

## On the Covid Frontline

*This comes from Nigel Beeton, who works in Radiology in a hospital in the East of England, and who is one of the resident poets on Parish Pump!*

*During this time of the coronavirus crisis, he is writing a weekly diary of his life at the hospital*

There was a group of my staff just standing in the waiting area outside one of the CT scanning rooms the other day. I opened my mouth to speak but one of them caught my eye and put his gloved finger in front of his visor in the universally understood bid to be silent, understood despite the fact that his lips were separated from his finger by the visor and a face mask. They don't often shush their boss, so I very obediently closed my mouth again.

The door to the room opened, and an elderly patient appeared, accompanied by another radiographer.

"Happy Birthday Mabel!" everyone chorused (I've changed her name to protect her confidentiality.)

Happy Birthday to you,

Happy Birthday to you!

Happy Birthday, dear Mabel,

Happy Birthday to you!

Even I joined in. I'm not sure if my singing voice is up to much, but my sentiments were genuine. I hoped she'd have a good birthday.

We all rounded off the melody with a round of applause, latex gloves make a strange popping noise if you clap while wearing them.

Dear Mabel loved it. She was clearly surprised and taken aback by the sight of half a dozen staff in PPE singing 'Happy Birthday' to her, but the experience had transformed an alien world of CT scanners and PPE into a familiar one of birthday wishes and a well-known song. "Oh, thank you everyone, you're all so kind; my family can't be with me today. Usually they come for my birthday."

Mabel, in her eighties, was self-isolating due to her age, but still living independently at home. We check dates of birth as part of ensuring that we are doing the right thing for the right patient, and so my colleague had clocked that today was her birthday. Having got to know her well enough during the setting up stage to be happy that she wouldn't mind, he conspired with his colleagues while watching the scanner do its stuff.

The coronavirus may be keeping us separated from one another, but it is spurring us all on to make greater efforts to be connected to one another, to show our humanity towards one another. Someone bought us lunch today. It appeared in pots by our gate, and we sat down and enjoyed a meal of restaurant quality food. Our friends had supported a local restaurant which, in its hour of need has branched out



into 'meals on wheels' and shown us such love and concern that a tear was brought to my eye.

I hope and pray that the coronavirus will soon fade into history. But I pray equally fervently that its legacy of connected humanity will last for many, many years to come.

## **Blessed are the truth-tellers**

*By the Rev Peter Crumpler*

*The Rev Peter Crumpler is a Church of England priest in St Albans, Herts, UK, and a former communications director with the CofE.*

ITV News journalist and presenter Julie Etchingham, a practising Christian, has defended the role played by journalists during the Coronavirus pandemic. She told the Christians in Media website, "Reporters are coming in for a lot of flack for the questions they are asking government. But what else are we for? We all get that this is a crisis like no other; that few in government have ever had to navigate such a challenge.

"But, if we're still attempting to function as a democracy in the face of this, then scrutiny is clearly crucial. Many in our frontline services and the wider public are demanding answers. We are there on their behalf. We don't always get it right. This isn't a moment to trip people up, but urgently to get to the truth."



As a Christian who has worked in communications for around 50 years, I strongly support Julie Etchingham's view. Now is the time for truth and accuracy to be at the centre of all our communications.

So, yes, we need to be praying for and supporting the front-line health service staff, the public health experts, the scientists researching vaccines to combat the virus, and the key workers keeping our societies running.

But we also need to be praying for and supporting the men and women working in and with the media to publish, upload, broadcast and distribute the most accurate information, without spin or distortion.

So here is a prayer for the media in these challenging days.

*Loving God,*

*We pray for everyone working in and with media in these challenging times.*

*Encourage all who seek to explain and interpret the fast-changing world around us.*

*Embolden the truth-tellers, truth-seekers and fact-checkers.*

*Promote coverage that builds our shared humanity and where everyone has a voice.*

*Bring clarity where there is confusion*

*Bring knowledge where there is speculation*

*Bring wisdom and insight when the way ahead seems unclear.*

*And bring us all to a knowledge of truth that sets us free, and helps keep us safe.*

*In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

*Amen*

## Fear is in the air – and it is a particular kind of fear

*Mark Greene, the Executive Director of London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, considers the fear of death – and our defence. For more, please visit <https://www.licc.org.uk>*

Amidst the daily readjustments, the working from home, the scurry for loo paper and pasta, the calls to relatives, and the deep concern for our livelihoods, the underlying fear that chills the nation is a fear for our very lives. Our delusions of invulnerability have been shattered.

For the first time since the threat of nuclear annihilation hung over the UK in the 60s, millions of us are worried about dying, or worried about someone else dying. Suddenly, the question that door-knocking Christian evangelists and Jehovah's Witnesses used to ask, 'if you were to die tonight, where would you go?' has a fresh pertinence.

In reality, we ourselves may be in need of reassurance.

Death has been firmly off the evangelistic and teaching agenda for some while. Yes, we have all heard sermons on death at funerals, but I suspect that on such occasions many of us are too busy grieving to fully take in the glorious truths of the future we have in Christ. Physical death has a sting – it is an enemy. Jesus weeps at the tomb of Lazarus, but Jesus also raises him to life – a foretaste of the day when He will raise all who are His to eternal life in a transformed body.

Of course, there are many ways we can serve our neighbours and co-workers – offering practical help, sharing supplies, calling – but one of the most powerful is to be a non-anxious, non-fearful presence, and to seek ways to share how our peace flows from our assurance of eternal life in Christ.

Out of love, Christ gave His life that we might live. And it is that perfect love that drives out fear (1 John 4:18), and empowers us to take risks for others.

In dangerous times, army chaplains tell me, people are much more open to offers of prayer, much more open to phrases like, 'bless you', or 'praying for you'.

Workplace groups testify to the same reality: co-workers in trouble are quicker to ask for prayer – *if* they know it's on offer.

So I am praying, as David did, that the Lord would be your shield (Psalm 18:2), your very present help in this time of trouble, and a fountain of hope and shalom to others.



Source: Parish Pump

