

**Issue 3
2020**

From the Water's Edge

Pastor Steve's Thoughts

Throughout November I believe God has been and will continue speaking to us about holding on and letting go.

Quite simply I believe we all, Christians everywhere, need to be holding onto God more and letting go of ourselves or the things of this world.

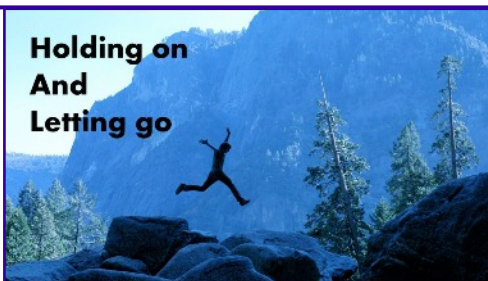
I was challenged on this by a friend of mine who asked me if I believed God was therefore calling us all to a monastic lifestyle of monks and nuns, cut off from the world. Not at all.

This world needs to see the love and kingdom of God more than ever. If we cut ourselves off from the world we rob the world the opportunity to see and experience the love and kingdom of God.

For the world, our friends, family and community to see the love of God we must be that love of God wherever we go. That means we mustn't cut ourselves from everything. We need to be holding onto God more and more as we step out so that it is Him and His love that is seen and experienced in and through us. Letting go doesn't mean cutting off, it means letting go of the control and say it has over our lives.

God is at work. There is a ground swell. People are becoming bolder with the love, care and service of God but it is easy to allow frustration to stop all this. We are all frustrated in these strange COVID times but God is still at work. Don't allow the frustration of our situation to rob you of the opportunity to see more of the kingdom of God here. Hold on to Him, let go of the world, the news outlets, social media, and hold onto Him and you will see more of His kingdom here.

Steve



**Holding on
And
Letting go**

Special Announcement from Lyn Drapkin & Tim Walker



We are pleased to announce we are engaged and plan to be married in January.

We would also like to thank everyone for your good wishes.

Much love to you all.

Lyn & Tim

Smile

Smiling is infectious
You catch it like the flu

When someone smiled at me today
I started smiling too

I walked around the corner
And someone saw me grin

When he smiled I realised
I had passed it on to him

I thought about the smile
And then I realised its worth

A single smile like mine
Could travel round the earth

So if you feel a smile begin
Don't leave it undetected

Start an epidemic
And get the world infected



I wish to thank everyone who has encouraged me with this publication and thank you for those who have contributed articles.

Despite the lockdown and depressing headlines etc. there is good news that the national news channels and press seem to avoid.

This publication is one of hope and encouragement.

Do you have an encouraging message for Riverside or something interesting? Please let me know

Details are on the back page on how to contact me.

Either leave a message on

- Riverside Elim mobile.
- Via my email address.
- Write a letter to me via the church address.

Les the Ed

Riverside Elim AGM 2020 Review

On the 1st November we had our Annual General Meeting.

We not only looked back but also looked forward together.

Here are some highlights of what we're doing as we move forwards together.

Friday is both Steve and Liz's day off.
Please help by not contacting them on that day.

We are planning to continue monthly gatherings on a Sunday morning at Dog Lane once lockdown has been lifted.

After a successful trial in October we were able to fit 6 or 7 families in each gathering. If more families want to join in we can run the program twice so that all families can join in. Look out for dates being released once lockdown is lifted.

Just Love@Clemetines opened successfully in October.

It will be closed for lockdown.

We do need volunteers to help us serve and love the customers and people of the community. We can provide all training so please let us know if you'd like to be a volunteer

Christmas on the Road.

Instead of us doing a BIG Christmas carol concert in one venue, because of all restrictions, we are taking Christmas on the road.

Book us to come and do a 30-45 minute carol concert in your street and you can invite your neighbours onto their doorsteps/front gardens to join in the carols! For available dates and to book the group contact Steve.

