

Charity news

The Furlough scheme comes to an end in September and I will be back to work full time on Monday 4th October! Between now and then I will continue to work part-time depending on the (hopefully growing) level of work and needs of the charity. There will be a continued presence in the office during August but I will be taking short holiday breaks with family as well. If you do get in touch and there's a delay in responding be assured I will get back to you in the near future.

The furlough scheme has financially benefitted FACT and made the difference between us folding and finishing our financial year in a healthy place. At a time when many larger charities have seen their income drastically drop we have been pleased to receive occasional grants from Christian grant making bodies that have supported us well in this year. We are also extremely grateful to our faithful supporters who have continued to give month on month to the work and ministry of FACT. Your practical steadfast actions have been a source of encouragement over the last 15 months. Thank you.



We currently have an excellent stock of boxes that are readily available to households who might like to try using them. It is my intention to make them available at events we will be running during the autumn (and beyond!) Our trusty band of office volunteers have paused production to allow some to be given away but once they start to disappear off the shelf they will start production once again.

What a great bunch of people they are.



It has been more than 4 years since we last ran a **Time to Wonder** event for school children in a local church. We have missed these awesome events and over the past few years we have had occasional conversations with supporters about whether we could run one at a church for adults or mixed age groups.

One time when we were using a church to run **Time to Wonder** for some local schools to come and visit and take part in the half day experience we also offered a group of adults from the church the opportunity to experience it for themselves. They were blown away by it, with some being left in tears at their deep spiritual engagement with God. They used exactly the same material as the children and were shepherded around the tented areas in the same way.

We are considering offering this opportunity to churches, to either run it purely for adults or for mixed age groups. Time to Wonder does what it says on the tin! Maybe you know a group of people at your church who would love time to be still and wonder about God.

It takes a huge amount of work and preparation to make these events happen, including training volunteers who lead sessions in the tented areas, so if there are multiple groups in a church or from other churches we would be very happy to run numerous sessions to save on the setting up and breaking down of all the equipment. Depending on the make-up of the groups, we would expect numbers to be between 18 and 30 for each session. **Time to Wonder** lasts approx 2 hours so could be done during the daytime or an evening.

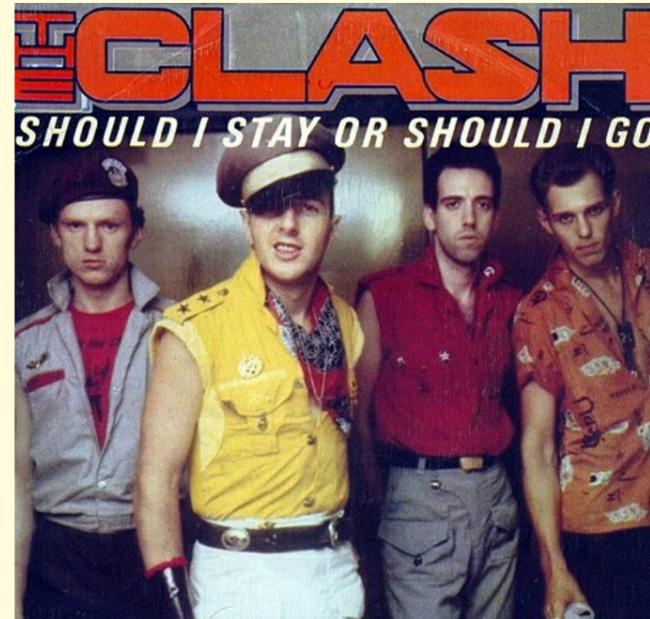
So now you've reached the end of the newsletter. It's time to act. Who will you share these ideas with? What will you do to make some or all of these things happen at your church?

Simon

A newsletter to keep supporters informed, inspired & involved.
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Faith Awareness
in Children Trust



The title of this song from my youth (I've seen them live!) sums up what I've been wrestling with. **'Post Pandemic, what is the best way forward for FACT?'** There are 2 extremes. At one end of the spectrum it would be sensible and prudent to simply wait, watch and respond to the needs of households / churches etc. as they unfold. Who knows who will attend or what any of those settings will look like this autumn, let alone going into next year. Essentially if you don't know where to go next, stand still and wait until you do know. At the opposite end of that spectrum is the idea that I should push ahead with what I believe to be the way forward and encourage others to come with me, to get onboard, to buy into the concepts and ideas. One of the major downsides for me of being on furlough has been the negative effect on my self confidence and self esteem. So my current emotional response to the question I posed was to lean heavily towards the first position, watch and wait. Even though historically I would have operated out of the second position, follow me, I have a great idea!

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So in a recent devotional time, as I listened to the scripture reading and then a few thoughts from the person reading the commentary, I found myself being poked with enough force not to hurt me but to make me sit up and take note, to realise this wasn't just good stuff but God speaking into my question at this time and place.

The text was 1 Kings 19:7-9. A small part of the story of Elijah fleeing Queen Jezebel but before he gets to the cave where he encounters God in the quiet. He's resting, feeling lost, unsure and frightened. The commentator said:

'There is a time for everything,' the preacher says [Ecclesiastes 3:1]. There is a time to rest and there is a time to get up and go. Elijah is asleep; again. Feeling alone, afraid, and unqualified, he seems to have shut down. But God's messenger wakes him a second time. 'Get up and eat,' he says, 'you have a long road ahead of you.' It will be a journey to a new face-to-face encounter with God.

