



The Lay Leader's Covid-19 Story

Hazel Loney

In recent conversations with friends and family I have found myself saying, more than at any other time in my life “I don’t know”. We have listened to the opinions of experts, virologists epidemiologists, scientific advisors and commentators, and as we strive `to do the right thing` one thing is for sure, we are still struggling with a new virus which is challenging even the brightest and best brains across the world.

RISE TO
THE
MOMENT

So, we ask what has the Church to say on the whole matter? Christian writers and commentators have moved quickly to write books on the subject and get them published, helping us to think through the issues a global pandemic brings. Theories about the origin of the virus and opinions about what God is saying to us all are diverse and varied but what have we learned from the experience of having to forgo corporate worship and facing a winter of uncertainty?

Most of our congregations have been quick to use technology, with Zoom, YouTube, live streaming, Facebook etc. This has been such a blessing and a bit frustrating at times. As

a preacher I am tired preaching into my own face!! One thing is sure, the gathered expression of worship is particularly important, I miss it desperately, but so too is the coming out from behind our church walls and being heard in the public space. Some drive-in services have been successful, and summer has facilitated that so far. Many people are saying they now join in two or three services on Sunday and some non church goers have started to listen in.

The mayor of London has expressed his thanks to the Christian churches particularly, for their work during this difficult time, so for many this has been a chance to show our faith in action. MCI has been quick to be generous in sending financial help to our partner countries where life is much tougher than here. My heart weeps for the world right now. I think of refugee camps near Syria, asylum seekers and migrants and displaced people with nowhere to call home. Some of the African countries struggling with bad governance and lack of adequate health care could be facing hunger, the pandemic has exposed the cracks in their systems. Yemen is heart-breaking.

Nearer home we have an economic crisis looming and job losses predicted, young families facing big challenges, our business community struggling. As we struggle on through this time of not knowing what should we be about? It strikes me that the first thing is, not a cop out, but sincere and earnest prayer for our political leaders, church leaders, scientists, researchers, and medical people, teachers etc. We should be mindful of the importance of our giving both to our churches and charities right now. I am glad we have called a special time of prayer in this season of unlocking on 24th August, if you have not signed up yet, you should.



In Romans 8 Paul reminds us that there are times we do not even know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. This struck a chord with me in the midst of my not knowing. I don't know lots of things, there are a lot of whys, so I groan for the world and when words run out, that is enough. As disciples of Christ we share in his heart for the world when it turned his stomach and made him weep, but he did more than that he gave his life that the world might be redeemed. So as we come out of lockdown ,and I trust we stay out ,we should be communities of disciples willing to weep with the world but also to give ourselves in practical ways so that the places where we find our selves notice us, not because of our impressive buildings or even our regular gatherings but because of our living presence in our communities.

In the world's brokenness Christ came to us, in the incarnation he became one of us and gave his life as a ransom. Jesus told his disciples in the upper room, "As the Father has sent me, so send I you" and he is still sending us, as he was, to give ourselves for our world. The great commission is not finished yet, so we need to keep on being and saying the truth as its revealed in Christ Alone.

