

My dear friends

I am writing just four days after Boris Johnson asked many of us to self-isolate and all of us to practice social distancing. In those few days, it feels that the world has changed hugely, at least for now. People are queuing for food, however unnecessary this might actually be, sport is cancelled, schools are closing their doors, perhaps for months, and we have less freedom to socialise. This is no doubt that this feels extremely costly to us - to so many business, to zero-hours contract workers, to us. It *is* costly.

And yet, I wonder whether we can look for blessings in these times, too. Perhaps the reduction in traffic will enable us to hear the birds sing more clearly. Perhaps being unable to travel to exotic places will help us appreciate the here and now. Perhaps focusing mainly on one view will enable us to trace the unfolding of the seasons more closely.

I wonder, too, whether this might be a time of reconnecting with friends whom we have always loved, but whom, in our busyness, we have not spoken to for a long time. Could you aim to pick up the phone each day to a much-missed friend or relative?

And could you reconnect with yourself? - remember the things you loved doing before you came too busy, take up that hobby you always wanted to try, become creative in the kitchen, or the garden, or at your sewing machine?

And could you deepen your connection with God? - take up the rhythm of prayer that our churches have adopted and in that prayer, find rest for your souls?

I'm not saying that this is not the toughest of times. It is. I'm not saying that this is going to be easy. It won't. But in it, what grace can we find, what joy, what comfort? Take a deep breath. Be. Connect. Create.

With much love

Revd Mary