

St. John's

St. Leonard's



## Welcome to Crosslacon Parish May Newsletter



St. Paul's

St. Michael's

Greetings to all our friends across the parish. I have been thinking of you so much, holding you all in my prayers daily. I hope and pray that you and your family and friends are keeping well and staying safe.

Normally Crosslacon Parish produces a parish magazine each month, but as many of the things we write about in the magazine are not taking place we have created in its place a parish newsletter. We thought that you might find it informative, helpful and uplifting to hear stories from across the parish which offer different perspectives on life in our community in these times...many of the stories are great testimonies to the strength, resilience and care for others that we are seeing right across this parish. I thank God for all that you do and all that you are!

If you have had this newsletter posted to you, in your envelope you will also find a smaller envelope which contains a little sunflower seed. Sunflowers are such joyful blooms so we are encouraging everyone to get growing. Wouldn't it be great to have sunflowers sprouting right across the parish. So find a spare bit of earth or a plant pot and sow your seed. Don't forget to send us a photo of you and your flower blooming side by side! For those who have received this by email...you don't get off the hook that easily...we are encouraging you to order seeds online and join in the green fingered endeavour!

We are also enclosing a prayer booklet that has been produced by the Church of England. (I have previously emailed this out to some of the folks in our parish). You may recognise some of the prayers, as I have sent these prayers out in other mailings but the booklet has the advantage of packaging them together in a helpful format. It also contains a liturgy that you could use on a Sunday at the time you would normally have gone to church.

We hope to provide a monthly newsletter during this time so if you have any ideas for articles or come across an inspirational story, let me know.

Finally in the words of the Vicar of Dibley....Stay safe, be kind and eat chocolate (but not too much!)

Nicki

### Bible Readings for the weeks ahead:

	Old Testament	Psalm	Epistle	Gospel
Sunday, 17th May, 6th Sunday of Easter	Acts 17.22 - 31	66.7-end	1 Peter 3.13-end	John 14.15-21
Sunday, 24th May, 7th Sunday of Easter	Acts 1.6-14	68.1-10, 32-end	1 Peter 4.12-14;5.6-11	John 17.1-11
Sunday, 31st May, Pentecost, Whit Sunday	Acts 2.1-21	104.26-36, 37b	1 Corinthians 1.3b-13	John 20.19-23
Sunday, 7th June, Trinity Sunday	Isaiah 40.12-17,27-end	8	2 Corinthians 13.11-end	Matthew 28.16-20
Sunday, 14th June, 1st Sunday after Trinity	Exodus 19.2-8a	100	Romans 5.1-8	Matthew 9.35-10.8, [9-23]

### A Prayer for these days

Ever present God,  
Be with us in our isolation,  
Be close to us in our distancing,  
Be healing in our sickness,  
Be joy in our sadness  
Be light in our darkness,  
Be wisdom in our confusion,  
Be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar,  
That when the doors re-open,  
We may with the zeal of Pentecost,  
Inhabit our communities,  
And speak of your goodness to an emerging world,  
For Jesus Sake,  
Amen

## Church services on the Radio and on the TV

If you are unable to link into our weekly online service which is streamed live on Facebook and then uploaded on to our Website, Crosslacon.net, then there are services you can tune into your radio and on the tv.

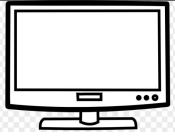


An old faithful is Songs of Praise...each Sunday at 1:15 on BBC 1.

Each Sunday on Radio 4 at 8:10 in the morning there is a Service of the word from different churches around the country.

Each Sunday at 8 Richard Corrie hosts the Sunday breakfast show on Radio Cumbria.

Every day during the week, Radio 4 Long Wave streams a service at 9:45.



## Thy Kingdom Come 2020

Join the global wave of prayer calling all Christians to pray between Ascension and Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus Christ. May 21st - May 31st 2020

Every single day hundreds of millions of our brothers and sisters around the world say the prayer Jesus put on our lips, praying 'Thy Kingdom Come'. In the past few years, the focus of our prayers in these days between Ascension and Pentecost has been for the coming of the God's Kingdom in the lives of family and friends, neighbours and colleagues that they might come to faith.

This Year... when we pray 'Come Holy Spirit' during Thy Kingdom Come 2020 we pray in this specific context of the COVID crisis, with all that we face, all that is unknown and all we are helpless before. We are calling this 'Prayer and Care'. Of course in churches up and down the country doing this is a daily reality, and this time of prayer gives itself to an even deeper engagement with the needs around us.

