How are we doing/will we do/will we reimagine mission differently as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic? Emerging Missional Trends during the COVID-19 Pandemic Literature Review

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Executive Summary

This paper reviews 207 pieces of literature in order to identify missional trends that have emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. 153 of these papers form what is known as the 'formal theological voice', representing academics and published theologians writing about mission, the church and pandemic, while the remaining 54 papers form what is known as the 'espoused theological voice'. This espoused voice is external to The Salvation Army and refers to the views of groups, denominations and individuals within the church but outside of academia and publication. The prophetic voice is not limited to academia; therefore, it is important to capture the views of others within the church who feel they have a sense of what mission should look like at this time. Throughout the analysis implications have been highlighted for The Salvation Army and the views of key missional thinkers have been separately drawn out. Additionally, reflections on online church that came up within the context of the church's mission are also discussed towards the end of this paper.

The formal literature frequently referenced the Old Testament stories of Job and the Israelites living in exile before returning to the Promised Land in order to make sense of the new context we find ourselves in. Job was highlighted as a challenge to those who were saying that COVID-19 is punishment from God while exile was presented as a parallel situation – one where everyone, including the church, is disorientated, has lost rituals that give structure and meaning and are having to learn to rely more completely on God's provision. These 'Biblical Touchpoints' helped to give framing within the literature to the discussions that followed on mission at this time.

Eight overarching themes were found to be prominent in the formal literature, and these shared many similarities to those found within the external espoused literature. First and foremost, authors emphasised the need to love and serve your neighbour. Beyond the call to love each other by socially distancing and following government guidelines, there was an emphasis on sacrifice and risking self in order to properly support those in need. The example of Christians in the Early Church risking their lives, and often dying as a result, during 2nd Century plague in order to love and serve their neighbours was frequently held up as an example that should be followed by the church during COVID-19.

Beyond loving and serving your neighbour, mission looked like the following:

- Challenging inequalities.
- Pointing people to the promise of a New World, whether that is by demonstrating how God's Kingdom is already here with us or by letting people know that there is a better world on its way.
- Bolstered by constant prayer, especially that which creates space to listen to God and discern God's desires and direction.

- Taking time to lament the pain and suffering of the pandemic. This call was particularly highlighted by N. T. Wright, and as is the case with Biblical lament, this lament should result in the church articulating a hope centred in Jesus.
- Being present – as God's presence – in local communities, getting out of buildings and challenging the individualism that strongly defines Western culture.
- Being imaginative and innovative in mission, allowing the Holy Spirit to move the church out of its comfort zone.

Within the formal literature, the call to use this time to 'proclaim the Good News' was not as prevalent as the other themes, at least not in the transactional sense of evangelism. Conversely, this did come up strongly in the espoused literature, especially from the Evangelical Alliance who have been publishing guidance on how to evangelise during this time.

This review also highlights what TSA can learn from churches delivering mission within the Ebola epidemic and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as well as how the church survived under oppressive Soviet Union rule when isolation was even more prevalent than it is for us now. Churches operating during the Ebola epidemic highlighted the importance of challenging harmful theology about the origins of the virus while the churches in HIV/AIDS contexts spoke a great deal about the danger of allowing stigma to seep into the church's mission. The church must remember COVID-19 does not affect people equally (due to their social location, race, class status and other factors), and therefore the church must always be the church of the most vulnerable.

Implications that came up for TSA throughout this paper cover a range of themes:

- First and foremost, spend time in prayer and reflection with God before making any missional decisions;
- Find a balance between the need to take risks when loving and serving others and the need to protect and safeguard those most vulnerable to the virus;
- Listen to the voices of those usually ignored and silenced and take the lead from them on what is needed within communities;
- Adopt a trauma-informed approach in congregational life;
- Create space for testimonies that acknowledge pain and loss;
- Support communities and congregants to process and form a collective memory of this time;
- Learn to apply an abundance lens to reimagining mission.
- Maintain visibility beyond just the offering of practical assistance;

- Work in partnership for the transformation of society, trusting that God will ensure TSA doesn't lose its unique Christian identity;
- Invest in leaders to ensure the continuation of discipleship;
- Speak out against harmful theology;
- Take the virus seriously and support government safety measures;
- Don't forget those still vulnerable to COVID-19, adopting language such as, 'the body of Christ has COVID-19, and therefore we must make our mission work for everyone, as if everyone is as vulnerable as the most vulnerable among us'; and
- Focus on developing small groups.

Introduction

On 23rd March 2020, Boris Johnson announced the closure of all non-essential public places, spaces and businesses. This included places of worship. The objective was to stop the spread of COVID-19, known colloquially as 'coronavirus', considered to be 'the biggest threat this country has faced for decades' (Johnson, 2020). The period that followed consisted of various stages of 'lockdown', and while most of the UK has emerged from the strictest forms of lockdown there are still plenty of distancing measures in place. These measures continue to encourage people to stay physically apart, due to the particularly contagious nature of the virus. The life of the church across the country has changed dramatically, for all denominations. This has been mirrored across the world and has led to many academics and theologians reflecting on how the church's mission has changed, and should and could change, during this time. As a result, this literature review aims to present the missional trends that are emerging from leading theologians and missiologists during this pandemic, alongside learning from churches who have lived through other devastating pandemics, such as HIV/AIDS and Ebola, as well as through times of repression and isolation, as experienced by churches in the Eastern Bloc living under Soviet Union rule.

This review forms part of a larger piece of research being undertaken by the Research & Development Unit at THQ to understand how The Salvation Army is doing/will do/will re-imagine mission differently as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, 207 pieces of literature were analysed and the findings are presented in six sections, followed by a section discussing potential implications for The Salvation Army (TSA). The first ('Biblical Touchpoints') briefly outlines the main stories and passages from Scripture that are referenced and used by the authors to inform missional thinking at this time. The second ('Prominent Themes & Trends') is the main thrust of this review and outlines eight themes that emerge as missional trends from the COVID-19 literature that falls within the formal theological voice. The third section ('Identified Theologians & Missiologists') outlines the thoughts of, and engages with the arguments from, specific leading theologians and missiologists who were provided to the author as potential sources of wisdom at the beginning of the literature sourcing process. The fourth section ('Trends from other pandemics') briefly outlines learning from the literature relating to other pandemics and the experience of the church living under Soviet rule, while the fifth section ('External Espoused Voice') explores the top themes from the literature that falls within the espoused voice external to The Salvation Army, as well as some comparison with the literature from the formal voice. The sixth section ('Some reflections on online church') provides additional thoughts specifically related to online church, given that reflections on online church appear prominently in the literature but are not necessarily inherently missional. The final section ('Implications for The Salvation Army'), before the conclusion presents possible implications for TSA based on the themes and ideas that have come up in the literature.

Methodology

1. Four Voices

The Four Voices of Theology is a working tool created by Dr Helen Cameron and colleagues in the Action Research – Church and Society project team to better understand the interplay of various 'voices' in theological reflection and research (see Cameron *et al.*, 2010, p. 54). The tool acknowledges that theology is complex, drawing together Christian practice ('faith seeking understanding') and different theological influences that shape that practice. The tool calls this Christian practice 'operant theology' ('the theology embedded within *the actual practices of a group*'), and the three other voices are as follows:

- 'formal theology': 'the theology of theologians and dialogue with other disciplines',
- 'normative theology': 'Scriptures, the creeds, official church teaching, Liturgies', and
- 'espoused theology': 'the theology embedded within *a group's articulation of its beliefs*' (Cameron *et al.*, 2010, p. 54).

These Four Voices of Theology will act as a framework for understanding the theological reflections and practice coming out of the wider COVID-19 research. As a result, this literature review predominantly captures the 'formal voice' – what academics, published theologians and other disciplines are saying about the church's mission during this pandemic. However, as the search did uncover some literature from external voices that wasn't published or by those from an academic background, there is also a section in this review exploring what has been labelled the 'external espoused voice'. This is theology coming from groups, denominations and individuals outside of The Salvation Army, such as those representing the Catholic Church in the UK.

2. Structure and parameters

Considering the limited time between the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and this research, the decision was made not to limit this review solely to academic literature (books and peer-reviewed journal articles) as it was believed that not enough time had passed to allow for this literature to have emerged. Consequently, this review includes grey literature and any form of writing (predominantly blog posts) and presentations (predominantly radio/podcast-type recordings) produced by/featuring published theologians and missiologists. Literature was found that was relevant in content (see following criteria) however was written by pastors, lay Christians and other missional thinkers without the academic credentials or background to be considered part of the 'formal voice'. As above, this literature is included within a separate section entitled 'External Espoused Voice', where it is also brought into conversation with the findings from the formal voice.

Additionally, given the 'newness' of the COVID-19 pandemic, literature relating to mission during, and as a result of, other pandemics of the past was also sourced. The reason for this two-pronged approach was to enable The Salvation Army to balance the immediate trends of the COVID-19 literature against wisdom from churches in the past who had already experienced changing mission during a time of pandemic and/or restriction. The literature chosen relates to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the Ebola epidemic specifically, with a very small handful of literature on mission during times of 'general' pandemic. Given the lockdown that has followed the COVID-19 pandemic across the world, literature on mission for churches living under Soviet rule in the Eastern Bloc has also been included, with the aim of shedding light on how churches continued to carry out mission during a time of restriction and isolation. The findings from this literature is presented in a separate section of this review to the COVID-19 literature.

The following criteria were used to find and narrow down the appropriate literature for this review:

- Contains reflections on the church's mission (including, 'doing church' and 'being church'), not just general theological reflections,
- Specific either to COVID-19 or to an element of the other pandemics/life under Soviet rule that drew a parallel to COVID-19[1],
- Under 20 years old[2], and
- The author was published.

Google Scholar, Academia.edu, SAGE, JSTOR, ResearchGate, Brill and Google were used as search engines for the literature alongside relevant journals listed in the top twenty Journal Rankings on Religious Studies. A source that provided extensive relevant blog posts and grey literature was the COVID-19: Missional & Theological reflections (2020) section on Churches Together website. Snowballing was applied where websites and literature found in the initial search presented additional relevant links and references. Snowballing is an established process used in research for both participant selection and the identification of literature. For literature reviews, it involves going through the references and/or bibliography of a paper and assessing which papers also fit the identified search criteria. This process is carried out until a saturation point is reached, where no new appropriate literature is found or the same literature keeps appearing. In the case of blog posts and videos for this literature review, where references were not used, links identified as 'similar to this post' were investigated. Only those which fitted the search criteria were then analysed.

[1] For example, social distancing, isolation, protecting those who were vulnerable to the virus' spread etc. This meant that the sexual element of the transmission of HIV/AIDS was not included, as it was assumed not to be comparable to COVID-19.

[2] Eastern Bloc literature was exempt from this

Additionally, prior to beginning the sourcing of the literature, the author was able to draw on wisdom from within the mission service to compile a list of leading theologians and missiologists who were considered to have wisdom to share at this time. Consequently, their thoughts on COVID-19 and mission were sought out separately, outside of the above search strategy. These individuals are N.T. Wright, Alan Hirsch, Giles Fraser, Justin Welby, Richard Rohr, Sam Wells and Israel Olofinjana. Paula Gooder, Stephen Cottrell, Michael Moynagh and Rene Padilla were also suggested; however, no relevant literature of theirs was found. It is worth noting that the above list of theologians and missiologists, while representative of leading thinkers, is not representative of wider society. These individuals are predominantly white men, reflecting a wider issue around Western mission being built and dominated by white men (Labeodan, 2016). The author therefore recommends that these individuals' thoughts and ideas are taken as part of the wider analysis – which includes a wider diversity of voices – rather than as a sole source of emerging missional trends at this time. This is particularly pertinent considering the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the BAME population (Perera, 2020a) and the fact that women are disproportionately represented at the frontlines of the pandemic's response (Zurlo, 2020).

