

the TREASURY

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Adapting during Covid-19



by Elin Bryn

How are you feeling by now? Has the 'lock-down' become your new norm? Is keeping two metres apart now your "go to" reaction? Isn't it amazing how quickly we, and society in general, adapt during emergency situations.

But Peter said, 'I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!' (Acts 3: 6).

However, we have had to make quite a few changes in order to adapt. The letting go of our old way of life can be difficult, and the changes can be painful before the new pattern becomes part of everyday life.

It is likely that daily timetables have changed for everyone – some are busier than ever. Home is now the office, school, or even the gym! All activities are confined to that one space and everyone has to fit into it. Others have seen their timetable visibly shrink, work slowing down, social events cancelled. The house is now empty and the weekly shopping trip has become the highlight of the week! Or maybe your work brings you face to face with the

virus. Being responsible for the caring of others is a heavy burden and an energy-sapping journey.

Whatever our situation, our world has changed. It would be so easy to become disheartened when we see people's pain and are unable to offer any help.

What a comfort it is, and how wonderfully encouraging to realise, that what we can offer people has not changed at all. Our ability to offer practical help may have changed, but just like Peter and John in New Testament days, we have something better to offer people. Not "silver and gold", not "our company or helping hand", but Jesus Christ himself! During this strangely changed

period we have the assurance that Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, still saves. We are confident that the power of the name of our Saviour can heal and that this healing is everlasting in Him.

So, in these strange days, when we feel empty handed and unable to offer help, let us remember that we can come to our Lord in prayer, filled with the same Holy Spirit as Peter and John on their way to the temple, and that we can offer Jesus Christ to people in need today. We can offer Him to friends who we phone or meet online, to co-workers or even to strangers in unexpected situations. Let us remember that what people really need is to come to know Jesus and praise Him as their Lord.

Elin Bryn is a UCCF Staff Worker serving students in Bangor and Aberystwyth.

120km Challenge for Christian Aid



It's the merry, merry month of May. Somehow the days have become weeks, and the weeks are becoming months. The month of May. The month of Christian Aid Week.

As in many towns and villages, the industrious Christian Aid committee and their supporters in Pwllheli are usually very busy at this time of the year. But this year, since it's not possible to hold the same fund raising events, I've decided to try and fund raise in a different way. I have given myself a challenge to run 120km during the month of May to raise funds for Christian Aid.

Even though the whole world is under the cloud of the Coronavirus, the needs of the

poor are the same, if not worse. People in the poorest countries of the world already face a lack of clean water, food and health care. Some are homeless. Some already live with health issues such as HIV.

As the rate of infection with Coronavirus accelerates, these people will feel its effects severely. Christian Aid works with its local partners to try and reduce the effects of Coronavirus on some of the world's most fragile communities.

Nia W Williams (Pwllheli) would appreciate your prayers for perseverance and strength to reach her aim of 120km, but

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A sandstone bas-relief depiction on the east end exterior of St. Deiniol's Church, Hawarden of the bodily ascension of Jesus into heaven. Ascension Day 2020 falls on May 21st. The words of the hymn by Venantius Fortunatus (530 - c.600) remind us of this 'festal day! to endless ages known, when God ascended to his starry throne ... with the reign of death o'erthrown.'

Not the Sunday Sermon

by Dr Mike Ward, Moreton

"One more step along the world I go" – or should that be "one more step up the stairs I go?" You've got to hand it to Neil Kirkham. Not only, in his pre-arterial re-plumbing days, did he swim up a local Welsh river in aid of charity wearing some form of sports gear that should have been banned in the interests of public decency, but now he is climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. Or to be precise the *equivalent* of Mount Kilimanjaro. That, I am informed, means climbing the stairs of his manse in Llandudno ninety-three times a day for the next three weeks. Or 6,000 metres. All in a good cause, more of which later (but when did Neil do anything in a bad cause, other than supporting Tranmere?). By the time you read this, Neil will welcome donations for a new stairlift. Except he retires next month, hopefully to somewhere flat.

Of course, this is a *symbolic* Kilimanjaro. So, let me suggest a few additions to Neil's challenge. First, Pam should remove the stair carpet. The carpet should then be replaced by lots of sharp stones, preferably frozen beforehand in the freezer for a few days. I almost said that the handrail should be removed, but then I realised that there is (genuinely) a rope handrail all the way up Everest. The handrail can stay. Trust me, Neil, you will need all the help you can get.

Secondly, we need some poisonous snakes and scorpions up the stairs among the newly imported rocks. Just to make it more exciting. Oh,

120km Challenge

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mostly to be able to raise as much money as possible to help our neighbours across the world. It's possible to make a contribution on the 'Just Giving' page by following this link: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/nia-williams28> or by sending a cheque made payable to 'Nia Williams' to: Glasgoed, Yr Ala, Pwllheli, Gwynedd, LL53 5BL. The prayers, support and encouragement of readers will be appreciated.

and just leave the front door open so the mountain goats, now used to Llandudno town centre and bored after eating all those privet hedges and being on national television, can be there to head-butt you halfway up Climb Number 482. And lurking the other side of the second bedroom on the left are some guerrillas (note the spelling) ready to riddle your body with machine gun bullets before you can say the word "pension". Pam missed them when she was herding off the mountain goats.