Look out for resources on line, on our website and on our Facebook page for ways that you can take part.

## Wath Brow Wonderings: Shining Lights!

There's a Fischy Music Song that we have been teaching the children in our local schools. It's called "You are a star!" The chorus goes like this....

'You are a star...just the way you are!'

It's great to watch the children smiling as they sing this fun song which has at its heart a serious message. How many of us know and live out of our true worth...that we are "wonderfully and fearfully made," as the psalmist wrote?

It's looking increasingly likely that the lockdown in some form or another is here to stay for some time to come. Whilst initially these social distancing measures might have seemed a bit of a novelty, it's fast becoming the new normal but that doesn't always make it any easier.

We will all be reacting to the restrictions in different ways... We have lost a great deal over the past several weeks, and we may be finding the loss difficult to deal with as time goes on. We may be feeling anxious about an uncertain future. The restrictions we are living with may have begun to weigh heavy. And I wonder if some of you, those who are shielding or strictly self-isolating at this time, might be battling with feelings of frustration. Wanting to do something to help but prevented by the need to be careful at exposing yourself and other loved ones to risk.

"You are a Star..." In recent days, that Fischy song has become a bit of a earworm...I've found myself singing it as I go about my daily chores. It reminds me of something Paul once wrote to the Philippian church.

"You shine like stars in the world." (Philippians 2:15)

You shine like a star. That's a big affirmation, isn't it? Perhaps Paul is remembering Jesus affirmation, "you are the light of the world...let your light shine." Paul is reminding the Philippians and us that we can be lights in our world.

We don't have to succumb to anxiety and negativity, but having looked clearly at the challenges we face, we can choose to be voices for hope and healing. Even when we are shielding and/or self- isolating!

Primarily, we do this by connecting and living into God's view of us...we are loved, cherished and valued. As Philip Yancey once said, 'There is nothing we can do to make God love us more and nothing we can do that will make him love us less.' It is as we live into our true worth that we are best equipped and resourced to affirm other people's God-given worth too. We all need to know that we are loved and that we matter. No matter how far the physical distance you have to keep from others, you can still bridge that gap by sending messages of love by phone, by text or even shouting them over the garden fence, or mailing them in a letter.

And that's not all we can do at these times...

When Pope Francis was asked what he was going to do during the time of physical distancing, his response was, 'I'm going to pray more...'

Our newsletter this month gives us lots to think about in terms of the work and projects happening in our communities and of the folks who might need our support... One really important and vital task we can all take part in is holding these folks and the work they do in the light of God's love. We can also be praying for all those making and taking decisions at this time.... even when we disagree. We can hold in our prayers all those in frontline jobs or community support groups.

And we can encourage others. We can smile and wave at a neighbour despite physical distancing and hold all we see passing our front gates in our prayers. We can take our pots and pans out to our front doorsteps and make a racket every Thursday night... reminding people that we are holding them in our thoughts and that we appreciate all that they do. We can get crafty helping to sew scrubs for those working in the health and caring professions along with the scrub team... or we can donate items that will help others in their crafty endeavours.

If we have the financial resources available, we can support some of the local community initiatives that are reaching out to help others in need, such as the foodbank.

But let's not forget, throughout these challenging times, that we are 'stars just the way we are'... each one precious, loved and cherished... Let's share a bit of that shining love with all with whom we are connected this week and in the weeks to come.

### **Prayer**

Shine Jesus, shine. In me and in the world. Let my life illumine others and guide my path through this perilous time. Let my light give you glory and add to the beauty of the world. Amen.

### **Christian Aid Week: 10-16<sup>th</sup> May**



As this virus spreads across the world, love rises up in response. You've already shown incredible kindness to your neighbours. Now is the time to reach out to your neighbours both near and far.

Your love protects. From storms, from drought, and now from coronavirus. Your love protects our global neighbours battling the spread of this illness. Your love protects. With soap, clean water and medical supplies.

By supporting us this Christian Aid Week, you can reach out and protect more of your neighbours today.

Go to the Website where you can give on line: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/give-money/make-donation>

Or speak to our team on the phone: Call 020 7523 2046 and speak directly to our regular giving team.