3. Conceptual framework

The majority of the analysis was carried out using an inductive approach where new trends and themes were pulled out of the literature as it was read, forming new ideas about mission that weren't represented in any initial framework. However, prior to this inductive approach, three definitions of 'mission' was used as a starting framework. This broke the literature down and enabled the author to see how much of the literature fitted into existing concepts of mission and how much was new ideas that required a more in-depth analysis. These definitions of mission were chosen as they represent three of the four voices of theology:

- Formal Voice – David Bosch's 'six faces' of mission (Bosch, 1991, cited in Action of Churches Together in Scotland, 2008),
- Normative Voice – Fives Marks of Mission (Anglican Communion, 2020), and
- Espoused Voice – The Salvation Army's mission (The Salvation Army, 2020).

The Five Marks of Mission were included not just as the preserve of the Anglican Communion, but due to the fact that they 'have won wide acceptance among Anglicans and other Christian traditions' (Anglican Communion, 2020a) and form part of The Salvation Army's definition of mission in its missional journal template, used by corps (churches) to develop their local mission (The Salvation Army, 2019).

Findings

1. Biblical Touchpoints

1.1. Job

The Biblical account of Job's suffering and ultimate restoration is the most commonly referenced piece of Scripture throughout the literature. While there are slight differences in the ways the authors apply the account to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a general consensus that it demonstrates that human suffering is not a punishment from God and is instead a reality humans face because of the presence of Satan, and therefore sin, in our world. Additionally, the Book of Job shows an isolated, outcast man (similar in this isolation to many during this pandemic) crying out to God but still refusing to believe that God has punished him, as he hasn't sinned. Instead, he cries out to God knowing that God is right there with him in his suffering; an idea that appears across the literature even without the story of Job in which to situate it (Dell, 2020). A handful of authors draw attention to the fact that there is no tidy resolution to Job's story and use this to highlight the fact that there are no easy answers to this pandemic (Paul, 2020 and Wright, 2020).

1.2. Exile

Bradbury (2020), alongside other authors including Sam Wells, highlights commonalities between the Israelites finding themselves in exile in Babylon and the COVID-19 pandemic. Bradbury (2020) finds parallels in the disappearance and loss of 'symbols and rituals bound up with life as God's people' in both the Israelites' exile and this pandemic's lockdown. However, he draws hope from the fact that during exile 'Israel experienced significant renewal as they faced the need to reframe and reimagine their lives as God's people' (Bradbury, 2020). He uses the story of exile to suggest that the church has the opportunity to develop a renewed sense of God's presence, including what that means when it's not building-dependent, a renewed sense of holiness and a renewed sense of mission. Wells (2020, cited in YourNeighbour, 2020) uses the example of exile to highlight the need to focus on an abundance of God and His resources, rather than a focus on scarcity. Exile also featured in papers from the Christian Theology in the Midst of COVID-19 Conference organised by The University of Winchester, specifically those exploring the theme of lament (see McLendon, 2020 and Pahlen, 2020). These papers identified lament as 'the spiritual language of God's exiled people' (McLendon, 2020, p. 6). Consequently, the act of drawing parallels between exile and COVID-19 serves to help explain why 'lament' comes out as such a strong theme throughout the literature.

Exile is also touched on in the HIV/AIDS and Eastern Bloc literature. In the HIV/AIDS literature, the focus is again on lament. Njoroge (2008, p. 232) presents the Biblical example of Nehemiah and how his journey 'home from exile to restore the walls of Jerusalem' began with lament. She encourages the African continent to face its grief,

through lament, about the past horrors that have pushed it to feel like an exiled people and made it harder to face the reality of HIV/AIDS. Interestingly, it is not the story of the Israelites being in exile that is referenced in the Eastern European literature. Instead, Constantineanu *et al*. (2016, p. 451) references Peter's first epistle, where Peter calls Christians ''sojourners' and 'exiles'', emphasising that not only can they never call any place home, but they should understand home as their community. He uses this to emphasise that the church in the Eastern Bloc were not deterred from meeting, as they understood themselves, when rooted in Christ, to be permanent exiles anyway, no matter their physical location.

1.3. The collapse of the tower in Siloam

In Luke 13:1-5, Jesus explains how eighteen people who were killed by the collapse of a tower in Siloam were no worse sinners than the others living in Jerusalem. These verses are referenced in the literature to challenge the idea that those who are negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic are somehow to blame for the virus and are being punished by God for their sins. Valerio and Heugh (2020) summarise the thoughts of the various authors who refer to this account in the following way: 'Jesus is clear that the existence of disasters doesn't mean that those who are affected by them are worse people than anybody else. Such events should never be an invitation to judge others…Any suggestion that coronavirus is some kind of divine judgement is fundamentally at odds with God's character.'

1.4. The Book of Revelation

Reference to the Book of Revelation within the literature can be largely attributed to Israel Olofinjana, however both Paul (2020) and Wright (2020) also bring the Book into conversation with Biblical reflections on COVID-19. Olofinjana (2020) doesn't provide any definitive answers, however he uses Revelation to ask if COVID-19 is another sign that we have entered the 'end times', alongside the 'Ebola outbreak, Syrian refugee crisis, Presidency of Donald Trump, climate change, [and] Brexit'. As explored in more detail in the later section detailing the views of these theologians, this idea of 'signs' is a key theme running through Wright's (2020) book. Wright (2020) acknowledges that while the Book of Revelation shows 'signs' such as plagues (throughout Chapters 7 and 8), which could be interpreted by some as an indication that the end times will be preceded by 'dramatic signs', he argues – in line with his overall argument that Jesus is the ultimate sign pointing us to redemption – that 'the book of Revelation (as is well known) is full of fantastic imagery which is certainly not meant to be taken literally as a video-transcript of 'what is going to happen'…the victory of the Lamb, already won on the cross, is what matters'.

Paul's (2020) assessment follows a similar thread in that he sees Revelation as 'a vision of the future in the light of present reality'. He points out that the evils represented by the

horsemen in Revelations 6 are not new and therefore cannot be taken as signs of the 'end times'. The world has had pandemics before, alongside many devastating evils. Furthermore, God does not exercise ultimate control in Revelation until Chapter 21, when He '"wipes every tear" from our eyes', therefore suggesting that despite being Sovereign, God is not in control of these evils until the day He ushers in a new world. Paul (2020) comes to this conclusion in order to emphasise that COVID-19 is not God's doing in the world.

2. Prominent Themes & Trends

There is general agreement across the literature that the COVID-19 pandemic calls for new notions of mission (see, for example, Bradbury, 2020; Henry, 2020 and Olofinjana, 2020). Carvalhaes (2020) describes COVID-19 as an 'altar-call', calling the church to a new way of living; a changed way that honours the earth and moves us away from our 'fast road to a collective death'. Passmore (2020) reminds the church that seeing all these new people join services via online channels is an opportunity to work with new people to build a new way of doing church (positioning online church as a key means of being 'missional').

Consequently, the following themes have been pulled out of the literature based on the understanding that the church is being called to be a 'new thing' at this time (Wells, 2020, cited in YourNeighbour, 2020). They are not discrete themes, and they encompass many smaller themes that have been grouped in this way based on the context surrounding them in the literature. The following themes are listed in this order to highlight the interconnectedness of the themes and to create a succinct narrative, rather than to demonstrate how frequently they emerge in the literature.

The eight themes are as follows:

- Love and serve your neighbour,
- Challenge inequalities and work for justice,
- Point to a New World,
- Pray, listen and discern,
- Lament and make space for suffering,
- Be present in community,
- Be imaginative and innovative, led by the Spirit, and
- Share the Gospel.

2.1. Love and serve your neighbour

The biggest lesson for the church's response to COVID-19, drawn out from the literature on the Early Church's response to the Antonine Plague in the 2nd Century and echoed across the rest of the COVID-19 literature, can be summed up in 'some of Jesus' most famous teachings: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"; "Love your neighbor as yourself"; "Greater love has no man than this, that he should lay down his life for his

friends."' (Stone, 2020). This should be no surprise given that loving and serving your neighbour is an integral part of the church's mission at any point in time, as detailed in the Five Marks of Mission: 'To respond to human need in loving service' (Anglican Communion, 2020). In fact, literature suggests that the Early Church's approach of loving and serving their neighbours rapidly grew the church and Christianity, especially as non-Christians pushed sufferers away and fled from their friends and family (Lee, 2020; Peppiatt, 2020 and Stone, 2020). COVID-19 calls the church to a re-emphasis on this core commandment, particularly with the elements of risk and sacrifice highlighted by the Early Church's example.

For many, loving and serving your neighbour at this time has looked like bringing groceries to people shielding or unemployed (Weinstein, 2020) and checking in on neighbours who are more isolated than others (Christian Research, 2020). However, throughout the literature authors articulate that given the incredibly contagious nature of the virus, loving and serving your neighbour also looks like staying at home, following social distancing guidelines and, importantly, keeping churches closed (see Paul, 2020; Stone, 2020 and Welby, 2020). They acknowledge that this involves sacrifice, however it is not sacrifice for the sake of self-preservation, but instead sacrifice in order to protect those who are ill and vulnerable. In fact, the examples of the Early Church make clear that loving and serving your neighbour at this time does not mean simply 'staying away'. This is especially pertinent considering the isolation that COVID-19 is creating and the negative impacts isolation can have on people's mental health and well-being, as demonstrated already by a study carried out with older Catholic women unable to attend church in the Philippines during this pandemic (Buenaventura, Ho and Lapid, 2020). Instead, the Early Church takes the idea of sacrifice further by demonstrating how Christians should actively be taking risks, and putting themselves at risk, in order to truly love and serve their neighbours during this time. Or as Bosch puts it, to 'demonstrate Jesus' sacrificial love' (Bosch, 1991, cited in Action of Churches Together in Scotland, 2008). This risk however, should never put others at risk, something which Martin Luther articulated in his advice to Christians during plagues in the 16th Century (Holt, 2020).

This call for the church to sacrifice and risk more while never putting those who are vulnerable at risk is relatively consistent across the literature. In fact, Goldingay and Scott Goldingay (2020) present a clear example from the 17th Century of the total population of Eyam, a village close to Sheffield, isolating themselves under the guidance of their village priest to avoid spreading the plague to Sheffield as it made its way up from London. They were successful, however a quarter of the population died as a result of this isolation. Eyam, therefore, stands as a challenge to the church, and a reminder that a virus such as COVID-19 can have a devastating impact. Consequently, it is quite disconcerting to read the words of C. S. Lewis, adapted by John Lennox, and hear the words of Alan Hirsch, both

of whom appear to 'downplay' the negative impact of the virus and undermine the call to love and serve in a way that keeps the vulnerable protected and safe.

> '"This one [COVID-19] is, 2%, it's terrible, but it's a 2% death toll. And if we'd really just think about it, that's not a... Let's keep it proportionate to the threat. Wait till something like the swine, sorry, not the... The Spanish Flu of 1918 came out. That was devastating and you talk about 30, 40% of the world's population, that's when we really experience this, because everything collapses at that point…"' (Hirsch, 2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020)

> '"Don't waste the crisis and be brave and be strong. You're already dead. You died in Christ. You're a dead man walking. Nothing can kill you. Off you go. Just be that kind of person, I think. Don't be cowering in the corner."' (Hirsch, 2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020)

> '"In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb [coronavirus] was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anaesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists [coronaviruses] have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty."' (Lewis, cited in Lennox, 2020, p. 52).

A common theme in these quotes is that Christians have already died to our sins, as Jesus took this death for us, so this life is only fleeting. While these quotes are difficult to read, Lennox (2020) goes on to state that he adapts the C. S. Lewis quote for COVID-19 for the purpose of encouraging us to maintain a Christian perspective on loving our neighbour. Echoing the Early Church's willingness to not only sacrifice but also to risk, he states that:

> 'None of this is to say that we should ignore the rules being put in place to slow down the infection spread and so put ourselves (and others) at unnecessary risk, especially in situations where we have to self-isolate or where we are in an area that is locked down. It is to say that *we should be looking for how we might love others, even at cost to ourselves*—for that is how God has loved every Christian in the person of his Son, dying for them on the cross.' (Lennox, 2020, p. 55, italics mine).

