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Dear Friends,

***Christian Aid Sunday***

*Love never fails. Coronavirus impacts all of us. But love unites us all*

During the last few weeks many of us have discovered things we didn't know about ourselves or possibly those we live with. Some of us have been trying to cope with loneliness, unable to see our families. For others its been coping with personal anxieties and fear surrounding Covid-19. For others its been our capacity to live with our family 24/7 juggling schooling, working from home etc. Sadly, some of us have been bereaved and on top of the feelings of loss we have not had proper opportunities to say farewell either at the bedside or at a funeral. Many of us have had to cope with illness alone or isolated within our homes or hospital. I suspect each of us has had to face challenges we could not have dreamed of a year ago. Just as our children have been learning about VE Day and the events of WW2 this week our grandchildren may perhaps one day be studying the global response to Covid-19 in years to come. We are making history.



Thousands of Christians around the world wear a bracelet saying “WWJD” (the acronym for “what would Jesus do?”) to remind themselves to live out their faith in their daily lives. The problem with WWJD is that many of the situations that we have to deal with now did not happen in first century Palestine and so we cannot answer the questions! If we take the bible as a whole, even acknowledging the differing voices and the New Testament in particular, we might say God in his Christ is present in acts of healing, in reaching out to the weak, in comforting the sick and bereaved. We might even say God speaks out against injustice and points out that in the Kingdom of God the rich do not get richer whilst the poor get poorer. You may remember the wonderful story in scripture when Mary, as if anointing Jesus for his burial, breaks open a jar of costly perfume and pours it over him. Judas and probably many others thought this was a total waste of money and yet Jesus affirms Mary's action saying, “you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me....”.

This year Christian Aid Week runs from 10<sup>th</sup> until 16<sup>th</sup> May. There will be no red envelopes delivered or collected and nobody will ask you to join in our parish's effort to visit every household and encourage others to fill a red envelope. For some of us that is a deep sadness for we want to remind others that Christian care for our neighbour goes well beyond Radyr and that our faith is expressed as much in action as in words. For some of us this is a bit of a relief...I can still remember being told to “F off” over 30 years ago when I knocked on a door in Epsom. I can remember one man saying he would never give to a Christian charity for fear that we might evangelise people of other faiths, and another excused himself from giving by pointing to the huge running costs of various charities. How hard it is in those doorstep moments to convey to others that Christian Aid is simply bring help to those who need it most because they are loved by God and by us. I am concerned that Christian Aid's ability to reach out to and care for the neediest in the world will be compromised by the global lockdown. Of course none of us knows WWJD but his was a life lived for others. So this year please be generous and just imagine being unable to wash your hands or isolate from others or receive medical treatment if you contract Covid-19. This year you can click on the red donation button on the website <https://www.christianaid.org.uk> and, if you don't have the technology to do this, do just place your donation in a jar or envelope for us to send as soon as our churches reopen.

As I write this letter we are awaiting further news from the government concerning the lockdown - my own home is, I suspect, a microcosm of the nation's anxieties and longing to live normal lives again. Rarely does a meal go by when this matter isn't hotly debated. Some of the family can't wait to see their friends or go to school or work whilst others think the need to save lives is more important than the economic argument. I am grateful that I am not having to make these life and death decisions.

Most of us at some time or another have believed the grass is greener..... For the sake of little Wilfred I do hope our PM's new relationship is both life-long and life giving. I cannot count the times that I have spent time with a young King David who has seen his Bathsheba and has been or is being tempted. And, just in case you think that was a sexist sentence, I can promise you I've met as many Bathshebas as Davids. The bible tells a story about human nature...and when it's tough all of us, myself included, imagine life would be better if we could tweak the people or components in it. Even today I'm imagining another world. I can no longer find solitude and silence at home. I love my family...but I can't get away from them easily these days. You might imagine that I am reading and praying with so little work to do at the moment ...but the coffee table is still heaving under the weight of a pile of unread books that I can't wait to devour. And then there's another problem, "why is it that parents of so called adult children still load the washing machine and dishwasher for them?" Why oh why can't they just pick things up off the bathroom floor? Yet only this morning I realised I, of all people, am failing to count my many many blessings. A call to a parishioner, an email from another, both told the same story - the loneliness, the silence and the lack of human contact is crushing. And we imagine that if we could go back to the lives we once led we will be happy ever after...but of course that's the myth.

Only yesterday the nation "celebrated" VE Day mindful of the fact that whilst evil was defeated lives would never ever be the same again. My father and his family could never articulate the pain they felt for the losses of their family - cousins and grandparents, sons and daughters gassed because of their faith. A cleric sent me a WhatsApp message yesterday attaching 1930s poster images he dares not share with his parish. I pray that he refrains from action ...one said, "beware of conscription" and another from the Peace Pledge Union said, "wars will cease when men refuse to fight" and "war is a crime against humanity". Oh yes, once upon a time many of us were pacifists. But now we realise that there are some battles that must be fought - in the trenches, on the beaches and in the hospitals and nursing homes today. To bury our head in the sand is to allow evil and suffering to prevail. Perhaps the greatest exemplar of one who stood up to evil in his day is our Lord Jesus Christ who suffered and died that others might live and who gives us a way to feel thankful even in the face of pain.

One of my closest friends is in hospital. I've known her since we were expecting our first born sons. She and I are like chalk and cheese and yet there is an unbreakable bond between us. Brain washed in a Roman Catholic family she now sits light to faith. When she needs her husband and her family around her most of all they cannot get near her in hospital. Yesterday, she too sent me a WhatsApp message saying of her beloved husband whom she adores and who adores her but who forgot to deliver a toothbrush to the hospital delivery area, "I honestly think that there is something wrong with men - I gave him a detailed list of what toiletries I needed and he turned up with four little shower gels, an ancient manicure kit that he must have dug up in the garden instead of a nail file, and the smallest tube of toothpaste ever...but lots of books that I don't want to read...and all I want to do is clean my teeth". Midday yesterday I phoned the on call chaplain to say "forget the religious stuff but please find a toothbrush for my darling friend". Thank God she's got a toothbrush today - her situation reminds me that even in the face of crushing pain it's the little things that really matter.

This coming week is Christian Aid week - I fear that I will revert to my usual moans and groans but I will remind myself to count my blessings and share some of them with those who need them more than I do. I'm going to try and deal with the washing and the mess and the online education knowing that these are my blessings not my curses. I will remember my friend whose family cannot visit her. As I clean the bathroom I will try to imagine women in the poorest parts of the world who don't have clean water to drink let alone to flush and wash their clothes in. I will try to think about those young girls who do not have an education or the youngsters who walk miles in the midday sun to school instead of moaning about the pressure of home schooling. I will also

think of those families for whom the nation's VE Day celebrations will forever be tinged with sadness.

One day the lockdown will end and the life that we knew will begin again. Yet whilst we might celebrate others will still mourn. All of us will in some way be forever changed. Even as that great legend Moses led God's people to freedom and they were fed with manna from heaven they still looked back over the shoulders imagining life was better in Egypt when they had fish and cucumbers, melons, leeks and garlic. Perhaps this Christian Aid week is the week to notice that God still feeds us with manna from heaven each and every day ...and no the grass isn't really greener ...when some are sick or starving,

Yours in Christ,

Vicki  
Xx

