

Dear all

Here we are again, as lockdown 2 starts. It seemed a good idea that I start up my regular vicar's letter again. Sonia and I will also be ramping up the phone calls we make to keep in touch with you over this month or so. I would like to encourage others to contribute as well. If you think you have anything you would like to share – a personal reflection, a poem, something that you've found on the internet, a piece of music – please let me know. The more the merrier. I would also encourage you to phone around your friends – perhaps working your way through your phone book. Even a 5-minute catch up could make someone's day.

Talking of the internet, I saw this posted recently:

Terry Waite, 1763 days as a hostage in appalling conditions.

He just told us all to stop complaining! 🙄🙄🙄

Change your mindset he said, you're not STUCK at home, you're SAFE at home ❤️ #TerryWaite

His advice:

**Keep your own dignity - get out of your PJs!*

**Form a structure for the day*

**Be grateful for what you have - shelter, home, possessions*

**Read and be creative*

My comment about this was that this may be spoken from a place of experience (and an experience that not of us will share); however, we're not all Terry Waite! It's OK to have a wobble occasionally.

I am concerned that this will be yet another pressure that people will put on themselves. Last lockdown was very hard for many. We are now facing darker and colder days – which affect many people quite badly anyway, especially if, like my mother, you already experience SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder).

Make sure you have good contacts and can talk about your feelings. Sonia and I are here for you too if you need a chat.

Having said that, there are certainly some good things to be noted from Terry's advice. In the first lockdown, I became aware that my days were becoming pretty unstructured, and that tasks were taking longer because it was difficult to focus. One simple thing that I did was to go back to wearing my clerical shirts, rather than T-shirts. It got me into a more positive and focussed mentality.

I have taken up (again!) the Canadian Air Force 5BX exercise programme. It's a very good one (only 11 minutes per day). When you start, you hardly notice that you're exercising, but you work your way up a series of tables, gradually getting fitter (hopefully). I'm using an app for it for the first time. I hate it! When I used the book, I could stay on a level as long as I liked. In contrast, the app changes relentlessly every 8 days. Just as I think I can just about cope with a level without serious injury, it says "OK. Now a couple more sit-ups... a few more stationary runs..." HELP!!!

But it doesn't need to be that hard. Colonel Sir Thomas Moore ('Captain Tom') showed what can be done by a simple slow walk around his garden.

My watch nags me! I will feel a buzz, and it says, "you need to stand up now". Or it might say "breathe" – well, I haven't exactly forgotten! Actually, the latter gives about 30 seconds of slow deep breathing in and out. And it does make a difference.

Three other things are very important to me. Firstly reading – not just theology (not always relaxing), but, for me particularly, historical detective novels. I am currently reading Richard Osman's novel 'The Thursday Murder Club'. Very witty. For example, he just drops in the name of a Vegan café – 'Anything with a Pulse'!

Secondly, listening to music – some of which I have shared with you in the past, and will continue. My latest discovery is ‘Requiem for Fallen Brothers (1914-1917) by Alexander Kastalsky, who was a pupil of Tchaikovsky, and a mentor to Rachmaninov. The dates of the war refer to the period that Russia was engaged. It includes Orthodox and Gregorian Chant, as well as hymns from the allied nations, *Rock of Ages* being one. Here is the Kyrie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICT6-nX6GYI> For those who might like a more authentic Russian Orthodox style, Google ‘kastalsky memory eternal’.

And last, but by no means least, there is the discipline of the Daily Office – Morning and Evening Prayer. It gives a structure and content to my devotions, as well as a pattern for bible reading. Morning Prayer is currently reading through Daniel and Revelation – not the easiest of books it must be said. The CofE provides a link to 4 services – Morning Prayer, Prayer in the Day (noon-ish), Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer (or Compline). You might find this helpful. It can be in contemporary or traditional language, and may be found at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>

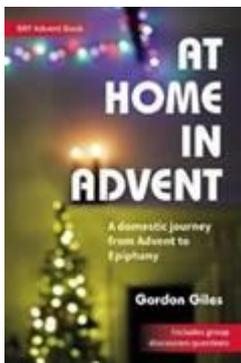
Needless to say, our plans for services over the next few weeks have been thrown into chaos. We intend to keep the 10.00am Sunday morning service going online. We are allowed to broadcast from the church, though quite how this will work I don’t know. We will be live on Facebook.

As I announced that we would be going back to our hardly-established pattern of evening services, I intend to keep to that as far as possible. On the 1st Sunday, we will have a Book of Common Prayer Evening Prayer, and on the 3rd Sunday, an ‘alternative’ style. Both will be at 6.00pm, and will also be live-streamed via Facebook.

Watch this space for Christmas Services!

There will be a live-streamed Act of Remembrance at 3.00pm on this coming Sunday, 8th November. Unfortunately, actual attendance will be by invitation only. This complies with Government guidelines.

This year, we will be running an Advent course, based on the book *At Home in Advent* by Gordon Giles.



The Church Times says about this book: *In the BRF Advent Book, Gordon Giles identifies the three Advent themes that his reflections seek to explore: “hope, expectation and trepidation”. At Home in Advent is intended both for individual use and for groups. With daily thoughts accompanied by questions, activities, and prayers, it offers a “domestic journey from Advent to Epiphany”. The unpretentious text takes account of the coronavirus threat without traumatising the reader. Its very domesticity would make this book the perfect present for someone on lockdown.*

The author believes in the “bounty of Christmas” and is happy to find this bounty in the everyday. Here is a timely reminder that, while some of the celebrations may be different this year, it is impossible to “cancel” Christmas.

We will try to set this up via Zoom. Zoom is very easy to manage – you download the app, and sign in with the meeting code and password that will be given. If you have a computer with camera and microphone (as in most laptops, tablets or smartphones) you can interact. Otherwise, you can still follow.



Stay safe

Blessings and love

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