Consequently, Hirsch's comments could also be read as a call for those Christians who are able to, to go out and be 'people of risk', loving and serving their neighbours at a cost to themselves, knowing that 'nothing can kill' them as they're 'already dead' (Hirsch, 2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020). Hirsch and Lennox's comments, although perhaps 'brash' in their

approach to a virus that is killing hundreds of thousands across the globe, is also a rallying cry for the church's 'standard' mission objective of 'love your neighbour' to be riskier and involve a higher rate of sacrifice as Christians set out to mirror the Early Church's approach; an approach that stunned non-Christians into converting to Christianity, en masse, as they experienced and witnessed 'a communal love like they'd never seen before' (Lee, 2020). An implication here for TSA is how to strike a balance between loving and serving others sacrificially while also ensuring the safeguarding of those most vulnerable to COVID-19.

2.2. Challenge inequalities and work for justice

Nevertheless, while Hirsch and Lennox's words could act as a rallying cry to some, they also risk making light of a virus which is not an 'equal opportunity virus' and does in fact harm some more than others, as well as being more of a risk to some people than to others. 'Whether it's food insecurity, economic insecurity, housing insecurity, existing health risks, or racial injustice, we're seeing the ways in which vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected by the virus and are unable to cope with its shock' (Our Daily Planet, 2020). Hirsch and Lennox speak from a privileged position, and while they are not wrong that, as Christians, we have all already died, as Christ died for us, they do not address the fact – Hirsch in particular – that the levels of risk involved in loving and serving your neighbour are different for different people. It is perhaps this recognition, among other factors, that led to 'challenging inequalities and working for justice' arising as another theme in the COVID-19 literature.

Again, as with 'love your neighbour', 'challenging inequalities and working for justice' is embedded in the church's mission at all times. We see this in the Five Marks of Mission: 'To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind' (Anglican Communion, 2020) and in Bosch's 'six faces' of mission: Christ incarnate, 'the One who sides with the people in shanty towns on the edge of the city…who suffers in and with the victims of oppression…and is moved with compassion for people on the edge' (Bosch, 1991, cited in Action of Churches Together in Scotland, 2008, p. 19).

While this theme is more prominent in the HIV/AIDS literature, it also comes across strongly in the following specific ways in the COVID-19 literature:

- Listen to the voices of those usually ignored and silenced;
- 'Be one' with the marginalised;
- Challenge unjust structures; and
- Hold governments to account.

2.2.1. Listen to the voices of those usually ignored and silenced

Jiménez (2020, p. 6), from the Methodist Church of Mexico, reminds us that there are many who cannot stay at home during this virus and are 'suffering the shortage and failures of health care systems'. This virus looks very different to them, and it is those people who the church must be engaged with at this time. If we wish to '"participate in the unfolding historical narrative of God…to recognize who Jesus is and seek to live in the light of this revelation"' (Swinton and Mowat, cited in Purdie, 2020, p. 11), then we 'must listen to the world in which we live, to both the dominant and *the marginal voices*…and to bring these into conversation with scripture and tradition in order to discern the breath of the Spirit' (Purdie, 2020, p. 11, italics mine). Roxburgh and Robinson (2020) remind us that Scripture tells us how the church in Philippi 'was built from an encounter with Lydia, with a slave girl and a jailor' and these sorts of experiences, where a marginal and usually silenced voice has been heard and led to positive change, have been shared by numerous church planters across Europe. As a church with activist roots, this is a good reminder to The Salvation Army to ensure that when it is meeting need and speaking out it is listening authentically to those marginalised voices rather than assuming it knows what is needed in communities to alleviate suffering and challenge injustices. The Salvation Army must be following the lead of those who are marginalised as they articulate their own needs and desires for change.

2.2.2. 'Be one' with the marginalised

'To be faithful to the kingdom…the church must be with those to whom the kingdom belongs: the poor, the marginalized, the invisible ones' (Jimenez, 2020, p. 6). Again, this is particularly prominent in the HIV/AIDS literature, however, recognising that COVID-19 is not an 'equal opportunity' virus, this call for a 'Church [that] is not only for the poor but more substantially, a Church of the poor' (Deguma *et al.*, 2020, p. 370) also appears in the COVID-19 literature. This is key to both liberation theology and Catholic teaching on the 'Preferential Option for the Poor'; both of which authors were drawn to when reflecting on how the church should respond to the pandemic. Deguma *et al*. (2020) emphasises the fact that the whole community is strengthened when the church prioritises assisting, and being with, the marginalised. Additionally, Perera (2020) calls on the church to pray to understand 'the anguish of the refugee and the rape victim, the homeless & hungry, the marginalised and the abused' and go beyond just serving them. 'The church and theology must involve the poor in their making of theology and practice, because the input and participation of the poor and the victims is fundamental for a church and theology full of life' (Sobrino, 2007, cited in Jimenez, 2020, p. 7)

2.2.3. Challenge unjust structures

'Being one' with the most marginalised leads to challenging the very structures that keep them marginalised, as echoed in the Five Marks of Mission.

> ‘The church should be acting now to dismantle the social injustices that render the people who suffer the most discrimination the least likely to survive a pandemic. There is no clearer proclamation of the work of Christ in the world than prioritising those with the fewest advantages. This is what we need to be doing now.’ (Adam and Clough, 2020, p. 6)

One of the ways the church can challenge oppressive structures during this time is to ensure it doesn’t fall straight back into the ‘trap of capitalism’ when life begins to return to ‘normal’. Carvalhaes (2020) calls the church to consider whether it will ‘support the bailing out of profit-driven corporations, or will we demand a minimum wage so that all people can survive and be able to stay at home’ as we move back to ‘normal’? ‘Will we see that most of what we use isn’t really needed and most of what we take from the earth isn’t necessary?’ (Carvalhaes, 2020). Part of challenging oppressive structures includes repenting for our part in creating and upholding them. Wright (2020) calls on the church to repent for ‘our real ‘trespasses’ (against one another, in our political systems; against the natural world and particularly the animal kingdom, in our farming and food-chain systems) of which we should have repented long ago’. In this context, as opposed to the individual repentance of sins, it would appear that Wright (2020) agrees with Carvalhaes (2020) in COVID-19 being an ‘altar-call’ to repent of our complicity in upholding harmful structures and patterns of living that are leading us on a ‘fast road to a collective death’ (Carvalhaes, 2020). However, Wright (2020) is keen to emphasise that it shouldn’t have taken the COVID-19 pandemic to move the church to corporately repent in this way.

2.2.4. Hold governments to account

Wright (2020) reminds us that God holds us responsible for decisions we make in the world He has placed us in authority over, and therefore part of the church challenging inequalities and working for justice should involve demanding ‘proper investigation and accountability for whatever it was that caused the virus to leak out, and for the lesser ways in which various countries and governments have, or have not, dealt wisely in preparing for a pandemic and then handling it’. Barrett (2020) states that the church must resist allowing the government to claim that now is not the time to look at past mistakes. The church must hold the government to account for the fact that the NHS doesn’t have the capacity to deal with the pandemic due to consistent underfunding and competitive tendering. Hand in hand with holding governments to account, VanderWeele (2020) encourages the church, alongside other religious communities, to advocate for better data so that when policy makers are making decisions about when to reopen and head back to ‘normal’ they are making decisions that benefit all, including the most marginalised.

2.3. Point to a New World

Bringing together the directive to hold governments to account and the response of the Early Church to the Antonine Plague in the 2nd Century, Wright (2020) highlights another

theme that came strongly out of the COVID-19 literature, that of 'pointing to a New World', or more specifically, God's Kingdom:

> 'In following this vocation, we will thereby be doing what Jesus told his followers in John 16: in the power of the Spirit, we will be holding the world to account. Just as the Jesus-followers were showing the officials of the Roman empire that there was a different way to run society, so there will be signs of God's kingdom that can emerge from the creative, healing, restorative work of church members today.' (Wright, 2020).

These words mirror one of Bosch's 'six faces' of mission: '"Christ will come again"…focus on second coming of Christ…a new heaven and new earth…the mission of the church is to witness to the temporary, provisional nature of society, and to hold up the hope of a new society in God's time' (Bosch, 1991, cited in Action of Churches Together in Scotland, 2008, p. 22). During COVID-19, pointing to this New World is heavily linked to risking self in order to love and serve others, as explored in the description of the first theme. Wright (2020) describes how Christians during the Antonine Plague were able to be fearless, even as their response led to death for some, because of their strong belief in God's promises for life beyond the grave. This reiterates the importance of the church being riskier in its love of, and service to, its neighbour, as well as demonstrating the interlinked nature of God's mission.

Interestingly, there is contrast in terms of eschatological views within the literature about whether God's Kingdom is here already, and the church is to point to the ways it manifests itself by helping people to experience it here on earth (Hutton, 2020; Wells, 2020 and Wright, 2020), or if God's Kingdom will be ushered in when Jesus returns, and the church is to demonstrate the temporary nature of this world in order to point people towards a New – eternal – World (Hirsch, 2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020 and Lennox, 2020). As demonstrated in the 'love and serve your neighbour' section, Hirsch and Lennox's views come hand in hand with a seemingly more 'blasé' attitude towards death. As explored already, the danger with this view is the risk of not valuing life as it is now. Additionally, missiologically, a solely future eschatology in which the world will be utterly destroyed when Jesus ushers in God's Kingdom, offers less motivation to uphold all aspects of mission, specifically what is phrased in the Five Marks of Mission as striving 'to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth' (Anglican Communion, 2020). In contrast, a future view may help the church, in the instance of COVID-19, to see itself as resurrection people who are already dead, and are therefore willing to risk their lives to love and serve others.

With this in mind, the literature calls on the church to point to a New World in various ways:

- Have a prophetic voice and posture;

- Be a resurrection people, of abundant life; and
- Join and model the new thing God is doing.

2.3.1. Have a prophetic voice and posture

Rohr (2020) quotes Virgilio Elizondo, calling on churches to adopt a prophetic role by living out a new lifestyle, one that COVID-19 has given us the space to live out. A 'new way of relating with persons, goods, institutions, and God—that is itself an arresting alternative to the ways of the world' (Elizondo, 2020, cited in Rohr, 2020). Searle (2020) argues that adopting a prophetic posture means listening to those who are speaking prophetically in the community, while Tomlin (2020) highlights how COVID-19 has forced people to live lives of more self-control and the church should speak prophetically into this different 'moral universe', emphasising how continuing to live this way will lead to a better future for all. For Rohr (2020a) this prophecy is to be lived out by the previously powerless stepping forward, from death to life, and confronting those in power.

2.3.2. Be a resurrection people, of abundant life

This is echoed in the second way that the literature calls for the church to point to a New World, in being people of abundant life. By supporting and 'being with' those who are powerless as they come 'out of their tombs of substandard housing, disease-infected neighborhoods, economically enslaving jobs, schools that strengthened illiteracy, and churches that perpetuated segregation' (Rohr, 2020a), and step from death into life, the church demonstrates what it means to be a people of life over death. This obviously ties into 'being with' the marginalised, as explored in the previous theme, and gives the church another perspective to that call. Specifically, it means not shying away from naming the pain, but ultimately pointing to new life through Jesus (Beamish, 2020). Wells and Knudsen Langdoc (2020) emphasise that being people of abundant life means not becoming overly fixated on what is prohibited, and instead focusing on what is possible at this time. Rohr (2020b) shares this focus on what is possible, highlighting how 'the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus shows us what's fully possible. God will always bring yet more life and wholeness out of seeming chaos and death…[and this] allows us to work together toward "what can be".'

2.3.3. Join and model the new thing God is doing

Rohr's (2020b) emphasis on God always bringing life out of death leads us to the final way the literature encourages the church to point to a New World – join with the new thing that God is doing. Wells (2020, cited in YourNeighbour, 2020) encourages the church to 'over accept' the situation the pandemic has left the church in and commit to fitting into the larger story of what God is doing at this time, whatever that may look like. Wright (2020) points back to another disaster faced by the Early Church – a famine in Antioch during AD 41 and 54 – to demonstrate that instead of focusing on why the famine was

happening the Early Church quickly realised 'that what God was doing, he was going to do through them'. Consequently, the church during COVID-19 has a responsibility to accept God's invitation to work through it as He does a new thing. Peppiatt (2020) reminds us that 'human beings can participate with God as his co-workers to bring his Kingdom of salvation, healing, wholeness, and shalom'. The key for the church is to remember that God's work during COVID-19 will be done through us, for 'God works in all things *with and through* those who love him' (Wright, 2020).