Revd Neil Kirkham counting the steps!

Do not think, Neil, you can go to bed at night during this climb. Bed? Come on, there are no beds on Kilimanjaro! It might not do your floorboards any good (you are leaving the manse soon enough, so what do you care?) but every night you must hammer in the tent-pegs and pitch camp before settling down in your sleeping bag to your evening meal of cold porridge and Kendal Mint Cake (other brands are available). I fear it is still too easy for a man of your annoyingly good fitness. Given that British Aerospace has recently lent their expertise to building ventilators, it should be easy enough for them to build and install a machine that extracts, lets say, 30% of the oxygen in the air for the last half of your journey, replacing it with a less than healthy atmosphere and at a bracing temperature of -6C (the temperature you would get in the real Kilimanjaro but

only marginally colder than a summer's day on The Great Orme).

There, you've done it! But as you climb down the stairs for the final time, bags of frozen peas strapped to your knees, you will discover someone has nicked your wallet and smartphone. Which is what would have happened on Kilimanjaro anyway.

And you will say, as do we all, *thank goodness most of what we do is symbolic*. It is not that long ago we celebrated Easter, albeit of a different and "socially distant" kind this year, and we did not have to go in the literal footsteps of Jesus or replicate the physical agonies that Jesus went through. *Once and for all*, as the well-established law firm Messrs Calvin, Luther and Knox said about what Jesus did. I have no intention of walking in Jesus' footsteps in the Holy Land because McDonalds Galilee was not there when Jesus was alive, and neither were the border patrols at Bethlehem, or the different sites of the Holy Sepulchre marked according to religion. So, we can make do with symbolism. Symbolism is what we are about. The theologian, Paul Tillich carved out a whole teaching and writing career explaining Christian symbolism.

It is when we take things too literally that we get into trouble. This year on Good Friday in San Fernando in the Philippines, Ruben Enaje had a day off. He should have been crucified, not metaphorically crucified, but hammer-and-nails crucified, for the thirty-fourth time but coronavirus restrictions stopped him or rather his pretend-Roman enemies. He said he was disappointed. It did not stop many others whipping themselves through the streets in San Fernando, standing at least six feet from observing believers to comply with lockdown. We have enough problems in the real world without attempting to re-enact what is surely a once-and-for-all sacrifice that has brought us on our journey to where we are. And Neil would be the first to admit Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice has brought him to where he is – or will be when he is released from the orthopaedic ward of the local hospital for surgery on his knees.

In the real world, many more people will die of hunger this year than die of Covid-19. Their deaths will not be reported. Their stories will not grab the headlines. *Going hungry is not symbolic*. Step in Tear Fund, the Christian charity which will benefit from Neil's climb. Neil is doing this not because Kilimanjaro, like Everest or Captain Tom Moore's driveway, is there. (It is not. It remains in Africa.) No, he is doing it because in sub-Saharan Africa right now, ravaged by a catastrophic locust plague in the east, there are only, at best WHO estimates, two doctors for every 10,000 people. Compare that with thirty-two doctors to every 10,000 in European countries. Consultants and intensive care units are even more scarce. As Neil says, this sponsored climb offers an opportunity "for local churches to support those nations that do not have a National Health Service".

Neil's smartphone and wallet will still be there at the end of his metaphorical Kilimanjaro climb. In the real Africa, the doctors will *not* be there. And what will be stolen from the villagers in the coming months, our African brothers and sisters, will not be smartphones or wallets but their lives. Think about that. And they will need more than bags of frozen peas to ease their pain.

To donate, please contact Neil Kirkham at neil.kirkham@ebcpw.cymru www.justgiving.com/fundraising/neilstheclimb2020

Cheques payable to *Tear Fund* can be mailed to him at 26 St Mary's Road, Llandudno LL30 2UB

Further articles by Dr Mike Ward under the same title can be accessed at www.moreton-presbyterian.org.uk

Revd Bruce Nelmes B.A., M.Sc.

Readers will sympathise with the family of the late Revd Bruce Nelmes (Groes-faen) who died on Sunday, 3rd May in the Royal Glamorgan Hospital. He served as one of the last of our missionaries to India, and was ordained for service there in 1959. His funeral at a date to be determined will be a private one. We hope to publish a tribute in a forthcoming issue.

A Life Remembered

Sir John Houghton, Evangelical Christian and Elder of the Connexion who was a major figure in the global battle on climate change

Sir John Houghton, who died on 15th April, had been an Elder of the Presbyterian Church in Aberdyfi (*'The English Chapel'*) since 2005, a period of growth in membership, until he was forced to retire from active involvement last year as a result of Alzheimer's Disease.

