

Letter to WSAM churches

7th May 2020

Dear Friends

I hope, as I always say, but very sincerely mean it, that you are all well. It is lovely to hear voices over the phone, and sometimes even see faces online. This week the internet has made it possible for me to chair a national church committee meeting with attendees from all over the country, without having to leave home - a way to take decisions and share with each other safely and cheaply, and better for the environment; but I would still rather that we had been able to meet in person. Each Sunday here we do our best to worship and to pray together, but I know many of us long to be able to do so truly and physically together, in the same place at the same time!

The Future

Despite a lot of press and media speculation, the government has actually said very little about the future. What we do know is that the Coronavirus is not going away any time soon, so we need to learn to live with it, and with the threat that it poses. Any relaxation of the lockdown may well have to be temporary, and in any case the 'new normal' will certainly not be the same as the 'old normal'.....

With that in mind, the URC has produced a booklet entitled 'Ready for the new "normal"' and it contains some wise and practical advice for all of us in local congregations - things we need to think carefully about before we try to move forwards into this slightly different world. Since the government has yet to announce any details about the way ahead, there are no hard and fast rules as yet, but there are things we need to consider if we are to act responsibly and with regard for everyone's wellbeing.

The booklet, for those able to download it, can be found at

<https://urc.org.uk/new-normal.html>

Sadly I don't think there is an easy way to get it to others, as it has 22 pages and isn't, as yet, being produced in a physical form. However I'm open to suggestions, and the elders will certainly be looking at it.

For Now

While we wait to see what may happen, there are some resources available to help us: The first one was passed to me by Irene, and is especially for those who don't have a computer! This is a free call telephone number, especially aimed at Anglicans but helpful for many, especially lonely people with no computer. Every day you can listen to a different message and a hymn, by calling 0800 8048044 at any time of the day. I tried it

and was immediately connected to a message from the Archbishop of Canterbury - give it a try.

Next, for those who enjoy colouring (not particularly children, although they may like some of them) there are wonderful pages on the URC website to print off. Too many to mention all of them, my favourite is <https://urc.org.uk/images/psalm-24.pdf>

A resource aimed particularly at the 16-25 age group is a new weekly online live Youtube broadcast called 'Triologue'. Each session will explore a theme alongside a Bible passage, providing a spring board for further discussion and reflection. They are on Thursdays at 7pm and the first one has already happened, but is still available to view on URC Children's and Youth YouTube channel - bit.ly/urctriologue

Finally, worship. A reminder that the URC daily devotions and Sunday worship in the form of a podcast can be found at <https://devotions.urc.org.uk>

And for any of you who enjoy Iona Community worship, have a look at their new daily services, available in the form of Powerpoints on their website, <https://iona.org.uk>

In the old 'normal' times, next week would have been Christian Aid Week. Of course really it still is Christian Aid Week, and in any case we can give to Christian Aid any week of the year, but you might like to remember them and their work especially in your prayers this coming week, and perhaps give to them online if you are able. We won't be having a specifically Christian Aid service, but the churches of Farnham have put together a service on YouTube and generously offer it to all of us: <https://tinyurl.com/ycyqwkg> (or search Farnham Churches Christian Aid Week Service 2020).

As we mark the 75th Anniversary of VE day, we remember that this world we live in was shaped by the conflict and horrors of the Second World War, and by the way it ended. May we also remember that so many people and nations worked together and fought side by side to achieve that ending, and give thanks for them as we remember before God those who died. They worked and fought for a better world, of peace, of justice, and of co-operation. May we never forget.

God Bless you all, please be kind - to yourself and everybody else - and keep in touch. We have tried so hard to keep everyone safe for the last few weeks, let's not give up now!

Anne Lewitt

These letters and Bulletins, with some details removed for confidentiality, are now being added to our church websites so that they are more easily and widely accessible.