2.4. Pray, listen and discern

A key part of Wells' (2020, cited in YourNeighbour, 2020) call for the church to fit into God's larger story was the process of praying to discern how God wants the church to be part of this new thing God is doing. Consistently across the literature, the number one thing identified for the church to be doing at this time is praying. This includes many different prayers – 'prayers that see people, that visit the most vulnerable people in their most daring needs. Prayers that act prophetically by calling each other to care for those abandoned by companies, governments, families. Prayers that makes us decide who will go around our streets and neighborhoods to check in to see who needs something.' (Carvalhaes, 2020). Prayers that create space for the church to listen to what God is saying (Mann, 2020 and Tennent, 2020), prayers that remind the church to call out in trust that Jesus will do the things it cannot do (Carvalhaes, 2020 and Tabb, 2020), and prayers for discernment about what is next, including about how to continue praying (Mann, 2020 and Peppiatt, 2020). It means praying without ceasing (Peppiatt, 2020).

Prayer and discernment are treated in the literature as pre-requisites to many of the other themes that emerge. Cray (2020), Diocesan Advocate for Pioneer Ministry and Fresh Expressions of Church, claims that 'discernment is by far and away the capacity most needed by church planters and those undertaking mission initiatives', and that hasn't changed during the pandemic. The church must be discerning how to receive the 'gifts' of this pandemic, even as they don't look like gifts, and that may require new acts of resistance, such as daring to enjoy what God has given us (Wells and Knudsen Langdoc, 2020). Discernment must be communal and personal (Robinson, 2020) and the church must be prepared to listen across differences in order to discern what God is doing, and therefore how to join in (Roxburgh, 2020). Finally, Purdie (2020, p. 2) reminds us that during a time of crisis we shouldn't be afraid to ask difficult questions, 'trusting that missional clarity will emerge'. Consequently, an implication for TSA in this area is the need to spend time in prayer listening to God in order to discern what God is saying about mission at this time prior to making missional decisions.

2.5. Lament and make space for suffering

Alongside prayer, one of the strongest themes to come out of the literature – spearheaded particularly by Wright (2020) – is the need to lament. Wright (2020) describes the main

thrust of his book as the need to resist the knee-jerk reaction to have answers and to, instead, allow a time 'of lament, of restraint, of precisely not jumping to 'solutions''. During times of pain and suffering, such as this pandemic, he calls on the church and Christians alike 'to lament…to complain…to state the case and leave it with God' (Wright, 2020). Unfortunately, despite almost 40% of the Psalms involving lament, Lynch (2017, cited in Peppiatt, 2020a) tells us that 'mainstream Charismatic worship hardly gives it a passing nod'. This leaves churches unprepared during this pandemic to face the pain and suffering of its congregants with the sort of honesty found in the Psalms. After all, 'the mystery of the biblical story is that God also laments' (Wright, 2020a). Searle (2020) links lamenting with having a prophetic voice; the act of being honest with ourselves and with God and, therefore, being champions of those who are suffering.

2.5.1. Be people of hope

However, lament is nuanced and complex. It goes beyond just crying and gnashing teeth because it takes place in the context of hope in God (Harrington, 2020). In fact, Wells (2020, cited in YourNeighbour, 2020) encourages the church to start with lament, but to then allow that lament to grow into a statement of faith and hope. This – continuing to hope in God – comes out strongly in the literature, in the context of lament and outside of it. As detailed in the previous theme around pointing to a New World, Peppiatt (2020b) calls on the church to have, and to demonstrate, a 'sure and certain hope…that this is not the only life'. Nelson (2020) reflects on the parallel deaths of Lazarus and Jesus – especially pertinent when COVID-19 collided with Easter. She concludes that medicine during COVID-19 can only ever be a Lazarus to the church's Jesus, and that the church needs to be offering the nation the ultimate hope, that of Jesus and his triumph over death. Hope is the church's unique gift (Nelson, 2020).

2.5.2. Be vulnerable in the 'not-knowing'

Crucially, the church must hold onto, and offer out this hope without feeling the need to give answers. The church must embrace vulnerability in order to share each other's burdens and point each other to the hope we have in Jesus (Bradbury, 2020 and Peppiatt, 2020b). When speaking about not feeling the pressure to give answers, Wright (2020) presents the example of Paul in the Book of Romans coming to God and saying he doesn't know what to pray for. Wright (2020) claims that it is in moments like this, as we lament and go to pray, that we become caught up in the 'inner, Triune life of God' and realise that ''not-knowing' is itself the right place to be'.

> 'Not only do we, the followers of Jesus, not have any words to say, any great pronouncements on 'what this all means' to trumpet out to the world (the world, of course, isn't waiting eagerly to hear us anyway); but we, the followers of Jesus, find ourselves caught up in the groaning of creation, and we discover that at the

> same time God the Spirit is groaning within us. That is our vocation: to be in prayer, perhaps wordless prayer, at the point where the world is in pain.' (Wright, 2020)

Dell (2020) relates the 'not-knowing' to the story of Job, reminding us that Job got no answers to his questions, and admitted that he didn't understand why he suffered, however he was led into a more mature faith than he'd ever had before.

2.5.3. Create a space where COVID-19 can be processed as trauma

Within the call to lament, there is a trend in the literature calling on the church to view peoples' experiences of COVID-19 as trauma, and to therefore create a church with more space for the acknowledgement of suffering (Barrett, 2020; Pahlen, 2020 and Rohr 2020c). Allen (2020) reminds us how the Early Church built new meaning out of the trauma of Jesus' death in such a way that led to a new identity with the traumatic event at its centre. While she is not saying that the church should now create a new identity with COVID-19 at the centre, she is pointing the church towards a trauma-informed Christianity that 'compel[s] the church to respond from a position of helping those in greatest need and those who have experienced the greatest trauma' (Allen, 2020, p. 39).

> 'When Christians are struggling with personal trauma which they are only beginning to navigate, like Peter, Christ invites them to the table as they sit in the depth of their trauma. Christians remember Christ's death and have a Saviour who understands the pain of their trauma and calls them to follow Him. If Christians need to find safety and security in the triumph over death, the Resurrected One invites them to lay their grief and wounds at the table and to share in the meal, as he invited the disciples and Peter to join him in a meal of bread and fish.' (Allen, 2020, p. 37-38).

She, along with others in the literature, argue that churches that recognise, and makes space for, the trauma of COVID-19 are better equipped to support their congregations and communities to process what has happened and move forward (Allen, 2020; Barrett, 2020 and Pahlen, 2020). Adopting a trauma-informed approach is already important to those working in contracted services. Therefore, there is already a framework within TSA that corps officers could learn from that which would help them to acknowledge the trauma of COVID-19 in their congregational life. Rohr (2020c) explains that this is through solidarity; a solidarity that is only real if it is felt and suffered, allowing God to reach us through our suffering. Fraser (2020) reminds us that suffering is what fills our churches, rather than emptying them, and churches therefore have a responsibility to speak to that suffering; to be a church for broken people who can experience this brokenness together. Allowing space in our churches to experience this suffering together reminds and encourages us to 'invite God's presence to hold and sustain us' (Rohr, 2020c).

We see here that providing hope, accepting the 'not-knowing' through vulnerability and creating space for the pandemic to be processed as trauma all come together to form a picture of how the church should lament. The literature also provides some practical suggestions for the church to go forward in lament. For example, Carvalhaes (2020) suggests a prayer service: 'gather people online, read the book of Lamentations or Psalms to each other, then say out loud all of your frustrations with this virus, your anger about this situation and share it with each other. End with a word of gratitude'. McLendon (2020) calls on the church to weave lament into its liturgy as we head back to 'normal', while Peppiatt (2020a), by explaining how Charismatic Christians like herself avoid acknowledging pain and loss, calls for spaces for the sharing of testimonies that don't have a happy ending. After all, Bradbury (2020) reminds us that being 'a vulnerable community of suffering and service' is a 'means of being a blessing to the world', just like Israel was. There is a clear implication here for TSA, both as corps reopen but also for the way online services are conducted. Space must be made for testimonies of COVID-19 that acknowledge the pain and suffering of this time to be shared, and this space must be safe and inclusive. There is an additional challenge for TSA here, about how this can be done online. One suggestion is to create this space within a small group structure (something that the external espoused literature prioritises).

2.6. Be present in community

Rohr's (2020) reference above to God's presence leads us into another theme that comes out strongly – that of 'presence'. This emerges both in the importance of coming into God's presence at this time and the need for the church to be 'present' and/or a 'presence' with people at this time – what Wells (2020) refers to as the missional foundation of 'being with' (Wells, 2017, cited in Colwill, 2020). 'Being with' involves 'learning the language' of the people the church wants to be present with (Colwill, 2020 p. 7). Wright (2020) reminds us that being 'energised' by God's presence is vital to mission, and this is what should drive the church into being a presence with, and for, others.

The literature points to various ways the church should be present, and practice presence, at this time:

- The church as a sign of God's presence;
- Focus on community, particularly **local** community;
- Challenge individualism; and
- Join with others.

2.6.1. The church as a sign of God's presence

Omondi (2020, p. 3) describes the Church's visibility 'as the most powerful message the world can receive…because it shows God present in our world'. The literature indicates that this visibility of the church is not only important as a 'sign' for non-Christians, to

point them to God, but as an anchor for Christians. Stock (2020) carried out research with priests in the Catholic Movement of the Church of England as they dealt with lockdown and the closing of churches. The priests in the study emphasised that it was important to their congregants that they filmed themselves carrying out mass inside the building as the building reminded them of God's presence presiding over the community (Stock, 2020). Bagnall (2020) also emphasises the fact that the physical church makes Christ tangible to Christians and non-Christians alike.

Conversely, Stock's (2020) research also suggests that the importance of a physical church building is less integral than the priests self-identified, instead emphasising that 'presence' doesn't have to be physical to still be impactful. Stock (2020, p. 7) argues that 'the Christian community is formed through and in Jesus Christ' and therefore liturgy – carried out online, for example – provides a place to live out presence in the absence of physical presence. Nevertheless, whether it is physically or through online channels, authors agree that the visibility of the church's presence is what is important, especially during such a trying time. 'The presence of the Church during a major incident is an important living out of the gospel and of following the example of Christ's ministry of being with those in need and in crisis. It also presents a sign of hope' (Donnelly and McManus, 2006, p. 663). There is a challenge here for TSA in how to maintain visibility beyond just the offering of practical assistance. One way to do this could be by adopting what Wells (2019) refers to as 'being with'. 'Being with' a community, particularly those who are marginalised, involves centring the people who are in need and refusing to approach the situation as if these people are a problem that needs to be solved. It is an ongoing relationship that cherishes people and sees their skills and assets.

2.6.2. Focus on community, particularly local community

Across the literature there was a sense of admiration for the ways that people have come together and supported each other in their communities during lockdown. Dell (2020, p. 3) describes how 'in our collective effort to fight the virus, we are finding new depths of community spirit and of sacrifice' while Rohr (2020b) comments on how 'we're now seeing many people, religious and secular, from all around the world, coming together to form alternative systems for sharing resources, living simply, and imagining a sustainable future'. Welby (2020) calls on the church to hold onto that focus on community as we look to the future and Small (2020, p. 6) reminds us that the church was never meant to be a building that people visited on a weekly basis, but instead was meant to be a 'relationship community of believers' which now has the opportunity to 'connect in different ways at different times'. Rohr (2020b) challenges the church with the reminder that Paul taught Christians that faith 'must take actual form in a living, loving group of people. Otherwise, love is just a theory'.

So what does this call to focus on community mean in practice, in the depths of this pandemic? Rohr (2020d) calls the church back into authentic community; something which he claims the formal church has lost sight of and been unable to create over recent years. He points to:

> '…the emergence of new faith communities seeking to return to this foundational definition of church. These may not look like our versions of traditional "church," but they often exemplify the kinds of actual community that Jesus, Paul, and early Christians envisioned. People are gathering digitally and in person today through neighborhood associations, study groups, community gardens, social services, and volunteer groups. They're seeking creative ways of coming together, nurturing connection, of healing and whole-making.' (Rohr, 2020d, p. 14).

For Hirsch (2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020), authentic community is beginning to look at each individual apartment building as a village, really focusing in on the 'local' and building community with those right in front of us. Mission involves being outward-looking, 'sent' people, and Hirsch (2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020, p. 21) argues that this involves starting from where God has sent you – 'expressing that sentness' as much as you can in your home and local community. Bagnall (2020, p.2) makes a similar claim, stating that 'the role of the Church is to love people locally', while Glasman, Sinclair and Roxburgh (2020, p. 4) call on the church to bless the land close to it; 'the hospital, the police station and the supermarket, the truck stop and the garage, the land itself'. Hirsch (2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020) calls on the church to be radical in its re-focus on the local:

> '…it's something different to be very radically local and small and on mission where you are, wherever that is. Right now, our movement is not limited. We're allowed to go outside. There's no curfew or nothing like that, but our kids can't go to school and I'm not going to the office and our churches aren't holding services. And so our community is suddenly, kind of radically, restricted to the floor of our apartment building where we know all of our neighbors across the street and down the hall or across the hall and down the hall.' (Hirsch, 2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020).

2.6.3. Challenge individualism

Just as an earlier theme called on the church to 'be one' with the marginalised, the church's emphasis on community and 'renewed sense of dependence on one another' (Bagnall, 2020, p. 1) should challenge the individualism that our Western society so highly values. Campanele (2020) explains how COVID-19 has sped up the paradigm shift Western society was experiencing; one that was beginning to reject the individualism central to our current paradigm. Consequently, the church has the opportunity to demonstrate a different way of living and being together. Fraser (2020a) highlights the difficulty of doing this with social distancing in place but emphasises the fact that all true religion calls for a

transfer of the 'centre of interest in life from self to the Other — that Other being both God and other people'.

However, the church must resist the urge, especially through the current online approaches to worship and gathering, for '"our very understanding of community" to devolve "into a sort of relationship of isolated individuals"' (Small, 2020, p. 4). After all, the sort of community the church should be demonstrating 'is more than just a congregation of individuals or "connected individuals"', instead it is one that invests in relationships in a deep and meaningful way that emphasises the interconnected nature of all humanity (Francis, 2019, cited in Sbardelotto, 2020, p. 76). Mann (2020) describes these types of relationships and community as 'dwelling in and through each other'. Achieving this requires time and attention, as well as patience for those who don't have the privilege of extra time but should still have an equal role in building this new community.

2.6.4. Join with others

The final aspect of being present in community that comes out of the literature is the need to join with others. This includes secular organisations and work happening in the community outside of the church, not just the need for ecumenical solidarity and partnership. Campanele (2020) reminds us that Christianity does not have the monopoly on goodness, and therefore the church should be joining up with the good things being done in its communities. Colwill (2020) tells us that working in partnership is key for mission, and this should be underpinned by a theology that works for the transformation of society with others. The implication here for TSA is a reminder that it doesn't have to 'do everything' itself. TSA has a 'unique selling point' in the fact that its identity is rooted in Christ and it is able to offer spiritual support and nurturing. Therefore, there need be no fear of partnering with others who have more or better placed resources to deliver good work in the community. In fact, TSA could use this as an opportunity to 'be salt and light' in those partnership interactions.

Linking together the call to 'join with others' and the call to 'challenge inequalities and work for justice', Johnson (2020) calls the church in the Global North 'to remember its responsibility to the church in the Global South as the virus spreads, given that most health and medical resources are in the Global North'. Wright (2020) adds to this by calling on church leaders around the world to work together to ensure the world doesn't rush back to policies focused on profiteering that rely on keeping these unequal power relations between the Global North and Global South in place. Finally, Harrington (2020) calls on churches to come together and share their experiences of COVID-19, enabling the formation of a collective memory that raises up the voices and narratives of those not being heard now and helps with the processing of trauma. This call to join with others in forming a collective memory also links to the need for the church to listen to the voices of those typically silenced and to be a space where trauma can be acknowledged and

addressed. Consequently, this links to the earlier implications for TSA detailed in these sections. It may be a challenge for a traditionally activist church, keen to 'jump in', solve social problems and meet need, to take the time to hear voices that may not be immediately forthcoming, especially when it comes to acknowledging trauma and creating a collective memory representative of all.

2.7. Be imaginative and innovative, led by the Spirit

The theme most closely aligned to the practical application of mission that features in the COVID-19 literature is a call for mission to be imaginative and innovative, led by the Spirit. Hirsch (2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020) states that our first battle in identifying how to move mission forward at this time is in 'reimagining who we are' and 'what our functions are'. He states that this battle will be won through imagination. These thoughts are echoed by Robinson (2020), who claims that mission involves dreaming, and dreaming is 'imagination + innovation'. Wells (2020, cited in YourNeighbour, 2020) tells us that this is the perfect time for the church to dream about what the church could look like. He calls on the church to take this opportunity to imagine a smaller, more faithful and more playful church and to begin to put in place what is needed – post COVID-19 – to make that dream a reality. After all, the church worships an imaginative God (Glasman, Sinclair and Roxburgh, 2020 and Jiménez, 2020)!

2.7.1. Allow the Holy Spirit to surprise you

The authors have thoughts on what this process of being imaginative and innovative should look like and should include. The first is that the church should be prepared for the Holy Spirit to surprise it in its missional call and pull it away from pre-made plans, strategy and programme, and from leaning too much on its previous experiences. Reflecting on their call to the church to be prepared to listen to the voices of those usually silenced and ignored, Roxburgh and Robinson (2020) speak again to the example of Paul arriving in Philippi and how having no group of men to meet with and no synagogue to ground himself in would have thrown his whole mission plan. Instead, he had to be open to the Spirit surprising him; something the Spirit did indeed do by leading him to a poor woman, among other surprising encounters. Cray (2020) also points to the fact that the church in Acts was continually surprised.

2.7.2. Allow the Holy Spirit to pull you out of your comfort zone

The second point the literature makes when talking about missional imagination is that the Holy Spirit is likely to pull the church out of its comfort zone. Cray (2020) states that the church is called to 'witness beyond what is familiar, beyond its comfort zone'. Hutton (2020) agrees, stating that conceiving mission involves having a mind open to new possibilities, even, and especially, those that take the church out of its comfort zone. However, Cray (2020) states immediately afterwards that being in an unfamiliar setting should always involve discernment about how to move forward; a theme that has already

been explored for mission more widely. Roxburgh and Robinson (2020) agree, stating that like Paul, at this time of disorientation the church *must* look to God as agent.

2.7.3. Abundance over scarcity

The final point is the encouragement for churches to apply a lens of abundance over scarcity. Wells (2020, cited in YourNeighbour, 2020) states how early on in his ministry he'd unintentionally set up barriers within himself to resist God's abundance, always making excuses about there not being 'enough' God. Later he realised that there was, and had actually always been, an 'over-abundance' of God, and that he needed to be more open to accepting God's abundant gifts. He takes the story of the Israelites being in exile and emphasises how scarce everything was for the Israelites at that time. However, he then points to how Israel 'found a faith and an intimacy and an encounter with God greater than it had ever had before. And that is why it is written down in the Bible' (Wells, 2020, cited in YourNeighbour, 2020). The church is called, at this time, to abundantly accept the gifts that God is giving, rather than trying to work from a place of scarcity. One example of applying this abundance lens includes developing a new way of being together with those who are attending online church, rather than concentrating solely on trying to bring 'back' people who have stopped attending during this time (Passmore, 2020). This is an approach that will be good to explore further in faith-based facilitation workshops with senior leaders of TSA. Hirsch (2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020) shares that one way the church can do this is by investing more time and energy into building the capacity of emerging leaders who can take on small group roles and increase the ability of churches to deliver more meaningful pastoral care. This is interesting considering that this is something that churches could actually do even in the lockdown period – it doesn't rely on previous programme resources.

2.8. Share the Gospel

The final theme that arises out of the COVID-19 literature is central to the church's understanding of mission at any given time. 'Sharing the Gospel' or 'Proclaiming the Good News' is, in fact, stated by the Anglican Communion (2020) as 'a summary of what all mission is about'. Perhaps it is for this reason that sharing the Gospel doesn't appear as often as the majority of the above themes, as it is assumed that all of the other themes automatically feed into the sharing of the Gospel[3]. For example, Colwill (2020) states that sharing the Gospel comes from loving people well – it happens through 'natural encounters' and 'intentional actions' to love and serve people. However, HIV literature also points to a missional approach that prioritises loving and serving your neighbour over conversion and evangelism (Dube, 2002). While this hasn't come out of the COVID-19

[3] In fact, in the initial analysis that used existing conceptions of mission as a framework to begin from, The Salvation Army's 'saving souls' was the only mission objective that didn't show up in any of the literature.

literature, it does present a different point of view that may be the reason for the lack of emphasis on sharing the Gospel.

Wright (2020) begins by chastising the church if it has taken a pandemic to push it to stepping out of its comfortable lifestyle and sharing the Good News, suggesting that he always sees this as a missional priority. It is possible that this theme largely depends on what 'sharing the Gospel' looks like to those responding to the call. For example, Hutton (2020) states that mission must be 'grounded in the good news of Jesus', but doesn't indicate if this specifically involves evangelism, or the 'sharing' part of 'sharing the Gospel'. Conversely, Searle (2020) states that the church must stop being so attached to a building and must be stepping out, sharing the gospel, trusting that God has gone before. McLendon (2020, p. 3) points us to the work of the church in Acts, as many authors have done throughout the literature, and states that Acts provides a basic claim: 'when the Word is preached and Christ is exalted as the risen and ascended Lord, the Spirit's power manifestly grows the church in the face of political, religious, and sectarian opposition'. Colwill (2020) explains that we have an opportunity during this pandemic to 'grow a sense of proper confidence and articulation of the gospel' despite the slow and minimal reopening of churches – something that some Christians saw as evidence of opposition against the church by the government (Marie, 2020).

3. Identified Theologians & Missiologists

3.1. N.T. Wright

As already indicated in the section above on 'lament', the primary focus of N.T. Wright's book 'God and the Pandemic' is on the need for the church to take the time to stop and lament. This is also echoed in his earlier article in TIME magazine (Wright. 2020a). Wright (2020) uses Romans 8, particularly verses 22-27 about the groaning of creation, to reiterate the fact that the church should not be giving easy answers at this time. The God we see in Romans 8:22-27 is a God who groans with us, and the Spirit is one who intercedes on our behalf when we don't know what to pray because we are overcome with not-knowing, misery and pain.

> 'Dare we then say that God the creator, facing his world in melt-down, is himself in tears, even though he remains the God of ultimate Providence? That would be John's answer, if the story of Jesus at Lazarus's tomb is anything to go by. Might we then say that God the creator, whose Word brought all things into being and pronounced it 'very good', has no appropriate words to say to the misery when creation is out of joint?' (Wright, 2020)

Therefore, we reach his conclusion that Christianity offers no answers to COVID-19 and it's not supposed to. Contrary to voices claiming that COVID-19 is a sign from God that the 'end times' are upon us and that we need to repent now, Wright (2020) claims that Jesus was not only the final message from God to repent but also in Matthew 24:36 we are told that even Jesus didn't know when the end times were coming (see also Valerio and Heugh, 2020).

> Therefore, 'any claim to tell from world events when the 'second coming' will occur is a claim to know more than Jesus himself (Mark 13.32). Jesus himself is the reason why people should turn from idolatry, injustice and all wickedness. The cross is where all the world's sufferings and horrors have been heaped up and dealt with.' (Wright, 2020).

Linked to this idea of Jesus being God's final call to humanity to repent of its sins, Wright's (2020) views on how the church should be pointing people to a New World at this time is shaped by his belief that this New World, God's Kingdom, is already here. He shares this view with Wells (2020) who claims that 'it's Easter, not the coronavirus, that changes everything. It's Easter that shows God will never give up on us. It's Easter that demonstrates that this relationship, for which God created the universe and because of which Jesus died, is finally, ultimately, eternally unbreakable'. Wright's (2020) call for the church to point people to this New World involves the church joining with what God is doing and loving and serving those in need during this pandemic. He claims that this loving

and serving, 'being Christ' and joining with what God is already doing is more important that trying to understand why the pandemic has happened:

> 'These people, prayerful, humble, faithful, will be the answer, not to the question Why? But to the question What? What needs to be done here? Who is most at risk? How can we help? Who shall we send? God works in all things with and through those who love him.' (Wright, 2020).

