

CITYtheology

The magazine of the Leeds Church Institute

Spring 2021
Issue 25



“In these very challenging times, where we are all vulnerable to the virus, but appalling inequalities and poverty are growing, I would like to see more people who are well rooted in what nourishes them spiritually but are outward facing, active citizens, working together and making a difference.”

Celia Blackden encourages us to show love that reaches out to others in times of crisis



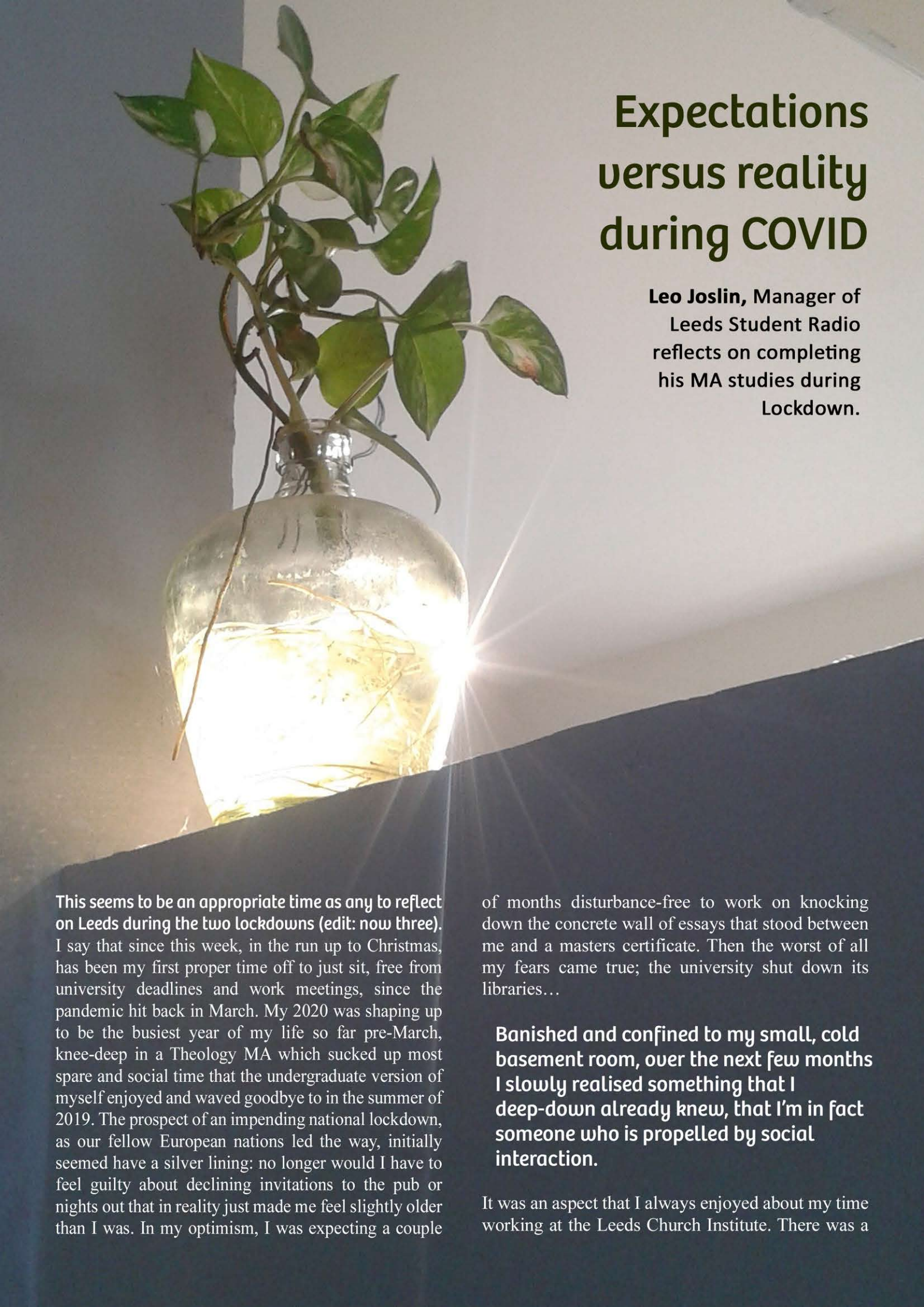
Surviving and Thriving during COVID 19

Helen Reid reflects on the experiences of church leaders during Lockdown.

