



CT-eNews

May 2020

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Reflection of the Month: Thy Kingdom Come

The global prayer campaign Thy Kingdom Come is taking place from 21-31 May 2020. Here Brian Heasley, International Director of Prayer for 24-7 Prayer and Global Ambassador for Thy Kingdom Come, shares our [Reflection of the Month](#) for May 2020...



A recent study from the university of Copenhagen has found that there has been an amazing global rise in prayer in the last month. 24-7 Prayer's international website has seen more traffic in the last 8 weeks, than it did for all of 2019. We are also seeing incredible interest in people wanting to take part in this year's [Thy Kingdom Come](#) in many different ways.

In these times people are, increasingly, turning to prayer. As author of the study Jeanet Bentzen suggests, "The rise in prayer intensity supercedes what the world has seen for years."

It could appear that there is a storm afoot in this world; one that is wreaking havoc on all that we hold dear. Governments, institutions, social structures and our very way of life are undergoing a profound challenge.

Nations are closing borders. The economy is heading for crisis. Global travel has, possibly, been altered forever; people are staying at home.

And people are dying.

We are living in a world that is changing around us every day. The world is scared and doesn't know where to turn.

So, the world is falling to its knees in prayer.

The coronavirus pandemic has affected all of us. But in the midst of the darkness, a surprising and unexpected unity has arisen. Humanity is united in fear, worry and uncertainty.

Which, as the University of Copenhagen has seen, means the world is newly united in prayer.

And when faced with the reality of this critical and huge situation, a united prayer response is vital. We need to pray like we have never prayed before.

This is the time to invite the power of God to intervene; an opportunity for us to invite a Holy Kingdom to break in; to transform not just this current situation, but also to transform our hearts to love one another more deeply; to care for our global family in a new and radical way. Our prayer for Thy Kingdom Come, that people would come to know Jesus, is the greatest hope that we can offer the world at this time.

We believe that prayer can bring transformation. We believe that when two or more are gathered, Jesus dwells among us (Matthew 18: 20). We believe God partners with even our feeble, faithless, whispered prayers to bring about his Kingdom.

Why not get involved in Thy Kingdom Come, as part of the church's response at this time which is about the praying for people to come to know the love, hope, peace of Jesus?

Use some of our prayer resources or get involved in [our virtual prayer room](#) for this period.

This is a crucial time for the world to fall to its knees in prayer.

Brian Heasley is 24-7 Prayer's International Prayer Director. He and his wife Tracy pioneered the work of 24-7 Prayer in the party area of Ibiza, Spain, where they lived for 8 years. He is originally from Belfast, Northern Ireland, and now lives in England. Brian is global ambassador for Thy Kingdom Come. He is also a trustee of [Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#) a charity working in the area of freedom of religious belief.

Thy Kingdom Come radically revamps in the light of Covid-19

The global prayer campaign Thy Kingdom Come has launched new elements, including 'Prayer and Care', in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

A global prayer movement, characterised by mass public gatherings and worship, has been radically revamped due to Covid-19.

[Thy Kingdom Come](#) has been tailored to enable churches, families and individuals to pray and worship in their homes, through a suite of adapted resources, in line with social distancing guidelines.

Now in its fifth year, the movement – which began as a call to prayer for evangelisation within the Anglican Communion in the period from Ascension to Pentecost – now draws thousands of Christians together, across different denominations and traditions, to pray for their friends, family and neighbours to come to know the love of Jesus.

For the first time this year, Christians are not only encouraged to pray for others to know the love of Christ, but to also practically demonstrate their love and care through action during the 11 days, an initiative called '[Prayer and Care](#)'.



Resources available

In addition to this, the campaign has also developed several new 'Thy Kingdom Come despite Lockdown' resources to equip people to worship at home.

For churches, there is [an Upper Room resource - a virtual prayer room](#) where churches can take part in continuous prayer, alongside international prayer organisation 24/7 prayer. Inspired by the upper room experience in the book of Acts, where the early disciples gathered to pray, this timely resource encourages churches to go deeper in continuous prayer drawing on the richness of this historic tradition.

