

This time the google question revealed the most frequently asked phrases are:

“What can I do to help

- during coronavirus
- the NHS
- black lives matter
- climate change
- me sleep!

All pressing issues and well worth our prayers and more – our involvement and our commitment as Christians taking our full part in society, shaping it and listening to it...

There is much for us to do – let us lean on God a while longer, to gain the strength and purpose to do what we are called to do and to carry on.

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

We sang one of my favourite hymns “Just as I am”. The words remind us that God accepts us, just as we are; with all our faults, with all our doubts and concerns.

There is no need to be pure to come to his presence, no need for grain or animal sacrifices as in the OT. Through JC we can come

“Just as I am”.

And in coming, we will receive welcome, pardon cleansing and rest.

As we are battered by life, no matter we can come and hand over to God all our feelings and our negative thoughts.

We are welcome, Jesus has died for me so that I can come “Just as I am”.
Amen.

Matthew 11:25-30

JC promises rest to the weary – healing and compassion. He said:
Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

Does that passage speak to you?

We all need this, particularly in times when we are called to care for those who are ill, elderly, infirm or lonely. I myself thro my husband’s illness and death lent heavily upon my God. You all know the poem “Footsteps” how God carries us ...

Bur “rest” does not mean idleness, or the absence of activity. Jesus does offer peace and well being in the midst of the Church life as we engage with family, society and the church.

JC said ²⁹ *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*
³⁰ *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

The yoke is an instrument of work – the ox is yoked to pull the cart or the plough. If it is a badly fitting yoke – you pull against it seeking release from the task set.

In Jesus days on earth there would be two ox together in the yoke to pull the cart. An older experienced ox and a young one who would take the lead from the older wiser ox. For us Jesus is the wise teacher offering us to be yoked with him as he says His yoke will be easy – it fits perfectly and enables us to accomplish the task.

It is also thought that the yoke referred to the scriptures which the Pharisees held over the people to admonish and cajole them into obedience to their rules. Again Jesus offers the new covenant, a fulfilment of the old testament laws and a release from bondage as he shows us the way into an open loving relationship with God the Father.

So throughout this period of lockdown what tasks have we been

set? What service have we been called to?

We are all called to support & uphold our Christian values particularly in our family life and with our nearest neighbours. This calling requires many gifts – or as we call them the fruit of the HS.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Galatians 5:22-23

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control - these are the gifts/fruits you will need to strengthen you for your task.

And even in lockdown, in our church lives we need to continue to be a caring fellowship providing loving and supportive friendship.

- Do we phone each other – talk across the road or fence?
- Do we strengthen and encourage each other?
- Do we learn and pray together?

We need to keep all this going now not wait for when we return to “church” and our “normal” daily lives.

If we do this then we have the opportunity to tell others about our relationship with God, tell them how God is there for us, supports us and cares for us. How God brings to us the strength and gifts we need for our tasks. Speaking of **our own spiritual journey** and how God has supported us on the journey. We can be honest about how sometimes it is tough – God appears to be ignoring you...and it is Ok to be angry about that! But if we keep praying and reading our scriptures then we will come back to Jesus the source of peace, inspiration and strength for the coming days.

Another way to tell the Gospel is in the way **we behave** – as JC taught us – by showing our love, not just to God, but also just as importantly by showing our love to our neighbour. I remember in a previous parish holding a Holiday Club for children

based around the parable of the Good Samaritan. We taught the children that when we try to love our neighbour it is not just the person next door – the chant was:

Who is your neighbour – Answer - Everyone is our neighbour. It is so disappointing that we are not able to gather in person with the children we know in our villages, in the way we expected at the beginning of the year. But Hannah has been able to talk with the children through the school and is doing a great job building those relationships in all our villages which will give us the opportunities as lockdown is released. In fact there are so many disappointments around what we can and can not do as lockdown releases, and it doesn't help with the news broadcasters showing how some intrepid churches are open and willing to take people in for weddings and funerals. It just is not that easy when we have a vulnerable congregation who should not be asked to take up the burden of cleaning and supervising gatherings in our church buildings.

So we continue to meet together on zoom and look for other opportunities to be church for each other. Life has changed and we are embracing that change brilliantly and should give thanks to God and Hannah for all that we have.

There is much we can still do from home. Not least of which is to pray for the shape of things to come – there is one thing we can be sure of - it will be different.

As our wardens and then PCCs grapple with **when** and **if** and **how** to open our churches we must support them with prayer and sound thought processes, expressing our personal opinions and then **listening** to others, so we can come to a whole hearted agreement about the way forward.

Some time ago I discovered the art of asking google an open ended question to find out what is at the forefront of society's mind. You start the question and google then automatically gives you the most popular end to the sentence – the most frequently searched question. So I asked:

“What can I do to help”..