



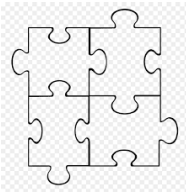
Flame Trust

- education
- supporting disadvantaged people and the voiceless
- local and worldwide community involvement
- mentoring and social development in a variety of cultures and situations
- tours and events bringing insight and challenge to audiences in the UK and overseas

News & Prayer Update Autumn 2020

Rev Partner

I am told that there has been a marked increase in the sales of Jigsaws during the past six months. Apparently many folk have been enjoying this simple pursuit to relieve boredom and fill time. However, a friend of mine recently posted a message online that gives a new twist to the original jigsaw. He purchased a puzzle where the picture on the box did NOT represent the completed puzzle, but served to provide a view looking backwards. The puzzle requires skill and imagination as you dream of what the picture will look like...going forward. The skill is to take the element from the 'backward' look as on the box, and imagine what the picture is like going forward.



A brilliant analogy methinks of where we are at in the Autumn of 2020. I won't waste words that we have already digested from so many sources about 'unprecedented times', but I would want to say that we have to adopt some re-imagination as we go forward.

Church and fellowship is going to be very different – at least for the foreseeable future - and the communities that will survive will be those who are able to take the foundations and proven experiences of the past and build something different for the future. Quite a challenge, requiring spirit-led decision making and wisdom endued from above. It requires a halt on the desire to keep looking back and wishing everything was as it used to be. It demands re-invigorated spiritual energy to believe that the future will be different but just as fruitful if we

embrace new methodology and application, without deserting our beliefs and confidence in doctrine.

Here at Flame, as small as we are, we have tried to adapt to this new season. This has included using technology in a different way - working from home, not to mention the re-scheduling of projects and events and 'trimming the sails' as many of our partners and supporters have experienced their own personal challenges. We have seen some of our long term partners called home - some of whom have been with me on my ministry journey since I came into Christian ministry way back in 1970.

Yet this is a new season, and along with the challenge has come new opportunity to be salt and light and make a difference in a world which is in pain and confusion. Never have I sensed a deeper search for answers to questions that have been muffled in better times, and I suddenly find myself in the middle of conversations and explanations with people whom I have never met before - most of whom would be 'unchurched' - yet are prompted to ask meaningful questions about

purpose, identity and spirituality because of the 'whys and wherefores' of 2020.

It would take too long to explain and document those encounters, but they have emerged from my work with students and staff at the Academies, people in shops and on the street, service providers at all levels and indeed decision makers who are charged with the responsibility of providing pathways for the future.

But here are a few insights and experiences:

1. The exam result fiasco did prompt my writing to the Times and local newspapers as I considered that trusting an inaccurate algorithm was like playing Russian roulette with the lives and destinies of so many of our young people. I have realised that leadership at the level one would expect has been profoundly disappointing, and at the risk of straying into the political arena, it seems to me that we have too many juniors making big decisions instead of the maturity and experience of those who were born earlier.

Wisdom comes from a mix of both, with good listening and

understanding thrown into the mix....and we know where that comes from! My writing and protest prompted some excellent discussion and opportunity.

2. As I write, **we are re-imagining our Chaplaincy work.** This season has prompted a raft of new issues and exposed the vulnerability of many of our young people and indeed adults. Domestic abuse has increased, and personal insecurity is palpable in so many lives. Gerry Denston, who we support as an extension of our ministry, is currently liaising with Heads of Schools and our Chaplains to re-assess and develop a new strategy as we go forward. Interestingly enough, one Head of School is seeking our help as students return, and that one person is expressing the needs of many others.

Please pray that Gerry, and those of us involved in the support and delivery structures might know God's wisdom and encouragement for such a time as this.

3. I have been speaking at a number of Christian events and services, delivering messages via

'Zoom'. Not being in the fast lane of technology, I did at first find this quite a challenge and have to say that staring at yourself whilst delivering an address is not always a blessing. We certainly need to be aware of those untidy bookshelves! I recorded a message for the parents and carers of our new intake of students – explaining what is meant by Christian ethos - and I also addressed our staff on their return, underscoring the principle of what is good, right and true – our Christian values. On a lighter note, a close colleague of mine did confess to nodding off to sleep in a Zoom prayer meeting which was immediately picked up by the other participants and it was only through a hasty text message alert that his eye lids were encouraged to open. Lovely!

SO IN ALL OF THESE NEW OPPORTUNITIES, PLEASE PRAY THAT I MIGHT KNOW GOD'S WISDOM IN ALL THAT IS PLANNED OVER THESE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

Visit www.flametrust.org

for the latest news, event information and details on how to make a donation online



**NOW SOME SNIPPETS OF NEWS
FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND
PRAYER INPUT**



Time Out has been postponed and is now re-scheduled for 2021: Sunday February 28th – Thursday March 4th.

Given the announcement from the Health Secretary this morning (9 September), this is the right decision, but it is worth adding that we have also reserved the traditional dates for Time Out just in case the measures that are currently in place that militate against gathering together for expressions of worship and fellowship, are still in place. Those dates are Monday 11th October – Friday 15th October 2021, and the Redcliffe Hotel has agreed to hold these as a back-up so that we can join together for our 20th celebratory event.



A big thank you to those of you who have agreed with the wisdom of this decision and we are VERY encouraged with the number of folk who have already transferred their booking to the



new dates in February. Rev. David Coffey (*left*) has agreed to do the Bible readings and we anticipate a time of encouragement and blessing as we 're-imagine the future'.

If you have not booked, do consider joining us and be assured, every measure will be taken to keep you safe and well.

(It is also worth mentioning that the hotel is currently for sale, but an offer is not expected to materialise in the foreseeable future. Sadly we are witnessing the demise of many hotel establishments in Devon at this time. We have every assurance that the standard of service and hospitality will not be compromised by the private owner's intention to say goodbye to his family business).



The Playground Project in Romania has had to be re-scheduled. Covid cases in Romania have been rising and we had to postpone Calin's visit in the Spring. However, he is now scheduled to be there – even as you read this letter – and contacts with the main players have been established, with some new contacts and expressions of interest.



We were a little conservative in our original budget estimates but we shall have a clearer picture of costs in a few weeks' time.

However, we have been blessed to discover a company that manufactures outdoor playground equipment for children and young adults with learning and physical challenges just 60 miles away from the site, and one of the managers was born in the town where the home is sited.



Please pray that this synergy and interest will deliver well, and that Calin and Florin, the Director of the Home, will be able to make good progress.

Florin Put, Home Director (left) with Calin Rezmuves

Please consider whether this is something that you could support. We would be delighted if you were able to 'partner' with us in this project. Details of how to support the project are on the Response Form.

The new office base at Zoar Methodist Church

is established but has not been used for 5 months. Jackie has been working from home. Sadly, we trusted and paid the Post Office to re-direct our mail to the new Post Box at the church and they failed miserably. Three times we discovered that mail, including bookings for Time Out and donations, had been pushed through the redundant letter box in the old building in Dudley, which was moth-balled by the new owner. Royal Mail was very 'cavalier' about its mistake and it took a large measure of papal persistence to achieve an apology and more attention to detail in the delivery of an appropriate service.



Apologies to those of you who waited a long time for replies, letters of thanks and confirmation of bookings. As I write, Jackie is now back at her desk, but juggling the demands of her home and family who are now back at school and college.

Pray for her in all of the challenge of keeping Flame (and me!) on track, and keeping safe in her home environment.

A few health issues of late.

Persistent 'light headedness' has been a feature of the past few months and it may be linked to the occluded artery in the neck, although the consultant has said that the other three are allowing excellent blood flow. I have therefore been advised to see a cardiologist as, from time to time, the heart rhythm is irregular and this can cause light headedness. (My brother is being treated for arrhythmia). I am also going to a balance clinic to check out whether the inner ear is the problem. Apparently, this type of symptom is extremely difficult to diagnose, so if you have any wisdom, replies on a postcard please! ***Seriously, some prayer into this would be appreciated as it can be really unsettling although I am told (again) by some, that this is often a symptom of 'maturity'.***

I've spent a little more time in the garden during lockdown,

and am now benefitting from fresh tomatoes, beans, lettuce and wonderful harvest of grapes. I've also been continuing with the removal of stored documentation, but this has taken far more time than I anticipated as I could not resist looking at letters that I received

and sent, way back as far as the mid seventies. The carbon copies...(remember those?) were still clearly visible.

I didn't manage to get away for a complete break but did try on a couple of occasions, only to be thwarted by a tightening of the lockdown or the need for a travel certificate which would have needed a private Covid test. Costa Dudley has been my lot, but no real complaints.

As I draw to a close, I would want to say that the extra time at base, with time to think, pray, muse and meditate, has been advantageous in so many ways.

Living a very full life often pre-empted the opportunity to think more deeply and indeed constructively. This re-imagining the future has been high on my personal agenda, recognising that life is a gift from God which we must treat with gratitude and respect. The reminder that this gift is fragile and can easily be threatened by a mysterious virus that was unheard of twelve months ago is a salient reminder of our responsibility to live life to the full, yet with deep respect and love for the Creator, and those with whom we have relationships.

Consequently, I have re-evaluated my stewardship of time and resources, making sure that the weight of work and witness, that has always been the hallmark of my Christian commitment, can continue on other shoulders as and when that time comes. Discussions with my Board members has included conversations about the longevity of Flame should the founder be called home, supporting mission and personnel, committed to the infectious nature of the Good News of Jesus Christ, not that we have unlimited financial resources, but we do have opportunities for other encouragement. I would love to think that Flame's vision will outlive me!

I have discovered that these are often conversations that are avoided, even in Christian organisations and mission agencies, yet they are critically important, if the support of Christian ministry is to play an important role in our re-imagined future.

And in that context, can I thank so many of you who give regularly to Flame's ministry. We have lost support in this pandemic from those who have been called home, but also

because of the pressures that have come through the lockdown. Thank you to those of you who support us so faithfully and indeed to those who have increased their giving at this time, recognising the specific pressures that this season has brought.

We have no plans for expansion, but we do want to continue with the responsibilities and opportunity which we know God has given to us. Thank you for your prayerful enabling and I am certainly excited about being part of Flame's re-imagined future for whatever time God allows.

I am attaching a response form for you to use if you think appropriate, and should you require extra detail of any of Flame's activity, please contact Jackie at the office on:

**e: jackie@flametrust.org
t: 01384 232786**

We do try to keep the website as current as possible and when there is 'breaking news' or updates, it is always featured on the website.

The prayer fuel area is also well visited and is a valuable resource and encouragement as we go forward together with all the blessing and challenge that life brings.

May God bless you and keep you safe and well in these days,

With love and appreciation,



Dave



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