Christmas hampers

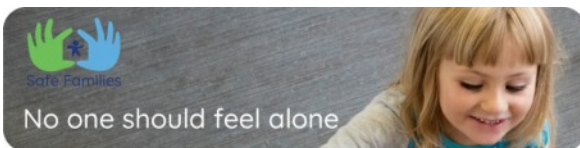
We have secured £5,000 from council and will invest money from Riverside too, to make 100 Christmas hampers for the people of Riverside to give to someone or a family they know who could be in need. We make the hampers, you pick them up and give them! More information will follow.

REVIVE regathering

In January we will be having six Sundays - three in Jan and three in February, - where we will be regathering at 4pm at St Georges Hall. Numbers are limited to 35-40. Face masks/shields are to be worn and temperature checks will be taken on the way in.

This is a 45 minute gathering based on a short word (different from the morning) and prayer in small socially distanced groups. The vision behind it is to allow our spirits to be revived by word and prayer together. More information to come before Christmas. Our morning online service will continue.

God has done all sorts of things in lockdown and He will continue. Many of these things are unexpected and He will continue to move this way. He has already taken us BIGGER in many ways we didn't expect and He will continue to do so. Let's keep listening and stepping into the BIGGER things God has for us.



Hi Riverside,

I hope that you and your families are all well. I'm Helen Hoarle and if you don't know me I work and volunteer for Safe Families, which is a national Christian Charity providing hope and belonging to local families through connecting them with volunteers from the church.

Almost all the families we work with do not have family or friends to support them.

They are isolated, lonely and very often feel unloved and unwanted. Families have been through trauma such as trafficking, domestic abuse, homelessness or are very isolated due to illness or disability.

We believe Jesus wants to bring families hope, identity and compassion through the local church. Praise God that volunteers' journey with our families and we see families find hope in hard times. God is a God of miracles. Our family friends are carriers of hope and the love of Jesus. We believe in a God who can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine. At **Safe Families** we see God is at work and volunteers bring light into the darkness.

Riverside has been partnering with Safe Families for over a year now and what a huge difference you have made. Riverside have befriended and supported 8 vulnerable families and 20 children in this time. That is amazing! Family friends have provided incredible support to families including showing love and care to a single mum of five, one of most vulnerable families we have ever worked with. One of the family friends from Riverside was there at her side when she went into labour, reassuring her and caring for the children. Imagine how hard that situation would have been if she had faced that alone. Thank you Riverside - that Mum has made such progress and last week the council highlighted it as best practice. They even asked what is different with Safe Families! What a witness.

Riverside family friends have also supported a Mum with a young boy taking him for day trips and befriending this Mum.

She had been through so much trauma and was initially so hard to reach that we wondered if we could help but Riverside volunteers again blew us away and she said

"I just feel the need to tell you that I'm so grateful for putting us in touch with [Riverside friends]. They have checked in on me regularly making sure to ask we have enough or need anything. I'm so appreciative and D regularly asks about them, he's just sent a little video saying hello to both and it's made me realise how dear they are to us so I want to thank you for allowing them to be in our lives. And a warm thank you for all the help and kindness. I hope you realise how comforting it is to have such genuine and caring support. I really really think you all make the world a better place".

What a testament to God's love.

After the initial lockdown we quickly realised that many of our most vulnerable families were unable to access food. We are so grateful to Riverside who together with other churches stepped up to help them.



Thank you to Liz and Steve and everyone from church who donated. From April until August we delivered to families who were struggling because of additional

needs, disabilities, and serious long-term health conditions. Riverside church donations played a key role in the provision and delivery of an estimated £17,625 of food which was delivered to these chosen families. The food parcels and especially the home-made cakes, small presents for children and the quality meat were greeted with huge excitement and joy by the children on every delivery. There were also tears from parents.

Thank you to all those special people who gave so generously and thoughtfully - those special touches mean the world. One parent who is struggling with a life limiting condition and a young

son with autism said "Words cannot describe how thankful I am! I cannot believe your church helped me. This has made such an impact on my life already.... Thank you sooo much! God Bless you!"

