



2/4/2020

Letter to our church and community

Dear friends, sisters and brothers,

We are more aware than ever of how different everyone's situation is. Every home with the combination of people or aloneness is unique and asks us to face "time" in a new way and "ourselves" in a new way as John Bell shared on thought for the day this week.

For those working on the front line it will be a time of stress, anxiety and emotional exhaustion, but also a calling and sense of purpose and worth. I have spoken to a couple of nurses and my friend Kerry who is a paramedic and there is such commitment and energy it is inspiring. (Please watch the facebook "Pass the Baton" challenge of our very own majorette troupe on Portobello, it is extraordinary") Kerry is the leader of this troupe and an amazing woman.

For those who feel cut off from family and friends I include a poem by John O'Donohue and also Ed Brindley has pointed out a Tom Wright reflection on lament. These can be found further on at the end of this letter.

We are so delighted with our Oasis ministry which has become a beautiful phone contact ministry with over a 100 folk involved in receiving weekly calls from the leaders and helpers. Thank you to Anne, Janet and Margaret for making this happen. A continued thank you to all the group leaders for your kindness and contact to your extended families. If anyone would like to belong to this please phone me 07910558139 and we will pass you to this wonderful team.

I had a lovely chat with Betty Littlewood (in her nineties) She is on FaceTime with her family but alone. She said "I am fine Sally, I am used to spending a lot of time on my own BUT somehow it feels different when you HAVE TO!" So true x

As we are all adjusting to this new way of life for some of us (once we are rested) it will get harder before it gets deeper. Finding some kind of rhythm is essential to our well being either daily or weekly.

Before this all happened Joyce shared a rhythm of life with me she is trying and I am using the idea of it in my life.

Mission Mondays,
Testimony Tuesdays,
Worship Wednesdays,
Thanksgiving Thursdays,
Fasting Fridays.

Making your own up may help you and your household.

I have found I can suddenly be working all the time and on some device all day, connecting but not growing. For me now fasting Fridays means no technology if possible on that day.

I had a sense early this week that our temples have been taken away for a time. This is not forever thank the Lord.

Our churches and places of worship, our sports stadiums, our shopping centres all our gathering places. So we have been sent home for a while.

Homes are where our christian faith began and in many parts of the world are the main cradle for faith because of persecution.

Some homes feel safe, some unsafe, some empty and some overcrowded. We are praying that you will find time to pray, to read God's word, to share meals with grace, to worship however it blesses you and to not give up responding to the whispers from the Lord as you contact and bless people in this way.

Please as you walk your daily walk can you be praying for the homes you pass and the households around you.

Rupert and I are here and working so please do not hesitate to phone if you would like to talk anything through, pray or just chat.

Acts 2:46

The believers met together in the Temple every day. They ate together in their homes, happy to share their food with joyful hearts.

PALM SUNDAY

For a contemporary service: **HTB online**. Live streaming their morning worship. This is the church where Alpha began in 1990 and where we began our faith journey:

<https://www.htb.org/sundayonline>

Just to say you can only watch this from 9.30-10.15am on Sunday with no catch up. We have asked our very own **Mark Taylor to lead us in worship for 15 minutes** following the live stream from HTB. If you go onto sandalmagnaparish face book page he will be **worshipping live 10.15-10.30am**.

The words for the songs are typed below. So sing along, play along and let's worship as a church which ever household you are in.

Just for fun let's make sure we have a baked potato this weekend and remember all those we usually share "Potato Sunday" with!!!

Ideas we had were:

Palm Sunday is about praise: So get your Fischy Music songs out on youtube and praise together.

Decide if you sing or are a musician to spend some time jamming with your favourite worship songs and giving it all to God. Or like me just put on worship and enjoy the talent of others and the words of faith and praise that have blessed me so much and lifted my spirits this week.

Jesus Story Book online has the Palm Sunday and Easter Stories you can watch.

<https://bibleproject.com> is an amazing resource for older teens and adults and there are many sessions you can choose from but why not watch the Palm Sunday/Easter week together and discuss and pray together.

We would love EVERY household to enjoy making an Easter garden this week

(Take a photo and e-mail them to sandalmagna@gmail.com, and we can share them on our facebook page)

You can make it in the garden, or at home with lego, with chocolate biscuits, clay, playdough, plasticine, a life size creation! Whatever you will enjoy as a family and through next week which is holy week think about each day.

We will be sending a note out next Thursday which is Maundy Thursday the day Jesus prayed in the Garden, so perhaps a time of prayer in your gardens would be a lovely thing to do. The rainbow prayer from the "Together at Home" resources would be beautiful to use.

Laura's ideas for families (Rainbow picture)

Together at Home.

<https://www.tath.co.uk/>

While we are unable to meet in our church buildings we can still be 'Together at Home'. We're providing free resources for churches to share with their families to help them explore the Bible and learn about God together whilst in their own homes.

Each week we're producing two packs that churches can share full of family activities, Bible study, prayer and printable puzzle sheets. One of the packs is based on the readings of the Lectionary for those churches who follow the Lectionary Calendar.

There are also a range of other resources released daily to help children and families connect with God and one another

Here are some suggestions for **Worship, Bible Reading, Prayer, and Reflection:**

Alternatively: **Worship with Archbishop Justin Welby** at Lambeth palace <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>

For a more traditional service from the **Royal School of Church Music Worship**, where you can sing a hymn and download an order of service: <https://www.rscm.org.uk/our-resources/hftd/>

Rend Collective, Socially Distant Worship Club is fun and chilled out.

Pam Payling has suggested the **Lectio 365** app which is so relevant, beautiful and helpful.

BIOY Bible in One Year Explore the Bible with Nicky Gumbel.