Expectations versus reality during COVID

Tapping into the silence of eternity in a world dominated by COVID

Where is the hope?



Expectations versus reality during COVID

**Leo Joslin, Manager of
Leeds Student Radio
reflects on completing
his MA studies during
Lockdown.**

This seems to be an appropriate time as any to reflect on Leeds during the two lockdowns (edit: now three).

I say that since this week, in the run up to Christmas, has been my first proper time off to just sit, free from university deadlines and work meetings, since the pandemic hit back in March. My 2020 was shaping up to be the busiest year of my life so far pre-March, knee-deep in a Theology MA which sucked up most spare and social time that the undergraduate version of myself enjoyed and waved goodbye to in the summer of 2019. The prospect of an impending national lockdown, as our fellow European nations led the way, initially seemed have a silver lining: no longer would I have to feel guilty about declining invitations to the pub or nights out that in reality just made me feel slightly older than I was. In my optimism, I was expecting a couple

of months disturbance-free to work on knocking down the concrete wall of essays that stood between me and a masters certificate. Then the worst of all my fears came true; the university shut down its libraries...

Banished and confined to my small, cold basement room, over the next few months I slowly realised something that I deep-down already knew, that I'm in fact someone who is propelled by social interaction.

It was an aspect that I always enjoyed about my time working at the Leeds Church Institute. There was a

constant fresh rotation of new faces to accompany the regular, always someone to talk to whilst sat at the reception desk. It's also a quality that my job, started in August, managing Leeds Student Radio holds. Even despite the current limitations on how many people can be in the office and studios, there's still a healthy number of both friends and strangers who come in for shows every day. When someone new to the society comes in for their first broadcast, they do so with some sort of nervous energy, then come out of the studio an hour later with this air of quiet pride which they in turn pass on to those around.

It is this kind of communication that having spent much of the year in a space incommensurate to social interaction, both physically and mentally, I have come to truly appreciate.

It has made me see old friendships in a new perspective, and regard new social encounters in a way so as not to take them for granted as I suspect many of us did before.

I'm not sure if it would be classed as irony, but there was something a bit strange about writing my masters dissertation on the importance of physical community in the midst of a national lockdown when most of us were the most isolated from each other we have ever been. To be more precise, it focussed on the work of the Greek Orthodox theologian Metropolitan (John) Zizioulas and his ideas surrounding the Eucharist as the thing which forms and binds together our community, and attempted to create a dialogue between Zizioulas' thoughts and the theologies of disability that are found in the Western study of Christianity.

To try and express my dissertation's conclusions in a very brief way:

It is not our basic nature as a human that makes us a person, but our interaction with other individuals. It is through relationships with those in our immediate community that we cease to be individuals and realise our personhood.

A person cannot exist on their own, disconnected from any and everything else. A person only becomes such when they enter a relationship with other individuals, when they form a community of

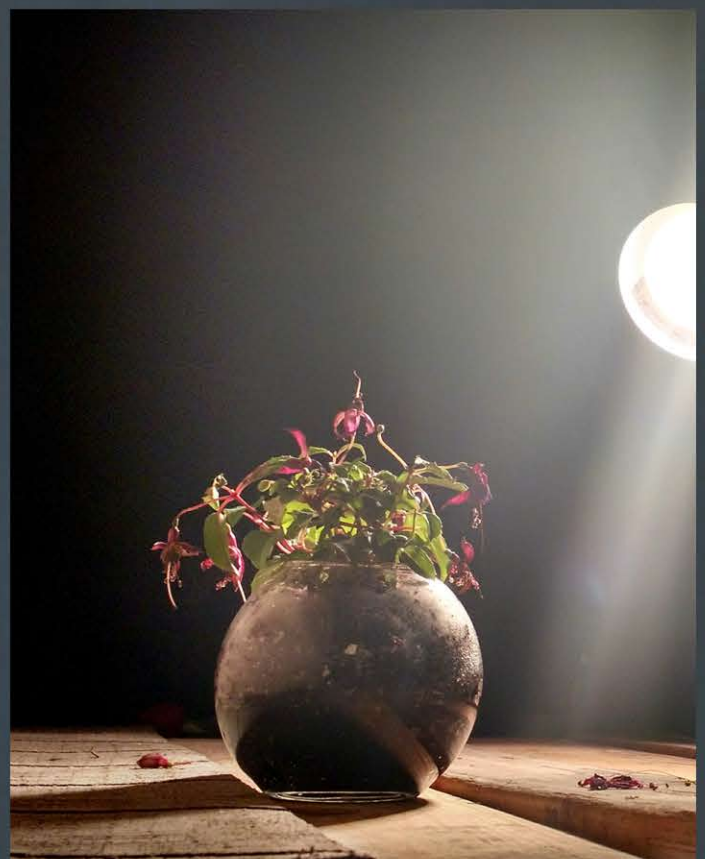
mutual bonds, and when they come to embody God's model of the human as one in constant relationship with the rest of humanity.

