

Surface

WHY EASTER

April 2021



Dear Friends,

Roy Lessin, the founder of Dayspring Christian Cards and gifts, Wrote a poem which speaks of the role Jesus plays in our lives and I include it here:-

To the **lost** sheep, *He is the **seeking** Shepherd;*
To the **needy** sheep, *He is the **providing** Shepherd;*
To the **hurting** sheep, *He is the **comforting** Shepherd;*
To the **bruised** sheep, *He is the **healing** Shepherd;*
To the **anxious** sheep, *He is the **peaceful** Shepherd;*
To the **wandering** sheep, *He is the **guiding** Shepherd;*
To the **fearful** sheep, *He is the **protecting** Shepherd;*
To **all** His sheep, *He is the **Good** Shepherd.*

As we have travelled through this past year with all the worrying effects of the Covid pandemic, we have both individually and corporately as a church, needed to experience Jesus travelling with us in all these aspects of His shepherding ministry. I read just recently a true story of a shepherd and his sheep dog. Early each morning he and the dog would follow the same path around his fields, checking to see that his sheep were safe and healthy. This routine was followed for a number of years, until eventually the old shepherd died. However, the shepherd's widow was surprised the next morning after her husband's death when the dog indicated to be let out at the usual time. As she watched, the dog set off in the usual direction and he returned sometime later, having done the full round, carrying on the work of checking on the sheep as his master had done, and he continued doing the same thing every day until he, too, died. Obviously the sheepdog was unable to check on the sheep in the same way that his master had done, but he faithfully continued to do what his master had taught him to the best of his ability

A faithful disciple too, will follow his master as closely as possible, and Jesus taught His disciples to do all the things that He did, showing compassion to all the people He brings us into contact with. He taught us how to minister the good news with its associated healing of body, mind and spirit to those who need help. He gave to His disciples, and us, the Great Commission, and the power and authority in His name, to carry on His good work. Through the power of His Holy Spirit we are enabled to do just that!

As we celebrate Easter at the beginning of April we are reminded that our Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep opening up the opportunity of sins forgiven and a place in the family of God forever. What an amazing privilege we have as we, who were once dead in our trespasses and sins have been raised to new life through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus was raised from the dead on that first Easter Sunday fulfilling the prophecy He had spoken about Himself at the graveside of Lazarus, **"I am resurrection and I am life"**. Within Him, as part of His very being and nature is the principle of resurrection and the principle of life which underlines another claim He made that, **"as the Father has life in himself so he has granted the Son to have life in Himself"**, and so He is able to impart life to others including you and me! **"Whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life"**. (John 5:24-27).

Herein lies the message of Easter, death the last enemy of all mankind has been overcome through Christ's death and resurrection, and we are privileged to be restored, as we believe in and put our trust in the Lord, to a right relationship with the God who created us.

For years as a young church goer, I believed in the resurrection but it made no significant difference in my experience until at the age of 21, I came to the place of realising that Jesus was challenging me, to believe in **Him** who is the resurrection and who has the power to change me from the inside. What a colossal change began to take place as I acknowledged my wrong doing, repented and asked Christ to become Lord of my life! I never want to lose the sense of wonder of what the Lord has accomplished for me and indeed His whole world, and need therefore to bring to mind on a daily basis how great is our God, the tremendous things He has done for us and the enormity of the love He has for this world. Despite the sadness and despair in the world around us, may you all experience a very happy Easter and KNOW the experience of His love for you.

Yours in His joy,
Clive.



Surface Deadline For inclusion in the May edition of Surface Magazine - please send all copy to Kate M via email by **Thursday 22nd April**. Many thanks!

Hi everyone,

For those who were not able to make the meeting on Monday about Hug in a Box and Food Parcels, you'll find a précis below of what we shared.

Roy and I will be happy to answer any further questions and would love to hear from anyone who feels they would like to be involved.

Mary and Roy

Food Parcel Project

The Emergency Food Box

Some folk will be aware that we keep available in the church a box of provisions to offer if someone experiencing hardship approaches us for practical support. Last year it was given confidentially to a lady who was in need and then re-stocked.

It's good to reassess things, and for a while I've wondered if we could have done more. For example, who was that lady and is she still in need of support? What was the background to her cry for help? Had she only suffered temporary financial insecurity or was this a need resulting from domestic abuse? Was she unable to feed her children? I don't have those answers. All I know is that she hasn't needed to contact us again. So, *could we have done more?* Should helping people in need, be purely a reactive, or one-off affair? Do we only wait for a knock on the church door, a phone call or a message via our Church website? Everyone is unique, and we manage extreme life events in different ways.

What does the Bible say about our approach to:

Meeting Needs

In Deuteronomy 15:11 God says: ***"For there will never cease to be poor in the land; that is why I am commanding you to open wide your hand to your brother and to the poor and needy in your land"***. God's law guided and balanced the spiritual and economic well-being of the whole nation.