John Houghton was born in Dyserth and his parents moved the short distance to Rhyl when he was two years old. His mother had been a Strict Baptist; his father had been a liberal Methodist when he first met her, although when they moved to Rhyl they worshipped together at the Brethren Assembly in the town. John gained a scholarship to Oxford in 1948 at the age of sixteen. He became an active member of the University Christian Union, and was grateful for older members, many returned from the war, for helping him to relate his fledgling faith to the real world.

During his career, Sir John had been Professor of Atmospheric Physics at Oxford, Head of the Meteorological Office and then Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). He was a major figure in the global battle on climate change; his book on the subject remains the key undergraduate text.

When in 1988 the first IPCC was formed, John became chair or co-chair of their scientific assessment working group for nearly fourteen years, and lead editor of the first three IPCC reports. He was knighted in 1990. In 2007 he collected the



A photo taken during a visit to Tokyo in 2006 to receive the Japan Prize

Nobel Prize on behalf of the IPCC, alongside Al Gore.

He battled hard to get the right-wing Christian consensus in the USA to accept that climate change was real, including addressing meetings to try to convince them of the science. He was described by a leading evangelical Christian minister in the USA as *'one of the world's greatest scientists'*, who *'combined his immense scientific understanding with a deep and profound evangelical Christian faith.'*

He was a regular contributor to the BBC *Today* programme; they were anxious for him to be more controversial in what he said – although as a scientist and a Christian, he sought truth before controversy! He appeared on *Songs of Praise* on two occasions and was often interviewed by the media, as well as being invited to give

talks to different audiences across the world.

After a long career, on his retirement back to Wales and while still trying to advance the scientific case for climate change, he walked and sailed while working tirelessly for the Gospel in and around Aberdyfi, preaching regularly and supporting any outreach. In more recent years and up until the time when he no longer felt able, in the absence of a minister he would chair church meetings. Members of his extended family from other parts of the country have made Aberdyfi their home for regular holidays and we are blessed by their presence in our summer services.

The gradual onset of Alzheimer's Disease clearly affected his memory, and forced him to take a smaller part; in his last weeks and before the lockdown, we would still meet for a weekly time of prayer, even though he found it more and more difficult to put things into words. But there is no doubt that God understood – John delighted in prayer and was never happier than communicating with his Heavenly Father.

Our Church Treasurer writes, *'He was a gentleman of the*

highest intellect and dignity ... I will remember John for his awesome and inspiring Christian faith. A scientist of the highest academic respect who looked at the vast confusion of the universe and saw the reality and beauty of the hand of God.'

He leaves a widow, Sheila, who has been elected as an Elder in his place, and also a daughter, son and seven grandchildren – from his first marriage to Margaret, who died from cancer in 1986. His eldest granddaughter (Hannah Malcolm) follows his path: she is an Anglican Ordinand, with a PhD on a theology of climate/ ecological grief, and herself a regular contributor to BBC programmes.

After his death, it was discovered that he had COVID-19. A short burial service took place at Aberdyfi Cemetery with the immediate family; it was time of triumph over death as we sang *'And, Lord, haste the day when my faith will be sight ... It is well, it is well with my soul.'* A service of thanksgiving for his life will take place when circumstances permit.

Sir John Houghton, born 30th December 1931, died 15th April 2020.

From the Confines of 23 North Road

As these days of 'lockdown' have meant being unable to leave home, I have turned my mind to the fact that my Study requires sorting out. Inevitably when such a task is undertaken, you come across old photographs and spend valuable time just sitting and dwelling on the memories of the past.

Some years ago an old friend whom I had not seen for some time, turned up on my doorstep as I was celebrating my birthday. I was so taken aback that I exclaimed, 'I cannot believe it!' I had had no idea that he was coming, but there he was standing there in my lounge. It was true, he was there.

Such was the occasion on the day when Jesus stood before Thomas who needed the physical touch of the wounds on the body of Christ to believe that He had risen from the dead. He had to



Revd Brian Reardon

accept that Jesus was alive and that the claims he'd heard made by the other disciples were true. 'Then Jesus told him, because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed' (John 20: 29).

'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!' (Mark 9: 24) is a prayer that people offer to God every day as they pass from doubt to faith.

I find Benedict's prayer for those in need of Christ's guidance, especially in times of concern helpful:

O gracious and Holy Father, give us wisdom to perceive thee, intelligence to understand thee, diligence to seek thee, patience to wait for thee, eyes to behold thee, a heart to meditate upon thee, and a life to proclaim thee; through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Not Quite a Photo Competition

To mark VE Day, the Lunch Club at Northop Hall Presbyterian Church filled individual food boxes with celebratory cakes and sandwiches which they delivered, observing safe distance, to those who normally attend the twice monthly lunch and afternoon tea club at the chapel. One happy recipient had arranged her own memorabilia in a frame which she had displayed outside her home. At Remembrance-tide the Flintshire village of Northop Hall makes a conscious effort to remember the fallen by highlighting every house in the locality where someone who was killed on active service once lived.

