



As we enter a New Year, what are we hoping for? Our response gives away our focus. Are we only hoping for the recovery of the things we have already known? Or are our sights set on the Kingdom of God and all the opportunities this new era is opening up? Are we looking back, as did the Israelites, who reminisced about the 'comforts' of being enslaved in Egypt, or are we excited and expectant as we discard the 'old wineskin' and step out with faith and obedience, pursuing the One who opens a new way before us? In 2020 everything changed and we were forced to lay everything down. Now we have been made ready for a fresh move of the Spirit of God. The 'wind' has changed direction! Are we ready to ADVANCE?

WHAT ARE WE PERCEIVING?

Worldwide move of God's Spirit. If we want to see what our Father is doing, we must be willing to ascend to see from a Heavenly perspective. Without this, our vision can be limited by our circumstances and obscured by the things of the world. Similarly, if we ascend alone, we can't see the full picture – we need the global Body of Christ for a full perspective.

Widespread deception distracts our focus. Whether in the form of misinformation, biased or agenda-driven reporting, or a pervasive spiritual blindness, many are easily deceived and led astray. Our individualism has led to the exaltation of personal feelings and opinions over Truth and has become the defining idol of Western culture, hidden in plain sight.

Widening divisions. Healthy debate in pursuit of Truth has been replaced with tribalism, intolerance, hostility and polarised opinion, amplified and accelerated by social media. There is increasing fragmentation at every level of society and across nations, now reaching a critical state.

THE WAY OF ASCENT

How low will you bow
to reach the height
of My holy hill?

How deep is your search
for the Way only seen
from above?

Will you descend
and forsake your view
to receive new sight?

Will you die to this world,
to the past, to yourself,
and ascend with Me?

LS

*"If my people, who are called by my
name, will humble themselves....."*

RETREAT TO ADVANCE

We are calling the whole Maranatha Community to take some time out from our usual routine to come aside with the Lord and listen to Him as we worship. This is a crucial time to pray for new perspective.

We propose to set aside the first week in March to fast, listen and 'ascend' to meet with the Lord. This time will be like a 'retreat', but during which we will ask the Lord to prepare us to 'advance'.

From **Sunday 7th to Friday 12th March** there will be daily online gatherings. These gatherings will also be accessible for those not online, via telephone. All are welcome but registration is required. For further information see tinyurl.com/mara-retreat or contact the Maranatha office.

THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

This declaration is first used in the Lord's response to the prophet Habakkuk (Hab 2.4), contrasting the posture of Godly people with the worldly. In a similar context, it is quoted several times in the New Testament.

In the book of Hebrews it is used as an exhortation to the early Christians experiencing suffering and persecution, encouraging them to stand firm in the expectation of Jesus' imminent return (Heb 10.36-38).

As we face great uncertainty in the months ahead, we too should stay alert and be ready for Jesus' return, even in the midst of a right concern for the immediate crisis that faces us.

Our security is not in knowing the future but in God, our loving Father, who sovereignly rules over all that is taking place, now and in the days to come. As we trust Him, we will have peace and be ministers of His peace to those around us.

MARANATHA!
ONE Lord ONE People

HOW FULL ARE YOU?

For many, there is a looming sense of emptiness in the weeks and months ahead. The reality of loss – a loved one; a job; a home; health; the list goes on – is dawning on us all. Loneliness and days depleted of activity or human contact are taking their toll. Many homes are juggling home-working and home-schooling, increasing stress. How does this day-to-day reality compare with Jesus' promise that He has come to give us **"everything in abundance, more than you expect – life in its fulness until you overflow!"** (Jn 10.10 TPT)?

As Christians, this is a vital question, but it's also vital for those who need to receive this overflow of God's abundance through us! Paul writes, "In Christ all the fulness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fulness in Christ" (Col 2.9). Similarly, Paul describes the Church as **"[Christ's] body, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way."** (Eph 1.23).

Mourning loss and expressions of grief are very important in our life journey and not to be dismissed. Lament has been an essential form of expression for the people of God for generations. As members of Christ's Body, we can be His presence for those around us, reaching out in love to those in need, as we reach and cry out to God our Father in our need. Our simple prayer is that the Spirit of God will fill the empty places, that His Spirit will bring new life where there has been loss and death.

As we intercede in this way, our emptiness is transformed into a space of opportunity – an increased capacity to receive Christ's love and grace, which releases healing for our souls. As we open our hearts to the flow of God's grace, we become channels of His grace for others. As John testifies, **"For from his fulness we have all received, grace upon grace."** (Jn 1.16).

AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE

Fr Charles, one of our members who is an Anglican priest in Malawi, has been made Archdeacon of Lowershire. He was tasked by the bishop to complete the building of a health centre, which has been unfinished for years. Fr Charles has accomplished this and has asked for our help to equip it. The facility will provide health care for the local community of 80,000 people. We know Fr Charles personally through our trips to Malawi. Please would you consider making a gift for this much needed cause. Cheques made payable to 'The Maranatha Community' and marked 'Malawi' on the back, should be sent to the office.

PRAYER CELLS - A LIVING NETWORK

Since the birth of the Community, our life has been undergirded and empowered by the prayer of members. We believe the Lord is calling us to increase our prayer capacity by extending the existing network of Prayer Cells. Would you consider forming a 'Cell' with two or three others? Most meet weekly (currently online or by phone) and receive a weekly prayer letter of requests, which is prayed throughout our network. Intercessory prayer is not the sole reason for meeting — through fellowship in worship, this rhythm of prayer is like the breath of the Community. Prayer requests may be sent by email to prayer@maranathacommunity.org.uk or by phoning the office.

SHARING FELLOWSHIP

It has always been a great encouragement to know that we are praying alongside others at certain times of the day. **Charles leads prayers in the office at midday, Monday-Friday, and this is broadcast via a link on the 'Pray' page of our website.** Why not join?

We also have a special online members area - **Maranatha One** - dedicated to sharing news and personal prayer requests. It would be great to connect with you there, go to <https://maranathacommunity.one> and click on Members' News. Any problems contact Charles in the office.

THE ROCK

You are the Rock
on which the winds
and storms
of all the years
have raged
in vain.
You are the constant
when all else
is variable
and shifting
as the sand.
You never change,
You are the same
as age succeeds
to age.
You have no fads
or fancies
and moods that
come and go
- no frail, and human
weaknesses
- no blowing
hot or cold.
You are the One
remaining
when all the others go.
Yet You are
the God of surprises,
of newness
and delight.
You are the One
forever
leading to pastures fresh.
You know
tomorrow's challenges
the shocks
and the alarms
the strange
and the bewildering
the fearful insecurity
the learning of new ways.
Yet in the change
and turmoil
You stand
with me
and all
is well.

Dennis Wrigley

Available as a prayer folder on our website or from the Maranatha office.

LOCAL GROUP ZOOM GATHERINGS

In order to more fully share the vision God is setting before us, the Community leaders will be arranging a series of online gatherings for local groups very soon. This will include connecting with those living overseas. If you are not part of a local Maranatha group and would like to participate, please contact the Maranatha office.