This was the theological dimension to the realisation that my relationships with others were an important part of who I was and am.

By having them taken away from me by the cruel consequences of the virus, and unintentionally forcing myself to spend months reading about the importance of community at a time when it was more relevant than ever, I was forced to see myself not as the solo figure of pre-lockdown, but as someone intrinsically linked to their friends, family and peers.

It is by the relationships with those around me that I realise who I am. It is those relationships that make me the person and not just the individual.

If the solitude and forced self-reflection of this year has led to something good, it is that I now see my relationships with others as an essential part of myself. They are not an add-on of existence, but the essence of it. They are not a bonus to be taken for granted, but the central facet of what it is to be a person.



Love that reaches out to others in times of crisis

Written by **Celia Blackden** who works for Focolare in Rome, an international movement of life experience and spirituality that aims to build unity in all spheres. Celia is dedicated to Catholic, ecumenical and interfaith relations, and formerly worked in Leeds for several years as Inter Faith Officer at Churches Together in England and at the Vocations Office of the Catholic Diocese of Leeds.



The concept of kindness is very powerful, and another word for kindness is love. St John says in his Gospel: “So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them”. (1 Jn 4:16) These principles were frequently spoken about by Chiara Lubich, founder of Focolare. Chiara quoted Erich Fromm in his book *The Art of Loving*, a great psychologist of our times who said: “Our civilization very rarely seeks to learn the art of loving. Despite the desperate search for love, everything else is considered to be more important: success, prestige, money, power. We use almost all our energy in pursuit of these goals and almost none in learning the art of loving.”

The love that comes from God helps us to go beyond our own categories and limitations. It has characteristics that can help us be outward facing believers and active citizens.

The first characteristic is that this kind of love is not limited to family and friends, but reaches out to everyone, to people we like and those we don't, to people from our own country or other countries.

Veronica Bishop, a friend and member of the Focolare community in Leeds, describes her experience of this kind of love during the first Lockdown.

VERONICA's experience

I work as a chaplain to 70 elderly people living in independent living flats. Some are independent and some have care. Around half, from a number of different denominations, like to attend services in the communal areas, while the others have different beliefs and some no faith. In my role as chaplain, I have been able to share something of the spirituality of unity which I have received from the Focolare community. This focuses on Jesus's prayer to the Father, "May they all be one". This oneness can only be built where there is respect and love for all. During Lent 2020, I felt it would be a good opportunity to try to involve everyone in the ethos of the season.

Instead of focusing on giving something up, we had a Lenten tree in the lounge on which people could hang leaves each time they remembered to do something positive for someone else. This idea really took off among all and was a talking point. I was aware of an increase in acts of kindness around me. Soon the tree was full of leaves.

During the first part of Lockdown I worked remotely doing phone contacts. I was concerned that people would suffer in isolation. The tree was not, however, removed by carers as I thought it would be but was moved to the centre of the now empty lounge as a visible testimony to what matters in life for all who passed by.

As Lockdown continued the love and concern for one another which had grown in Lent was transferred to the garden which was sadly in a neglected state as the previous gardener had left. So much so that people didn't want to go out. One day a resident, who was not too strong himself, was moved to do something about it and started digging. Another seeing him struggle came out to help until many residents, including those using wheelchairs, began to join in pruning roses and dead heading. The garden was transformed and there was a joyful atmosphere where all were able to enjoy it in safety.

