

## SUNDAY 23RD AUGUST TRINITY 10

### Thought for the Week:

"There is no them, only us - the transforming potential of the Gospel."



I can remember having a conversation with one of our Church members when we first started out on the journey of looking at what it might mean to be an "Inclusive Church" nearly two years ago now, and I remember their comment to me, which was along the lines of, "why do we have to do all this?" "In fact, I won't, because I believe we are already an inclusive and welcoming community," and that person then walked away. And in fairness to that person's conviction, they never attended any of the talks or discussions we had over the next two years about Inclusive Church with all its different aspects and struggles in many forms.

And I remember my own feelings at the time where, on the one hand, you don't know what to say and you're left feeling very inadequate. And at the same time, on the other hand, you know something important is somehow lacking or missing if you simply agree and so go along with that person's point of view, but you can't necessarily put your finger on it or therefore put it into actual words.

Have you ever had that feeling? You're just left with the memory of this unspoken strong raw emotion and it can stay with you for a long time. And so it stayed with me. And then, a few days ago, almost randomly, I came across a video on YouTube from a Messianic Jewish organisation I follow called "One for Israel." The video was entitled simply, the "Arabs are the enemy!"

I was shocked. This was from an organisation I knew was Jewish but which I thought simply sought to try and reach out to fellow Jewish people, mainly within Israel, but also around the world, with the Good News of Jesus. What were they doing turning on and attacking the Arabic community? I knew, all too well, there is pretty much always a deep underlying tension between Jewish people and Arabic people in Israel whenever we have been there, it can be even between Jewish Christian and Arabic Christian people sometimes, but even so. This had gone too far. I felt let down. Disappointed. My faith and joy in so much of what this organisation stood for was rocked.

How easy it is to come to premature judgements. It would have been so easy for me to simply have dismissed it, and thank goodness I chose not to. For this twenty minute video tells the story of a remarkable young lady, Anastasia Okhrimenko who was brought up in a strict religious Jewish family in one of the controversial Israeli settlement villages of the West Bank. She was brought up, from a very early age, to fear and even to hate the Arabic people that surrounded her in fear that they hated her. Hence, the title she chose for her talk, the “Arabs are the enemy!”

But from this strict upbringing, and through never giving up on God, even though she had given up on her then experience of her religion, she was not only led eventually to a belief and faith in Yeshua (the Jewish name for Jesus – which we translate as Joshua), she was also led to attending a Bible College in Israel, near Netanya on the Israel coast, and there to share in learning, worship, and prayer with both other Jewish believers but also Arabic Christian believers as well. And her years of fear and hatred melted away and she came to see not only her fellow Arabic students as Christian brothers and sisters but all Arabic people as her brothers and sisters, because of her new found faith and belief in Yeshua – Jesus, whether they saw her as a ‘sister,’ or not.



Anastasia now works in the Media Department of “One for Israel” making videos both for Jewish and Arabic communities, and her life, in her own words, is completely changed.

So what was the turning point for Anastasia? Like for many Jewish people, particularly religious Jewish people it is the two key things of discovering you can have a personal relationship with God in prayer, a God who is close, who is intimate not remote. And this is then re-inforced and underlined by secondly, the discovery that God so wants to have this relationship with each one of us that He was and is willing to embrace all of our pain and suffering by fulfilling the Jewish prophecy of Isaiah ch 53. For Anastasia, without any previous experience of Christianity and without having ever read the New Testament she knew that Isaiah ch 53 was talking to her about Yesua – Jesus and how He wanted to draw close to her in a meaningful and such a profound way that it changed how she wanted to live her life and see things.



I believe we can all approach the question of Inclusion like the Church member I mentioned at the beginning, that we are all 'nice' people and therefore try to do the 'right' thing, which essentially is "do no harm." And so we see Inclusion very much from a modern and liberal perspective, about simply "including" rather than "excluding" those who "maybe are 'different' to us."

What Anastasia offers us is a narrower but much more exciting and challenging perspective, which is to recognise that we all have had times of prejudice or discrimination, even in the moment you first saw the title of her video – we all form judgements, however 'Christian,' or otherwise, we try to be. What Anastasia shows us is that, by bringing these judgements and prejudices not only to Isaiah 53, but to the person she and we believe fulfils that prophecy by dying a prophetic death on the Cross, for not only my failings and judgements, but for all the failings, judgements and prejudice of the world, well then my heart, our hearts can be melted, and those melted hearts, which previously would have seen and called others 'different' or 'them,' I can now see as my brother and my sister, even if they cannot see me as such, but in this we are able to glimpse a bigger perspective, a 'godly' perspective, and truly a hope for a transformed world.



This is what I wish I had been able to see more clearly and therefore articulate when I was in conversation two years ago with that Church member – the lost opportunity for me, for him, for her to experience our own transformation and therefore the lost opportunity to see our neighbour, our brother, our sister at a new and deeper level, all because we had held back from embracing the Cross of Yeshua-Jesus.

We may not have such a dramatic story to share as Anastasia, for a start few of us would have been born into such a stark religious experience. But we will all have our own story to tell and therefore our own memories, which we may want to spend a few moments sharing in light of her story with the person of Jesus of the Cross. My hope, my prayer is that if you do, you too will find the welcome and the acceptance, and the love that Anastasia has so clearly found.

If you would like to watch Anastasia's speech to the Prayer Convention where she delivered her testimony under the title that prompted this "thought for the Week" – simply click: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2uBOUnJCEc>

Have a good week and may we all see with Jesus' eyes our brother, our sister.

Matt Thomson

N.B. If you would like to listen to a really good song that encapsulates so much of what we have been looking at please see the very pertinent and topical song by Kirk Franklin and friends "We all Bleed the Same" – simply click:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVKuA1s5I3o>



New Creation  
Building Better Community

[Live Stream Church for Sunday:](#)  
["NEW Church for a NEW Society -](#)  
[Two Churches as ONE" - 10.30am:](#)



THIS Sunday we will be in Congresbury for the last in our three-week series exploration some of the values we have signed up to as a NEW Church.

This week we are going to look at the theme of: "There is no longer them, only US: the transforming potential of the Gospel."

So please join us for a simple service that will seek to include those at home as well as those who physically attend. The service will last approximately fifty minutes.

You can access the Service by joining us in church or LIVE via the "New Creation Facebook Page" : <https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/> or catch up later via the New Creation website: <http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/> or New Creation YouTube Channel : <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXn34qIXBeOAmO1M1KbBw/>

**PLUS**

[Details of How to share in an Agape Feast at Home:](#)

Some people have kindly asked if they can share in an Agape Meal at Home either after the Live Stream service on a Sunday morning or at some other point during the week?

Kirsty has kindly put a link to the words we have used during the various times we have shared similar meals as part of the Service on a Sunday on the New Creation website: <http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/> )



Matt Thomson

**IMPORTANT NEW UPDATE** on the opening of Church Buildings for Worship and Occasional Offices – FOLLOWING THE Church of England’s ANNOUNCEMENT Thurs 13<sup>th</sup> Aug –



As from **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August** Ministers leading or preaching during the service are no longer required to wear a facemask (except while distributing Communion) obviously maintaining social distancing. This will be very helpful for all those who have found it difficult to lip read or hear clearly what is being said both at home via the Livestream and physically in Church.

For the rest of the time Ministers and the physical congregation will need to follow the Guidelines of the 8<sup>th</sup> Aug and so continue to wear a mask while physically in the Church Building and unless social distancing is able to be observed afterwards.

Otherwise, the additional guidelines continue to apply, here are a few brief highlights of something of what the rest of a physical Church experience might feel like:

- Wearing a facemask while in church is mandatory (you may unloop one side to receive communion)
- People need to arrive and will need to be admitted by a Warden keeping two metres apart
- A 21 Day Register of those attending is required by Track and Trace.
- Sanitising gel etc will be available
- People will be directed to their seats and people are asked to seat in ‘households’ of one or more people, two meters apart.
- Paper Orders of Service are restricted, and so we will be using the screen. We understand some people find it difficult to read from the screen, please speak to a warden if you require a different format.
- Unfortunately, we are not permitted to share in congregational singing for the time being but there will be music in various forms as part of the service.
- Holy Communion will be a part of the Service but will be optional for those who wish to receive it. Communion will be in the form of Bread only at present.
- Children and young people are very much welcome at the service. However, the Children’s Corner itself in both Churches needs to be closed at the moment. If you could bring some activity for your young person with you that would be very much appreciated.
- Although we are not able to offer refreshments, we hope to have ten minutes at the end of the service to be outside, socially distanced, in order to be able to socialise and catch up with one another each week (weather permitting).
- The service is expected to last for approximately fifty minutes, and we will be joined throughout by those Online.
- By coming to the service, you are consenting that your image may appear online.

There will be a copy of these details also on the website.

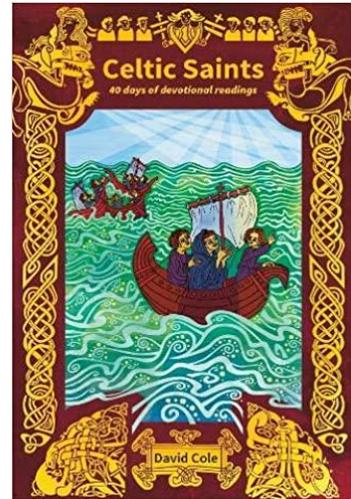
With thanks to the Wardens and others who have put in so much work to make this new addition to our worship life possible.

