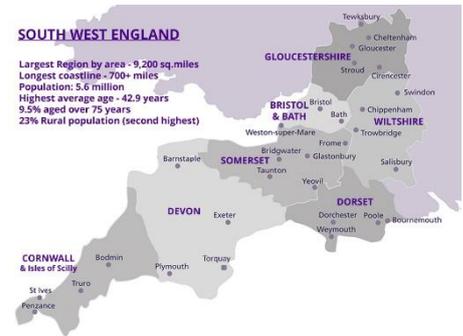


NPN WEEK OF PRAYER: SOUTH WEST REGION

UPDATE

Geography:

- Comprises the counties of Gloucestershire in the north bordering the Midlands, through Bristol, Somerset (previously known as Avon), Wiltshire, Dorset Devon and Cornwall including the Isles of Scilly.
- Largest Region by area - 9,200 sq.miles (23,800 km²) – with the longest coastline (700+ miles) including the South West Coast Path from Minehead to Poole Harbour (630 miles)
- 8 Cathedral cities: Gloucester; Bristol; Bath; Wells; Salisbury; Exeter; Plymouth; Truro
- Large towns: from Tewkesbury, Cheltenham and Swindon in the north and east; to Bournemouth and Torquay on the south coast; Bath, Yeovil and Taunton in the centre; to Bodmin and Penzance in the far west; plus regional centres and smaller towns, villages and hamlets



The South West is a wonderful place to live – I’ve had the privilege of living in 5 of the counties and worked in the other two. The Region offers the splendid coastal villages and surfing beaches of Devon, Cornwall and Dorset; the vast open expanses of Dartmoor, Exmoor and Salisbury Plain; the picturesque Cotswolds; the World Heritage Jurassic Coast and the Eden Project

Demographics:

- Population: 5.6 million (8% of England’s total population) – fastest growing population in England
- 23% live in rural areas – highest percentage in England
- Highest average age - 42.9 years: 9.5% of population over 75 years old

Steeped in history, folklore, creative arts and literature

- King Arthur at Tintagel; Glastonbury Tor; Stonehenge
- Cornwall has its own language and considers itself a separate nation
- Creative arts: Minack (clifftop) Theatre; Salisbury Playhouse; Old Vic Bristol
- Authors: Agatha Christie; Daphne de Maurier; Thomas Hardy

Economy is varied including:

- Industrial and Manufacturing along the M4 corridor and M4/M5 intersection including aerospace and “white goods” manufacturing
- Financial: many building societies + increasing numbers of Insurance companies
- Ministry of Defence:
 - MoD Support in Bristol
 - Royal Marines in Lympstone/Plymouth
 - SBS in Poole
 - Army Tank Division in Dorset & Wiltshire;
 - Navy: Devonport Dockyard (largest naval base in Western Europe); Torpoint is the home of the RN Submarine Training School
 - Commando Helicopter Force at Yeovil
- Construction:
 - Hinkley Point C: one of Europe’s largest construction projects will create 25,000 employment opportunities & 1,000 apprenticeships
 - housing especially the retirement sector
- Service industries are growing: Telecoms, Information Technology, the Met Office in Exeter and GCHQ in Cheltenham
- Many micro and small businesses with an increasing amount of home-based working
 - local micro gin distillery now making hand sanitiser for Truro Hospital
 - schools and universities using 3D printing to make facemasks
- Challenges: loss of Flybe impact on Exeter, Newquay and Bournemouth airports; thankfully Bristol Airport seems to be relatively unaffected

3 major employment sectors:

- **Agriculture, fishing, forestry, horticulture:** still of great importance
 - new potatoes and daffodils are major crops
 - Brixham; Newlyn and Plymouth have the 3 largest fishing fleets in England
- **Tourism:** is now in shutdown and visitors are not welcome
 - from boutique hotels to Glamping contributes £5 billion to economy
 - M5 is often just a means of getting to a traffic jam into Devon & Cornwall
- **Food production:** Cornish pasties; Devon cream teas; Somerset cider and cheese; Wrigleys and Dairy Crest and several breweries

PRAISE & PRAYER POINTS

There are some unique features about the South West but we're facing many of the same issues as everyone else

☐ **Coronavirus:**

- Thankfully least affected area in England: 1,384 registered cases; sadly 59 deaths; challenge not to be complacent
- Aging population susceptible to infection: my wife and I both have mums in their 90's; wife has great aunt 107!
- Dignity and funerals: problems with celebrating life; crematoria limited to 2 mourners!
- Carers under attack: Torbay Caring company forced to employ security guards to protect workers
- Shopper works suffering abuse from customers
- Gratitude: e.g. Clap for Carers; pray for kindness, compassion and thankfulness for those serving on the front-line

☐ **Isolation:**

- Because much of the SW is at the end of country it feels as if we're already "cut off" – farmers often working alone but the crisis has added to the feeling of isolation
- Often elderly are unable/incapable to access IT; lack of broadband in SW; Example: Church in Brixham – a younger lady living 2 doors away from an elderly neighbour found her broadband service reached the older person's house so she gave her an old smartphone and she is using it for the first time to meet link into the church Zoom services!
- Visitors aren't welcome currently but we will need them back as soon as possible. Some in the Tourism sector are offering refunds because they may not be in business next year
- Churches and neighbours befriending and assisting others; spirit of friendliness as people talk to each other as they pass one another

☐ **The Church:**

- The message hasn't changed but the methodology has
 - challenge: will we go back to "business as usual" when restrictions end or will we continue to be innovative in order to reach people with the Gospel?
 - will we continue with the prayer focus? Let's not let it slip
- New ways of "doing church" – live broadcasts of services; Zoom; YouTube; telephone based pastoral activities; cards through letterboxes offering assistance
- God's glory, honour and fame
Habakkuk 3:2 (NIVUK): ***"LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, LORD. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy."***
I'm not saying Coronavirus is God's wrath but have we failed to demonstrate His glory and honour? Thankfully He is a loving, merciful God
James 2:13 (NIVUK): ***"Mercy triumphs over judgment."***