As it grew colder, we were able to meet indoors in groups of six but then once again people had to isolate in their flats and many were missing family and friends. I looked for yet another way of keeping people's spirits up and a friend suggested a thankfulness tree. As well as being invited to donate to the Food Bank, residents were sent a leaf on which to write down what they felt thankful for in life. On passing the tree they could then add their food donation and their leaf. Staff have also been intrigued by these different trees and added to them. A few staff and residents were visibly moved upon thinking of all that they are thankful for.

I feel that wherever we are, what really matters is that we try to be the first to love even when it is hard. Even a small act of kindness can have ripples that will travel far.



Secondly, this kind of love takes the initiative. It does not wait for others to take the first step. This is what Jesus did with us when he came on earth to give his life for us. To explore this kind of love, I would like to share the testimony of Rita Bersch, a Focolare member in Brazil.

RITA's experience

I am a physiotherapist and I work in the field of assistive technology. Assistive technology is an area of knowledge that supports people with disabilities in carrying out daily activities such as nutrition, hygiene, movement and even communication. Due to the coronavirus, people with severe respiratory problems, and consequently with communication problems, continued to arrive in hospitals.

In this local and global situation, together with a group of friends we decided to share our knowledge, precisely in order to help when speaking becomes impossible. In practice we created alternative communication tables, which are simple resources with graphic symbols that the patients can choose to express what they want to say. Pointing to one image, for example, the person can say: "I am out of breath", "I'm in pain", "I feel sick", "I am tired" or "I am afraid."

In the other group of images we put requests and questions including: "I need help", "Call the doctor", "Call my family", "How am I doing?" and created a grid with letters so they can write the word they want to say. There was also an outline of a human body so that, after having highlighted the symptom or pain, they can show the part where this symptom is felt and its intensity.

Considering that this epidemic is global and that these resources could help people around the world, we have translated it into different languages such as Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, German ... Everyone can access the archives of this material, print it, classify it and offer it to the health services of their cities. We are very happy to know that this resource has already been used in many hospitals, health centres and ambulances throughout Brazil. We have received reports of how the relationship between the patient and the healthcare staff is better informed, finding that this simple resource makes it possible to establish a new type of communication. And on the part of the patients, they are relieved of the tension of not being able to communicate.

This example shows that justice is not only about giving to each their own, as the definition goes, but can also be about each giving what they have for the sake of the human family. If we develop a culture of giving then overcoming the disastrous consequences of the coronavirus will not be a distant goal.

Thirdly, this kind of love considers the other person as oneself. All the great faith traditions share the Golden Rule, which says: "Do to others as you would have them to do you" (Luke 6:31). This means having respect for others, their identity, and their freedom. In interfaith work some people want to dialogue on points of faith and scripture, others want to evangelise their non-Christian neighbours, others want to work locally for the benefit of the community and so on. There is quite a gap between the evangelisers and dialoguers. When I worked at Churches Together in England I was encouraged by Jim Currin, our Evangelism officer, to write a Grove booklet in the evangelism series. I trusted in God's help to find a point of contact between these two camps. One day I was walking up Headingley Lane and the title popped into my mind: "Friendship and exchange with people of other Faiths: a context for witness and dialogue". Friendship (love,

kindness) puts our relationships on a healthy footing. Then we can sincerely share our beliefs and also work together. In the UK, the Focolare has a dialogue group with people of other religions.

Fourthly, this kind of love is unselfish and generous. Where there is this love within the family and in all areas of society, there is unity, in which we experience greater light and strength because of the presence of God, of love, among us.

So in these very challenging times, where we are all vulnerable to the virus, but appalling inequalities and poverty are growing, I would like to see more people who are well rooted in what nourishes them spiritually but are outward facing, active citizens, working together and making a difference. In a sermon recently, the priest spoke about a loving family who suffered with no home, no car or no job. He said:

"let's not be afraid of the virus, let's only be afraid of not loving".

Tapping into the silence of eternity in a world dominated by COVID

Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy, the BAME Mission and Ministry Enabler for Leicester Diocese, reflects on ecumenism and justice during the COVID crisis.

There is a temptation for us at this time of crisis to kind of retreat behind walls in order to boost our sense of integrity, commitment to truth and maybe even a sense of power. The temptation to retreat behind those walls is in order to impose the strength and the power of our argument. And yet, there is something at the heart of our vocation as people of faith be open to the world, to live for the world, not the world as it is rather the world as it could be or indeed the world as it should be.

My friend Matt, who lives here in Leicester, during Lockdown was reflecting about some of the things that he would want to go back to. This was at the earliest phase of the Lockdown where we all thought that it would be only a matter of weeks. He was on furlough with his children at home and thinking and projecting himself into a possible future and a hopeful future. What he chose to do was simply put a board outside his garden and wrote the sentence “When this is over, I am looking forward to...” and then left spaces for people in the community to come and fill in their own hopes about the future.

I thought how powerful a way of looking at life, when after the fear and the narrative of COVID spreading around the globe, and when after every other human being was a potential threat to our physical wellbeing, somehow creating a space, where people were given a space where they could echo something of their hopes.

The board was filled up quickly, echoing something of the desire that all of us have of projecting ourselves into a world that is not broken.

Ultimately, I think the deepest longing of all of us, whether we are people of faith or not, is to live in a world where our humanity is elevated. And where, in the best of cases, we try to elevate each other's humanity. How do we position ourselves as people of faith into that prophetic space, where we offer to the

world, a vision, of not doom and gloom, but the hope that is at the core at the heart of our faith?

I am reminded of the words of one of my favourite hymns, *Dear Lord and Father of Mankind*, which began as a poem. In one of my favourite sentences there is the description of Jesus kneeling on the banks of Galilee listening to the silence of eternity.

When we talk about the landscape of interfaith work, or indeed, ecumenism, often what happens is that there is a cacophony of whose narrative needs to be heard, a challenge of finding who has the more compelling argument. But perhaps we can choose to stand in that prophetic space, as we create spaces where our posture is that of listening and tuning into the silence of eternity. The cacophony and posturing fades and, as the poem describes, we experience the silence of eternity interpreted by love.

I am wondering what might it look like if I were to stop using words and just plug myself into the silence of eternity, recognising that there is a deeper truth that transcends the truth of my tradition, that transcends the truth of my culture, of my education, of my story and amplifies that deeper truth that resonates with echoes of that within each and every one of us? Perhaps then we may be able to embody that longing of a world, not as it is, but as it could be or indeed as it should be. Where values such as kindness, love, and tenderness become the drivers of how we are with ourselves and how we are with each other. Now, more than any time in history where we are facing the pandemic of COVID, the pandemic of an environment that is broken, the pandemic of racism and many other pandemics, is there some deeper wisdom we can draw on, as we plug into the silence of eternity, and try to interpret it through love for ourselves and for each other?

This article is based on Lusa's presentation at a Heartshift event hosted by Leeds Church Institute for the Leeds Festival of Kindness 2020. To listen to the podcast in full, please visit www.leicleeds.org

Where is the hope?

Liz Mitchell reflects on being a Christian teacher and learner during the pandemic.

At the start of the Lockdown, I was a Special Educational Needs Coordinator and was enjoying that. When the schools closed there was still that immediate need to support the children in the building and offer some consistency. I was sustained by the verse in Isaiah (43:19) that has long been an anchor verse for me professionally. It's the part where God says:

'Behold, I will do a new thing. Now it shall spring forth, Shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, And rivers in the desert'.

Drawing on that verse also reminded me of a time when I had just qualified to teach in a mainstream school. It was all consuming, all you live and breathe is your lesson and your classroom, and that was it. You have to put your faith in God's resourcing.

When all schools fully re-opened, I did not experience much change myself but friends in those settings experienced changing needs and shifting timetables. In education there is change every year, but during the pandemic, every day can be different. That was when I opted to do more virtual teaching. Being a virtual teacher focuses on one-to-one tuition.

I have actually enjoyed my own learning during Lockdown. The course I am studying moved from face-to-face sessions to online. It has been a learning curve but we are at a point now where people have adjusted. I have probably done more Continuing Professional Development and training than usual because I've been able to access more learning opportunities than ever before. I was able to attend a training programme online which happens every year, normally in London, over two days. This year I did not have the cost of a train fare or overnight accommodation.

Online access can bring people together and has created more opportunities to share and develop knowledge and experience.

A positive I found was seeing, during Lockdown 3, a delivery driver who had his young son at the side of him getting some experience and a sort of live learning. I thought that was brilliant and it reminded me of the days I sat in my mum's car when she was working.

The statement 'We might all be in the same storm, but we're not all in the same boat' rings true for me, I think the events in 2020 has highlighted that.

We had the incidence of the racial trauma which rippled across the world. For some it was a surprise yet for people like myself, coming from British West Indian parents who came to the UK as teenagers, it was not a big surprise. We had already had the Windrush scandal. This is added to the way that COVID has impacted some sections of the population more than others. I hope there have been lessons learned, but I guess only time will tell.

My hope has oddly been in the uncertainty and the quiet. I have found hope in this Bible verse from Corinthians, 'my strength is made perfect in weakness'. In those times of hopelessness and uncertainty, that is when I have been able to just listen and pause. Yet, we have got to remember that for some people, the Lockdowns have been distressing and traumatic. We have had to learn new ways to grieve. There has been a lot of learning and a lot of adjusting. It is definitely in those moments of actually taking time to be with God and to ask for that time to just reflect and pray, for that comfort.

Looking to the future, I am aware that sometimes hearing what God wants for us can be challenging. It is challenging not to get overwhelmed by everything that needs to be done. We need to remember that there is always going to be something that needs doing and challenges are inevitable. So, pray, pace yourself, and don't burn out.

Surviving and Thriving during COVID 19



Helen Reid, Director of LCI reflects on the experiences of church leaders during Lockdown and the loosening of COVID restrictions.

At the start of Lockdown, Leeds Church Institute and Leeds Citizens envisaged a series of intentional conversations with church leaders. The focus of these conversations was to understand responses to immediate needs and create opportunities for shared learning and support. It was based on the Christian Aid disaster response template that moves from reaction to development.

The summary and analysis of the conversations below includes the first national Lockdown and the period of reduced restrictions over the summer and early Autumn.

Questions and Decisions

During Lockdown, many leaders found themselves asking and being asked lots of questions about life in a pandemic, where is God in all this, how can we do church and more besides, and did not want to offer quick and superficial answers. In conversations, there was consensus that this was a time of learning and for applying faith understanding to a unique situation.

At this time, several leaders made the point that this intense questioning would not simply come to an end with the end of Lockdown: one drew allusions to the experience of Noah who was effectively in Lockdown in the ark, and as the flood came to an end

sent out the raven that did not come back and sent out the dove three times. There was not a neat end to the flood and one was not anticipated for the end of Lockdown either.

By the time churches were allowed to re-open for public worship, leaders did not comment so much on questions as the endless decisions they were having to make. Many found they were busier than ever and the work almost exhausting. Particular mention was made of the pressure of the sheer number of decisions that need to be made and living with an extended crisis situation. These challenges were depleting people emotionally and challenging them spiritually.

A time for spiritual growth

From the start of Lockdown, leaders were encouraging congregations to seek spiritual growth in difficult times, and one leader talked of encouraging congregants to 'keep the spiritual antennae up'. In this context, one leader made specific reference to Job's struggles. Job is well known for lament. Nonetheless, following the whole story of Job shows that challenging times are times to learn more about God.

At the time of opening up again, there did not seem to be any great concern for the spiritual health of churches. Indeed some leaders reported that people

were individually taking *more* responsibility for their spiritual growth and that of their immediate family and friends. This was seen in people praying together on the phone and more sharing of prayer resources on Facebook and in the church magazine.

Pressing pause

At the start of Lockdown many had a sense of pressing the pause button. This led some to reflection on Sabbath with its valuing of the need for rest, *selah* (the word used for 'pause' in the Psalms) and prayer.

There was appreciation that this Sabbath time had brought them fresh creativity through engagement with paintings, poetry and music.

Images around time suspended or a time of waiting that were found helpful included the disciples on Holy Saturday leading into Easter Sunday; and the sense of waiting that lies behind the joy Simeon experienced meeting the Christ child in the Temple.

As time went on, mention was made of being enriched by biblical study and verses that sustain contemplation and hope, as well as an appreciation of God's creation. For others, a focus on engaging with the presence of Christ within regardless of external circumstance, or delight in discovering that the present situation does not diminish the experience of 'enjoying God' was a source of spiritual strength. So it seems that while during Lockdown, resources for spiritual reflection focussed on the Lockdown experience, when restrictions were eased, it was more generalised.

