

HEARING EYE

The voice of Open Ears

Hard of Hearing Christian Fellowship

No: 164

Spring 2020



Greetings

Welcome to this Spring Edition of Hearing Eye. In all these years, we've probably never sent it out before while in the midst of such scary times. It's not just the possibility (or reality) of being unwell, it's coping with the isolation and restrictions, that make this such a hard time for us all. I have been unwell myself and am still recovering. I haven't been able to leave my home for a while now but I do live with my good friend, Marilyn which I am so grateful for as I am very much aware that so many of us are completely on our own and struggling with needing to isolate at home, and with our varying degrees of hearing loss, not being able to call friends or family for help or for a friendly chat. Living at home can feel immensely isolating, particularly if we can't hear over the phone and maybe don't have a computer or smartphone.

Although, because of distance, we can't help on a practical level, we are praying for you, that our God will be your Friend, Provider and Comforter at this time, and that you will be deeply aware of His love.

A friend (Marylin) sent me a lovely card via the computer. It showed a winter scene that slowly transformed into a riot of coloured plants and green trees. The message that came with it is a message of hope, which we pray will truly bless you: ... 'the dark winter of the challenges we are facing will end and spring will come again.'

Please know that in Open Ears we really care about you and want to be there for each other at this time. Please do contact us if you would like prayer. You can email or phone (voice or text), or write to us. All our contact details are on the back page of this magazine. Let's support one another and pray for one another during this challenging time.

In this Hearing Eye I will share some specific thoughts and tips to do with the Coronavirus outbreak and there will also be a 30-day prayer guide to help us turn our hearts and thoughts to the Lord rather than being overwhelmed by all the fear reports. Remember that even when we have to be isolated from our loved ones, we are never isolated from the Lord. He promised us in Matthew 28:20:

'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

For the disciples, that promise must have been a tremendous source of comfort as their own world had changed as drastically as ours has at present. When all we are familiar with is stripped away, God is there for us, and as James teaches us, 'He does not change like shifting shadows.' (James 1:17) He is there for you right now and wants to give peace, comfort and provide for your every need. Jesus knows all the frailties of being human. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He wanted His friends with Him as He faced the horror of the coming days, but they couldn't cope and left Him to endure it alone. He knows our struggles and anxieties and can give us His own power to rise above them as we talk to Him and strengthen ourselves in His love.

Praying He will bless you through the pages of this Magazine and draw very close to you in the coming days.

Tracy Williamson, Marylin Kilsby and the OE Committee

Open Ears Holiday Conference @ Woodlands, Hothorpe Hall

New Date:- Monday 28th Sept – Friday 2nd Oct 2020

Please note this new date for our annual holiday conference. We are really hoping that by then the current situation will have changed and it will be wonderful to celebrate the Lord together with our amazing speaker Emily Owen. If Hothorpe Hall inform us that it can't run this year because of the Corona outbreak, it will be postponed to 2021.

We will be in touch in some weeks but please mark the dates in your diary as we'd love to see you there.

Some Tips for self isolating and social distancing when you are deaf/hard of hearing

1. If you are on your own and self isolating its very important to have a good support network especially if you can't use the land phone. If you have a mobile, even if you only normally use it for emergencies, consider having a group like family members or friends that you can text regularly to share mutual prayer and encouragement, including someone you can let know if you are not well and need medical help.
2. If you need help with getting food or meds and you're on your own, is there a neighbour close by that you can ask to help you, at least with making phone calls on your behalf?
3. If you are well, remember exercise is important so do try to get out once a day to take a walk and have some fresh air. Spring is here and the birds are singing, spring flowers are bursting into life and there is lots of beauty to discover. If you can't go out into the streets look at your garden with new eyes or even the things around you in your home, God wants to uplift you and give you joy in the midst of the struggles. Last week I noticed that the Poinsettia I was given for Christmas is still



alive and thriving despite me not having given it any water or care for a while. God has written survival into the heart of creation and we will survive this time of aridity too.