### **NHS Reflections from a local GP**

As a first time mum going back to work as a GP after 12 months maternity leave was, as I'm sure is the case for many working mums, a little daunting. Fortunately like lots of things in life, reality was less stressful than I had anticipated. My baby brain still functioned and Oliver was having so much fun with his grandparents, I don't think he'd even realised I'd gone!

Then almost overnight general practice and life in general changed completely. Oliver could no longer see his doting relatives, daddy was at home full time, zoom became the new 'catch up' and my days as a GP changed immensely. PPE, video consultations, conference calls, red zones, shielding and an eerily quiet waiting room were unimaginable the week before. Watching the scenes emerge from Italy was terrifying however the strength, resilience, resourcefulness, community spirit and kindness that has followed in the wake of covid 19 makes me hopeful that together we will come through this.

After the initial panic and race to prepare our surgery as much as possible the tide seems to be on the turn, at least for the time being. However I'm left wondering where has everyone else gone? Those worrying cancer symptoms, mental health difficulties, chest pain, the list goes, at least normally it does. I hope people aren't putting things off or feel they can't mention anything other than coronavirus. We are here to help everyone so please shout up and stay safe.

Eve Bewley, GP

## Egremont Food bank:

*Here's an account of my interview with Adrian Cozens, North Lakes Foodbank Manager conducted in a quiet moment at Egremont Foodbank session.*

*NP: So tell me about the Foodbank Adrian, what does it do?*

AC: The Foodbank helps individuals and families who are experiencing real financial hardship...we hear a lot about folks not getting benefits on time which means they have no money to buy food...but we also help those on the breadline because of other factors...those one zero hour contracts who have less work that week, those made redundant...In Egremont alone over the last year we have helped 500 people. And we do it all from donations of food from individuals and churches...you may have seen the bins in the supermarkets, schools and churches. People support us by giving staple basic food items that we then sort and parcel. Each parcel contains enough food to provide a balanced diet for an individual or family for a whole week.

*NP: How has the present crisis impacted on the Foodbank?*

AC: Well, many of our collection points are now closed, such as churches and schools and community centres. The Food Bins are still in operation in our supermarkets but in these days of physically isolating, many folks are not shopping in person, hence donations in store are also down. Altogether, donations are down by 40%. Usually we have about 4.5 week's worth of stock in store but we are now down to 2.5 weeks.

Simultaneously, our demand has risen by about 20%. Many folks have lost their jobs or can't work in the current crisis.

*NP: That sounds a bit of a challenge...how are you managing to keep going?*

AC: To be honest, we've been amazed at the generosity of folks in our community and the creative ways they are going about raising funds for the Foodbank. Take Ashton, who had a sponsored hair cut last week and raised £770 for us....and then there's Tom, a local artist who sold some of his work and gave us the proceeds. So far he's raised over £600.

And then I've been really touched by the messages and donations from other individuals, like the woman who contacted us to say that before the Lock Down she used to go out for coffee a couple of times each week so now she's donating the money she's saved about £5 each week.

Some churches have organised alternative food collection points and folks from the church are bringing in the food each week to our Foodbank in Egremont.

As a result of these financial donations and donations from some of our local businesses and organisations like Fair Share we are managing to meet all our demands.

We are also working together with many local community food aid initiatives that have started up in response to the crisis. Together we are sharing the task of supporting folks in this current crisis.

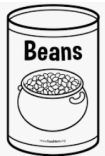
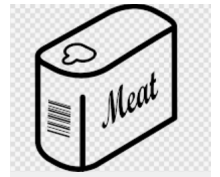
*NP: So how could we support you in these times?*

AC: It would be great if you could find a way to get food donations to us safely. If that's not possible then go to our webpage...The North Lakes Foodbank

<https://www.thefoodbank.org.uk/>

You can donate on line or alternatively, send us a cheque made payable to:

The North Lakes Foodbank, C/O Cockermouth Methodist Church, Lorton Street, Cockermouth. CA13 9RH

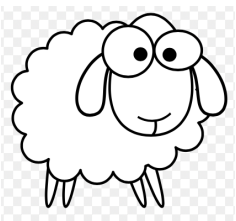


## Springtime on the farm

*Joan Jackson, from St. Paul's shares what has been going on in her farm during lockdown.*

Springtime during lockdown on the farm is having to go on as normal as possible with the lambs enjoying the excellent weather we have been having and the cows are also out basking in the sun, hopefully making lots of milk.

With not being able to go anywhere we are getting lots of work done on the farm, such as new fences put up, hedges and trees planted and even bug hotels popping up here and there as well as the usual spring work.