Pastoral care

Leaders spoke of the way the pandemic put the already vulnerable under more pressure and made people more broadly aware of the fragility of life.

This re-emphasised the church's role in pastoral care, and the importance of deep listening to people as part of that. There were many comments on the social and emotional impact on individuals and families of loneliness and/or isolation; and that the restrictions on funeral practice will make bereavement and grief harder to process, affecting people in the longer term.

Offering and coordinating pastoral care was seen as a key part of the churches contribution to the well being

of people who belong to church congregations and in local communities more generally. Churches used a wide variety of ways to offer pastoral care, using every means possible; phone, Zoom, notes and cards, doorstep visits, garden visits, meeting in the park and walking together. While there were variations in methods of engagement that were allowed by COVID restrictions at different times, the commitment and imagination of approaches was constant throughout.

Cooperative approaches

As one leader commented, Lockdown 1.0 showed that we in the West are not invincible as many have assumed, and there is a clear challenge to our individualism especially as church leaders.

And amongst many of the leaders we spoke to, there was a sense that this was a time when people actively sought participation in church and to make a greater contribution to church.

During Lockdown and the easing of restrictions, leaders spoke of the involvement of a range of people in sharing leadership in online worship, a wide range of people involved in and receiving pastoral care; greater appreciation of what can be gained cooperatively in church groupings such as circuits or deaneries; and movements like Pax Christi, and Justice and Peace.

Alongside this, links with secular-based community groups increased during this time as there was a common desire to work together for the good of the local communities. Some churches were able to re-open their community building in the Autumn and enable use by local groups for the benefit of all in the area. It was a big step and extra work to open halls as well as the church for worship, and it showed the commitment of these congregations to their local community.

Techno-church to hybrid church

During Lockdown, all leaders were involved in offering online worship in some form; on Zoom, pre-recorded or streaming live on Facebook. Many reported the numbers online were greater than their usual in person congregations. It was recognised that this may have included a lot of existing church members just shopping around and taking a look at other churches with a consumerist mentality. At the same time it was seen as an opportunity for the

“unchurched” to engage, and understood in terms of mission or outreach.

Some churches found that people from different parts of the country and indeed the globe were tuning into their Zoom worship, which was enriching. One also commented that analytics from recorded services showed on an average Sunday 50 more people engaging than would have attended in person pre-COVID, and so the idea of an unknown congregation was emerging, which would not easily adapt to a local and pastoral approach to the congregation.

When church buildings were open for use again, most churches were offering worship in church buildings and continued to offer online worship as well. Although some were seeing a notable decline in numbers of people accessing online services compared to during Lockdown, for others it remained high. Also, there were still some congregations only online, mostly those who did not own the building and therefore did not have this as an option.

In church buildings, there was quite a variety of approaches adapting to regulations around COVID: some ran an online booking system for places because numbers must be restricted, others experimented with holding more than one service. The clear preference was for as many people as was safe to be together.

Being together and not singing together was hard for some congregations, and it caused reflection on how important they felt these to be. Interestingly although there was an affirmation in the first round of conversations that church is not about the church building there was still a strong pull to the building, with the sacraments, singing (still not permitted) and fellowship the most treasured aspects of being together that having a building makes possible.

A hybrid approach of online and in church worship was thought to be affecting understandings of congregation more strongly than either had individually.

Some leaders expressed concerns that there seemed to be two congregations forming - online and in church – and were seeking to develop ways for the two groups to engage so that the congregation would not become divided. There was a clear sense throughout of having to keep adapting and developing practice.

Prophetic mission

The witness of the church engaging in social action and

addressing particular needs was given a greater emphasis at this time. Pre-COVID issues were identified as on-going concerns which have been reinforced during Lockdown.

Particular issues identified were: addressing food poverty and economic inequality in our city and globally, the campaign for the Living Wage, unemployment and debt, and the situation of Asylum Seekers and Refugees.

In addition, the way that people in areas of greater social and economic deprivation suffered disproportionately was highlighted and it was felt that the churches need to respond directly to the specific implications of justice in a pandemic.

More than half of the church leaders spoke on the importance of diversity, equality and/or antiracism before the murder of George Floyd raised awareness globally. There were concerns that community work to strengthen relationships across difference was not happening in the pandemic, although for others the concern was challenging racism or embracing diversity within their congregations. After the emergence of a focus on the Black Lives Matter movement, nearly all commented on how they sought to respond to the greater awareness of racism that arose from it. There were different approaches to this including being a signatory to the letter that went to Leeds City Council, to convening different meetings and listening to individual stories. In terms of continuing to follow up this issue two leaders expressed the need for exploring partnership with Leeds City Council rather than just being a critical voice.

As well as some saying how much they were appreciating less traffic and pollution, and more bird song and time outdoors, the issue of caring for the natural world that God created impacted thinking. Although there has been a growing awareness of environmental issues in recent years, the exercising of our responsibility was felt to be more vital and urgent than ever. This was nurtured in people by the extra delight they have been taking in nature and how this has sustained them in difficult times.

In the Autumn, it was commented on that a range of people from the different congregations were taking action on these issues, and that in some cases, new people were getting involved in social action. In one church, for example, members of the congregation became involved in support for Asylum Seekers in a way that had not happened before the pandemic.

Elements of church life during COVID 19 in summary

- Questions to decisions
- Techno-church to hybrid church
- Spiritual growth
- Pastoral care
- Cooperative approaches
- Prophetic mission

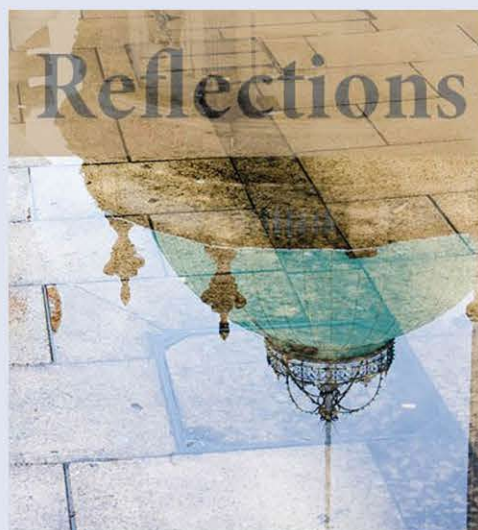
Contributors to this research

Fifteen conversation partners were selected to reflect the diversity in our Christian leadership in Leeds: women and men, different denominations and traditions, lay and ordained, and including ethnic and cultural diversity.

Conversations were initiated and reported by Paul Lancaster

(Hope for the Nations), Helen Reid and Rachel Walker (Leeds Church Institute).

Leeds Citizens partners to the process: Dr Ann Marie Mealey (Vice Chair of the Leeds Citizens Leadership Team), Revd Lindsey Pearson (Vicar at Leeds Citizens member church, St Mary's Beeston), Becky Howcroft (Leeds Citizens Community Organiser)



A Poet Theologian in Lockdown Leeds
Hannah Stone

Launch of "Reflections: A Poet Theologian in Lockdown Leeds" by Hannah Stone

Friday 5th March 2021, 1-2pm (online)

In April 2020 Hannah Stone was invited to become Poet Theologian in Virtual Residence at Leeds Church Institute, charged with writing an uplifting and empathetic weekly reflection on the impact the Covid-19 Lockdown was having on the communities of Leeds. Week by week, using her own and others' poetry as a medium, Hannah drew on religious ideas, poetry, art and music to map a route through this fast-changing and unpredictable experience. Join Hannah at the launch of this book based on Hannah's weekly reflections, an offer to Leeds as we enter the uncertain times of 2021.



This is a free event but booking is essential. Please email events@leedschurchinstitute.org or visit www.leedslitfest.co.uk to register.



Leeds Church Institute works through educational events, media, city engagement and a Learning Centre.

Email: events@leedschurchinstitute.org

Phone: 0113 245 4700
Address: 20 New Market Street, Leeds, LS1 6DG
Charity no. 220966



www.facebook.com/LCILeeds



www.twitter.com/LCILeeds

For more articles, and information about events, visit www.LCILeeds.org

Design: Daniel Ingram-Brown

Adobe Stock images: Sunflower (front cover) © wernerimages, Plant on Windowsill © dany, Plant on Table, © matthew laws/EyeEm, Prayer Tree © Tiffany, Pointing © Marina Andrejchenko, Desert © Galya Andrushko, Lake © Stefan Arendt, Virtual Church Images © Win, Wood Texture © Obsessively