Ask: Am I lying asleep when I should be preparing for a new challenge, a new journey, a fresh purpose?

Lord, teach me to be kind to myself when I need to rest, but help me be alert to Your voice calling me to 'Get up and eat'. I know that the road is long; give me Your strength for the way.

It was this final prayer that hit me between the eyes. I have been saying all through the pandemic that I needed to stop beating myself up about not being able to do anything but to simply *'be kind to myself and rest'*. So my question of should I stay or should I go was answered for me. It's time to get up and move, time to be brave and push forward with what I think God would have FACT do in this next season. So that's what I'm going to do. Read on and see what some of those emerging plans are and how I hope to know what is God's voice and what are just my crazy ideas!

Simon

FACT enabling children and households to reflect on the Christian Gospel



Long-time supporters will remember the 'Time to Wonder' (T2W) project that was run with schools. In recent years we have created our 'Time to Share at Home' boxes (T2Sh) that have been given to households to use at home and now we are adding 'Time to Worship Together' (T2WT)

The initial aim is to offer an event once a month on a theme that is loosely connected to the church year but will be grounded in issues of today. These themes may change over the coming years. They are designed for households of multiple ages to gather as a family unit and worship alongside other households. This is not All Age worship by another name! Nor is it Messy Church!

The picture below (sorry it's so small), it's just to give a flavour and for those who might be interested it's available in A3 size!) shows some of the themes, and possible dates. This is intended to be a starting point for discussion rather than a fixed and final idea.



Each session will enable people, regardless of age, knowledge or ability to engage with others from their family units via a simple act of worship that will encourage opportunities for encounter and engagement with God. These events could occur on a midweek evening or during a weekend. They could be church based or at a neutral venue. This is not intended to rival anything churches may be doing with their own worship patterns but instead to stand alongside what they are already doing, but with the emphasis on enhancing intergenerational worship. It may well appeal to groups of people who currently don't attend church, or are infrequent visitors as well as those regular attendees who will welcome new approaches to worship that will encourage their household's faith journey.

Churches are being contacted and it's hoped that conversations will start soon to make these new approaches happen in the coming year. An individual church could seek to run an event each month but I suspect it will be more likely that churches will select a smaller number over the year to fit around their own programmes. Churches may wish to be involved with delivering some of these events or may wish to hand over the whole thing to FACT. Volunteers will be needed and they could be from host churches or from others coming in to help.

As always with FACT based projects there is so much that needs unpacking and working through to tailor make it for your particular situation, so get in touch and let's talk further about your post pandemic dreams and desires for your congregations. We will work on a first come first served basis.

September's event is currently on the drawing board waiting to get the go ahead with specific churches. The flyer is a mock up waiting to add the specific details of host organisations. Could you see your church's details filling this missing information?

Please do get in touch but be aware that we are now entering holiday periods where I may be away at different times so don't worry if there's a delay in responding to your initial contact. I will get back to you.



Toddler Groups

It has been good to have worked with a toddler group leader recently to help review what they want to do and achieve as they open up in September. The pause forced on these groups due to the pandemic has left a huge need unfulfilled in our communities and so it's been good to reassess what the focus will be moving forward rather than a scatter gun approach.

I will be approaching groups I have worked with previously to see if they are reopening and if so whether they still want FACT's involvement once again. Do get in touch if you would like to talk further about this and we can start to plan in dates and try and help with what you might want FACT to do for your parents / carers and the children in their care.

And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'

The nature of being a disciple is to be a learner and follower of Jesus. The Bible is full of imagery of Jesus leading. For example, he refers to himself as the 'Good Shepherd' which is an image of someone being *in front* of his sheep, leading them to green pastures and watching out for danger. We read of him walking *alongside* 2 bewildered men on the road to Emmaus. His disciples would have walked behind Jesus following the rabbinic tradition of the day while also spending time with him eating and listening to him teach and debate.

For me all these face to face encounters are helpful and comforting. They allow me to imagine Jesus with me or leading me from the front, yet the reading from Isaiah throws a spanner in the works as God cannot be seen, merely heard from behind. He isn't leading with me following but gently directing as situations and opportunities arise before me. When my question is, 'Which way?' the answer isn't as simple as follow Jesus but becomes listen to God's voice which may be heard in varied ways. There can be a fear of not hearing or mishearing or that there will just be an awful silence. This fear could make me freeze, stand still and not move on. This is of course the wrong way to perceive who God is. I think the question becomes, not whether God is directing, but whether I'm really listening, being attentive and wanting to hear what he is saying.

If I do that and mishear, misunderstand, run ahead then God is certainly big enough to draw me back onto the path he wants me to tread. My responsibility is to consciously put myself in the way of God to be able to hear his voice rather than taking him for granted and assuming I know where we're going and how to get there.

So bumping into this forgotten text recently while attempting to sit with God was a timely reminder that God is coming on this journey with me rather than him launching me with a wave and then popping up at the end of the road.

Does God appear to be silent? Perhaps you just need to tune in again and then set off taking one step while trusting that God will speak from behind.

Then the angel of the Lord came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat."