

Dear all



I have just received an email from our bishops, which contains details of a new initiative from the Church of England, called Daily Hope. Daily Hope is a free telephone line with hymns, reflections and prayers aimed particularly at those aged 75 and over who do not have internet access. In the past week since being launched the phone line has had 12,000 calls. If you know of anyone in this 'target group', or anyone who might be interested, please pass this message on.

Another initiative recently launched by the CofE is #FaithAtHome.

#FaithAtHome which launches today will feature weekly video content to help families to talk about faith and pray together. The videos will be led by children, young people, staff and school leaders from across the country.

Over the next three months, #FaithAtHome will explore themes including courage, patience, generosity, resilience, love and hope. 'Hope' is the topic for the first assembly at the Oak National Academy today, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. The Oak National Academy was set up to provide video lessons and curriculum resources to assist teachers as they support pupils through the current COVID-19 restrictions.

The assembly will be followed by weekly collective worship, provided in partnership by the Church of England and Oak National Academy, with content drawn from #FaithAtHome.

The #FaithAtHome programme has set out themes for the next 11 weeks and can be accessed on our website - <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/faith-home>

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said:

"These aim of these resources is to offer simple ways for families and households to approach complex and difficult topics, such as illness, fear and bereavement. "The coronavirus pandemic has forced people of all ages to confront difficult and painful questions that none of us can explore on our own; we need one another to help navigate them. "My hope and prayer is that #FaithAtHome will not only equip children and young people to engage with difficult questions, but also inspire them to explore how they can become the answers to their own prayers, and, when this crisis is over, they are freshly inspired to love and serve those around them."

The Church of England's Chief Education Officer, Nigel Genders said:

"Home is the new normal, and faith at home is a habit we need to rediscover." "We are delighted that #FaithAtHome will be available to many children and young people through our partnership to provide collective worship with Oak Academy, and through church and school networks. "It will offer people of all ages and faith backgrounds a chance to pause, think and reflect, and to rebuild lost habits of prayer and faithful reflection in the home."

A third part of the email is a reminder that this coming Sunday, 3rd May, is Vocations Sunday. The CofE website notes that:

We believe all are called to serve God according to their given gifts, talents and context. Every Christian has a vocation, and it is the task of all those serving in ministry to help identify and nurture the gifts and callings of every member of the Church.

We often think that the word 'Vocation' means being called to a 'serving' role – not only as priest, but perhaps teaching, nursing, care assistant etc.. But the word simply means 'calling' – to whatever God has planned for us. That calling may be to parenthood... a particular job... a volunteering role... a particular role in the church. Only very few are called to priesthood – but there are many callings in the church. When Paul refers to them in his letters, he calls them 'Gifts of the Spirit', because God does not call without equipping his people to answer that call. (Sometimes that equipping may come after time, or after training!).

Paul's 2 lists include: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, discernment of spirits – all of which sound pretty heady – but also include serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership, and showing mercy.

Paul goes on, in 1 Corinthians 12, to state that no one gift should be considered above the others, and none should be sought above the others. All are equally important for the good governing of the church. To which we could add greeting, making music, maintenance, arranging flowers, being on the PCC, making coffee, leading or helping Children's church etc..

One gift we can all have – a really valuable calling – is that of encouragement. A simple "thanks, that really helped" is so important. Similarly, many people have found their true calling because someone has gone up to them and said "do you know, I think you'd be a really good..."

Whilst this time of lockdown is rather cramping a lot of the outworking of our callings, perhaps it might be a time to think and explore new possibilities.

For those who like thinking deeply, a paper on the theology of vocation can be found at [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/theology\\_of\\_vocation\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/theology_of_vocation_0.pdf)

This is very much a thinking ahead (though a very important calling right now might be the ministry of the phone!). For many, it is very difficult to think beyond the virus and the lockdown. Nick Fawcett has given a prayer that addresses the fact that our immediate concerns can sometimes loom so large and fearsome that we cannot see beyond them:

I could dwell on the future, Lord

I could dwell on the future, Lord,  
on what might happen to me,  
how sick I might become,  
the possibility, even, that I might die.  
But what would be the point of that?  
Would it help me?  
Would it change anything?  
Would I feel better for it afterwards?  
I could brood about how many months I may need to social distance,  
lock myself away,  
cut myself off even from my loved ones.  
But would use would that be?  
Will it solve anything?

Will it make the time shorter?  
Will I feel happier for it?  
I could fret about food,  
money,  
my job:  
whether we'll be left to go hungry;  
whether we'll find ourselves in debt;  
whether I'll end up with no work.  
But what's the good of worrying?  
Will it help me to cope better,  
or will it leave me drained, more troubled,  
less able to cope with what might come?  
No, I will not brood,  
will not worry about what tomorrow might bring;  
let each day's care be sufficient for itself.  
Who knows what the future holds,  
for good or ill?  
Who can say what blessings or trials lie in store?  
But I'm alive now,  
I'm well now,  
I'm here now,  
and this, Lord, is the day you have given.  
Help me to celebrate it,  
to give thanks for it  
and to live it to the full.  
Amen.

Finally, just because there is no other music in this email, here is a link to *Spiegel im Spiegel* for Cello and Piano by Arvo Pärt. Pärt is an Estonian composer who is steeped in the tradition of Gregorian Chant. This piece is very slow and peaceful. "You cannot direct the wind -- but you can adjust your sail." ~ Arvo Pärt.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZe3mXlnfNc>

Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark