

Dear all

I have tried to be really on the ball this week. Attached is an [order of service](#) for Sunday's service to help you follow what is happening. There are 4 hymns. As with last week, we will record a service in the church tomorrow, and livestream the service from the vicarage on Sunday at 10.00am. I will let you know the YouTube link when I have uploaded it. I have provided YouTube links for 3 of the hymns in the text of the Order of Service for those who want to hear them. Unfortunately, I could not hunt down a decent version of *Love is the way*.

Keeping a good mental health in this time of lockdown is not always easy. On my phoning around, I hear many comments along the lines that people are coping OK, managing to find things to do, keeping in touch with people and so on. Some have said that they are used to being on their own, and perhaps are getting more contact by phone, letter, email or Skype than usual. When the weather is good, that really helps. Others however are finding it more of a struggle. And I think we all have some better days and some not so good.

The CofE has set up a page **Supporting good mental health** which may be found at:

https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/mental-health-resources/supporting-good-mental-health?fbclid=IwAR03nKeaQOEzq4AbWS8iRPeI5Rnz-CDqIHDj_rFOt76-9U3ACZu99r6zaQ

Unless you cut-and-paste you might find it easier to go to www.churchofengland.org, then click on Faith in Action > Mental Health Resources. This contains a larger set of resources, but clicking on the 13 Daily Reflections brings you to the same page.

St Paul's Cathedral, London, have put together a resources' hub. It includes a variety of talks, children's activities, a virtual tour and pilgrimage, information about the organ etc. If you are interested in exploring it, you can find it at <https://resourcehub.squarespace.com/>

Our archdeacon, the Ven Justine Allain Chapman has followed her reflection on the account of Noah with another thought-provoking reflection on olive branches.



An olive branch

I feel up in the air, as if I am not really living my life, but surveying life outside my house and outside my country. It is safe inside but confined and I am wondering about living freely again, what that will look and feel like. Home feels safe, but not how life ought to be. I want to spread my wings.

After seven months Noah's Ark struck Mount Ararat and stayed there, securely fixed and up in the air as the waters went down. Ten months after the flood the tops of the mountains could be seen. No longer were the occupants floating without direction and purpose. They could survey the waters, the mountains and watch the chaos subside and the earth increasingly become a place where they could leave the Ark and live freely, unconfined.

While Noah watches and waits as the waters subside he realises there is more beyond the horizon than he can see and so he sends out a hardy raven. The raven, an opportunistic and intelligent bird, well able to defend itself, scours the waters restlessly going to and fro

until Noah knows the earth has emerged. Once there is the possibility of a safe and supportive environment Noah sends a dove. The dove returned having found nowhere to land. Sent out again after a week it returns with a leaf from an olive branch showing that there are trees flourishing so that a week later it doesn't return having found a new home.

There was a big hurry to build the Ark before the flood. It was not over suddenly, but took months and came in stages. We will feel at home in God's world again, even if now when we go out we feel unsure and vulnerable. Today I will draw strength from an image of Noah looking out as the dove returned with the pledge of hope and peace for a new world. I will mull over words of Isaiah: In returning and rest you will be saved, in quietness and in trust shall be your strength (Isaiah 30:15).

Today's prayer by Nick Fawcett:

Lord,
times are challenging at the moment,
demanding,
scary,
uncertain –
I can't pretend otherwise.
For many, life has brought heartache;
for us all, anxiety;
and we're well aware there's no telling what the future holds.
But life is still beautiful,
despite everything,
for those of us lucky to be well
and untouched by tragedy;
still precious,
wonderful beyond words,
offering so much to intrigue,
enthral,
thrill
and delight,
even with all the restrictions placed upon us.
Help us still to appreciate it,
still to marvel at it.
above all, still to live each day as fully as possible,
receiving it as a gift from your hand,
to be treasured and celebrated.
Amen.
Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark

