

## From the Rectory...

Recently I came across something posted on the internet that made me smile: "Until further notice, the days of the week are now called *Thisday*, *Thatday*, *Otherday*, *Someday*, *Yesterday*, *Today*, *Nextday*." To which might be added, *Birthday* and *Clappingday*. It seems that it may not be keeping busy that's the problem for some of us, it's more the difficulty of keeping a sense of rhythm, of the shape of the week. Of course parents of young children, key-workers, many of those working from home, and the people who are trying to combine more than one of those roles are probably busier than they've ever been.

Living under the shadow of Coronavirus has tested us all in ways we have never experienced before. Most of us have been living in isolation, separated from family, friends and colleagues. Life has been very different from what we have been used to and especially hard for many of those living alone and those who don't have gardens.

The most significant news for our Church life together was the suspension of all services and then the closure of all our buildings, something I have found particularly dispiriting. I am conscious of all those people who find strength and peace by quietly spending time in our churches during the week. Being prevented from joining with our Church family on Sundays, and at all our other normal events and activities, is both frustrating and saddening. I can't remember an Easter Day when I didn't go to Church.

All the wedding couples for the next few months have had to face the hard reality that their big day cannot go ahead. As soon as we are permitted, we shall do all we can to accommodate their new plans. However, all of these stresses and disappointments are as nothing compared to what those who have lost loved ones to this disease have faced. It has not been possible for myself and clergy colleagues to conduct funerals in the traditional way. Currently, only a handful of mourners are allowed to attend either a twenty minute Crematorium service, or to stand ("socially distanced") around the grave in a churchyard, with no singing permitted. To lose a loved one and be unable to give them a proper send-off has simply added to the pain. Our hearts go out to them and to all who are currently suffering with the illness. In addition, many are having to deal with redundancy and great financial uncertainty. Like so many organisations and businesses, our Church income has suffered and this will be a serious challenge going forward: *please read the letter from our Churchwardens and respond if you can.*

The Queen, in a moving address to the nation, recently spoke of her personal experience of living through the dark days of the Second World War and the sense of relief, indeed joy, when the fighting came to an end. The military heroes that gave us victory over fascism are of course in this crisis replaced by the incredibly dedicated staff of the NHS and all care workers who are bravely battling this invisible killer. A worrying number have themselves succumbed. We owe them more than words can say. I have enjoyed taking part in the "Thursday Clap" for the NHS at 8pm and particularly ringing one of the Church bells, to add an extra bit of clatter to the proceedings!

None of us know what the future will look like as we learn to live with Covid-19. However, amongst all the uncertainty about the future we must be thankful that some things are constant. The seasons advance – daffodils gave way to tulips, blossom to leaves, primroses to bluebells – just as they always have. And after a glorious Spring, Summer has begun, a reminder that God's time remains constant. We often say that God's time isn't the same as our time, and that's a helpful idea just now, when we need something bigger than us, someone infinitely trustworthy, to hold on to for reassurance and hope.

Be assured that as soon as we can, we will gather together once again for a reunion service and celebration. Perhaps if we have some good summer weather this can be outside in the fresh air, and we will then be able to sing – something many of us have missed very much. I just wish I could give you a date!

Yours ever,

*Colin*