All key resources are available as digital downloads on the Thy Kingdom Come website. This includes [a Prayer Journal with Bible readings](#), reflections and care actions. It features the 'Father's Love' illustration from renowned artist Charlie Mackesy on the cover. The [Journey with Mary devotional](#) is also available with an accompanying podcast series.

For families, the [Digital Family Prayer Adventure Map](#) will aid children and young people explore prayer in a fun way.

The map is full of activities based on the daily themes of Thy Kingdom Come and comes to life through an augmented reality app with bonus digital content. This includes Bible story animations and video reflections from well-known Christians including Archbishop Justin Welby, CBeebies' presenter Gemma Hunt, Guvna B, Eye Can Talk author Jonathan Bryan, Author of The Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd Jones and Storyteller Philip Glassborow.

The printed map was originally intended to be distributed to half a million key stage 2 children across Church schools in England and Wales. A version was created so families could print the resource at home. There is also an accompanying podcast series and journal.

The campaign will also relaunch its award-winning app which will enable anyone with a smartphone to access the content and journey through the 11 days of prayer. The app has been translated into eight languages and last year was downloaded in almost 100 countries worldwide.



Encouragement from church leaders

In a video message, filmed in his kitchen, **Archbishop Justin Welby**, one of the Presidents of Churches Together in England, reflected on this year's changes due to COVID-19. He said:

"It seems we are having to reinvent everything this year. Thy Kingdom Come, which is normally a time of gathering and of being together, is now to be done at home. Well, praise God. That's where the church began - in people's homes, in people's houses and where in many parts of the world it still happens."

And in an encouragement to all, Archbishop Justin continued:

“Let us regain our confidence as we pray between Ascension and Pentecost this year, praying for the coming of the Spirit that all may know that Jesus Christ is risen, that Jesus Christ is Lord, And in His life and love, there is hope and peace, and call and purpose. May God bless you in your times of prayer, may you know His living presence in your home. Amen.”

On the importance of prayer at this time, **Cardinal Vincent Nichols**, Archbishop of Westminster, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and President of Churches Together in England, said:

“Prayer knows no boundaries or obstacles. Prayer cannot be ‘locked down’. Lord, send us your Holy Spirit and the freedom that is the Spirit’s gift.”

Last year, the prayer movement culminated into a moment of celebration at Trafalgar Square where thousands of Christians gathered. The presidents of Churches Together in England (CTE), led prayers on the day including His Eminence, **Archbishop Angaelos**, CTE President of the Orthodox Churches. He said:

“Since the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and the women who ministered to our Lord, in the Upper Room, the Church has been built on a spirit of fellowship and prayerful collaboration. There is no stronger place for us to be than “in one place with one accord” (Acts 2:1), and so too, as we share in this Thy Kingdom Come initiative, we stand together waiting the continued inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and His empowerment to always preach the message of hope and Life to our world.”

CTE’s Pentecostal President, **Pastor Agu Irukwu**, said: “At no time in living memory has the Church needed to pray as much as it does now, as we grapple with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am particularly grateful for the role ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ prayer movement plays in mobilising the Church to prayer.”

Methodist Youth President, **Thelma Commey**, who authored this year’s Methodist Prayer Journal, said: “I am really looking forward to being a part of this ecumenical movement. Although it is virtual, and we can’t gather together as we might wish, I believe that the Holy Spirit will guide us all and empower us through this journey of prayer together.”

Churches across the UK and beyond, who would normally be gearing up to organise special services and events are now finding innovative ways of adapting.

Different denominations are also getting ready to be involved, including the Methodist Church of Great Britain, the Catholic Church of England and Wales and the Church of Scotland.

Various countries worldwide are making preparation to take part in Thy Kingdom Come, in line with respective government guidance on social distancing. This includes South Africa, Canada, Australia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Korea, Argentina, Brazil and South Sudan to name a few.

[*View this story on our website...*](#)

"We need to keep on praying: prayer makes a difference" - message from CTE Presidents

In a series of video messages released on 6 May 2020, Presidents of Churches Together in England are encouraging us to keep praying prayers of hope, because prayer makes a difference.

"We pray out of love to a God who is love", explains **Archbishop Justin Welby**. **Pastor Agu Irukwu** encourages us: "we have a Father who hears our prayers and who answers our prayers. So please, keep on praying. Be encouraged that our prayers are not in vain."

On 22nd March 2020, Presidents of Churches Together in England called for a National Day of Prayer and Action, and the take-up was amazing, with the hashtag trending second on Twitter that evening. But we need to keep on praying.

"There are so many opportunities of acts of grace and kindness that we see the churches presenting to the world. But I'm also here to ask you to continue praying for our churches, for our Church, for our nation, for our world", says **Archbishop Angaelos**. **Cardinal Vincent Nichols** agrees: "It's God's work that we're involved in. And we need the help of God, and we need to pray for that continually." **Revd Dr Hugh Osgood** concludes: "Let's keep praying and be assured prayer does make a difference."

[See their video messages \(and a transcript of each\) on our website](#)

Prayer is the key - CTE Trustees support #PrayersOfHope

The Trustees of Churches Together in England have joined with our Presidents to encourage us all to keep praying prayers of hope.

"Prayer is indeed the key", says trustee **Elizabeth Joy**, who is a member of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church.

Recalling the words of Isaiah Chapter 40, trustee **Amanda Allchorn**, from the Baptist Union of Great Britain reminds us in her message that:

"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength,
they will soar on wings like eagles,
they will run and will not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint."



"We need to keep on praying: prayer makes a difference"



"Prayer is indeed the key"



Reflecting on the importance of continuing in prayer, our Chair of Trustees **Rowena Lovernance**, from Quakers in Britain (Religious Society of Friends), says: "Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of truth and love in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life."

[See the trustees' video messages on our website](#)

Prayers Of Hope in summary

- Christians across the country are invited to join together in prayer at 7 pm every Sunday evening
- CTE's #PrayersOfHope initiative was [launched on 22 March](#), following on from the National Day of Prayer and Action.
- [Free downloadable posters are available](#) to encourage #PrayersOfHope - perfect for sticking in your front window. There are even colour-in versions for children!
- A weekly [Prayers of Hope radio broadcast](#) is also available on Premier Christian Radio on Sundays at 7 pm.

More than 65 churches unite to sing a blessing over the UK

More than 65 churches, representing hundreds more, have come together to sing a blessing over our land in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic. The song The UK Blessing, released on Sunday 3rd May 2020, had a clear and uplifting message: while our buildings may be shut, the church is very much alive!



The diverse range of churches involved included those from Pentecostal, Catholic, Church of England, Coptic Orthodox, Baptist, Methodist and Salvation Army traditions – many of which are CTE Member Churches.

Listen to the song and see the video [on its YouTube page](#)

The organisers of the UK Blessing say "Standing together as one, our desire is that this song will fill you with hope and encourage you.

"But the church is not simply singing a blessing, each day we're looking to practically be a blessing. Many of the churches included in this song have assisted with supplying over 400,000 meals to the most vulnerable and isolated in our nation since COVID-19 lockdown began. This alongside phone calls to the isolated, pharmacy delivery drops and hot meals to the NHS frontline hospital staff."

“Our buildings may be closed but the church is very much alive!”

[For a full list of the churches involved in the UK Blessing see the full story on our website](#)

Loss and Hope - new bereavement support

Resources to help churches of all denominations support the bereaved have been developed by a coalition of organisations under the banner of [Loss and Hope](#).

Loss and Hope was launched before ‘lockdown’ on 5 March. However, as the coronavirus crisis has developed the need for the project’s resources has become even more pressing. It is a partnership of ataloss.org, [Care for the Family](#), [HOPE Together](#) and the [Church of England](#).



