

## KEEP IN TOUCH

### Worship, Fellowship and Pilgrimage for the self-isolating

In the current coronavirus pandemic, many people are having to self-isolate. This isn't easy. The challenges of self-isolation include loneliness, uncertainty, anxiety, boredom and physical limitations.

In addition, if we are churchgoers, we will not be able to attend church services or home groups, share communion, or meet with friends for prayer and fellowship. A natural and familiar source of human contact and spiritual comfort has suddenly been withdrawn, and we can be left feeling isolated spiritually as well as physically.

This has been written to help you find a spiritual rhythm to your day, and to explore your home as a sacred place where you can meet with God.

Home can also become a place that strengthens your links with friends, family and community. Self-isolation does not have to mean solitude. There are many ways to keep in touch; such as phone calls, letters, emails, text messages, or online chat. Prayer also links us together in the deeper fellowship of Christ.

*Jesus replied, 'Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.'* John 14.23

Our prayer is that in this period of self-isolation, you may discover a renewal of spiritual life and a new freedom in God.

## WORSHIP AND COMMUNION

*By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me – a prayer to the God of my life. Psalm 42.8*

We are used to communal worship, gathering together as the Body of Christ. But worship can be communal even when we are alone, as we share the same resources and experiences. Churches often record their services and make them available online. You can also find services regularly broadcast on the radio or TV.

Some Christians have found that it is helpful to follow a daily rhythm of prayer and worship. Morning, noon and evening seems most natural, and some include night prayer as well.

The Church of England website has a 'Daily Worship' app that you can download and follow through the day.

*[www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer](http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer)*

While taking communion may not be an option for you, Jesus shared many meals with his friends. A meal time, however informal, can become a spiritual blessing. Start with a short prayer, giving thanks to God for the food he has provided. Invite Jesus to your table as a guest. Remember the occasions when he ate with his disciples, and the lessons they learned each time. You might like to read the stories as further study.

Useful Parish phone numbers:

Rev Jonathan Widdess, 01865 863702, [vicar@cumnor.org](mailto:vicar@cumnor.org)

Sarah Evans, 01865 861541, [office@cumnor.org](mailto:office@cumnor.org)

If you have spiritual or practical needs at this time, we will help in any way we can.

*May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5.23-24*

read back how God has been your daily companion. It can also be an encouragement to others should you choose to share it. Some of you may be a source of blessing to others by writing blogs, posting on social media, or emailing friends with spiritual reflections.

#### NURTURING AND CREATIVITY

*You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Isaiah 58.11b*

It can be a problem to live too much inside our own heads. We need to engage with our environment. If you have a garden, or even a collection of houseplants, tending and nurturing living things is very enriching. Your home is a place of blessing. Tend and nurture it as if it were a garden. Make it beautiful. Use your creativity and make things with your hands. Take time to appreciate all that is around you.

#### SEEKING HELP

For many reasons, you may find you need to seek help. Our spiritual, mental and physical health are strongly linked. Make a list of important phone numbers. Keep in touch.

You can keep up to date with the news from our Parish through the website <https://cumnor.org/> or our FaceBook Page, St Michael's Cumnor.

#### PRAYER AND FELLOWSHIP

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians 1.3-4*

Praying for each other, holding people in our hearts and minds, is a way of keeping in touch. You may have photographs of friends and family. If not, do you have an address book or contact list? Look through them prayerfully and dwell on each person who matters to you. Recall their stories, and the memories you share. Some people like to use a pin board to create an aid to prayer, adding photographs, letters, names and prayer requests. See if it's possible at least once a week to pray with a friend on the phone or online chat. Go beyond 'I'm all right, are you all right?' Read some Bible verses together. You might like to take it in turns to prepare some prayers and a reading. Listen to the same church service or sermon and reflect on it together.

#### BLESSING AND GRACE

*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.  
I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.' Psalm 91.1-2*

The Celtic Christians included every part of their homes in their prayers for God's blessing and protection. Go into each room in your home. Pause and listen. Look about you. Feel the air close around you. Say a prayer, as simple as 'May God's grace fill this place.'

You may find one place that suits you best as your prayer space. You can make it special with items such as a comfortable chair, a small table with books and Bible, pictures, a cross, a candle or lamp, and a warm shawl.

#### PILGRIMAGE AND PLACE

*As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them... Luke 24.15*

Pilgrimage is a way of reflecting our journey through life. As pilgrims, we can become aware that God goes ahead to prepare the way, he is our companion who walks alongside us, he watches over us and keeps us in his love, and he is there at the end to welcome us and offer us sanctuary.

Create a pilgrimage trail in your home. Write out prayers and Bible verses on pieces of card, and keep them in key places such as your favourite chair, a window, a doorway between rooms, taps that give water, a heater or cooker that gives warmth, a lampstand that gives light. At some point each day, walk slowly from place to place, and read the prayer and verses aloud. When you come to the last place, take a moment to be still and silent, and listen for God's voice.

Change the pilgrimage trail from time to time to keep the experience fresh.

#### TEACHING AND STUDY

*Jesus said... the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14.26-27*

There are many prayers, Bible study notes and guides, and recorded sermons to be found online or in books.

Put aside time each day for deeper reading and exploring. Reading someone's testimony, or poetry, or thoughts on a spiritual subject, can be helpful and inspire our own thoughts. Study, and dwelling on a short passage in the Bible, is a way we can encounter God and allow his words to feed us and bring us life.

#### REFLECTION AND TESTIMONY

*Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. Luke 2.19*

You may like to keep a spiritual journal. Note any significant thoughts, any Bible verses that speak to you, prayers and answers to prayer. This can be an encouragement to you as you