and save the postage.

Flower Crosses

Thank you to all of you who took pictures of your Easter Flower Crosses. They have brought a much needed splash of colour to our website, and the cover of this magazine.



The Lord's Prayer video

Matt is looking for people who are willing to film themselves saying the Lord's prayer, which will be part of a video for social media and our online worship.

If you would like to be part of this, please record yourself saying the Lord's Prayer (traditional version) and send it to Matt either by email, WhatsApp or Facebook (details on the back cover).

It would be great to get a range of people of all ages, and if you can do it in a language other than English, please do! If possible, please have your phone or camera in landscape.

The Next Edition

We plan to publish an edition of this Circuit Magazine regularly, so if you would like to write something or share something you come across please let either Clare or Matt know.

We are also looking to put together a small 'editorial team' to help put it together and find content. If you would be interested in being part of that team, please contact Clare.

Taken from 'A Silence and A Longing' by Eddie Askew

Lord, my mind is so small. And it makes you small.
I reduce you to a size I can love with.
I can't encompass all that you are.
I can't comprehend the vastness, the power that are yours.

Lord of all things, Lord of all time, and of eternity. Lord of Creation.
Your hand bringing together the atoms, energy.
Your hand bringing order out of chaos.
Light out of darkness.
Breathing life into the world and setting laws for sustaining it.

Lord of history. Gathering up the past,
Using nations and people to reveal yourself through their lives,
showing your love and concern that we might know the truth which can set us free.

Lord of the future.
There are so many uncertainties, Lord.
So many things to worry about.
We don't seem to get much better in the way we run things.
But I believe that one day
- although I don't waste my time trying to work out when -
one day I shall see your power and glory,
when all things are made new.

So, the past and the future are safe, Lord.
That's not the problem.
My problem is NOW.
I can live in the past. I can crawl into it like a womb,
warm and safe from the harsh winds of reality.
I can bury my head in the future, ignoring the uncertainties of today in dreams and
visions.

The problem is NOW.
Trying to make sense of what is happening day.
Trying to cope with today's crisis.
The Corona virus.
Running out of bread for breakfast this morning,
How the NHS is coping.
Power politics. - what decisions they will make next.
Significant or not, it's real to me.
It all adds to the strain, Lord.
And I need you NOW!

Not as a refuge
Not as a dream.
As a companion.
As someone to walk with me on the road.

Thanks to Joyce Davison for submitting this

Songs for a Lockdown

The following are all lyrics from songs that have been my response to various situations I have experienced. In some cases, the music is indifferent, but I think the words are quite relevant for now, no matter what the situation that originally inspired them.

Rev Clare Stainsby

Time (1986)

I've taken time to wonder at the way you formed my life,
I've even taken liberties, perhaps I know what's best for me,
I've tried to force your hand,
I was wrong,
I only know that if it's your will it will also be in your time,
So in your time I'll wait, and watch, and hope, and pray.

Impossible Dream (1991)

How can I help the impossible dream,
looking at life, how often it seems so grey,
Not much to say,
Where is the colour in every day things,
Where is the future when every day brings new fear,
Nothing is clear,
Speak to me, Lord, through my everyday hope,
Reach me, lord, give me vision and scope,
Guide my thoughts, lead my feet,
Share your truth, make real my impossible dream.

Do not let your hearts be troubled (1991)

Do not let your hearts be troubled, fear nothing, I am here,
Peace I leave, my peace I give you, trust completely, do not fear.
Holy Spirit now your helper always is by your side, with
Confidence in anxious moments, peaceful comforter and guide.

In all things God's goodness follows those who give their lives to Him,
In all troubled time's He's present, loving, giving peace within,
We are more than conquerors through Jesus, our Saviour and so
None can separate us from Him, all is safely in His hand.

For Today (1994)

Here as we kneel, here as we pray,
Here as we plead, so many words to say,
So You are here, never to leave,
Pouring peace into the hollows of our hearts,
And You give the strength for coping just for today,
And You grant us peace in going Your way,
And Your power flows in where faith is faltering,
Never weakening, never altering,
Lord we believe that Your grace is sufficient for today, for today.



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