



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 - March 2019

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Dear Panther

I am fascinated with the way new words and expressions creep into the English language. Let's not examine the arrival of the word 'Brexit' as that may cause your blood pressure to escalate, but I recently came across the word 'FOMO'. New to you? Well it is an acronym for 'Fear of Missing Out' and often used in the context of what some people have termed their 'bucket list'.

A lot of online marketing today is targeted at 'those who were born earlier', suggesting 50 things that need to be done before we die, or at least making sure you get your money's worth before it is too late. And it is amazing how many folk give serious consideration to making sure they travel here, there and everywhere, and experience all kinds of activity as they realise that something is coming down the track, bigger than all of us, over which they have no control.

Now let's not be too critical here. We all have things that we would like to do and sometimes we save up for that special visit to travel to see family abroad or to celebrate a specific occasion, but the key for those who have a deeper and more enlightened insight into our eternal destination, is surely in recognising that we do not entertain the 'FOMO' because the best has already been acquired. Other ambitions, hopes, dreams and aspirations fade into insignificance by comparison.

My personal fear, if I can call it that, is not missing out but missing the right opportunities, and allowing the fog and stress of uncommissioned activity to confuse and distract from doing what God wants us to address. This is

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precisely why these news updates are so important to me so that you can be alerted as to what is on my heart and question accordingly. I value that kind of input and although it does come from my immediate trustees/Board members, I am always open to insights from my prayer partners.

THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Work and ministry with students continues to occupy a lot of my time, but I am still of the opinion that this is a vital area of engagement. I continue to be part of the Multi Academy Trust Board, but have specific responsibility for Q3 Langley, where I serve as Chair of the Board.



We are expecting Ofsted to visit in the next few months and I personally am very excited about what is being achieved. Behaviour is exemplary, testified by visitors from all walks of life, and attainment and achievement is also bucking the local trend. I continue to address students at key times and am already bringing thoughts and material together for my Easter address.

I shall also be meeting the parents of new students who are deciding whether to apply for September entry. I explain what a Christian ethos looks like in the context of teaching and learning, and then thoroughly enjoy the interaction and questions that flow from that presentation. However, I am finding that issues that we never had to come to terms with even ten years ago are now very high on many agendas. I am sure you will have picked up from the media the profile that is currently being given to transgender people and all that flows from the identity debate. It is one in which we have to engage, and I have a letter on my desk from someone asking as to how this current focus chimes with a Christian ethos.

I have always subscribed to the fact that our faith commitment helps us to understand and deliver an appropriate response under all questions that relate to lifestyle, identity and conduct, but I find myself increasingly praying for wisdom as I make responses. The WWJD initiative always steers my thinking...(What Would Jesus Do?). Please pray for me as I give insights to students and parents alike.

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CHAPLAINCIES

Note the plural! What a fascinating few months this has been. As I have shared in previous newsletters about the invitation to plant chaplaincies in local schools in the West Midlands, we now find ourselves with another invitation from a schools network, asking if we could install chaplaincies across more secondary schools.

The initial development with the Invictus Trust has been a huge success. We sponsored a Sixth Form Conference on Ethics last November when 132 students attended and listened to quality speakers giving insights into how faith can shape our ethical conduct in the workplace, in education, in the health sector and in public life. The response was such that we are now being asked to deliver more of the same quality later this year.



Invictus Trust

We soon have to make a decision as to what we can do. We have earmarked some funding to support this ministry, but we would be unable to fulfil all of the current requests without some extra person power and finance. We are due to meet in the next few weeks to discuss how we can rise to all of the challenge – feeling massively encouraged, but recognising the need for extra support. And the latter has to be appropriate, as enthusiasm will not deliver chaplaincies that have integrity, commitment and above all, a ministry that is able to draw alongside our student population. Please make this a priority for prayer.

PERSONAL INSIGHTS AND CHALLENGE

I don't think I can add a great deal to what I have previously shared although a few weeks ago, I did have an episode that necessitated a visit to the doctors ... a very rare occurrence for me. I sensed my heart was beating a little faster over a four hour period, so I am now undergoing tests to ascertain whether there is anything that needs to be addressed. I am told that in an ageing population, heart palpitations and irregular rhythms do occur from time to time, but they must be checked out.

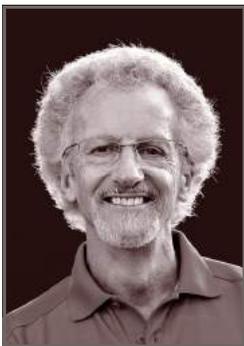
Of course that put pay to my plans to travel in February as Saga (aaaagh!) declined to give cover until tests results were in. So far, so good ... nothing untoward in the ECG and Ultrasound and one more

result to go .. the result from the heart monitor that accompanied me for 24 hours. Doctor suggested that it was down to a period of excessive activity, and as I had just delivered a talk on 'Coping with Pressure', I felt duly chastened.

Having said that, I am taking my own advice that I give to others on handling pressure and have taken steps to prevent overload. I feel much better for it although I have sent out clear signals that I shall be withdrawing from committees and meetings where others can do a better job. My greenhouse has found me in situ a little more frequently of late and the growth of my tomato plants bears testimony to that activity ... even in February. And phone connectivity is not good under glass ... at least that's my excuse!

DATES FOR THE DIARY

We shall shortly be sending out brochures and details for **Time Out: October 14th – 18th** in the Redcliffe Hotel in Paignton. Special guests will include Rev Willie Black who will give Bible readings, and others include David Coffey and Garry Brotherston. Ian and Linda Watson will also be there and I have the privilege of hosting the week's activities. There is already a lot of interest in this event ... probably as a result of the reputation of an excellent hotel that provides great comfort and hospitality, together with a very successful event in 2018. Further details on the web site and the accompanying booking form. Early bird savings are available until 1 May.



And for those of you who are Philip Yancey fans, the Leprosy Mission has asked me to host a series of evenings in September that features Philip, but also focuses on the life and contribution of Dr. Paul Brand ... a medical missionary pioneer by any other name. Details will be released soon and will be posted on the Flame website. Dates will be September 22nd -28th... tbc. This will be very popular and as dates and venues will be limited, do plan to get tickets as soon as they are available.

JOTTINGS

I continue to be amazed as to how many of you still ask about those early recordings and albums. As you know, I worked with John Daniels

and Ian Watson a few years ago and we released 'Still Waters' – an album that featured a re-working of some of those early songs that John wrote, plus some of my other favourites.

The response did take me by surprise as I had relegated my musical contribution to a lower division, but it has prompted renewed interest in the early material and I am regularly asked whether there are plans to re-release 'Writing on the Wall', 'Face to Face' etc. etc. Some of you have also asked whether, in line with a few other rejuvenated bands(!), there might ever be another tour.

Well ... first things first. John and myself have been in touch on the possibility of re-releasing those early albums and he has worked hard on re-mastering from the original vinyl tracks. We now have to look at the licensing and other protocols that could apply, but watch this space and as soon as we have some news, I will let you know.



There has been sadness of late. Good friend and colleague Andy Palmer (left) has gone to be with the Lord after suffering a stroke in December that was followed by a more serious episode in early January. Many of you will know Andy from his involvement at Time Out on the sound desk, and of course, he recorded and delivered all of the product after the event. His thanksgiving service was a great testimony to a life well lived in the service of others, as was that of May Cumming, mother of Linda Watson who passed away in January. I was privileged to share in both services.

The frailty of earthly life has also led to my giving thought to what is left behind when loved ones pass away, and indeed what our legacy will be when God calls us home. In some ways, this has been prompted by conversations with another good friend before he passed away ten months ago. It transcends the usual focus on goods and chattels and I think this probably closes the circle from where this letter commenced.

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FUMO is not on my agenda ... quite the opposite, but I have found myself giving a lot of thought of late, as to how I can make sure that whatever my contribution to the Christian cause has been while my heart is beating does not terminate when it stops. I am therefore at present, engaging with a number of folk who I respect for their maturity and wisdom, in gleaning some insight into how we can discern what is necessary to encourage the right ministries before the Lord returns.

I have a real fear that sometimes we fail to recognise when God is calling a halt on a ministry initiative or even a mission organisation, and Christian history is peppered with activity and events that outlived their purpose and original vision. Maintenance mode should never be an option. As I have said many times before, there are seasons in the year but also in ministry, and we need to recognise when a season is ending and be ready to replace, plant or encourage new growth and activity.

Please pray with me as I try to discern what God is saying to me about all of this and if you have a comment, please drop me a line. I do want to hear from the broad church of our constituency as I do think that we need to be very clear, in the light of all of the challenge in our society, that we keep the brightest torches burning.

Time to draw this to a conclusion. Thank you so much for your prayers and your practical support. This next period is going to be a challenge. Please pray specifically around detail shared in this letter, but above all, that I might have Godly wisdom and discernment in choices and decisions as issues cross my threshold.

Wishing you God's blessing and again, with grateful appreciation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dave Pope

PS As you are aware, postal costs are rising. We are really keen to make sure we have all of our partners' email addresses for the occasions we could send updates this way. If you haven't already sent your email information to us, then that would really help when we have 'stop press' detail.