

## Stories of hope and optimism from the Catalyst team: April 2020

### FAMILY

My sixteen-year-old and 22-year-old children have re-discovered the arts and crafts cupboard in the house – which we used more when they were in primary school 😊

- Candle making, arty card making with 'rotator painter' as well as baking



Fire pit time in the garden – marshmallows, 'kazoo' competitions (guess that tune!) and strumming of the ukulele

The anniversary poster is self-explanatory – a hope filled way of celebrating whilst in Lockdown.

Becoming part of virtual 'pub quizzes' from around the country



### PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

People's willingness to connect and communicate and check-in with each other locally, nationally and globally

How quickly people have adapted to different ways of communicating online (e.g. family, friends, colleagues and church)

When social distancing and when making the needed journeys to the shop or pharmacy – for the most part, people making an effort to smile, give a greeting and make eye contact – to reduce anxiety and tension.

## **CHOOSE JOY**

I heard a great talk once from somebody who had experienced significant hardships and losses during their life but still managed to have great hope in times of trouble. Their secret? “Choose joy”.

Choosing joy isn't the same as being happy. Happiness is a temporary emotion, but joy is an attitude that people can choose to have in both easy and difficult times. I



have been making a conscious effort to choose joy over the past few weeks, and this has helped me appreciate the good that is still happening during this time of physical distancing.

There are many things that I am thankful for. I've been able to spend time with family and friends, both far and near. I've spent time sitting in the garden and chatting with my parents. I've

been playing and recording music with my younger brother. We have miraculously set my grandparents up with Skype and are able to talk to them regularly. I've managed to stay connected to my church family through live streams and Zoom meetings. I had a virtual games night with some of my friends who are stuck inside. I've taken time to relax and look after myself (and I've crocheted a small herd of llamas in my spare time!)

Choosing to find joy in something every day is helping me adjust to changes. Instead of focusing on what's missing now that I can't go outside, I am able to look at what I already have and be truly thankful.

## **STILL CONNECTED**

Phil Daoust: The Guardian 08.04.2020

“Separated in space, we are connecting like never before, through text, speech, video, songs from balconies, applause on doorsteps. Never have so many people asked, “How are you?” and genuinely cared about the answer.”

## FINDING COURAGE

*“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”*

– Nelson Mandela

At a time like now whilst in lockdown, I am ever more seeking ways of embracing courage. I have to look no further than my 3 and a half year old children, who, at this young age are completely oblivious to what is happening during the pandemic. During this time, we have engaged in a lot of play activities, but it feels very different to our typical play on a regular weekend or evening. I am putting it down to seeking more ways of being creative during this period of lockdown. The other day we made a den with cushions, rugs, blankets, pillows and I let them grab (within reason) what they wanted to add to the den. Whilst playing, I was suddenly transported to my early play experiences with my siblings as a child. I remembered summer holidays playing role play activities and finding much pleasure in having exclusive time with my sister. It made me think how valuable this lockdown time is for children. With the pace of life a little slower, we are devoting more time to play. Not only was this time enjoyable for them, but I sought much pleasure re-living my inner child which my children have nurtured. I find comfort, gratitude and encouragement in knowing that these play experiences will create lifelong memories.

## STOPPING TO SMELL THE ROSES

One of the biggest things I've noticed during lockdown is an increased mindfulness, and with that genuine gratitude. It's easy to get into a habit of rushing and suddenly the week has passed by and you haven't finished that job, phoned your friend back or cooked that item in the back of the fridge that has started turning furry. It's that familiar feeling of *“Where did all my time go?”*

At first, I thought I'd approach self-isolation by cooking and watching a lot of Netflix, and generally enjoying that illusive 'me time', but it hasn't worked out quite like that. Don't get me wrong, I haven't committed to an *“I'm going to learn a new skill”* mindset (although I did look at a language app for two consecutive days and can now ask for apples and greet people in Spanish).

What's happened is not that I'm doing *different things* (other than the obvious, not going out), but I'm *doing things differently*; and I'm noticing the joy that these everyday actions actually bring me. I value every conversation and interaction (and I'm probably speaking to my friends and family more frequently now than before all of this). I'm noticing every step travelled on dog walks or runs, and how every spring bulb, flower and green shoot in my garden grows a little bit more every day.

The roses smell good!