4. Re communication strategies and social distancing, one idea for good lip readers is to stand, one inside the house / flat (if your flat is on the ground floor or you have a balcony) and one outside. With the glass between you, you can stand much closer and talk plus use signs / gestures plus hold up written notes. I (Marylin) might try this with a neighbour who is HOH! I (Tracy) have a Speech App on my mobile (Smartphone) called Live Transcribe, so when my neighbour called to ask if we needed anything in the shops I was able to stay in the hall and hold the phone out towards the doorstep and it picked up his words. I've also stuck notices on the porch door and if you struggle with lip reading and can't hear from a distance it could be worth asking them to write things down with a marker pen so it can be read at a distance or use a small whiteboard if one is available. If you both have mobiles, text each other but where you can see each other and exchange smiles or even a virtual hug.

Mary Bucknall sent this photo of her neighbour's cat Jasper, saying how it made her day to find Jasper sunning himself on her front doorstep with no worries about social distancing! It's so good to smile!



A Psalm for Today by Christine Pitts



O Lord my God, please listen when I cry out to you, the light has gone and darkness engulfs me.

“Look to me, I am the light of the world, and there is no darkness in me at all!”

My enemies prowl all around the world like roaring lions longing to devour everyone, and fear overwhelms me.

“Do not fear, cast all your anxiety on me because I care for you”.

Listen, Lord, as I cry out to you with my heavy burdens; weariness and exhaustion have overtaken me.

“I never grow weary or tired, so come to me and I will give you rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. I will lead you to green pastures beside quiet waters where you can relax as I bring you healing and restore your soul”.

Loneliness and isolation fill my heart, my friends have all gone, there’s no one to talk to, no one to share things with.

“Come to me, you can always talk with me at any time for you are not alone, I am with you always and will never leave you, even to the very end of time”.

How will I feed my family? food is running short, supermarket shelves are empty, people are panic buying.

“I am the bread of life so do not worry about what you will eat, for life is more than food. Consider the ravens who do not sow or reap, I feed them, and you are far more valuable to me than they are!”

Lord, I cry out to you with my praise and thanks. I thank you that you are always with me and so I have no need to fear for you are the way, the truth and the life. Because you love me you have adopted me into your family. I am your child and nothing can separate me from your love. You never change, you are the same yesterday, today and forever. You reign over all things and have the final victory. My help comes from you, O Lord, you are the maker of heaven and earth, you watch over me and keep me from harm. I will sing a new joyful song to you; I will join with all your angels to worship and praise you for ever.

From Bristol to Navakholo: An Adventure

We, the Willdig Family, have two kids aged 5 and 3. We live in Bristol and attend a small community church of perhaps 40 members, which is in one of the poorest areas of Bristol. A small church with a small budget.

Yet when one of our members, a Kenyan man, told us about a church in rural Kenya which is running a primary school under a tree, we prayed and decided to help. We needed to raise about £8,000 – and to be honest, we thought £2,000 was an ambitious target for our church! But God provided marvellously and we ended up with over £11,000 raised in about nine months.



A team from our church would go (at our own cost) and as a family we decided to be part of that team. Even and especially the kids! This meant quite a few vaccinations for everyone, and a big cost, but we believed God would provide for us just as he was doing for the school project.



And so we went. A long flight was followed by a 14-hour drive into rural Kenya, where we found the project in a village of mud huts – without running water, with roads so terrible that a car journey that would have taken 10 minutes in the UK took about 2 hours, and with villagers who had never seen any white

people before. Let alone white kids! Wherever we went, we had everyone's attention.

Dominic (3) was our ice breaker: he arrived in the village, saw the massive mud puddles (as it was rainy season), got his kit off and got stuck in! The village kids, all in their Sunday finest, watched in amazement as this half naked white boy joyously covered himself in mud.

Unfortunately, Nadine (5) couldn't enjoy herself quite as much because she had a temperature and a cough. Despite receiving paracetamol as often as the package allowed, she was getting worse – fever, cough,

weakness... so after a week we took the decision to get her into hospital, and found that she had pneumonia.

While I stayed with her in hospital at Nairobi, the others in the group went to Mombasa for four days as planned. And as God would have it in his providence, our hospital stay turned out to be four days as well! That time, while not planned, turned out to be one of the most precious for us in that entire trip.

We couldn't leave the hospital, but members of the local church visited us daily, brought us food and treats, and prayed for us. It was a precious time of friendship building – and on my birthday, someone even brought me a cake!

After this, we had one day left in the country and we used it to see an animal reserve.

It certainly was an adventure. Not in the way we expected, but in God's providence it was our adventure and has built strong relationships – and our small local estate church saw a big God at work in providing way beyond our wildest dreams!

Susanne Willdig



Spring Harvest Home

From April 13th – 17th everyone can access Spring Harvest online – STT will be provided for the main teaching. Go to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for Spring Harvest to subscribe for this wonderful alternative to the norm.

Obituary – Tony Clifford

The committee were saddened to hear that Tony Clifford of Reading, a long-standing member of Open Ears, died in December 2019. A fuller article with memories of Tony will follow in the Summer edition of Hearing Eye.

It's Puzzle Time! A Christian Wordsearch

J M I B N I D E S S E F N O C
O A N A E S O V U I N O R A A
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Aaron, Abraham, Affliction, Believe, Blessed, Boaz, Christ, Confessed, Courage, Egypt, Faith, Fasting, Heaven, Inheritance, Isaac, Isaiah, Israel, Jephthae, Joseph, Joshua, Love, Martha, Mary, Moses, Naomi, Noah, Obey, Passover, Peaceable fruit, Perfect, Prayers, Promises, Rahab, Resurrection, Ruth, Samuel, Sara, Strength, Word of God, Worship.

In The Spotlight

I thought it would be lovely for us all to hear a little bit about our lovely treasurer, Julia Chapman, and she has really come up trumps as her answers are so interesting! Thank you Julia!



Hello Julia, lovely of you to join us for 'In the Spotlight'. Can you tell us about yourself? Where do you live and what do you do?

Hello everyone, I currently live in Wokingham, which is a small town on the outskirts of Reading in Berkshire (If you are still not sure where this is, it is approximately 30 minutes west of Heathrow airport). I live by myself in the town centre with one of my closest neighbours being Waitrose (which can become very useful, especially when giving people directions on how to find me).

In terms of 'what do I do' I usually find people are referring to one's occupation when they ask that question (as that is often how we categorise people). I am a qualified accountant and worked within finance for approximately 20 years. However, I had to stop work in my previous role due to developing sight loss and am now registered as being sight impaired. I now spend my time helping out a number of Christian charities, on a voluntary basis, one of which is being Treasurer for Open Ears.

What things bring you joy in life? What hobbies or interests do you enjoy?

I enjoy spending time catching up with friends whenever I can. One of my main interests is property and interior design. You can often find me watching the latest property programme on television or planning the next project I would like to do around the house. I also

enjoy watching tennis and try to follow the 4 main grand slam tournaments each year. My ideal day would be a day out at Wimbledon enjoying great tennis, and of course the strawberries and cream.

How long have you been a Christian and how did that come about?

I grew up in a Christian home and as such going to Church was a regular part of our family's routine. Every Sunday we would attend Church along with other events as they occurred during the week. I enjoyed Church as we were fortunate to be surrounded by many other similar families who also attended Church, in fact most of my social life growing up revolved around Church as there was a very active young people's work there. I can't remember an exact time when I made a commitment but know it happened over a period of time as I grew to understand that merely attending Church was not enough, that I needed my own relationship with God and that it was time for 'me to move from being a passenger to driving my own car' in terms of my Christian life. During my teenage years I continued to be active in the Church, was baptised and helped at many Christian camps during the summer and enjoyed attending Spring Harvest each year, which all helped me grow in my Christian life.

A significant change in my life was when I left home to go to University in Bath. It was the first time I had lived away from home, and I was meeting new people and finding my own feet. It was really good to meet people with different outlooks on life and faith, shaped by their variety of background and nationalities. University I found was key in reinforcing what I did believe and putting much of it into practice. My social group changed from being made up of mainly Christian friends to being mainly non-Christian. The most important lesson I learned was that the best way to reach out to people is to become friends which meant they trusted you and were much more open to having key conversations and attending Christian events. I was fortunate to see several of my friends at Uni become Christians and see God starting to work in their lives.

After university I spent a year in Australia at Capernwray Bible School. I didn't originally go there planning to attend Capernwray but to cut a long story short a series of events after I arrived took me there and turned some very challenging times into what I now look back on as being some of the happiest times of my life. Being amongst such a great group of people from around the world learning about God and putting faith into action was very refreshing and gave me a glimpse of what heaven will be like.

Do you have a hearing loss yourself or any other disability? How has that affected you in life?

I don't have a hearing loss myself, but as mentioned earlier I am registered as sight impaired. About 10 years ago I was diagnosed with a degenerative genetic condition that impacts the retina at the back of my eyes. So, whilst I do not know what is like to have hearing loss, I can relate to the challenges having a disability brings. The main impact of this condition has been on my ability to read (words do not appear complete on the page, more like they are written in a foreign language, such as Russian, although with the aid of a magnifier I am able to read on a word by word basis). The other main symptom is that my detail vision is not as crisp as it was and, although still have full field of vision, it is not clear vision, with some areas clearer than others.

As I am sure others will testify, coming to terms with having a disability is not easy and takes a lot of adjustment, from physical, to emotional and spiritual perspective. Losing your vision is on the whole an invisible disability and as such very difficult for others to acknowledge and empathise with, let alone know how to help. Uncertainty about the future increases, especially in terms of how you will cope and what life has in store for you. For me work was challenging, and I went through several years of uncertainty with a particularly difficult manager. As I look back, I now realise that, when faced with losing quality of vision, each person definitely embarks on a unique journey. I have learned that it creates a huge

opportunity for people to get involved and help individuals facing such challenges, even the smallest gestures can make a big difference.

How long have you been part of Open Ears and what drew you to join us? What role do you play on Committee?

I have been involved with Open Ears for approximately 3 years now after responding to an advertisement in Christianity magazine for a Treasurer. I had stopped working and was looking for ways to get involved with some Christian charities when someone showed me this advert. I went along to meet the committee, and the rest as they say is history.....!

What do you feel is the most important aspect of Open Ears' ministry?

I can remember the first weekend away I attended with Open Ears at the Greenhouse Centre in Bournemouth, where Emily Owen was speaking. It was a great experience; Emily was excellent and someone I could definitely relate to with facing challenges in life. To see a group of people with hearing loss singing their hearts out in worship together and not being worried about how it sounded was humbling. It was great to see how God could bring together a group of people with similar challenges to support each other and learn more about him at the same time. It is the members that make Open Ears special and I pray that God will continue to use us as a charity to meet people with hearing loss who need Christian fellowship and to know they are not on their own and can be encouraged in their Christian life. If anyone reading this has any ideas of how Open Ears can help its members in the future, please do let one of the committee members know.

What would you love to see developing and opening up more as Open Ears moves into the future?

I would love to see new ways for our members to fellowship with each other and encourage each other in their Christian lives as well

as with the challenges of living with a disability. Living with hearing loss can be isolating for many people who often do not feel comfortable in their local Church. Having a group of people who can relate to the challenges people are experiencing can make a real difference. Given the diverse locations our members are from it can be difficult to meet in person. I hope developments in technology will make fellowship and support easier to achieve in the future. For example, it is great to see Tracy, on our committee, using an app on her phone to identify what people are saying to her, enabling her to have much more personal interaction with people.

Is there any message of encouragement you'd like to give the readers of Hearing Eye?

I would like to pass on a 'thought for the day' that has challenged me recently. It is by a great author, Sarah Young, who has written the 'Jesus Calling' devotional books. These are very practical, bit sized daily devotions that I would encourage anyone to read.

"I want you to learn a new habit. Try saying "I trust you, Jesus" in response to whatever happens to you. If there is time, think about who I AM in all My Power and Glory; ponder also the depth and breadth of My Love for you. This simple practice will help you see Me in every situation, acknowledge my sovereign control over the universe. When you view events from this perspective – through the light of my universal presence - fear loses its grip on you. Adverse circumstances become growth opportunities where you affirm your trust in Me no matter what. You receive blessings gratefully, realising they flow directly from My hand of grace. Your continual assertion of trusting Me will strengthen our relationship and keep you close to Me. (Psalm 63:2; Isaiah 40:10-11; Psalm 139:7-10)"

Many thanks Julia! We are blessed to have you in Open Ears and we pray that the Lord will bless and enrich you in every way.

Let's Pray

It's easy to feel helpless at times like this, but God has given us a very powerful weapon – prayer! We may be on our own, we may even feel poorly, but as we pray, doors open for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be brought about on earth as it is in Heaven. Let's join together to pray for the World, for our Nation, for ourselves, our families and friends, for the NHS and others on the frontline. . .



1	Thank the Lord that He alone is God and that He is always with you. (Matt 28:20)
2	Pray for Boris Johnson and the Gov't for wisdom and strength as they seek to stop the spread of COVID.19
3	'The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' Philippians 4:6-7
4	Pray for anyone you know who may be ill with COVID.19 or who is struggling with isolation.
5	Pray for the NHS, for the doctors, nurses, paramedics and carers on the frontline.
6	Pray for the provision of protective equipment to those who still need it and for more and more tests to be made available.
7	Pray for the Open Ears family, that any of us struggling on our own will be helped and comforted, that any unwell will quickly recover.
8	'Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.' Psalm 91:3 - 4
9	Thank the Lord for His great love for you.
10	Pray for those who are very ill or dying from Coronavirus that their hearts will be opened to God's love for them and they will have all the medical help they need.

11	Pray for Italy, Spain and Europe and the terrible losses they are enduring, for supernatural strength and resilience to their medical frontliners.
12	Pray for Marilyn Kilsby as Chair of OE and for all the OE Committee to be strengthened and given God's wisdom.
13	Pray for yourself to be filled with His peace and if you are poorly, to receive His healing touch.
14	Pray for families struggling to work from home and to home school their children. Pray for children to find creative ways of spending time while at home.
15	Pray for the vulnerable around us, those who are elderly and unable to see their families, those who have disabilities and need care. Pray for any fearing abandonment that they will know peace.
16	I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.' John 16:33
17	Pray for God's holy power to be released against the virus. For the tide to be turned globally, for the number of those being infected and dying to go down; for the pandemic to come to an end. 'Your Kingdom come! Your will be done.'
18	Pray for our businesses and for all whose incomes have been badly affected by the crisis. Pray for global financial recovery.
19	Pray for our churches and church leaders that they will be kept well and filled with Holy Wisdom as to how they can still reach out to their congregations to teach and encourage them during this time of Church shutdown.
20	Pray for all in Open Ears that we will find right ways of communicating with those around us despite the struggles imposed by social distancing on those who can't hear.
21	'Because he loves me,' says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.' Psalm 91: 14 - 15
22	Pray for your neighbourhood, your street, anyone you know who is on their own, your local doctor's surgery, school,

	businesses and churches. Pray for divine favour and help on all.
23	Pray for prisons across the nation, for protection from COVID.19 for prisoners and staff. For prison chaplains and for anyone you know of in prison.
24	Thank the Lord for His love for you today and that He has given you ears to hear His voice. Take time to listen to Him today. How does He want to encourage you?
25	Pray for wisdom for OE as we adapt to these changing times. For our plans for future conferences and breaks, for our need to employ a freelance worker – that the right person will be found.
26	Thank the Lord for the anointing He gives you and that He has already prepared good works in advance for you to do.
27	Praise the Lord for all His faithfulness to you. Ask Him to show you how He has blessed you and write them down to help you worship Him.
28	Pray for a revival as people realise their need of something bigger than themselves. Pray for hearts to be opened to His love. Thank Him that many nurses and doctors are now praying before their shifts.
29	As we think about Jesus' amazing love in dying for us allow our hearts to rise up in thankfulness and worship 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life.' John 3:16
30	Let's pray the Lord's prayer together: Our Father in Heaven Hallowed by thy name Thy kingdom come, thy will be done On Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread And forgive us our trespasses As we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, For ever and ever, amen.

Meaningful Mistakes by Emily Owen



Typos. Most of us will have made them. Times when the words we type don't convey the meaning we'd like them to.

Sometimes they're funny, sometimes they're embarrassing, but usually it is fairly easy to

decipher the actual meaning.

Typos are generally mistakes easily mended.

But typos also, I find, often carry meaning.

This morning, I received a message from a friend, which mentioned shopping.

'It can be challenging in the shops tho. The selves are so empty.'

'Selves' clearly meant 'Shelves.'

A mistake easily mended.

And a mistake that carried meaning.

Life is challenging at the moment.

Normal routine has all but disappeared.

We are having to find new ways of being.

It's more challenging in the shops, because the shelves are 'so empty'.

Is life (even) more challenging because our selves are so empty?

Perhaps we do feel empty.

Adrift.

Tired.

Unsure.

We can't seem to stop the emptiness.

There's a verse in the bible that does not say, 'Come on, cheer up, make more effort, stop being empty.'

It says 'He (God) fills my life....'

He fills my life with good things.

My youth is renewed like the eagle's!

Psalm 103:5

God fills our lives with good things.

We don't need to fill ourselves, but, because God fills our lives with good things, it means they are there.

Maybe it's hard to see them sometimes, especially now, but they are there.

What is good in your life today?

A cup of tea? A smile from someone two metres away? Sunshine?

Whatever is happening around us, our 'selves' are not empty.

In my neighbourhood, and many neighbourhoods across the country, people are pulling together. Messages come through; 'Do you need anything? I'm in the shop and I've seen X/Y/Z on the shelves?'

Yes, those shelves would usually contain A-Z but, by going and looking to see what's there, things are discovered.

Perhaps new things.

Things people haven't tried before.

Perhaps your 'self' would usually contain A-Z, but now there's only X/Y/Z, if that.

X/Y/Z is still worth holding onto.

Who knows how you will be filled by it?

God does.

And, because of Him, we can carry on, trusting that, however empty we feel, He can – and will – fill us.

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:29-31



For a smile!

Family Bible Surprise

A little boy was fascinated as he fingered through the pages of the old family Bible. Suddenly, an old leaf that had been pressed between the pages fluttered out. "Mum, come quick!" he cried. "I think I just found Adam's underwear!"

Anthea Owen

Open Ears Prayer and Planning Retreat, 1st and 2nd June 2019



Every year or two, the Open Ears committee, plus Marilyn Baker, our associate committee member and wonderful singer and worship leader, and Roy Spiller who often helps with setting up the loop system at our conferences, get together for a time of prayer. We seek the Lord, bring Open Ears before Him and make plans for the future. We met last June. Everyone took part in the programme, starting with worship and prayer as we committed the weekend to the Lord.

Every session in the programme started with prayers and either a Bible reading or worship. Mary Bucknall, our Vice Chairperson, set the scene by going through the decisions we made at our retreat in 2018. We also discussed our financial situation. Thankfully, this is healthy but we do need more people to donate regularly. This helps with planning future events, which are a core part of what Open

Ears stands for – fellowship, easy communication, fun times together and being with people who either experience or understand hearing problems. These events always run at a financial loss, which is why donations are so important.

A very useful session for us was a visual meditation led by Susanne. We were given paper and various pencils and crayons and asked to listen to what God had to say to us. Not everyone did drawings but everyone listened and shared! It was wonderful how the Lord gave each of us different pictures or words but there were common themes: people communicating and sharing, loneliness being left behind as they others who have similar experiences; feeling part of a group and being secure; being able to relax and enjoy fellowship; everyone feeling welcome.

We covered other aspects of the running of Open Ears during our time away, including what other ministries we can take on, our individual gifts, ideas and strengths and how we can reach more hard of hearing and deafened people.

As a member of Open Ears, you are probably asking what decisions were made by the end of the weekend and how will it help people who are part of, or who are interested in finding out more about, Open Ears. On a practical level, we have already completed the new information leaflets, and refreshed the Open Ears website with much help and guidance from Real Point, a print and web design company. Having now received the appropriate training, three of us are updating the website regularly! We are making enquiries about a day event in Oxford that will probably be held in early 2021. We have a new projector and stand to be used at our holidays and conferences and we're planning to buy some other technical devices that will help people who need speech to text but can't see the large screen. Open Ears isn't as well-known as we would like it to be, so we are hoping to be able to use someone on a freelance basis to help with publicity and social media. And, of course, we will continue to run our holiday conferences and send out your Hearing Eye every three months!

We could still do with another one or two committee members and especially someone with good hearing to can take minutes of the meetings. Could this be you? If so, do please contact us – contact details are on the back page of this Hearing Eye.

Also, do you have any ideas that you would like to see Open Ears do in the future? If so, we would love to hear from you!