## Scrub up!

*Only a few weeks ago, Sellafield worker, Claire Riley started a community endeavour to make scrub clothes for the health and care workers in our community. It has gone viral and hundreds of folks across our communities have got their sewing machines out of the loft and are busy running up a whole variety of items that could be used to help our frontline workers stay safe!*

*Lynne Huddart is our local Scrub Hub co-ordinator...here in the Crosslacon Parish. She writes.....*

We are making scrub bags, headbands, hats and scrub uniforms. We have patterns for all the items and the scrubs themselves are coming to us pre-cut. To make the scrub uniforms we are asking that people have experience of making clothes and has a over-locking machine that they are confident using.

We are also accepting donations of material for the bags, headbands and hats. It's mainly bedding material such as sheets, duvet covers, pillowcases but the most important part is that they must be able to be washed at 60 degrees. We can collect any donations directly from individuals - obviously observing social distancing rules.

We have a variety of ways where people can donate money towards the purchase of material for the scrub uniforms.

I've put contact details below as it would take up too much room if I gave you the payment detail!

We don't charge anyone from the NHS or care services for the items so we really are reliant on donations of all types.

My contact details are: Lynn Huddart, Email: [alphascrubhub@gmail.com](mailto:alphascrubhub@gmail.com) Tel: 07718984923



## News from the Council: Mike Graham, Church Warden at St Paul's, Frizington

So much has changed in our everyday life since the Coronavirus struck.

Copeland Council has also been affected and we have had to change and adapt accordingly to best meet the needs of our residents.

Many of my colleagues have been reassigned to very different roles from the tasks they usually carried out.

Some are ensuring government grants are being paid to those people who qualify as quickly as possible.

To many businesses, employers and employees these are financial lifelines while doors are closed and trading has been suspended.

Some of my colleagues are ensuring residents are getting help and guidance with a myriad of issues that have impacted on them.

Our waste teams are, as always, excelling in their work as they collect our waste, thereby reducing health risks.

Their work often goes under the radar, but their important role in Copeland has never been more appreciated than it is at the moment.

Many of our staff are working with colleagues from other councils across the county and with the private sector to help those who are homeless, vulnerable, and in need. They are doing a great job and many are working long hours.

Councillors too have been playing their part in helping their residents in a variety of ways including being a conduit for information. They are working hard and are always available and willing to help.

My own day to day job is to be an advisor to the Elected Mayor of Copeland Mike Starkie.

However, I am now spending a large amount of time helping very vulnerable people access emergency food.

These are residents who have fallen through the cracks and often turn, or are guided, to our council hubs for help. I

have been involved in purchasing food and working with colleagues to collate and then bag various items ready for daily collection and onward delivery. I have found this work challenging, particularly trying to source some food items that have become scarce, for example tins of potatoes, vegetables, hot dogs etc. However, I have found my work interesting and I work with some terrific people.

If you need any information regarding Copeland Council please go to our website

[www.copeland.gov.uk](http://www.copeland.gov.uk).

There is a link to our services and good information in relation to the coronavirus epidemic.

Stay safe everyone. God Bless, Mike Graham.



## News from Montreal School:

*Head Teacher, Mrs Burnett and year two pupil Freya share some thoughts....*

Greetings from Montreal

We want to send our best wishes and thoughts to all of the community during this very difficult time. Montreal Church of England School closed to pupils on the 20th March so the children have now been home for 5 weeks. We miss them all, and we are making sure we call them each week and send them activities to try at home. Each week the school puts together food packs for lots of our families and we try to help out all our families as much as we can. Some teachers and children are also going to the hub school at Orgill in Egremont which has been set up to help children of key workers and others that need to be looked after.

We are now having staff meetings on our computers and tablets - it is very strange but nice to catch up with people. All the staff cannot wait to get back to school but we just have to wait until it is safe to do so.

We are very grateful for the sunny weather. Lots of the children have sent us pictures of what they have been getting up to at home - there has been lots of baking, going on walks around Cleator Moor and making crafts.



One of our Year 2 children has shared her thoughts on what life is like for her right now:

Hi! I am in week 6 of isolation. It has been ok. I have been doing a bit of maths, made a tent, played with chalk, jumped on my trampoline and played with my dolls. We have been going on lots of walks with our dogs which is fun. I have missed school, my friends, my family and going shopping. I wish I could go back to school soon. Stay happy, be safe.

Freya, age 7.

## Care in the Community: Ruth McGrady, Church Warden at St Michael's, Arlecdon

*(Ruth is a manager in a community care agency.)*

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times"

This quote by Dickens seems to be very apt for the Care sector. The best of times you may ask, for me this is the team work and selflessness of those that go into people's homes and do not complain that they are being asked to go and look after others while not being able to see their own loved ones due to being afraid to spread COVID-19.

The worst of times for all those selfless professional care workers that are abused while trying to shop for those who are unable to go out due to the social distancing. Sometimes this is the only time they leave home with the help of others and they are unable to do this now and for some this is very distressing.

On a positive note we are furnished with updates daily and good communication and interaction has become the norm. For all those receiving some assistance from those who choose to work tirelessly with dignity and grace, let them know their worth. A simple thank you means so much to the care workers.

These are uncharted times and we are planning daily, changing and updating care needs as we get cases of COVID-19 and also trying to take on more care packages to help free up hospital beds. So I would like to leave you with another quote from Dickens

"No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another"

## Store Cupboard Recipe of the Month - Chicken with red onions

A store cupboard recipe from Church Warden Sheila Richardson....

She says...This is a well used recipe in our house...it's simple and delicious.

Ingredients

2 boned chicken thighs per person (skin on)

Seasoned flour

1 tsp olive oil

1 medium red onion per person sliced

300mls sweet cider or Apple juice

Toss chicken in flour and heat oil in a large frying pan. Place chicken in oil skin side down on a fairly high heat and fry for approx. 10 mins. or until skin is brown and crispy. Remove chicken from pan and drain pan. Place chicken back in pan skin side up. Add cider/apple juice and place sliced onions around chicken. Cook on a light boil for about 25 mins. The juice should be the consistency of pouring cream. Adjust amount of liquid if necessary. Serve with rice or a green salad.



## **St. Michael's Building Update**

April has been a challenging month for the tower project due to the Covid-19 lockdown, but work has continued on tasks that can be progressed from home. Our architect is busy creating drawings and bid packages for the structural engineering and building phases of the project, and has held discussions with United Utilities about the church water supply. The bell specialists are designing equipment to allow the bells to be removed, and the Fabric Committee are continuing to hold monthly meetings using video conferencing, plus are looking at other ways to progress work remotely.

The lockdown has, however, forced us to revise the project plan. We have made an assumption that contractors will not be allowed to work in the church until at least Sept 2020, and this has shifted removal of the bells from Summer 2020 to Autumn 2020. The key dates in the new programme are as follows:

Preparatory building work –	Sept 2020
Bell removal –	Oct 2020
Tower repair works –	Nov 2020 – Sept 2021
Remount bells –	Nov-Dec 2021

We were originally planning to hold an open day when the bells are lifted down, to allow people to view the inscriptions on the bells, as many of the bells were donated by members of the church in 1905, and some of these were ancestors of the current congregation. The bell removal date has now changed to October 2020, and it is uncertain whether social gatherings will be allowed by then. If this proves to be the case, an opportunity to view the bells will be created in Autumn 2021, prior to the bells being replaced in the tower.

Another decision made this month was to temporarily remove the oak font cover prior to the start of tower building work. The font cover requires renovation for safety reasons, and its removal will allow the stone font (which dates from 1578) to be used for baptisms, once again.

Debbie Keighley

## **Cleator Moor Covid Community Support Group:**

Amy Caddy is the Wath Brow Zone Co-ordinator...

Hi everyone, my name is Amy Caddy and I am a local volunteer with the Cleator Moor COVID Support Group.

I form part of a team of wonderful volunteers from around the town who are here to help and assist those who may be vulnerable or who are self-isolating.

As a group, through the local hub (contactable on 01946 444950), we collect prescriptions and deliver them direct to your doorstep, collect shopping, post letters and are even here for a chat with the befriending service we offer.

I am also part of the Pantry team where every Tuesday we take delivery of over 75 crates of food which is then distributed to those in need in the local community.

I love volunteering. I love helping people. I love our local community.

If you are in need of help just contact the group on: 01946 444950. The lines are open Monday to Friday from 9-4 and on Saturday and Sunday 10-5.

## **Frizington Covid support group**

Joanne Jeynes, our Team Treasurer has been a founding member of this support group...

