

Dear Friends,

Maybe, just maybe, we are beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel. As I write we are beginning to see a relaxation of the government's guidelines on the pandemic. Now we must pray urgently that there is not a second spike; that suddenly more people start contracting the virus and, of course, dying from it.

At Christ Church, Moreton Hall, we have been very pleased to be part of the local authority's care programme and through our networks we have supported those who are vulnerable and isolated. I would think that this ministry will need to continue for the next few months and it is my hope and prayer that it will continue after the pandemic is over. Loneliness is one of the biggest problems we face on Moreton Hall. There are many people who may be at work but live alone and many people who are retired and living on their own a long way from friends and family. It has been a surprise to find how many people need our help and support at this time.

One of the biggest enemies to good friendship and good neighbourliness is our own busy-ness. Probably one of the greatest benefits of the pandemic is that all of us have had to slow down, stop and reflect and think about how we live our lives and who and what is important to us. We should not just switch back to our old lifestyle when this is over. There is a very strong probability that we will not go back to how we were before. Certainly the airlines and the holiday system we once had will not be there and maybe not for many years yet. I think cheap flights will probably be a thing of the past.

Many people are asking 'where is God in all this?' It has been interesting to note ever since we have been televising our services and doing thought-for-the-day how many people have got in contact with the church to watch and pray with us. National statistics say that there has been a 25% increase in church attendance through on-line services and it is estimated that over half the population of the country has been praying regularly. There has been a launch of new prayer apps Like the bible in one year (BIOY) See <https://justdisciple.com/christian-prayer-app/> which you might like to consider.

So, part of the answer to 'where is God?' is that He has been right alongside you. For many people He has become for the first time a living reality and for others He has become more real than ever before. That is a friendship worth cultivating and retaining once the pandemic is over.

In my long years as a priest I have noted people have come to me in great distress and asked for prayer, which I have been glad to give, but when the crisis is over we do not see them again. I hope it will be different this time. While many people have died, and our hearts go out to the bereaved and those who have lost so much, God has also saved many more through the NHS. There are many people who have encountered the virus now giving heart-felt thanks for saving their loved ones. God has not abandoned us. He has stood with us. He wants to lead us into a better world. If we can learn the right lessons from the pandemic and build up our community lives and have more time for each other that will please Him. I think if we put less trust in our technologies and our systems which have not proved adequate for the challenge and put more trust in Him we will build a better world, a more tolerant world, a more understanding world and, if I might say so, a more blessed one.

Assuring you of our continued prayers and good wishes,

Revd. Canon Jonathan Ford.

Minister Christ Church Moreton Hall