I hope that you have found this rather delayed report interesting. The next committee retreat is planned for Spring 2021.

I would like to thank each and every one of you who supports Open Ears with your prayers, your giving and your attendance at holidays and conferences. Open Ears wouldn't exist without you! God bless you

Marylin Kilsby

The Joy of Help and Contact Together

We really want to be in touch with one another in the Open Ears Family during this time of social distancing and isolation. Emailing, posting onto the OE Fellowship Facebook Page, writing to us if you don't have email, contacting the OE phone by voice or text are all ways we can do this. If you use email and would like to be in touch via email, please email Chris Pitts to give her your email address details. As Ingrid says overleaf in the Churchear report, 'Let's not do alone what we can do together.'

News from Churchear



Dear IVSS
Churchear
members!



At the beginning of March the board met again in Reichenbach in Germany to make the final preparations for this year's conference. One of the days we spent in Eisenach where the conference is planned to take place, visiting the conference venue Haus Hainstein and celebrating Sunday worship in St. Anne's church. The church had just had an induction loop installed and besides us from the board there were several other hard of hearing attendees, all given the ability to hear well. The sermon was about lies and truth from a national as well as from an international perspective. We do not live in our own timescale alone, but carry with us traces of choices made through history.

In the park outside Haus Hainstein, I was reminded that a Swede had been significant in that place 100 years before. A statue of Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, best known for his ecumenical efforts, stands in the park at Haus Hainstein. In Uppsala, the city where I was born, there is a much smaller statue of him outside the Archbishop's administration. Some key words to describe the works of Nathan Söderblom should be: 1. Community outreach. 2. Border-crossing co-operation. 3. The diversity of our faith. 4. Do not do alone, what can be done together.

This all fits into the activities of IVSS Churchear. We are an ecumenical organisation providing outreach to those who, due to their hearing loss are especially isolated in any society. Söderblom also campaigned for peace (In 1930 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize). All over the world we see wars and conflicts. Christian minorities are persecuted in many countries, and hearing impaired in countries with limited resources are especially endangered. Not being able to access oral information or quickly to escape in an

emergency situation, may make the difference between life and death.

In the history of Haus Hainstein it is written how Nathan Söderblom between 1924 and his death in 1931 became the patron of Haus Hainstein. The place was originally a hotel then was turned into a community college emphasizing theology. Connected to it there was a guest house, according to a model based on the Sigtuna foundation in Sweden. Sweden's king and queen of that time showed an interest in Haus Hainstein as well.

At our meeting in Reichenbach, we were confident that we should all meet at the conference in September. During the weeks since, however, the global health situation has changed radically. We then expected the corona outbreak to last some weeks, mostly a few months. Instead it has developed into a global pandemic, and for the moment no one can say for sure when we will be safe again. Numerous countries have closed their borders for international travels, out of as well as into the country. In many countries all public gatherings, including religious worships, are banned. Will it on this background be possible at all to have an international conference this September? Or should we take the consequences of what happens, postponing the conference to next year? We still have time until the end of May before we have to make a decision, but the board would like to have the opinion of you, the readers of this letter.

In our intercessions we can bring forward all those who in various ways are affected by the ravages of the coronavirus, and pray that this outbreak may fade out.

With my best regards in Christ,
Ingrid Stillström

Marylin Kilsby tells us that the Churchear website says that all conference registrations are suspended for now and the decision will be made at the beginning of June as to whether to hold the conference this year as planned, or to postpone until next year. In Marylin's opinion it would be best for it to be postponed till 2021.

Open Ears – What We (Usually) Do

Open Ears holds a national residential event every year alternating between a Monday – Friday holiday conference and a weekend conference. We vary the venues of these events, to give people from different parts of the country as much opportunity to come along as possible.

As well as these residential events, we plan to run more day conferences, starting with one in Oxford in Spring 2021. More information about this day event will be available later this year. All events, day and residential, are fully accessible to people with hearing loss. A Speech to Text service, British Sign Language interpreter and an induction loop are available.

We try to advertise Open Ears as much as we can. As well as our website, which we update most weeks, we have leaflets which can be left at doctors' surgeries and hearing aid or hospital clinics as well as to give to your friends and family. If you would like us to send you some, please contact the Administrator using the contact details below.

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