The group was established on 15 March 2020 in preparation for COVID-19 support. The group is linked with Copeland Council and Cumbria Resilience Forum. Since the UK went into lockdown the group have supported almost 100 requests from elderly or vulnerable residents in Frizington, Arlecdon, Asby and Rowrah. The group provides support with shopping, medication collections and has provided a number of food parcels. The group has recently extended its services to include taking out/bringing in bins, gardening for the elderly and infirm and would consider any reasonable request for support.

The group has 4 area coordinators, who in turn are supported by 28 volunteers. The group can be contacted 7 days a week, 0700 – 1900hrs on 01416 282221 (this is a skype number and is answered locally).

### **Church carrying on throughout the crisis.....**

Firstly, I would like to say a huge thank you for all the ways you have been supporting the life, ministry and mission of the churches in this Parish over recent weeks. Thank you to those who have been keeping in touch with everyone... thank you to those who have been an encouraging and affirming presence, as we have tried to adapt swiftly to new circumstances and different ways of being church. Thank you to all those who have been lending your time, support, skills and resources to the many community support groups that have been set up across the parish. I have found it humbling to witness such an outpouring of community care and kindness in recent weeks.

These are difficult and challenging times for everyone, and we are really mindful of the impact of this virus on people in so many varied ways...health, emotional and social well-being and financially too.

As you are aware, churches are also being affected by the restrictions imposed by the lockdown. Whilst we are not able to use our buildings, church continues in a different form, online, over the phone, through newsletters. And even though buildings are closed we still have to pay for utilities, insurance, parish offer.

We have received enquiries about how you can continue to financially support the church at this time if you can't place your offering on the plate. Whilst church services are not taking place, we would like to suggest alternative ways to financially support the church:

- Paying by a regular standing order...please be in touch with your warden if you would like to set up a standing offer. We have now got some forms that we can send to you that you could fill in and post off to your bank
- Posting a cheque to your church wardens\*
- Arranging for your envelope(s) to be safely collected.

\*Cheques are preferable to cash at present. If you post an offering, please indicate which church it is for and the amount you are offering, the date and your name. And do please keep a record yourself of anything that you have posted or hand delivered.

The following addresses are offered for those who might want to post or deliver their church offerings:

Rev Nicki Pennington: The Vicarage, Trumpet Road, Cleator CA23 3EF

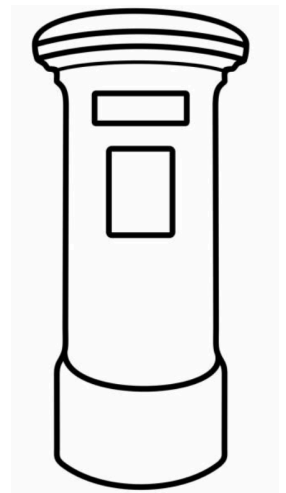
Harold Blair (Warden at St. John's) 12 Rheda Terrace, Cleator Moor,

Mike Graham (warden at St. Paul's): Boathouse Wood, Rheda Cross, Frizington CA26 3TE

Marilyn Graham (Warden at St. Paul's): 74/75 Yeathouse Road, Frizington.

Carol Martin (St. Leonard's): Glanrafon. 3 Ehenhall Gardens, Cleator, CA23 3BW

Susan Hardy (St. Michael's): 35 Asby Road, Asby, Workington, CA14 4RZ



We would also like to stress that if you, or those dependant on you, have been adversely impacted financially by the virus, please be assured that we would not wish to place additional burdens on you at this time. If there is anything we can do to support you or your loved ones at this time, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

For those who are able, we would be very grateful for your continued financial support in this period as we continue to be church in this place.

Church Wardens



## **Grieving behind closed doors**

Bereavement at any time is hard. Bereavement during a period of isolation with restricted movement and limited contact with family and friends is the hardest thing possible. During the global coronavirus pandemic many thousands in the UK will and already have faced the loss of someone they know. Whether the death is from Covid-19 or another cause, it is likely to be traumatic at this time. Family and friends are unlikely to be with loved ones when they die, and those grieving will be cut off from their usual support networks. Physical comfort will be limited and funerals may not be able to be attended.

In these strange times, we are having to find new ways to be with each other in times of grief and loss; new ways of honouring and paying our tributes to those we have loved who have died; new ways of dealing with our own feelings of loss and sadness and new ways of holding those we know who are grieving in our love and prayers.

The following thoughts are offered in the hope that they will help to inform, reassure and support you or those you love and care about, in these days when many of us are grieving behind closed doors.

