

# 2020 - Q2

## COVID-19 Edition



# STREAMS

## Quarterly Report

### Birthing Life, Wherever We Flow...



Founded in 2010, Flowing Rivers has grown from a small team regularly gathering in an Essex living room to a large organisation now overseeing various projects locally, nationally, and internationally.

As you are a part of our journey and projects, our quarterly reports seek to provide an update on all we have going on from ministry to mission work.

We are passionate about equipping people with the tools needed to develop great values in leadership and servanthood in their local, national, and international communities.

We believe that the church is a representation of the Lord's hand extended to humanity in love, expressed through teachings,

healing, humanitarian support, economic empowerment, and leadership development for posterity.

Our mission is to preach Christ through the practical expression of God's love!

## Food For Thought

During a pandemic, it's easy to go into self preservation mode - only looking out for yourself and loved ones. However, living as a disciple of Christ, we are taught to deny "self" daily. So what does that look like in a pandemic? It looks like saying "yes" to being a blessing to your neighbour; saying "yes" to being a blessing to your community; and saying "yes" to being a blessing to The Body.

As COVID-19 altered the world as we know it, we made the decision to be God's hand outstretched in love to our community. As a ministry, we have been volunteering with our local food bank by doing bulk shopping on behalf of Flowing Rivers. Many volunteers from our ministry don't actually live in the same borough as the food bank we support however we decided early on that we would not allow distance to be an excuse for not volunteering!

Many are working from home, but take time out of the working day and it has been a blessing to be a part of such an impactful project. We have also been able to take this a step further by volunteering to do food drops for people in need during this unprecedented time given that the food bank can't currently welcome visitors.

There are many other ways you can also be a blessing during this time. For instance, you can sign up to a volunteering scheme in your local council and make deliveries to the elderly and other high risk individuals who live locally - you don't have to go way out of your area to make an impact - there are opportunities right on your doorstep!

Whatever you do during this season, you should decide to be a blessing. We will look back at these times in years to come, and as The Body of Christ, we should be remembered as the people that shone brightly during a time of darkness.



## The Impact Mission

It's fair to say that the past few months in the UK have been very interesting, with the country dealing and responding to the challenges of COVID-19.

Over in Kenya - where one of our key missions outreach is based - we've received word that they had been experiencing significant challenges with the impact of the Coronavirus being a major one, additionally but they had also been facing major floods and on-going issues that arise from poverty.

Dealing with the pandemic is one thing, but when you add menacing floods into the mix it becomes quite a frightful time.

We saw first hand footage of these floods, some resembled a tornado made up of water in the ground! To add to this, Kenya was also dealing with swarms of locusts affecting their much needed crops especially in this period of lockdown.

While in the UK the early phases of the lockdown saw many of us unable to buy supplies for our households, in Kenya, lockdown coupled with disproportionate levels of poverty meant many were unable to buy the supplies they needed and ran the risk of starvation.

The lockdown in Kenya also meant a total shut down, where not only were non-essential shops closed, but even food shops and markets were closed. Many people did not have the resources to bulk buy in preparation for the lockdown.

One of the young people we spoke to in Kenya actually said, "We may not die from the Coronavirus, but it is likely that we will die from starvation".





## Isolated Outreach

Flowing Rivers is set to relaunch its Prison Project which seeks to cater for ex-offenders seeking to re-integrate into the society. Within the UK, 39% of ex-offenders re-offend within 12 months of release, and Flowing Rivers is determined to bring hope, break generational cycles, help restore relationships, create a safer community and ultimately win souls to Jesus.

We are currently in partnership and also actively looking to partner with some key agencies such as Her Majesty's Prisons, Police, Probation Offices, the Salvation Army and other ex-offender care institutions to help build a relationship with ex-offenders to reduce re-offending within the Barking and Dagenham area.

As a church, our first focus of support is to provide practical needs such as applying for ID, acquiring accommodation, helping claim benefits, developing life and employment skills, and restoring relationships with family and friends. The next area of support is the befriending and mentorship program, where we plan to support the ex-offenders on an emotional and spiritual level through building rapport, investing in their lives, setting goals and empowering them.

rapport with offenders whilst in prison, support with practical needs upon release, arrange frequent follow-up as a befriender, mentor the ex-offender to result in an empowered person who is capable of contributing positively to the society and bear fruit in Christ.

Please keep us in your prayers, as this project places us at the forefront of engaging with ex-offenders who have potentially experienced a difficult past and only Jesus can help turn their lives around. If you are also interested in joining the team, there are various roles which could be suitable for you, including; befriender, mentor, care coordinator and safeguarding officer. Please contact Hafeez Odekunle [[missions@flowingriversuk.org](mailto:missions@flowingriversuk.org)] for more information.

## Winter Warmth

The Winter Giveaway is a project carried out every year to support the homeless community of Central London. The giveaway involves distributing 'Love Bags' that contain essential items carefully considered through consultation with the homeless community, to survive the harsh climate of the winter months.