God was *proactive* here. He had built in an overarching strategy, the Year of Jubilee, (Leviticus 25:1-13) to help those whose financial circumstances had taken a down-turn, such as through bereavement. Every 50 years, debts would be cancelled, land returned to its rightful owner and slaves set free. This Godly 'reset' was an act of deep compassion from a Father God who knew and loved His children and was ready to meet their needs in all circumstances.

Building Relationships – Getting to know people

Getting alongside to offer support isn't always easy. Everyone is different. We read in the gospels about people who were comfortable with going to ask Jesus for help, there were also those who Jesus Himself started conversations with, but also we note people who, like the man lowered through the roof, needed his friends to encourage and bring him to Jesus to meet his needs.

Psalm 139 reminds us just how well God knows us and Jesus, was the same as His Father. He really KNEW people – which often surprised them.

Jesus already knew and cared about the woman at the well. He was focussed on the whole person – she saw that He cared and that opened a life-changing conversation – as with Zacchaeus - how his life changed after a cuppa and chat! Jesus got to know the man and cared deeply that his life choices had made him both spiritually and relationally poor.

This year, as families and businesses prepare for the end of furlough, there is little doubt we will see a further rise in unemployment and families suffering related hardship such as financial and food insecurity. We may sense that there will be those in our community who will need support.

If so, how can we prepare ourselves, as His church, to 'open our hands' effectively? Roy already has valuable experience in this area and we would like you to consider the following presentation. Mary

Food Parcel Project: Start-up Plan

The Food Parcel initiative will initially be run as a trial comprising two types of parcel which will be given by SFC to people in need of support. The project will be funded by using £500 of the grant already secured from Involve. This has to be spent before the end of 2021. A credit of £200 has also been put onto our account with InKind which sources liquidated stock and supplies them at heavily discounted prices to community projects; this credit has to be used by the end of July.

Once we are certain we have the interest and resources to deliver a viable project of this type we will contact the Parish Council as they have been providing food supplies during the pandemic. We do not wish to compete with, undermine or overlap the excellent work they have been doing; our scheme is potentially more relational through the contacts we make through our own activities and connections. It is intended to be very long term and also, immediately accessible on any day of the week. We have the opportunity to refine and tailor our support to avoid or minimise any perceived conflicts.

Then, once the initial stock of parcels is prepared, we should let other churches and relevant agencies know they are available as part of developing and trialing referral processes.

All boxes will have a personally written note inside appropriate to the recipient's situation.

Food Parcel

These are designed to support people who are known to be in difficult financial circumstances.

Each box will comprise a quantity of ambient food items such that a quantity of boxes can be immediately available to be given as soon as we become aware of a person in hardship.

To 'keep it simple' initially, rather than trying to purchase items and pack boxes ourselves, a quantity of food parcels will be sourced from the Food Parcel Service (FPS). This service is run by Children and Families Ltd, a charity with headquarters in Sheerness but the food box holding site is in Ashford.

FPS provides unbranded boxes with a variety of contents so that third-party organisations can brand them and use them as part of their own food support programmes. FPS delivers pre-packed food boxes to almost anywhere in the county and on a variety of days; deliveries are typically scheduled a month in advance.

Each box will have a minimum of 2 months and up to 9 months shelf life. There is a fixed delivery fee of £10 and then £8.50 per box. It is understood there is no minimum order but this needs to be checked. If boxes are collected there is no delivery fee and they can be collected on any day/time; the collection point is in Ashford near Junction 9 of the M20.

The food box contents vary from time to time but for £8.50 each they contain around £20-25 worth of food because FPS source donated or very low-cost produce which is surplus to the requirements of supermarkets and suppliers for a variety of reasons. Typically a box would contain 1x cereal, 1x UHT milk, 1x Tea/Coffee, 2x tins of meat, 2x tins of veg, 2x soup, 2x beans/spaghetti, 2x pulses, 1x Pack of Rice/Pasta, 1x jar of sauce, 1x Sandwich filler (Jam/Peanut butter etc.), 2x fish, 2x desserts (fruit, custard, etc.), 1x lucky dip (biscuits, choc). SFC could likely not match creating boxes of similar cost to us without building our own considerable network of food donation supplies.

We will also create a few boxes labelled “allergy aware” and pack in-house items which are gluten/dairy free.

Our project will initially be funded by the grant from Involve. If 15 boxes were purchased then this would cost £150 plus the delivery fee although a volunteer may be very keen to get involved by going to collect them.

We will need to sort/reorganise storage in the church building to accommodate keeping a number of boxes to hand.

Hug in a Box

These are designed to show love and compassion for people experiencing upsetting, or challenging situations such as bereavement or illness. They can also be used for selected celebratory occasions such as the birth of a new child. The boxes will be made up in house by a small team of volunteers deciding and managing the contents, purchasing and maintaining the box supplies and distributing them when needed.