3.1.1. Engagement with John Lennox

This section is included because there are a handful of theological points on which N.T. Wright and John Lennox differ which are worth briefly engaging with. Firstly, Lennox (2020) is more than willing to explore the idea that COVID-19 is a sign from God – what he describes as a 'loudspeaker' – calling on us to turn to a God we may have ignored up to this point. While Wright (2020) does acknowledge that God is free and able to send any 'signs' He wants if He so desires, he doesn't see COVID-19 as anything other than a result of our broken world.

Secondly, the entire premise of Wright's (2020a) TIME article is the idea that Christianity doesn't offer any answers to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in fact, it's not supposed to. In contrast, Lennox's (2020, p. 21) book works from the opposite premise, that 'Christianity has something to say about the issue of natural disasters like coronavirus—something that is not to be found elsewhere'. In many ways, this is linked to the authors' differences in view on the presence of God's Kingdom (Wright believing this New World is already with us, in contrast to Lennox believing this New World is yet to come). Wright's (2020) views on God's Kingdom leads him, as described above, to prompt the church to point to this New World by working for justice in the here and now; joining with what God is doing and loving and serving those in need, particularly during this pandemic. In contrast, Lennox (2020) emphasises the lack of justice in this world, even as we work as Christians to challenge inequalities and work for justice, and uses this point to challenge the atheistic idea that it is 'enough' to accept that death is the end of humanity, including for those who have fallen victim to the COVID-19 pandemic. He believes that Christianity's answers lie in the fact that God will be ultimate Judge, as demonstrated in Jesus' resurrection, therefore we will have justice to disasters such as COVID-19 when God ushers His New World in. Lennox (2020) also argues that Christianity allows Christians to 'maintain perspective' on the pandemic, reminding them that they have 'already died' and therefore, as already explored in the 'love and serve your neighbour' section, should have no reason to fear taking risks and making sacrifices in order to love and serve their neighbours more fully. Unfortunately, this view does imply that only Christians have the potential willingness to risk and sacrifice in order to love and serve others; something that is simply not true.

Lastly, the very approaches that each author uses to engage with the pandemic are different. Lennox's (2020) focus is on finding, and providing, answers to why COVID-19 has happened; consequently drawing the conclusion that justice will be delivered when God ushers in His New World, and we can rest, in the here and now, in the knowledge that we follow a God who knows suffering. Conversely, Wright (2020) does not attempt to provide answers. He's not interested in the 'why?' of the pandemic, instead he's interested in the 'what?', and he uses various parts of Scripture to demonstrate that this was the approach taken by Jesus and His disciples when they faced times of pain and suffering. In the same way that Job didn't get any answers to his suffering, Wright (2020) suggests that Christians, and the church, should instead choose to focus on how to respond to the pandemic.

3.2. Alan Hirsch

Alan Hirsch's inclusion in the literature is through an interview with Brandon O'Brien from Redeemer City to City; a network to support and resource local churches. Hirsch's focus is less on the 'what' of mission and more around the 'how to' of mission at this time. His strongest focus is on the development of new leaders – 'I think that as we're leaders we should invest in other leaders, just identify some and begin to invest in them to see how this can actually develop into really a mini ecclesia' (Hirsch, 2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020). When asked how to invest in future leaders, he emphasises the importance of discipleship - 'begin to identify and create disciples and out of disciples you're creating leaders' (Hirsch, 2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020). The implication here for TSA is to continue investing in leaders during this time, to ensure the continuation of discipleship.

Alongside developing new leaders, and in turn 'mini ecclesia', Hirsch's (2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020) focus is on the importance of generosity and hospitality in being a 'sent' people within the local community the church is called to. As already articulated in the final section, he emphasises that the first battle of defining mission during this pandemic will be won through the church's use of imagination. Tying into this emphasis on imagination was the use of chess as a metaphor. Hirsch retells the story of him first learning to play chess, when he was told to begin playing without his Queen. Hirsch explains how he would consistently lose, however over time he'd learn how to utilise the other pieces rather than just relying on the power of the Queen. Hirsch uses this metaphor, with the Queen representing the Sunday service, to encourage churches to learn how to use the other 'pieces' (parts of 'church') in order to release the church from its reliance on the Sunday service (Hirsch, 2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020).

3.3. Giles Fraser

Giles Fraser has written numerous articles about COVID-19, however only two relevant to mission are included in this review (Fraser, 2020 and Fraser, 2020a). His first (Fraser, 2020a) emphasises the importance of community, reminding the church that it is a social

institution and therefore the move online is limited in how much it can 'replicate' church. He calls on the church to challenge individualism by remembering that, as already explored in the 'be present in community' theme, 'the great aim of all true religion is to transfer the centre of interest in life from self to the Other — that Other being both God and other people' (Fraser, 2020a).

His second article (Fraser, 2020) links to Wright's (2020) call for churches to lament. Fraser (2020) calls on the church to be a place where broken and suffering people can come and have their suffering and brokenness taken seriously. He reminds the church that it 'remains one of the few spaces in our culture in which we are allowed to acknowledge the existence of futile suffering without someone feeling so uncomfortable about it that they need to reassure us all that everything is going to be OK' (Fraser, 2020).

3.4. Justin Welby

Justin Welby features in the literature with his Easter Day address on the BBC's The Andrew Marr Show (Welby, 2020). His concern is more in the immediate than many of the other authors, including justifying his decision (taken in consultation with others in the Church of England) to close churches during the lockdown period. It is perhaps because of this context that a theme came out of this address that barely appeared in the rest of the literature; the idea of the church needing to 'set an example' (Welby, 2020). Welby (2020) was clear that for the church, loving and serving your neighbour, particularly those vulnerable and in need, meant closing its doors in order to 'share in the suffering of the nation and set an example' of what love looks like at this time. Closing the church's doors meant saving lives, and that is a clear example of loving others. Interestingly, Welby's (2020) advice also went beyond that which was given in Government guidance, specifying that priests were not allowed to go into their churches either. He justifies this by claiming that priests are there 'to set an example to share in the deprivation of the things we like doing to care for others'. While Welby (2020) doesn't mention the members of the church making up the Body of Christ using that language, his argument could be seen as drawing from Body of Christ imagery. Alimi *et al*. (2020, p. 353) explains how 'Paul's image of the church as the "body of Christ" made up of many "members" working together to glorify God highlights the way in which Christians, at least, are supposed to be "in this together"'. Closing churches for everyone, priests included, is a clear and visual way of showing the rest of the country that the church sees the pandemic as something we are all 'in together'.

Welby's (2020) address also touched on other themes pulled out of the literature and identified in the previous section. For example, he encourages the church to focus on being in community with each other during this time, albeit in different ways than usual; emphasising that the church is busier than ever. He reminds the church of the reality that we are all 'one', which is in line with the idea of being 'in this together'. Therefore,

COVID-19 is an opportunity for the church to re-evaluate how it values people. Finally, he encouraged the church to continue pointing to Jesus and the hope we have in him by reminding the church that we still get to celebrate Easter, even if it's from a kitchen rather than a pulpit.

3.5. Richard Rohr

The focus of the literature by Richard Rohr is on being in community, spurred on by the reminder that we are all 'one' and are made to exist fully in connectedness and communion (Rohr, 2020). He calls on the church to protect and nurture the dignity of the members of its community, as this is the best way to sustain a community, even when it is challenged by external forces such as COVID-19 (Rohr, 2020a). As already explored in the previous section on being present in community, Rohr (2020d) claims that the formal church has lost its way in its efforts to establish genuine community and now has an opportunity to follow the lead of other organisations and groups, such as study groups and community gardens, that have naturally formed out of peoples' desire to be in community and are more closely aligned to the model of community envisioned by Jesus, Paul and the Early Christians.

3.6. Sam Wells

Sam Wells features in the literature through a combination of articles of his own and a couple written with other authors. He has the most to say about mission in the Leader's Lunch conversation facilitated by YourNeighbour.org (YourNeighbour, 2020). His biggest focus is on the idea of looking at this time, and mission in general, through a lens of abundance rather than a lens of scarcity. This is explored in more detail in the final paragraph of the 'be imaginative and innovative, led by the Spirit' section above. This focus on abundance echoes the call of others, such as N.T. Wright, for the church to have a prophetic voice, looking at what is possible rather than what is prohibited at this time (Wells and Knudsen Langdoc, 2020). This process of working from a place of abundance requires discernment and should result in the church pointing to a New World (Wells, 2020, cited in YourNeighbour, 2020 and Wells and Knudsen Langdoc, 2020). These are the other two themes that come strongly out of Wells' literature.

3.7. Israel Olofinjana

Israel Olofinjana is the only scholar within the literature to link COVID-19 with the question: 'is this the end times?' Both the article (Olofinjana, 2020) he wrote for his organisation's website – Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World – and the YouTube video (Olofinjana, 2020a) he created address this question, based on the fact that people have been asking him precisely this question. He explores different views of the four horsemen in Revelation 6, including the idea that COVID-19 is represented by the white horse and is the Anti-Christ. Ultimately, he states that he personally doesn't believe COVID-19 has ushered in the end times, or the second coming of Christ, as there have been

pandemics and disasters throughout history. However, in contrast to the prominent view in Wright's (2020) book, he does believe that COVID-19 is a sign for people to repent and prepare themselves for Christ's coming, even if COVID-19 is not the thing to usher it in.

4. Trends from other pandemics

Many of the same themes came out of the literature around other pandemics and the church under the Soviet Union, in the Eastern Bloc. The sections below give a very brief summary of where certain themes come out more strongly in this literature than in the COVID-19 literature, as well as highlighting any new themes that aren't present in the COVID-19 literature. The vast majority of this literature is from academic journals, as more time has passed since these pandemics started, giving theologians and missiologists time to reflect on how the church originally responded and whether this response is still appropriate or lessons should instead be learnt going forward. This is particularly valuable for the COVID-19 pandemic as not enough time has yet passed for these reflections, so where some themes feature more strongly in this literature than in the COVID-19 literature it may be worth reflecting on why and whether these findings are more appropriate ways for the church to be responding during this current pandemic.

4.1. The Ebola Epidemic

Even with the lack of academic literature on COVID-19, the Ebola literature already reveals parallels between the ways churches initially responded to both pandemics. Some churches in Ebola-stricken countries moved their church services onto the radio (Corman and Horikoshi, 2014) and many had to lead the way in changing traditional burial practices (Greyling *et al.*, 2016). While churches in the West haven't had to address the dangers of traditional burial practices in the same way during COVID-19, they have had to contend with changes to funeral attendance and the grieving process for families who have lost their loved ones. Otherwise, the strongest of the COVID-19 themes to come out of the Ebola literature was that of joining with others, particularly health professionals, to tackle the epidemic (Bangura, 2016 and Corman and Horikoshi, 2014), being in community – Jansen, (2019, p. 76) reminds the church that 'building resilient communities is the sign of healthy faith' – and the importance of prayer (Ko, 2020).

Something that came out strongly in the Ebola literature was the recognition that initially some churches stoked fear in their congregations by claiming that Ebola was a demonic force (Bangura, 2016). They justified the pandemic as God wanting to 'showcase His power' (Bangura, 2016) and as punishment for 'other' people's lifestyles (Marshall, 2017). There was also a lot of harmful theology around healing – suggesting that only Christ could heal, and therefore congregants should ignore health advice and medical professionals (Bangura, 2016) – and the Bible was used to justify these harmful messages, as well as continuing to encourage their congregants to come to church, shake hands and touch each other even when this was contrary to medical advice (Marshall, 2017). This is significant for TSA during COVID-19 because similar theology, messaging and tactics have been employed by some churches in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (see BBC News, 2020; Naughtie, 2020 and Petrosky, 2020). The Ebola literature is looking back at this, and

commenting on how harmful it was to people, as well as how churches felt encouraged to change their messaging from fear to hope when they felt that they were seen as potential partners in the fight against the epidemic (Jansen, 2019). It is worth, therefore, noting that now may be a good time for TSA to be speaking out against the harmful theology that is being discussed about COVID-19 (some of which Wright, 2020, addresses) and promote the church as a meaningful and important partner.

Other themes that came out of the Ebola literature that aren't in the COVID-19 literature are reminders to TSA that it has a role to play in ensuring people continue to take the virus seriously and take the adequate precautions, rather than leaving this up to the government and medical professionals. Churches in Ebola-stricken countries were vital in raising awareness of Ebola, busting myths and educating people on how to avoid catching it (see Corman and Horikoshi, 2014; Greyling *et al.*, 2016 and Marshall, 2017), as well as donating medical equipment and PPE wherever possible. One thing that wasn't mentioned directly in the COVID-19 literature, but TSA has been doing, is distributing food parcels to those in need – this was another way the church responded to Ebola (Corman and Horikoshi, 2014).

4.2. The HIV/AIDS Pandemic

Almost all the same themes emerge from the HIV/AIDS literature as from the COVID-19 literature, however the emphasis is quite different. The strongest theme to emerge from the HIV/AIDS literature is the idea that we are all 'one', particularly with the marginalised and those seen as 'other', as this should change the way churches approach mission during a pandemic. The HIV/AIDS literature uses language such as, 'the body of Christ is HIV positive' (Bate, 2014, p. 209), 'all of us are 'people living with AIDS'' (Pillay, 2003, p. 115) and '"If one member suffers, all suffer together with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26)' (Ross, 2004, p. 340). The main thrust of this is to challenge the stigma faced by those who have HIV and AIDS. While this may not immediately seem relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic, it does prompt the church to consider if there is any chance that itself and its mission may begin to stigmatise people, even unintentionally. It may not be those who have had the virus that are stigmatised, but in fact those who are most vulnerable to the virus. In efforts to protect those most vulnerable, and as society begins to 'open up' again, will the church risk forgetting about those who are still too vulnerable to walk through its doors? Will the church end up stigmatising those who are most vulnerable by attempting to return to 'normal' with those to whom COVID-19 doesn't feel like a real threat anymore?

One way for TSA to avoid this is by learning from the churches engaging with mission in a HIV/AIDS context, and by adopting the language above. TSA would look more inclusive for those who are still vulnerable to COVID-19 going forward if it adopted an attitude and posture of 'the body of Christ has COVID-19, and therefore we must make our mission work for everyone, as if everyone is as vulnerable as the most vulnerable among us'. After all, the literature tells us that '"the hardest part of having the disease is not the illness itself

or facing the prospect of death and dying, but experiencing the fear and the reality of rejection from friends, family, church members, medical professionals, and even strangers"' (De Lange, 2006, p. 259).

The other theme that comes out particularly strongly in the HIV/AIDS literature, certainly more strongly than in the COVID-19 literature, is that of 'challenge inequalities and work for justice'. For some in the literature, this also ties into the idea of having a prophetic voice. For example, De Lange (2006, p. 254) calls on churches 'not only to accept their pastoral responsibilities vis-à-vis HIV/AIDS, but also their prophetic responsibilities in exposing factors that promotes the spread of or aggravates the suffering caused by the disease, especially economic globalisation and gender inequality'. Perhaps this is such a strong call in the HIV/AIDS literature, compared to the COVID-19 literature, because enough time has passed for studies to be done on the links between poverty, inequality and HIV/AIDS. However, it is clear from the COVID-19 literature that does encourage churches to challenge inequalities and work for justice that many are already aware of the links between poverty, inequality and COVID-19 and it is never too soon for the church to step up and begin challenging these factors that make certain marginalised people more vulnerable. In fact, Kang (2005, p. 383), while speaking about the need to radicalise mission in light of HIV/AIDS, states that 'it is not enough for us [churches] to try to be nice to those with HIV/AIDS and to include them into our communities, we need to deal with the root, fundamental, structural issues so that we can be in solidarity with them, and being in solidarity with them starts in learning and knowing what to refuse and protest'.

4.3. The Church within the Eastern Bloc

Literature describing the actions of the church within the Eastern Bloc under Soviet rule was difficult to come across. The majority of the literature explores how the church was coming out from under Soviet rule and what the church looks like now in former Eastern Bloc countries. As a result, the literature explored was small, and didn't yield many results.

Nevertheless, some of the same themes in the COVID-19 literature do emerge from the Eastern Bloc literature that is available. For example, Walters (2008) tells us that one way the church showed that it was relevant and garnered support from others outside of the church during Soviet Union rule – therefore fighting its own extinction – was to play a key part in fighting for changes to human rights law. This started as advocating for the freedom of religion and belief but expanded to include human rights violations outlined by actors outside of the church, building the church's reputation as an institution that would challenge inequalities and fight for justice for everyone, not just its own people. In fact, 'it is the moral authority of Christianity which in many countries has come to provide the enduring framework for the conducting of this wider human rights campaign' (Walters, 2008, p. 12). While this may seem like a self-serving action from the church – intended to

help its own survival rather than to genuinely aid people's human rights – Walters (2008, p. 22) also tells us that the church demonstrated the Marxist values of 'love, integrity, honesty and the life of true community' in a way that Marxism didn't manage when actually put into practice.

The above are key reminders that the church and its mission in times of struggle – whether pandemics or state oppression – have an important role to play in demonstrating the world people actually want to see. While 'pointing to a New World' wasn't mentioned in the Eastern Bloc literature, it could be argued that that's what the church were doing under Soviet rule by living out a different and better way, despite the risk.

5. External Espoused Voice

As mentioned at the beginning of this review, there was a desire to capture what came up in literature that fell outside of the scope of the 'formal' theological voice but constituted the 'espoused' voice from individuals, churches and denominations external to The Salvation Army. This section is a brief summary of the external espoused voice, and the opportunity to bring it into conversation with the findings from the formal voice already discussed.

In total, 54 pieces of literature were designated part of the external espoused voice and therefore analysed. Particularly prevalent within this literature was the voice of the Catholic Church within the UK, the Evangelical Alliance and ministers from various denominations contributing to a series of talks on mission for Church Action on Poverty. Where certain themes were more prevalent in some of these organisations/denominations than others, it's highlighted below.

There was much overlap in the themes and ideas that came up in the external espoused voice in comparison to those in the formal voice. For example, the most common themes in the external espoused voice are reflected in the call in the formal voice to 'challenge inequalities and work for justice'. Additionally, the theme of 'exile' and drawing on the experience of the Israelites in the desert learning to rely on God as they got to grips with a new identity, was drawn on strongly throughout the external espoused literature. Where the themes were similar, there were, however, differences in emphasis. For example, there appeared to be a heavier focus on 'joining with others doing good work in the community' within the external espoused voice and a strong call for 'smaller missional communities', including the phrase, used by two authors, that the church should be a 'church of small groups, rather than a church that has small groups' (Laxton and Yang, 2020 and Laxton, 2020). Similarly, calls for the church to focus more on 'proclaiming the Good News' were more prevalent in the external espoused voice.

This emphasis on proclamation of the Gospel is one of the reasons this data aligns more closely to the data around mission within the internal espoused voice (as presented in the frontline interviews report). Another point of alignment is in the fact that the authors within the external espoused voice tended to focus less on the broader themes within mission (which was generally the case within the formal voice) and more on the practical elements of delivering mission. One example of this was more detail around the needs that the church should be meeting as part of mission, rather than a broader call for the church to 'love and serve your neighbour': 'This can range from simply following the lockdown rules the Government has set out to prevent the spread virus, having encouraging conversations at a physical distance over the hedge or behind the window, and making sure that those who can't leave their home are having food and prescriptions delivered' (Ringland, 2020).

Another interesting difference was the fact that many of the authors in the external espoused voice commented on the fact that prior to COVID-19 there was a negative culture of 'consumerism' within the church (see Frost, 2020; Ireland, 2020 and Smith, 2020, among others). While there was a general acknowledgement that online services could contribute to that going forward (especially as congregants can 'shop around' and hop between different services as they're streamed/uploaded online), there was also hope that this pandemic, in pushing us to focus on what is important in our lives, would help to challenge this. As people crave and look for community, there was a hope that the church could address and meet this need in a way that challenged consumerism (Christopherson, 2020, cited in Stetzer, 2020).

Nevertheless, the following themes are broad groupings of the most common ideas that emerged in the external espoused voice for mission at this time:

5.1. Mission should take place at the margins, centring the marginalised

This view of mission was particularly prominent in the literature from both the UK Catholic Church and the ministers involved in Church Action on Poverty's (CAP) video series. This is perhaps unsurprising given the Catholic 'preferential option for the poor' and CAP's focus on eradicating poverty. However, the focus of their explorations of mission went beyond just 'helping the poor' to calling on churches to do all mission from the margins, joining in solidarity with those who are marginalised and taking cues from them on what needs to be done. Whether that is working to transform unjust societal structures that make some people more vulnerable to COVID-19 (see Brower Latz, 2020; Glienecke, 2020 and Schlumpf, Winters and McElwee, 2020b), holding the government to account for their decisions and policies (Anglican Alliance, 2020) or raising up those voices usually silenced and ignored (Brower Latz, 2020 and Peters *et al.*, 2020).

5.2. Mission should look like loving and serving your neighbour, meeting their needs

As with the formal voice, there was an emphasis in the external espoused voice to ensure mission included 'loving and serving your neighbour' (see Bradbury, 2020a; Haas, 2020 and Wright, 2020b among others). Again, there was an acknowledgement that it was right to close churches and socially distance as a way of loving people, especially those most vulnerable to COVID-19. The Early Church's response to plague was also referenced by multiple authors as an example to follow (see Schlumpf, Winters and McElwee, 2020; Stiller, 2020 and Straine, 2020), however there was not the same importance placed on taking risks and sacrificing self in order to love and serve effectively and fully.

5.3. Mission should involve joining with others who are doing good work locally, because mission should be local

While joining with others and working in partnership came up in the formal voice, it was less frequent and tended to be viewed as part of the wider theme of 'being present within the community'. Within the external espoused voice, it appeared more prominently as an essential part of mission at this time. The CofE Diocese of Portsmouth (2020) reminds us that 'it's tempting to think that the Church needs to step in and to start to create special new teams of volunteers who can help people who are vulnerable or isolated. However, there are many local care groups or community groups that existed before the outbreak, who are looking for your support and already have such networks in place'. Likewise, Bower-Latz (2020), from the Nazarene Church, explains how a Nazarene church gave up operating their small foodbank to let a bigger one take over, acknowledging that it had more resources to reach more people. There was an acknowledgement that the church doesn't have to do everything, especially if groups and people are already delivering good work within the community. It was clear that this included ecumenical working (with Mumford (2020) using the fact that two very different ministers worked together to enable and support the village of Eyam to isolate itself in the 17th Century to frame his call for ecumenical solidarity) and emphasising a Gospel of 'unity' in Christ (Haas, 2020).

This emphasis on joining with those who are doing good work also linked to the view, shared by multiple authors, that mission should be centred on the local community. Echoing Alan Hirsch, Ringland (2020) felt the pandemic 'has brought the unexpected benefit of an enforced refocus on the local – those immediately around us, in our own communities' while Glienecke (2020) called on Christians to live 'intentionally on the block', carrying out mission where they are. For the authors from the Evangelical Alliance literature, this need to look outward into the community was with an intention to evangelise (Knox, 2020).

5.4. Mission is evangelism, particularly delivered through nurturing friendships

The call to evangelise was particularly strong in the literature from the Evangelical Alliance, with a whole blog series dedicated to better equipping individuals to grab hold of the 'spiritual hunger' within their communities and find genuine, meaningful ways to proclaim the Good News to their friends and family members (Calver, 2020 and Knox, 2020a). Consequently, this call to proclaim the Gospel was relational, but there was a definite trend within this literature to focus more on evangelising than on meeting the needs of those in the community.