## **Coping personally with grief and loss**

Everyone experiences grief differently. There is no 'normal' or 'right' way to grieve. And the complex and challenging times we are living may complicate and impact upon our grief. You may find that you experience some or all of the following emotions and reactions at different times in different levels of intensity: Shock, anger, distress, bewilderment, loneliness, guilt, depression. It's important to know that all these reactions and feelings are completely natural and normal.

I was listening to someone reflecting on their experience of grief recently and they said...

"I think something that helped me was that there will be dark cloudy days, then lots of cloud and a little sun and then lots of sun with a little cloud. Life is never the same and never can be until we join up again in heaven."

## **Faith in times of loss**

Just as we all react differently In times of grief, our grief will impact our faith in different ways. Some of us feel able to reach out and connect with God...we have a sense of God's presence with us and can feel reassured and comforted by the promises we find in scripture that reassure us that nothing will ever separate us or our loved ones from God's love. We are able to hold onto the assurance that our loved one is now at rest in God's nearer presence...all the struggle and pain of life at an end, now at peace enfolded in God's love.

Some people find that their grief distances them from God. They may feel angry that God 'allowed' our loved one to die. They may feel that in some ways they are to blame, and that their loved one's death is some form of judgement on them. Some find it hard to hold on to faith in the God of love who never intends harm or suffering for any one of God's beloved and cherished children.

Whatever you are feeling, all of your emotions and reactions are understood by God. Even though we may feel distant from loved ones, God is with us, nearer than our very breath, alongside us in our pain and anger, with us in our guilt and in times of lowness and depression, seeking to heal and restore, to reassure us of our worth, to comfort and console.

The Psalms can be really helpful at times like these. Essentially these prayers express the whole range of human emotion, conveying that there are no off limits for God. The psalms give an implicit permission to rage and remonstrate, to despair and lament. Take Psalm 42 for instance. Why don't you read it aloud, slowly, several times and see how it connects with your own experience of loss. You could try reading these other Psalms in the same reflective manner: Psalm 4, 9, 22, 23, 27, 40 allowing the words to help you form and shape your own prayers to God...

## **How can I look after myself?**

Taking care of yourself in these difficult times may be even more complicated. Do reach out to those around you and talk about the person who has died and your relationship with them, your memories and your feelings. Look after yourself. Eat properly and try to get enough rest (even if you can't sleep). Most of all, give yourself time and permission to grieve. And if you need additional help and support, tell people what you need.

### **Supporting others who are grieving**

It may be that a family member or a friend has been bereaved and you are wondering how you can support them during this time. It's not always easy having a conversation with someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one. It can be even more difficult on the phone when you can't see and read the person's body language. But, given the tendency that grief has to isolate us from others, even more so in these days of physical isolation, it's important that we try to be in touch, by phone if possible, but a letter or a text can help too.

### **When you can't attend the funeral of a family member or a friend...**

The Church of England have produced some resources which might help if you are unable to go to the funeral of a loved one, including a simple service sheet to follow at the same time as the funeral. There are also prayers that you can use. On the website below you will find all sorts of information including information about options of videoing funeral services which you can watch with family and friends at a future date.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/funerals/here-everyone/support-when-you-cant-attend-funeral>

### **Seeking more help**

I am always available to talk on the phone. If you or someone you love is grieving and would value someone to talk to, don't hesitate to give me a ring. Mobile tel. 07462194549 and landline 01946 451257.

Alternatively, there are national organisations such as Cruise who offer support. You can call Cruise helpline. Our National Freephone Helpline remains open – call 0808 808 1677. Opening hours are Monday-Friday 9.30-5pm (excluding bank holidays), with extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, when we're open until 8pm. Or you can email them on [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

Another agency that provides support.... <https://www.ataloss.org/Pages/FAQs/Category/coronavirus-pandemic>.

### **A Prayer for those who are grieving**

God of all life,

When all there is in our lives is the empty space where the beloved was and nothing can fill it and we want nothing to fill it because no one can take the place of the beloved...

Give us your strength in our sorrow,

Your presence in the absence we feel,

You rest that we might rise again to new life,

And your hope that in death we are not divided.

Amen

God of all life,

When your people are mourning,

make us patient listeners to the memories of happy times.

Make us sensitive carers

so that we support but do not weaken

Make us good friends,

So that we can hold the future open for when our friends are ready to face it,

and hear our prayers for all those recently bereaved.

Amen