

From our Bishops

Making Community through the long haul

Bishop Nicholas has written to our clergy telling them that while "we need to be preparing for the long haul", our churches "make community like nothing else in our society."

In an Ad Clerum sent out at the end of last week, the Bishop said:

"We are at a stage with the Coronavirus when many of us are wondering, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' The answer seems to be that we need to be preparing for the long haul.

But he added:

"I have been reflecting on the significance of Christian community. Churches make community like nothing else in our society. Church communities are not for their own benefit. We make a considerable contribution to the wider social capital. It was good to see this up front in Danny Kruger's report to the Prime Minister on Levelling Up our Communities and his admiration for the work done by St James Devizes where Danny is the relatively new MP. "

In his letter the Bishop said:

"The virus appears to be accelerating trends that were already there and patterns of church going have changed."

He said that many would be thinking about how to use the pastoral opportunities of All Saints/All Souls this year, particularly to assist those who were unable to attend funerals or to mark a death in the way we need to do and that " many are already thinking about how to do Remembrance Sunday. The keeping of Advent and celebration of Christmas will be very different in a way that will still have meaning for the wider community."

He also said:

"The need for good theology that helps us reflect about our present circumstances is very great. Several people have commented that they are surprised the Church hasn't spoken more about death and the meaning of eternal life. Maybe we have lost confidence in something that is so central to who we are and what we do that we are finding this difficult? Christianity began at an empty tomb and the way in which Christians cared for the dead was a very powerful witness about what we believe about life.

"There are a number of books and online resources that might help us think theologically and be reflective practitioners. Tom Wright was one of the first off the mark with his God and the Pandemic: A Christian Reflection on the Coronavirus and Its Aftermath. I have found Walter Brueggemann's Virus as a Summons to Faith: Biblical Reflections in a Time of Loss, Grief and Uncertainty to be insightful and helpful. Either might be stimulating reading for a Deanery Chapter and book club."