5.5. Mission should look like active small groups and smaller missional communities

Interestingly, the external espoused voice tended to be more cynical, or at least more cautious, about online church. As already expressed, some authors were concerned that online church would replicate, and perhaps even heighten, the consumerist approach to church. For example, Frost (2020) describes online church as 'UberEats for churches' and critiques how you only need someone to log onto an online service for a few minutes for them to count in the attendance numbers. As a result, one aspect of online church that was mentioned a lot was the need to invest in strong, active small groups, and for these to develop into small missional communities, or perhaps even 'mini ecclesia' as Hirsch (2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020) stated earlier in this paper. This also meant emphasising the need for churches to empower their individual congregants to realise they can 'do mission' in their own areas of the community and their own relationships (Haas, 2020 and Pegg, 2020), linking with the points around mission being local – 'where you are'.

As a church that has recognised a need for a renewed focus through the adoption of church health strategies such as NCD (Natural Church Development), an implication of this is for TSA to support its corps officers to develop stronger small groups, both online and offline. These spaces could also be used to equip congregants to feel able to carry out mission 'where they are', in their own spheres of influence.

5.6. Mission should revolve around prayer and discernment

Finally, as articulated in the formal voice, prayer was identified as a central part of mission at this time. Many of these calls for increased prayer were for those vulnerable and marginalised; recognising prayer as one thing, at least, that individuals could do to show love for others, considering the necessary isolation and distancing measures (Larson, 2020 and Straine, 2020). Stiller (2020) articulates the approach of 'pray and avoid people', recognising that 'prayer is God's gift to us' and we should use it. Pegg (2020) calls on churches to share with their communities how much they and their congregants are praying for them, to show the communities that they love them and know that they're there.

6. Some reflections on online church

The purpose of this literature is to present emerging *missional* trends, not emerging *ecclesial* trends. However, there is a great deal in the literature about doing church *services*, with a particular focus on online church, that is worth summarising, particularly as there is some crossover with thoughts about 'doing church' in general. It is worth noting that the most extensive document exploring digital church, and some links to the mission of the church more widely, is a book compiling 1) the thoughts of various pastors from around the world and a variety of denominations about what it's been like to 'do' online during the pandemic, and 2) essays from academics and theologians working in the field of digital church and theology reflecting on emerging trends at this time. This book is Campbell, H.A. (2020) *The Distanced Church: Reflections on Doing Church Online*. Online: Digital Religion Publications (access link found in references).

There are three broad views in the literature on the emergence of online church during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first is that online church has only really been positive and digital services are the future (see Kim, 2020, cited in World Council of Churches, 2020 and Zsupan-Jerome, 2020), the second takes a more neutral view, recognising the benefits of online service but concluding that the future should hold a balance of both online and offline church (see Sbardelotto, 2020; Small, 2020 and VanderWeele, 2020) and the third calls for the church to return to gathering physically (although not necessarily return to 'normal') as soon as is practical and safe (see Passmore, 2020; Shepherd, 2020 and Wybourne, 2020). Nevertheless, regardless of these differing views, there is a strong trend stating that no matter what, the church should not go back to 'normal', this is an opportunity for change. This includes avoiding the temptation to simply recreate what is done in physical gathering online. Sbardelotto (2020, p. 75) refers to this tendency as focusing on 'transmission' and 'exhibition', rather than 'community and relationship'. The online space is different to the physical space, and therefore should be utilised differently.

The biggest positive presented in the literature about the emergence of online church during the pandemic is the fact it has bought gifts of reconnection – previous members of the physically gathered church joining online – and new connections – new people joining online services (see Elbert, 2020; Olofinjana, 2020 and Passmore, 2020). In this respect, online church can be viewed as missional as well as ecclesial as it becomes an avenue for reaching new people with the gospel. From a wider missional perspective, there are calls for the church to focus on these people and continuing to engage them rather than focusing on the church building (Small, 2020). Others stated that online church could be more interactive and collaborative than a physical gathering, thereby enabling people to build a stronger connection to the ideas being explored and how they relate to their own faith (Danielsson, 2020 and Mercer, 2020). This linked to other statements that online church can be more empowering than physical services as individual members are more

likely to be given creative roles and opportunities to take the lead in a way they wouldn't be in a church building (Danielsson, 2020 and Taylor, 2020).

Nevertheless, in contrast to the above, other authors challenge the idea of online services as an acceptable solution for church, questioning if they risk turning church members and congregants into passive viewers rather than individuals engaging in the life of the church and the transformation of the society the church operates within (Passmore, 2020 and Shepherd, 2020). This was a concern raised in the literature more widely, that in our current Western paradigm church is already turning people into consumers. Farah (2020) proposes that moving to online church may actually help the church to reflect on this more widely, potentially leading to ecclesiology becoming deinstitutionalised and the growth of more genuine, mission-seeking discipleship movements. Additionally, other authors argue that a gathered, physical presence is vital to church, particularly as the church worships a God incarnate (Small, 2020 and VanderWeele, 2020). Fraser (2020a) argues that 'technology will only help so far because religion is intrinsically a social business', while Small (2020, p. 4) states that 'the virtual cannot forever sustain the substantive and tangible. God came, in the incarnation, to be present materially with humanity, and Jesus is coming again. God wants us present, in His Presence.'

Wider missional points that emerge in the literature in the context of online church includes the reminder that church must always be more than just a Sunday service, whether it is online or a physical gathering. Hirsch (2020, cited in O'Brien, 2020) describes the Sunday service as a hammer, and how it has led many in the church to see every issue as a nail that the hammer must solve. This has led to over-reliance on this single tool, perhaps demonstrating perfectly why so much of the literature on 'doing church' during the pandemic focuses only on the movement of services to online spaces. Roxburgh, Weston and Robinson (2020) agree, stating that we've turned 'mission' into 'church'. Nevertheless, Wells (2020, cited in YourNeighbour, 2020) argues that we have an opportunity now 'to transform our society's understanding of the church'. The church must be demonstrating – online or otherwise – how it is 'fundamentally blessing a group of people who aren't asking any questions, they're just here to be helpful. And to recognise and celebrate that the help doesn't all have to come through them'. This is an opportunity to stop containing Jesus in a building; to stop allowing the building to dominate and to focus on sharing the gospel, 'knowing that God goes before us' (Searle, 2020). This is an opportunity to show people that the church building is a gift, but church is the 'people of God assembled' (Welby, 2020, p. 4).

Implications for The Salvation Army

Throughout this paper, implications for The Salvation Army have been highlighted. These are by no means exhaustive but were highlighted in discussion with the Assistant Director of Research as missional trends that TSA may not have considered previously or did not easily align with TSA's background or current practice. For ease, they are summarised here:

- First and foremost, spend time in prayer and reflection with God – Before making any missional decisions, and 'jumping in' to the 'doing', TSA needs to spend time 'being' in prayer, listening to God to discern where He wants the organisation to go. TSA must be open to being led by the Holy Spirit. This may include a period of lament for what has been lost.
- Find a balance between the need to take risks when loving and serving others and the need to protect and safeguard those most vulnerable to the virus – TSA should consider how this is messaged out to the frontline, especially those who understand serving as sacrificial because of Jesus' sacrifice.
- Listen to the voices of those usually ignored and silenced – TSA must be ensuring that when it is meeting need and speaking out it is listening authentically to the most marginalised voices and taking its lead from them, rather than assuming it knows what is needed in communities.
- Adopt a trauma-informed approach in congregational life – In order to support people to process COVID-19 as trauma, TSA can learn from the work of its contracted services and integrate aspects of this approach into its congregational life.
- Create space for testimonies that acknowledge pain and loss – Space must be made for testimonies of COVID-19 that acknowledge the pain and suffering of this time to be shared, and this space must be safe and inclusive. This could be done through small groups, particularly where there is the added difficulty of needing to meet online.
- Support communities and congregants to form a collective memory of this time – This will involve taking time to listen to the voices of those marginalised and ignored to ensure a collective memory of this time is representative of all experiences.
- Learn to apply an abundance lens to reimagining mission – One way to do this would be to focus on developing a new way to be with those who have been attracted by online church.

- Maintain visibility beyond just the offering of practical assistance - The church's presence is an important living out of the gospel. One way TSA could do this is by adopting what Wells (2019) refers to as 'being with'.
- Work in partnership for the transformation of society – TSA doesn't have to 'do everything' itself. TSA has a 'unique selling point' in the fact that its identity is rooted in Christ and it is able to offer spiritual support and nurturing. Therefore, there need be no fear of partnering with others who have more or better placed resources to deliver good work in the community.
- Invest in leaders during this time – Investing in leaders will ensure the continuation of discipleship and create smaller communities where people are able to offer each other more support.
- Speak out against harmful theology – As demonstrated during the Ebola epidemic, the church was vital in challenging harmful theology about where the virus had come from and how it was spread. There is a role during COVID-19 for TSA to do the same, and in the process position itself as an important partner in combatting the virus.
- Continue to take the virus seriously and support government safety measures – TSA has an important role, especially as corps reopen, in keeping people safe and being seen to set an example. This involves supporting government safety measures that reminding people of their importance.
- Don't forget those still vulnerable to COVID-19 – In the rush to reopen, it's important that TSA learns from churches carrying out mission in an HIV/AIDS context and doesn't stigmatise those still vulnerable to the virus by creating an environment only accessible to those who can risk being 'out and about' in the community. One way to do this is to adopt the language of 'the body of Christ has COVID-19, and therefore we must make our mission work for everyone, as if everyone is as vulnerable as the most vulnerable among us'.
- Focus on developing small groups – There are clearly benefits to online church, such as connecting with the wider community and moving beyond the church building, however, online church could also increase a consumerist approach to church. One way to try to resist this consumerist approach online is to focus on building active small groups that provide people with the connection and community they crave while ensuring their spiritual needs can be met.

Conclusion

There is a great deal within the literature to process. This literature review has attempted to do justice to a wealth of wisdom, ideas, thoughts and suggestions from a wide variety of authors. This review primarily represents the 'formal voice' of current theological thinking on mission during, and after, the COVID-19 pandemic, however it does also draw on literature that turned up in the search that better fits into the espoused voice external to The Salvation Army. These findings will complement the findings from other parts of the wider research project that reflect the remaining two voices and the espoused voice internal to The Salvation Army. It will be both interesting and necessary to critically engage the themes and trends found in this review with the themes and trends drawn from these other voices. This is the intention of The Four Voices of Theology model and the reason it is structured to show the interplay of the voices.

This review has presented eight broad emerging missional trends to the reader with multiple themes woven into each trend. The COVID-19 literature leans heavily on the story of Job to demonstrate that God did not send COVID-19 as a punishment for humanity's sins and to remind the church that it has a job to show the world a God who knows suffering and comes alongside His children in their suffering. Out of this theological understanding of the pandemic comes the importance therefore for the church to point to a New World, whether that World is already here or must be hoped for in the future. This New World is one in which the church loves and serves its neighbour with a willingness to risk self and make significant sacrifices, as demonstrated by the Early Church during times of plague and famine. The church must do this without putting those who are ill and vulnerable *at* risk; instead using its power to challenge the inequalities that have led to certain people being more vulnerable to the virus and its effect. This must include listening to the voices of those who are often silenced and ignored to ensure its mission is not only *for* the marginalised but is *with* and, most importantly, *of* the marginalised.

This must all be done from a place of prayer, where the church is willing to stop and listen to God, spending time discerning where God wants it to be. The church must make space for lament, recognising that for many COVID-19 is a form of trauma. However, this lament must result in a renewed sense of hope in the God who suffers traumatic experiences alongside His people. The church has an opportunity to be present, and show God's presence, in different and new ways in its local communities. This may mean learning to rely less on buildings and on the Sunday service, and may mean looking to other local community groups doing good work to gain inspiration for new, meaningful ways of being in local community together. The church will need to learn to trust in God's abundance, rather than focusing on scarcity, and allow the Holy Spirit to surprise it and pull it out of its comfort zone as it imagines a new way of being. Finally, as with all mission, the church must be sharing the Gospel as an intrinsic part of all the above; showing people the person

of Jesus through sacrificial love, being *with* the marginalised, challenging harmful structures, creating space for suffering and proclaiming an everlasting hope that points everything it does to God's Kingdom.

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