A Bible Image a Day

From Monday 30th March, Rupert will be putting on our Parish facebook page, SandalMagnaParish, an image from the Bible each day, with a text that looks at how that image is used in different contexts throughout the Bible.

You are welcome to incorporate this into your daily readings or use it to help in your reflections and prayers.

The Bible is full of visual images and symbols which weave together to create a beautiful and colourful tapestry. From the images of Genesis to the visions of Revelation via the poetry of prophet and psalmist and the parables of Jesus, these images drawn from the natural world, the animal kingdom, human nature and man-made objects have a continuing freshness and meaning for us today.

Over the next three months we will work through 100 images that form the basis for a book to be published in the Autumn called, From Ark to Zion, an ABC of Biblical Images.

Songs for Sunday with Mark Taylor:

1.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
All you who hear, now to His temple draw near;
Praise him in glad adoration!
Gloria, Gloria, ah, ah
Gloria, Gloria, ah, ah

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee,
Surely his goodness and mercy will daily attend thee.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
If with His love he befriend thee.
Gloria, Gloria, ah, ah
Gloria, Gloria, ah, ah

Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him!
Let the Amen sound from His people again;
Gladly for ever adore Him.
Gloria, Gloria, ah, ah
Gloria, Gloria, ah, ah

2.

Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord x4

*Peace in Heaven and glory in the highest
When mouths stay closed the stones will cry out*

Majestic is the King who comes in the name of the Lord

Triumphant is the King who comes in the name of the Lord

3.

Hallelujah, hosanna! x4

God has exalted Jesus to the highest place,
and given him the name that is above every name.
That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
and every tongue confess that he is Lord.

4.

You are here, moving in our midst
I worship you, I worship you
You are here, working in this place
I worship you, I worship you. X2

*Way maker, Miracle worker, Promise keeper
Light in the darkness
My God, that is who you are. X2*

You are here, touching every heart
I worship you, I worship you
You are here, healing every heart
I worship you, I worship you
You are here, turning lives around
I worship you, I worship you
You are here, mending every heart
I worship you, I worship you

You wipe away all tears
You mend the broken heart
You're the answer to it all, Jesus. x2

BY N.T. WRIGHT UPDATED: MARCH 29, 2020 PUBLISHED:

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For many Christians, the coronavirus-induced limitations on life have arrived at the same time as Lent, the traditional season of doing without. But the sharp new regulations—no theatre, schools shutting, virtual house arrest for us over-70s—make a mockery of our little Lenten disciplines. Doing without whiskey, or chocolate, is child's play compared with not seeing friends or grandchildren, or going to the pub, the library or church.

There is a reason we normally try to meet in the flesh. There is a reason solitary confinement is such a severe punishment. And this Lent has no fixed Easter to look forward to. We can't tick off the days. This is a stillness, not of rest, but of poised, anxious sorrow.

No doubt the usual silly suspects will tell us why God is doing this to us. A punishment? A warning? A sign? These are knee-jerk would-be Christian reactions in a culture which, generations back, embraced rationalism: everything must have an explanation. But supposing it doesn't? Supposing real human wisdom doesn't mean being able to string together some dodgy speculations and say, "So that's all right then?" What if, after all, there are moments such as T. S. Eliot recognised in the early 1940s, when the only advice is to wait without hope, because we'd be hoping for the wrong thing?

Rationalists (including Christian rationalists) want explanations; Romantics (including Christian romantics) want to be given a sigh of relief. But perhaps what we need more than either is to recover the biblical tradition of lament. Lament is what happens when people ask, "Why?" and don't get an answer. It's where we get to when we move beyond our self-centred worry about our sins and failings and look more broadly at the suffering of the world. It's bad enough facing a pandemic in New York City or London. What about a crowded refugee camp on a Greek island? What about Gaza? Or South Sudan?

At this point the Psalms, the Bible's own hymnbook, come back into their own, just when some churches seem to have given them up. "Be gracious to me, Lord," prays the sixth Psalm, "for I am languishing; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror." "Why do you stand far off, O Lord?" asks the 10th Psalm plaintively. "Why do you hide yourself in time of trouble?" And so it goes on: "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?" (Psalm 13). And, all the more terrifying because Jesus himself quoted it in his agony on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22).

Yes, these poems often come out into the light by the end, with a fresh sense of God's presence and hope, not to explain the trouble but to provide reassurance within it. But sometimes they go the other way. Psalm 89 starts off by celebrating God's goodness and promises, and then suddenly switches and declares that it's all gone horribly wrong. And

Psalm 88 starts in misery and ends in darkness: "You have caused friend and neighbour to shun me; my companions are in darkness." A word for our self-isolated times. The point of lament, woven thus into the fabric of the biblical tradition, is not just that it's an outlet for our frustration, sorrow, loneliness and sheer inability to understand what is happening or why. The mystery of the biblical story is that God also laments. Some Christians like to think of God as above all that, knowing everything, in charge of everything, calm and unaffected by the troubles in his world. That's not the picture we get in the Bible.

Rupert's note: Maybe reading a Psalm a day would be a good habit to get into.

POEM by JOHN O'DONOHUE

FOR ABSENCE

May you know that absence is alive with hidden presence,
that nothing is ever lost or forgotten.

May the absences in your life grow full of eternal echo.

May you sense around you the secret Elsewhere
Where the presences that have left you dwell.

May you be generous in your embrace of loss.

May the sore well of grief turn into a seamless flow of presence.

May your compassion reach out to the ones we never hear
from.

May you have the courage to speak for the excluded ones.

May you become the gracious and passionate subject of your
own life.

May you not disrespect your mystery through brittle words or
false belonging.

May you be embraced by God in whom dawn and twilight are
one.

May your longing inhabit its dreams within the Great Belonging.

*With our love and prayers,
Sally and Rupert*