During the last few months, our Resource friends have also been wonderful providing beds, sofas, a washing machine which we know have provided families with a lifeline in difficult times. Thank you Riverside!

Since March, Safe Families has supported churches to reach out to offer hope and belonging to their communities more than ever before. Nationally we are equipping over 1000 churches, working with 40 local authorities, and have supported over 11,000 children. Since lockdown referrals have gone up 55%. Locally we have grown so that we are now working with the church to bring the love of Jesus in a practical way to over 150 families and our team has more than doubled since May.

If you want to chat about getting involved in praying, giving financially or as a resource friend or volunteering as a family friend either on the phone or in person, give me a call. The great thing about Safe Families is that it is completely flexible, and every offering of time or resources is treasured. My email is helenhoarle@safefamilies.uk or call 07387 417 210. God Bless You Riverside Elim!

In Luke, chapter 18, Jesus told His disciple's the story of the Persistent Widow to illustrate their need for constant prayer and to show them they must never give up.

During the 2nd World War Prime Minister on 21st October 1941,
Winston Churchill spoke to students at Harrow School.

He stood up and gave this advice:
Never, Never, Never Give Up.
Then he sat down!

A Fireman on a steam engine is responsible to start the fire so as to heat the water which will eventually boil and turn into steam. The locomotive is a very large cold lump of metal.

Gradually the fireman adds more coal and the water reaches 50C. The locomotive is now a warm lump of metal.

More coal is added until the water is 99C.



The locomotive is now a hot lump of metal until the fireman adds just one more shovel of coal and suddenly the water reaches 100C. The water boils and starts steaming. The locomotive is now a mighty moving powerful engine.

This is an illustration on how we need to keep on praying.

(Adding coal to reach boiling point and then continue for if you don't, the fire may go out!)

*For the answer to prayer to work we are advised to pray -
Immediately, ASAP, - Every Day, Weeks, Months, for Years*

Never, Never, Never Give Up Praying

The Little Boy with No Toes.

The Story of the charity

'Orphans of Kenya'

When Annie Austin set off in early 2000 for a two week holiday in Kenya with her friend Leon, she was completely unaware of God's plan for her.

When they arrived, it was a culture shock, for they did not realise that people lived in mud huts.

At their hotel in Mombasa, they were befriended by an English couple, Graham and Rita who introduced them to Omar, their local driver. He was also a teacher in the nearby town of Milindi and took Annie and Leon to his school for a visit.

The headmaster explained to them during the visit that about half of the children were orphans. At that, he called a small boy over and asked him to show them his toes. **The boy lifted his leg and to Annie's horror she saw the ends of his toes were missing.** He explained that orphans had no shoes so, in the rainy season, mud sticks to their feet and termites in the mud chew the ends off their toes.

That moment for Annie was so significant and said to the Lord there and then,

'I will do everything I can to help the orphans of Kenya'.

Annie & Leon extended their holiday for two more week. Then with the agreement of Graham, Rita and Leon they decided to finance the materials for a much needed classroom at that school.

With Omar's assistance they purchased the materials and the children's parents built the classroom. A plaque bearing their names and the date was witness to the appreciation of those involved.

Once home Annie went immediately to Riverside and Pastor Jason's wife Linda was there. Annie said 'I got very emotional and told Linda my story. Jason and Linda decided I could fundraise under the umbrella of Riverside and that was when 'Orphans of Kenya was born.'

Two years later the pastor at Riverside was Mike. Annie needed a way of placing those funds where they were intended. Mike went on-line and located Hope and Kindness, a fairly new charity connected to the Elim church in Redditch operating an orphanage in Kenya.

Completely unknown to Annie (but not to God!), Terry and Judi Mott, Hope and Kindness founders, had just negotiated for a piece of land to extend the orphanage. They had returned to England wondering where the money for this purchase would come from. A day or two later, an envelope arrived from Annie with a cheque for the exact amount of that land. How amazing is that?

That was the start of a beautiful friendship which has blessed Annie from that day to this. As Annie would say *'God has got the big picture and He is in control'.*

Liz Craven

Dear From the Water's Edge



My name is Tim Scarborough. I was the one making all the noise with the drums when we used to meet together on Sunday mornings!

Some of you might remember that I was one of the people interviewed by Steve a few weeks into lockdown. To my shame, that's how long it has taken me to get round to writing this after being invited by Les, but here goes!

Firstly I want to say I'm delighted that From the Water's Edge exists, and that we have Les who is able and willing to create it.

Lockdown, in its many forms, has seen a massive technological response to keep people connected, but good old ink, paper and the postal system are also proving their worth once more!

After the initial shock of lockdown and the wave of fear and panic-buying, I was excited to see genuine human care for others come through. On our street – like many others – someone took the initiative and posted those slips through everyone's door offering a point of contact for help and support to those who needed it.

The effect was wonderful! I've lived here since 2012 and now for the first time I know the names of people all along the street. There have been socially distanced gatherings in the street and we all stayed out to chat after each "Clap for the NHS" when they were happening. There's now talk of a street party when we're allowed to do such things!

I was also excited by the idea that we'd have to find new ways to do old things: work, family and church have all needed a rethink.

I never dreamed I would be running drumming workshops (Pam and I have our own business doing this for schools, Scouts, Guides and businesses) via a computer screen, but it turns out we can do this very successfully!

It came about almost by accident because my instinctive response when lockdown first happened was to offer families a bit of drum fun on Facebook and people started asking if I could do it for their Scout groups. We've had over 300 bookings since the beginning of lockdown from all over the UK and some from Australia, Dubai and South Africa! I never imagined a time when we would be unable to touch our children and grandchildren, but that has led to a greater valuing of that seemingly everyday occurrence since it became possible again.

One of the most powerful effects of lockdown has been the way everyone has been forced to reconsider their priorities and values, and meaningful contact with family has become a greater priority for many people including me. Pam and I are very thankful that we have each other at this time, and occasionally reflect on how different things would have been if lockdown had happened before we met in 2014.

I would never have believed there would be a time when church congregations weren't allowed to gather together. Church gatherings are a historic and iconic element in our culture as well as throughout my life, yet suddenly we find ourselves in the same position as the earliest Christians: looking for ways to shine our light as individuals among our community.

I've enjoyed seeing and being part of some unusual and meaningful approaches to church which might never have happened had it not been for lockdown, and I'm looking forward to an exciting Christmas project which I believe will have an impact this year and in the future.

Overall, I'm glad to say we're doing well and enjoying the space that the situation has brought into our lives. I miss my time on the road and I kick myself every time I forget my mask, but I enjoy seeing things from a new angle and will try to keep that alive!

I'm enjoying the new conversations I'm having and looking forward to more, if you fancy a natter, my number is
07753 460 504.

Much love

Tim

My grandfather started walking five miles a day when he was sixty.
Now he is eighty-five and we don't know where he is.

"Doctor, doctor. I can't stop singing The Green Green Grass of Home."

"That's what we doctors call The Tom Jones syndrome."

"Oh really, is it common?"

"It's not unusual."

Police arrested two kids. One was drinking battery acid and the other eating fireworks.
They charged one and let the other off.

Two silkworms had a race. It ended in a tie.

Wycliffe Bible Translators
newsletter dated March 2020 included
Sani's Story. (Not his real name for security purposes.)

One day Sani who used to be a Muslim and is now involved in West Africa received a phone call from a Muslim man who said that he and four of his friends experienced something extraordinary.

The five men were leaders of a militant group and while taking 2,500 to launch an attack, the group had been confronted five times by a vision of a man in brilliant white.

The group returned to their camp where the man in white came to the man who had been on the phone. The man in white held out his hands showing holes in his palms and proclaimed

"I am Jesus;

I have come that you might have salvation and bring salvation to others".

The militant leader immediately accepted Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. Incredibly and simultaneously the other leaders had also been visited by the man in white.

They discussed what they should do next and remembered hearing about Sani, a man who talked about Jesus in their own language.