Each bag was stocked with a hat, scarf, gloves, thermal socks, dental and hygiene care products. While these may seem like basic necessities to many of us, each item was carefully considered with regards to the impact it would have on the recipient. For example, socks are a key item for those living on the streets and essential for survival; as when it rains, socks are prone to getting soaked and so being able to change into a dry, warm pair of socks really does bring a little comfort.



Despite the unsettling reports, we along with our Kenya family, give thanks to God for preserving them so that they can be agents of change within their community during this challenging season.

Pastor Sammy from Sure24 informed Flowing Rivers of the challenges and inhouse we raised £2000. This £2000 was used to give over 500 families 2 weeks worth of provisions to keep them going through the lockdown period.

As a ministry we would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to this cause, your prayers and donations have gone a long way and we trust God to continue to birth life in and through us in Jesus name.



A successful scenario breakdown of re-integrating an ex offender could follow this path: Build

All 'Love Bags' were also paired with a sleeping bag, and a selection of winter coats, shoes, belts and various other items of clothing which were also donated for the homeless to choose from.



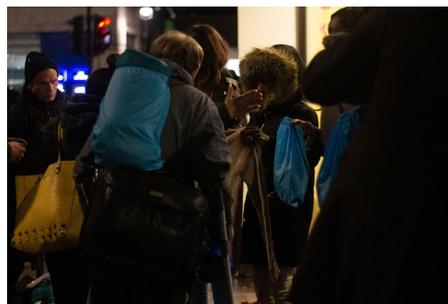
The Winter Giveaway was set to take place on the 2nd and 3rd Sundays in February and March – to coincide with our regular Street Mission Sundays. However, due to unforeseen circumstances (and for the first time in its 10-year history!), it proved impossible to serve the homeless on the 2nd Sunday of February.

Nonetheless, this did not stop the Street Mission Team from fulfilling their goal of equipping the homeless community for winter and instead the determination of the team led to the giveaway happening on the 4th Sunday of February. In preparation for the outreach, the team took on the mammoth job of assembling 150 'Love Bags', which was completed in one Saturday afternoon with the help of just 15 volunteers.

With a target to distribute the 'Love Bags' to a large number of rough sleepers, this year was the first time we ventured out to a new location for the Winter Giveaway/Street Missions. Opting to station the teams between Holborn and Charing Cross, the teams were divided up into two groups with half serving the homeless community in Lincoln's Inn with food and hot beverages and the other half handing out 'Love Bags'. The strategy proved

highly effective as all 150 'Love Bags' were shared out on each of those Sundays and we were also accompanied by some of our younger members, whose presence and help didn't go unnoticed by the homeless.

A beautiful moment that occurred during the giveaway came in the form of witnessing a homeless man stand with the Flowing Rivers Choir and take a moment to enjoy the melody of choruses. Although we were all braving the cold, the lovely voices of the choir members did well to warm everyone's heart. The reason why this particular moment stuck out was because this gentleman embraced something completely new to him even though he did not know the songs, but the smile on his face showed how the words ministered to him. Moments like that remind us that we can share the love of Christ in diverse ways.



Finally, we would like to applaud everyone who contributed in one way or another to making The Winter Giveaway a success as the dedication and ability to

adapt to change are invaluable to keep serving the homeless community.

## Blessed To Bless

'Twas the night before Christmas and we received a message from Pastor Sam about a lady he had met who had lost all hope. In a state of despair, she revealed that she had no food for her eight children on Christmas Day and had no support as her husband had left her a few months prior.



Around that time of year it's so easy to forget about those in real need but as a ministry we jumped at the opportunity to be a real blessing to someone.

A quick call in the Whatsapp group for funds, food and anything to make Christmas special for Maria and her children and everyone ASSEMBLED – #IfYouKnowYouKnow – and just like that, we had two cars full of food, drinks and gifts for this beautiful family.

This opportunity helped to remind us that we are blessed so that we can be blessings, which is the real reason for our prosperity.

So on the eve of the Coronavirus lockdown, we reached out to Maria again to ensure that she had some reserves for the duration. There was no escaping it, this was shaping up to be a challenging time for her and her children crammed in one room with limitations on playing outside. Sharing a house with just the average 2.5 children is challenging enough, let alone 8 in one room!

It transpired that her greatest need was a television of some sort to keep them entertained and hopefully, even if only for brief moments, escape their government imposed imprisonment.

Once again, the Flowing Rivers Body came together again to supply a widescreen desktop complete with internet connection and a Netflix account to assist the kids to watch television shows and movies but also get organised with accessing online educational programs.



## The Story Continues...

### ...Pastoring Through A Pandemic

If Flowing Rivers was a fish, this pandemic stricken environment is water – we were created for such a time as this! Our ethos and culture has been tailor made to thrive in the commotion. I believe that the advent of the church building undermined the true expression of the church because the salt that was intended to savour the earth got a fancy salt-shaker to hide in. What this pandemic has done is spotlight some of the issues that are wrong with the church and also some of the things that makes the church a standout entity!

All of a sudden, serving members is not as pressing as serving your neighbours, frontliners, local community, etc. I have not been called just to Pastor a church but to Pastor a city, and perhaps even a nation. Now, because one man (or woman) cannot Pastor a nation alone, that statement truly means that I have been called to raise a people with whom God can “Pastor” a nation. To this end, in this pandemic, our funds have gone primarily to DO MINISTRY and not just those things that aid us to do ministry. Please do not misunderstand, those things are needed (like building rent, utilities and so forth), but they pale in priority when compared to addressing the need in society.

Our resources (human and otherwise) have gone on setting up a Christian befriending service for hundreds who are isolated, and partnering with businesses such a Glassdoor to feed the homeless that have been housed by councils in hotels and dorms. Additionally, volunteer drivers have facilitated food drop-offs

to over 1,000 vulnerable families in partnership with the Rainham Foodbank. As part of our commitment to this service, we also offer a monthly bulk shop to support the service.

The Bible states that out of the heart proceeds the things that gives life (Proverbs 4:23), therefore as a counter perspective to the dire negativity of the daily news briefings in mainstream media, I’ve committed to delivering a daily briefing of good news from around the world in relation to the Coronavirus. Everyday at 3pm, you can catch ‘Everyday Good News with Psam’ on Instagram [[@samson.baptist](https://www.instagram.com/samson.baptist)] to escape the macabre nature of the news and be inspired by epic stories of real life medical recoveries, signs of economic recoveries around the world and other positive news stories as researched by the COVID-19 rapid response team.

Our commitment to our international missions continues, and our support of the Sure24 orphanage in Nakuru, Kenya, the children in South Africa and Borneo has intensified during this pandemic lockdown. Apart from our direct work with the orphanage in Kenya, we are now supporting over 500 families with dry food supplies in the community through our representatives in Kenya and over 200 families in South Africa respectively. Ultimately, Pastoring through a pandemic has meant going back to basics for so many, a reminder of what is truly important. It underscores my personal motto that “the greatest investment in life is the investment in a life”, and to this end we are committed as Flowing Rivers, “birthing life wherever we flow”.

To get involved in any capacity, please feel free to email us at [info@flowingriversfoundation.org](mailto:info@flowingriversfoundation.org) our team is readily available to provide further information and respond to your queries.

To contribute financially towards any of our projects, please feel free to use our online donating system on our Giving Page:

[www.flowingriversfoundation.org/giving](http://www.flowingriversfoundation.org/giving)

Thank you and look forward to your continued support this year.

---

## Flowing Rivers' Glossary

**Child Sponsorship** – We support orphaned children in Borneo and Kenya with the aim that children are upheld in prayers, contacted on a regular basis, and receive financial procurement through monthly sponsorship. This vision extends beyond just the members of our team as we also encourage those who are financially capable to invest in a child's life.

**Conferences** – A collection of seminars focused on inspiring people to be current, relevant and influential in their generation. The impact series focuses on relationships, business, career, investments, personal development, healthy living, mental wellbeing and much more.

**Crown of Glory** – On the last Saturday of every month, a team of us visits a residential home and spends two hours with the elderly. We often plan fun activities varying from bingo to board games and on occasion even charades!

**Food Bank** – To assist members of society who are unable to afford food and in collaboration with a number of food banks, we regularly donate non-perishable foods to our surrounding boroughs. Additionally, we offer assistance with the organisation and storage of the food. We also host Tin Tuesdays every week to collect donations from the Flowing Rivers congregation.

**International Missions** – Through annual trips to Kenya, Flowing Rivers supports Sure24, an orphanage based in the Nakuru region, as well as Living Waters Village foundation located in a village within Borneo.

**Just Church** – Just Church is a campaign to get other churches and organisations to come together under the umbrella of simply "church", stripping down names and labels to take second place to the work given to the church body to do.

**Prison Project** – Flowing Rivers recognises that the re-offending rate of inmates is on the increase. Therefore with targeted training sessions to address self-esteem, failure, true success, gang life, among other things, we hope to minister God's love and comfort to those incarcerated.

**Street Mission** – We visit Lincoln's Inn Field in central London twice a month and provide food, drinks, prayer, amenities, and advice where required. We believe that faith without work is dead, and as such we recognise that we are God's hand extended in love, specifically to those who are homeless on the streets of London.

**University Visits** – Flowing Rivers understands the relevance of the university institution, not merely as a hub for learning, but also the residence of potential leaders. Collaborating with other organisations, we host business seminars, industry specific talks, entrepreneurship boot camps, and so forth. These conferences consist of atmosphere changing worship, heart changing, love and life changing teaching.

**Winter Giveaway** – Launched in 2011 to cater to the needs of homeless people within London during the coldest months, every year our team of volunteers assembles and distributes Love Bags to homeless people in the capital.