Matt Thomson

**Daily Blog – the Next “Forty Days” – “Forty Days of inspiration from the Celtic Saints” with David Cole:**

The Daily Blog has turned a chapter. After spending “forty days with the Holy Spirit,” we are now going to look at the inspiration we can draw from the lives of others, in this case the Celtic Saints.

Both our Church communities have well-known Celtic roots – Congresbury with St Congar and Banwell with St Patrick, and the lives of these men and women of faith are often enlightening, encouraging, and relevant to the lives we live today, especially as we too emerge into a NEW community and NEW Society.



As an inspiration, and to form the framework for the Blog, the team will be drawing on the work of David Cole (himself a member of the Community of St Hilda and St Aidan) who has shared a short biographical story of each saint, a Bible reading, and an application to everyday life for each day.

So, why not start on the next chapter of our journey together by following the Blog each day (each video is approximately five minutes) or by playing ‘catch up’ once or twice a week?

You can access the “Daily Blog” either by looking up the “New Creation Facebook Page”:

<https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/> , the New Creation website:

<http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/> or the New Creation YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXn34qIXBeOAmO1M1KbBw/>

Or you can purchase David Cole’s book for yourself from Eden or Amazon, or via Amazon Kindle.

Thank you to the Team for all their hard work.

Matt Thomson

**A message of thanks from Beth Ashton-Hilton– Treasurer for St. Andrew’s, Congresbury.**

I just want to THANK our members for their amazing generosity in responding to recent financial appeals. Our income and expenditure overall have both dropped by about 20% this year. Although we have lost several donors this year and we have been affected financially by the months of lockdown, income has been supported by so many members giving by standing order or diligently sending their offerings to me by post or hand delivery. In addition, our appeal for £720 to cover the cost of Bibles for 2020’s year six leavers actually

left us with over £400 in the fund toward \*next\* Bibles for 2021! Following that request we were a little reluctant to ask again for donations, this time to enable us to upgrade our sound system. I am delighted (and humbled) to be able to tell you that we have exceeded the immediate need of £700 by receiving to date a total of £900. We are already aware that the worship laptop will need to be upgraded and we would like to add several tablets and possibly related software to dedicate to the use of our vision impaired members, so any further donations to that fund will be gratefully received and held for those purchases in the near future.

~ Beth Ashton-Hilton, Treasure(r), St Andrew's Congresbury

Anyone wishing to contribute toward the Sound System in Congresbury can do so in any of the following ways:

- Cash in an envelope, with your name on it please
- Cheque payable to "St Andrew Congresbury PCC"
- BACS:
  - Account name: St Andrew Congresbury PCC
  - Sort code: 60 23 32
  - Account number: 72280484
  - Reference: Church Sound System

As long as we know who the donation is from, if you have a Gift Aid form on file with your Church, your donation will automatically be Gift Aided and the amount claimed added to the Sound System fund.

Cash and cheques can either be sent/delivered to me (Beth Ashton-Hilton) at 14 Weetwood Road, Congresbury BS49 5BN, given to your Church @ Home coordinator to be relayed to me, or, if you have any questions or need any help – just contact Beth, Matt or Kirsty.

Matt Thomson

### [Please continue to pray for Bishop Peter Hancock and for his family:](#)

As we announced last week, Bishop Peter was diagnosed with a particularly aggressive form of Leukaemia and has begun treatment in hospital straight away. Please pray for him, and for his family at the time. He is likely to be stepping back from his role as figurehead of the Diocese for some time and so please pray also for Bishop Ruth, for Howard and their family as she takes on the role in his stead.

### [Lastly – a BIG 'Thank You:'](#)

On behalf of Kay and Paul, Howard and Ruth, Jan and I, a very big thank you to you all for all the cards thoughts, presents and prayers that so many of you have sent to us over this time. It has been a real blessing and very touching and humbling. On behalf of all the grandparents, and indeed great grandparents, "thank you."

Matt Thomson

Here's  
how to  
access  
all of our



## Online Content.



[www.newcreationchurches.org.uk](http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk)



[www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches](http://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches)



[www.youtube.com/channel/UCXn34qIXIXBeOAmO1M1KbBw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXn34qIXIXBeOAmO1M1KbBw)



[www.facebook.com/LivingFaithNC](http://www.facebook.com/LivingFaithNC)

# Youth Resources



Youth@Home content available through  
[www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches](http://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches)  
Facebook groups

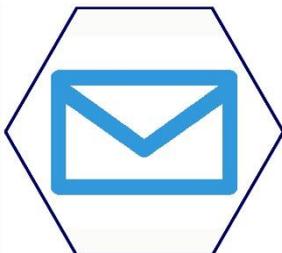
# Community Resources



[www.facebook.com/lovebanwell](http://www.facebook.com/lovebanwell)



[www.facebook.com/LoveCongresbury](http://www.facebook.com/LoveCongresbury)



For further details email  
[churchathome@newcreationchurches.org.uk](mailto:churchathome@newcreationchurches.org.uk)