Suggested box contents could include:

- A freshly baked cake (to be made by SFC volunteer)
- ‘Cook’ frozen ready meal (available from Henhurst Farm shop)
- Pack of quality biscuits e.g. shortbread
- Mixture of sweets in a nice jar
- Some bars of quality chocolate
- Large bag of Popcorn
- New Baby clothes and new baby items – these would be perhaps from a supply crafted and donated by church members
- Gift Card

Produce available in quantity from the likes of Booker cash and carry, In Kind or Amazon Pantry.

Next Steps:

Decide if the scheme is to go ahead.

Create a small team by announcing to the membership and inviting volunteers and/or directly asking some specific people.

Team to develop:

- Working arrangement
- Referral process and forms,
- Keep-in-touch responsibilities,
- Implement initial tasks, etc.

Initial tasks to include but not limited to:

- Purchase a quantity of food parcels from FPS
- Finalise Hug in a Box contents/arrangements

Agree volunteers to do baking/shopping on demand when needed.
Purchase appropriately sized boxes online.
Design, print and fix box labels.
Produce small flyer and referral form advertising to potential referral Partners

When everything is in place, soft-launch the initiatives to church members, friends and potential referral partners.

Consider and develop pastoral care and community support training if and as appropriate include awareness and signposting techniques. For example:

Debt awareness and advice
Children and Families support
Age and Solitude needs
Depression and suicide awareness
Abusive relationships eg. National Domestic Violence Helpline

Hi everyone,
Please note we have new sign in information for our Zoom prayer meetings.
It starts from 31st March and will run until further notice

God bless,
Mary

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/93780499797>

PHONE IN DETAILS

Meeting ID: 937 8049 9797#



Tech Team - Members Needed!

Whilst it has been challenging for us all not being able to meet in person over the last year, we know from feedback that many of you have enjoyed and benefited from watching services and broadcast online and seeing SFC's virtual presence and production capabilities develop and improve. God has challenged us to do things we never thought we would have to do! So, have you ever wondered how it is done? Have you ever fancied being a film or TV producer or getting involved in audio-visual production? Well, if any of you would like to come and see the tech in action and maybe have a go yourself then do get in touch. It would be good to have a few more people on the tech team to expand our capacity as we gradually return to more in-person services and well as continuing to broadcast online. So do get in touch to chat about this further.

Roy and Beni.



Alpha online course on Zoom

We have been grateful to be able to hold and host together, an Alpha course online just recently from 21st January through till 1st April using the online facility of Zoom. We were privileged to have 16 screens in operation with 21 people in total participating as we shared together using a twenty five minute video each week followed by 30 minutes of discussion.

Some on the course intimated they were only able to join because they were able to access the course from home. I think it has been a real blessing to all involved enabling us to progress a little further along in our spiritual journeys as we deepen our relationship with the Lord and fellowship with others discovering more about ourselves and the Lord.

Certainly for me, Clive, although I am not computer competent, I felt a real desire to reach out in the community with the love of Christ, so with the help of the online training available from Alpha and the help of others more in touch with Zoom and computers, I stepped out of my comfort zone to attempt this adventure! You must ask our Alpha graduates if they felt it was a success and how they were helped.

As I am writing this article we are about to embark on week eight of the course but already Lynne and I are looking to host another such course in the future. We obviously are praying for more people from the community to participate with hopefully seeing people come to a living faith in Christ as a result of joining in the course. Is there someone you could pray for and invite to join you on our next course in order that the life of Jesus can be imparted to their lives too?

Thank you for considering this matter, for praying for the existing course and we certainly covet your prayers for the next one.

Please get in touch with us if you feel you would like to join the future course (Dates to be decided) and start praying for the Lord to open the hearts of people to volunteer to be a part next time round.

Yours in Christ,
Clive and Lynne Jones.



Staplehurst Free Church Interim Leadership Team

**Terence Hawgood
Bob and Mary Howse
Clive Jones
Kate Henry**

Treasurer: Roger Bashford

**Staplehurst Free Church
Church Administrator - Maggie Martin**

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Sunday Connections in April

Friday 2nd	10.30am	<i>Why Good Friday? - Communion in the Car Park</i>
Sunday 4th	10.30am	Worship and Word <i>Why Easter?</i> <i>Speakers by video - Bear Grylls and Canon J. John</i>
Sunday 11th	10.30am	Worship, Word and Communion <i>Theme: "Power through Persistent Prayer" Mark 9</i> <i>Speaker: Paul Martin</i>
Sunday 18st	10.30am	Worship, Word and Communion <i>Theme: "Greatness in the Kingdom of God" Mark 10</i> <i>Speaker: Clive Jones</i>
Sunday 25th	10.30am	Worship, Word and Communion <i>Theme: "Looking for Fruit" Mark 11</i> <i>Speaker: Roger Lumley</i>

Enabling everyone to know Jesus
and grow in a personal relationship with Him

**STAPLEHURST
FREE CHURCH**