So here was this man, inviting Sani to visit this militant group. After much prayer and thought, Sani went to the camp.

There he spoke to the 2,500 militants. Instead of preaching, Sani simply read Scripture, as the New Testament had been translated into his (and their) language a few years earlier. After reading four chapters of James, Sani invited the men to accept Jesus and amazingly all 2,500 responded.

A Christian ministry in one strongly Muslim country of the Middle East reports that Covid-19 lockdown has resulted in far more people attending their Internet worship services, many questions about Christianity being emailed in from viewers, hundreds of requests for New Testaments and several people turning to Christ.

Muslims who would have been fearful to be seen entering a church building, can participate in worship and discuss with Christians online.

Praise God for this positive outcome from Covid-19 lockdown and pray that those who have made commitments to follow Christ in the last months will grow in their faith.

An Attitude of Gratitude - 2020

Nine months ago, I don't think any of us could have envisioned life as it is with the Covid-19 pandemic. Our lives now have rules and restrictions unlike any we have had in our lifetime - whether we are seven, seventy seven or in between.

Thinking back to my childhood after the 2nd World War, there must have been many restrictions, but for me my childhood was carefree and happy. One thing I remember clearly was my parents' love and discipline and the importance to always say please and thank you when asking for or receiving something.

How important this simple instruction is! I have tried to put it into practice all of my life.



- The air I breathe, the created world, the seasons, the sun, trees, flowers, birds.....
- The list is endless...

How many things are you thankful for?

May I suggest that those moments you start to feel low, isolated, restricted, you lift your eyes to Jesus and start saying thank you.

And give thanks for everything to God the Father

in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:20 (NLT)

Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Jesus Christ.

1Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NLT)

Jennifer



Frequently I think about all the things I have to be thankful for,

- Jesus, my salvation and forgiveness, God's mercy, Love and Grace
- Les [my husband], all my family, my friends, my material possessions.....

- I cleaned the attic with the wife the other day. Now I can't get the cobwebs out of her hair.
- Then my mother-in-law fell down a wishing well, I was amazed, I never knew they worked.

John Balcon's Story and Wyre Forest Food Bank.



Early in 2019, Paul Crook, who was volunteering at the then Franche Foodbank, asked if I had a car. Naively I said yes and since then, I have been involved with the foodbank. Back then there were a few drivers who took it in turns week by week to deliver food parcels to the vulnerable and needy in Stourport, Kidderminster and Bewdley. Generally, I delivered to Stourport, and Paul to Kidderminster. On average, the foodbank delivered about 80 boxes each month.

My, how things have changed since lockdown! There has been a sharp rise in demand for the foodbank (now Wyre Forest Foodbank, to reflect the area covered). We then started distributing about 80 boxes each week! On the first Friday of November we distributed 81 boxes in a single day.

Despite rising demand, we are always supplied with enough donations to cover it. For this, we thank and praise our marvellous Father God, without whom the foodbank would not run.

Nearly 3 months ago, despite having just returned from a week's holiday, Paul and Barbara Guille, who have managed the foodbank for the last 5 years or so, still looked in need of a holiday. I asked whether they had considered training someone to share the burden. Barbara looked at me strangely. Had I said something wrong? Next thing, Sam, the pastor at Franche said he wanted a word with me later. Oh dear, had I said something wrong? Later, he explained that the leadership had agreed to ask me to take on the role of Foodbank Manager, a role which I have gladly accepted.

It is challenging and far more than just Tuesday and Friday mornings, the main delivery days. We have a small team of dedicated volunteers who help with packing and sorting items for distribution. Plus we have around 20 drivers, some of whom volunteer on both days. We are very grateful for all the support we get from local churches (including Riverside, of course), and many businesses and supermarkets in the Wyre Forest community. Praise God.

John Balcon

Wyre Forest Food Bank's Christmas Appeal.

<https://www.spacehive.com/wffb-christmas-special>

At the beginning of October, we launched a Christmas Special fundraiser to raise £5000 to supply Christmas-themed food parcels for the families we support.

