

Isolation and community • Minister's Letter, June 2020

We have come through Easter and it looks like we will reach Pentecost without being able to gather together in celebration. It is a strange time to be the church. I am sorry that we have not been able to open the church even for private prayer, as I think many would appreciate that. But we need to keep to our own homes, as counselled by the government.

I don't know what you have been doing in recent weeks, but many have turned to new hobbies or to gardening and cooking, as well as keeping fit and, no doubt, a fair bit of television, though we have to manage without sport at the moment. There has also been a great sense of solidarity and community, and there is a lot of helping others.

I wonder what you think are the benefits we are getting in our period of isolation. One thing that is clear is a sense of silence, and of slowing down. People are becoming more aware of nature, of birdsong and of plants and flowers. I noticed a hedgehog coming into our garden the other day. Perhaps they are feeling more confident in roaming around with the reduction in the amount of traffic. I have also been enjoying a great display of rhododendrons in my garden, and particularly like 'Percy Wiseman', which has pink buds opening out to creamy white, like apple blossom.

The church continues in our own homes and all over the world. With television and the internet we have a window onto lots of different services in every corner of the world. I expect quite a lot of people tune into cathedral services, but quite a lot of churches produce their own services week by week. I am told that St Mary Redcliffe is live-streaming Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline every day of the week. We haven't got into live-streaming at St Saviour's. However, I have been producing a leaflet each week with a reading and thoughts to reflect on each week, and, since Easter, have been producing a sound file with a short service on it for Sundays, both of which can be downloaded from the church website: www.coalpitheath.org.uk. Our online house group continues week by week using Zoom. It will be interesting to find out how people are managing to worship and what they are learning about it when we are finally able to get back together.

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