One of the CTE Presidents, **Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby** said: “Over the last few years in this country, there has been a real opening up of conversations about bereavement in our society... As a result, increasing numbers of people are likely to reach out for help to process loss – and this is presenting the Church with a special opportunity for outreach to our communities.”

Loss and Hope has [shared a short video](#) which has immediate guidance for anyone who is supporting someone who is recently bereaved.

Loss and Hope also draws on the comprehensive resources at ataloss.org.uk – a charity run by Revd Canon Yvonne Richmond Tulloch. Canon Tulloch cautions churches “We mustn’t fall into the trap of thinking we’ve got the subject covered just because we once had training. The conversation is evolving.”

To help churches offer relevant support, Loss and Hope is offering training to enable members to support bereaved individuals in their own communities. Based on the [“The Bereavement Journey”](#) course, which was originally developed by [HTB](#), people will get skilled up to guide people through the course either online, or face-to-face when that becomes possible once again. the sick and the elderly, providing foodbanks, debt advice and so much more.

[View this article on our website...](#)

Global disaster experience supports UK churches

[World Vision](#), the international Christian partnership, is using decades of expertise in disaster relief abroad to help families in the UK.

They have developed [the Little Pack of Hope](#) for church leaders to support their congregations and communities. The pack, which can be [downloaded as a pdf](#), includes a series of simple and engaging activities for children as well as an easy-to-follow live streaming guide to help with one of the technical challenges of lockdown.

“World Vision has 70 years’ experience of supporting communities around the world through disasters and emergencies – from the Ethiopian famine in 1983, to the Rwandan genocide and the Syrian refugee crisis. In the UK, we now find ourselves in similar circumstances,” says Ruth Tormey, Churches Lead at World Vision UK.



“We realised that the activities we use in refugee camps and other emergency situations can now be used here. Our prayer is that the Little Pack of Hope will bless churches, and help children, families and communities feel connected, safe and supported at this time.”

World Vision, one of CTE’s [Bodies in Association](#), is also [working globally](#) with more than 7,000 faith leaders in 80 countries to combat the spread and effects of Covid19. Areas of particular concern for the charity’s health experts include Africa, the conflict-affected Middle East and refugee and migrant populations caused by Venezuela’s economic crisis and the expulsion of Myanmar’s Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh.

[View this story on our website...](#)

Churches and Coronavirus – your stories

Thank you to everyone who sent us stories of how you are working together ecumenically in your local areas. Keep up your amazing work!

Here are links to a couple which we have shared on the CTE website:

[Website launched to help Norfolk Christians respond to Covid-19](#)

[Praying and partnering with our local police](#)

We would like to share more examples of inspiring ecumenical events and initiatives which are happening during the coronavirus crisis in the next CTe-News. Please send them to [Sarah Ball by email](#) by Monday 8 June.

CTE Coronavirus Hub

If you are looking for guidance, resources or inspiration for your church during this difficult time then visit our Coronavirus Hub. We’d like to draw your attention to the following which feature links to information from our member churches:

[Missional and Theological reflections](#) compiled by CTE’s Principal Officer for Evangelism and Mission, Rev Dr Ben Aldous

[Help developing social media for your church](#)

[Mental health and wellbeing resources](#)

And finally...

Don't miss: Ecumenical journeys – perspectives from two long-serving leaders as they leave their posts



[The Four Hs – honesty, humility, humour and hope - a reflection by Canon John O'Toole.](#)



[Building bridges in Birmingham for 14 years – an interview with Birmingham Churches Together Ecumenical Development Officer, Colin Marsh.](#)

New research project wants to hear the experience of converts to Christianity

The Hyphen Project at The University of Birmingham is aiming to explore the ways that converts to Christianity balance their religious and cultural identities during times of major life change. The purpose is to create a resource to help churches better understand and support their congregations. [Read more...](#)

Housing Justice seeks new trustees

Housing Justice is an ecumenical Christian charity whose mission is to mobilise Christian action on homelessness and housing need, through love, justice, advocacy and nurture. They are currently looking to recruit new trustees to join their Board. [Read more...](#)

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