Here at the beginning of November, I wonder whether £5000 will be enough? The project needs to reach the target in pledges by 1st December or else we get nothing.

Thanks be to God that we are halfway there!
I will let you know how things go, both in the Christmas fundraiser and my role at the Foodbank.

John Balcon



Adorable Wife

Wife: "How would you describe me?" **Husband:** "A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J,K."

Wife: "What does that mean?"

Husband: "Adorable, Beautiful, Cute, Delightful, Elegant, Fashionable, Gorgeous and Hot."

Wife: "Aw, thank you, but what about I,J,K?"

Husband: "I'm Just Kidding!"

Josie's Picture

Be Encouraged

I am standing in the shallows of a large sandy beach. I look out over the ocean to see Jesus way in the distance, in deep water. He is beckoning to me and I long to go and meet Him there but I cannot reach Him, being so far away. "I haven't come very far." I sadly declare to Him as I look at the distance between us. Instantly He gives me an encouraging reply, "Turn around and look back. See how far you've come!" It is true, the distance between where I stood and the shore-line is significant. "Don't be discouraged, you're doing well and making progress!"

How easily we become discouraged, looking down at the negatives, all that is wrong with us, feeling far from God, instead of looking at the positives in our lives.

*"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith"
(Hebrews 12:2)*

Don't Be Discouraged

A few months later, I have the same picture only now I am knee deep. Again, discouragement floods my heart as, pondering all the mistakes and hurts of the past, I realise how far I have to go to meet with Jesus. He says to me, "You were very busy back then on the sand without Me and made quite a mess. Now however, the motion of my waters has gently erased for ever all you have been through. It is all gone. Don't try to remember. Just continue on your journey towards Me." Of course, as I watch the incoming tide, it washes away every footprint and indentation on the sand at the water's edge, erasing with it all that has been before.

We become so discouraged as we ponder all our wrongs committed in the past. We begin to dwell on them to the extent that we see no hope in the present or the future and we forget the victory we have in Jesus.

*"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing!"
(Isaiah 43:18-19)*

**"When I work I work.
When I pray God works."**

UCB Word for Today. 29th October 2020

‘The higher things’!

‘Set your minds and keep them set.’

Colossians 3:2 AMPC

The Bible says, ‘Set your minds and keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth.’

There are many things that happen in this world which can easily affect our mind and emotions, and we need to learn how to rise above them. When negative thoughts are building up and trying to take control of our emotions, we need to take a few minutes to ‘set our minds and keep them set’ on ‘the higher things’.

It often helps to speak positively about whatever is bothering you. For example, have a chat with yourself that goes something like this: ‘My family may not be everything I’d like it to be, but I’m thankful I have a family. My house may not be as nice as I’d like it to be, but it’s still a good place to live. I might be going through a difficult time right now, but Jesus is with me and He’s going to get me through it.’

The devil knows which of your buttons to push to get an emotional reaction. So what should you do? Stand on God’s Word: ‘Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) is the man whom You discipline...instruct...and teach out of Your law, that You may give him power to keep himself calm in the days of adversity’ (Psalm 94:12-13 AMPC). The more you discipline yourself to say no to your feelings and yes to the wisdom of God, the easier it becomes to defeat the enemy in a spiritual tug-of-war. So decide today that you won’t arrange your life around unreliable emotions, and focus instead on ‘the higher things’!

Barnabas Aid reports in their September/October 2020 prayer guide,

Pakistani Christians were greatly encouraged by the discovery of a huge stone cross, at least a thousand years old, in the foothills of the Karakoram mountain range in the Himalayas.

The cross, which is more than 2 metres in length, is evidence of the early presence of Christianity in Pakistan, brought by Christians from the Middle East.

Pakistani Christians are often accused by the Muslim majority of following a newly introduced, Western religion.

Pray that the fact of the ancient presence of followers of Jesus may become common knowledge in Pakistan, giving His modern followers more acceptability and less harassment.



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