

PRAYING FOR THE WORK OF UNLOCK 2021



Welcome to the prayer letter for 2020/2021. I think it's quite safe to say that none of us would have chosen a year like this one that has given rise to so much fear and uncertainty but our God is faithful and so we need to pray with some perspective. Looking back to things we can thank and praise Him for and committing our future to Him. I'm reminded of an old hymn from the 18th century:

How good is the God we adore, Our faithful unchangeable Friend!
His love is as great as His power and knows neither measure nor end!
'Tis Jesus the First and the Last, Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We'll praise Him for all that is past, We'll trust Him for all that's to come.
Joseph Hart (1712-68)

SUNDAY

Imagine yourself standing at the foot of the cross on that first Good Friday – confused about what's going on, frightened, surrounded by Roman soldiers and you thought Jesus was going to help you. Now move to the garden on the first Easter morning, the tomb is empty, Jesus has risen – just like He said he would. All your despair and fear starts to turn to hope and joy. Praise God and let's pray that that will be the experience of many, many people at this time.



MONDAY

The Unlock office has left Handsworth, Sheffield and moved to Shiloh in Rotherham. Give thanks for the use of the space at The Old Rectory, Handsworth Parish, and for all who have worked for Unlock at various times in the past. Some of those people are now with their Lord in heaven. Others are now working in different places. Pray for them in their new roles. Pray too that good relationships and long-lasting friendships will be built with the new folk at Shiloh.



TUESDAY

Praise God for His wonderful provision. With the walk not able to take place this year and staff not allowed to go to work, the future could have been very bleak. Give thanks for the Government's Furlough Scheme and generous donations from the Virtual Walk. Both of these will help immensely but continue to pray that Unlock supporters will be willing to be generous again in the coming year.



... He gives us a crown of beauty instead ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Isaiah 61

WEDNESDAY

There have been 36 London Walks, 1 virtual walk and some smaller ones in Birmingham, Coventry and Liverpool in the past. Reflect on these – someone you've spoken to who has inspired or challenged you, a church that you've seen thriving in an unlikely location, God at work in an amazing way in a really difficult place or seeing God's beautiful creation even in the heart of the city. Give thanks for all of these and pray that next year's walk (physical or virtual) will be as inspiring.



THURSDAY

The pandemic has changed the way in which we do lots of things and has caused some really hard circumstances for many. The people who suffer most will be the vulnerable, the poor, the elderly and the marginalised. The same is true for our churches and organisations – poorer ones will be worse off than richer ones. Ask God for ways in which we can help. Ways in which we can demonstrate the good news and the love of the down-to-earth Christ.



FRIDAY

Give thanks for our office staff and members of the Council. Pray that they will be able to meet face-to-face sooner rather than later. Many of our churches are still closed or only partially open. Pray for all who are feeling lonely and especially those who are struggling with everything being online – not everyone has computer skills or even access to a computer!



SATURDAY

One day the pandemic will be over. Pray that those leading Unlock will have a God-given vision for the future of the work. Ask that they will be guided by the Holy Spirit to know where to be working, with whom and in what way, so that in 2021 we can look back and praise God for all that He has done.

