

Dear Tony



As we sat in chapel this morning I could see the forsythia blazing yellow abundance over the drive, with the gentler shades of daffodil clumps and primroses dotted all over the bank below. A classic Mothering Sunday scene. But on a Mothers Day like no other.

Again I want to say how delighted we are to hear from so many of you in response to these newsletters. (I read **every** email, but please understand I can't write back to them all.) It brings home to us especially how many of you out there are with us **and with each other** in spirit.

That may be by joining in our specific chapel times (9.10 each morning, evenings ad hoc). Or more generally having your Othona connection as a conscious part of your community support at this troubled time.

Today I'm going to share a prayer we used this morning, a cartoon, and link or two, and some ideas/questions. Let's go in reverse order.

Ideas and Questions

We've begun collecting ideas for what we can best do to make a positive contribution. By 'we' I mean this place and our small Othona team, but also **this network of people like you and including you**. Here are some of the ideas already on our radar. You're bound to have more!

On our part, we can share some content related to the events we've had to cancel. Not just for the few who would have been here, but for all of us. It might be a youtube clip, or a picture and commentary. A family-friendly quiz for Easter time or a recipe from our Good Life colleagues at Tamarisk Farm.

Instead of Walking Week this year I'm hoping to offer walks you can take alongside me, in your imagination, through choice parts of springtime Dorset. And with Dorset Art Weeks cancelled we can have an online art exhibition instead. Things like this we can launch on this newsletter but also leave available as resources for another time via our website. First up, I hope to bring you a taste of our beloved Enneagram teacher Karen Webb who was to have taught here next weekend.

Another potential for these newsletters is to bring snapshots of **your** news, **your** local community initiative, **your** poem or diary entry. What might others be interested to

hear? (I'll say now that if we get too many offers I'll have to select or edit, but don't let that put you off!)

Othona is a place of retreat and refreshment. While you can't visit in person we could bring you glimpses of the house and grounds, the life and the history - letting you take a kind of mini-retreat-at-a-distance. Would that be welcome?

There will be some sad news too as the weeks go by. I think this community mustn't shy away from that. Will you or yours let us know if you're taken ill? Some of our Othona folk have special expertise around the issues of bereavement and our own mortality; I hope we'll be sharing some of their wisdom too.

So that's some ideas to begin with. We don't want to promise more than we can deliver, nor try and duplicate what others do much better. For instance, many churches (and groups from other faith traditions) will be streaming live worship. (If we streamed our morning Seedtime from chapel it'd be mainly silence, which doesn't really work online!) Some will be rooted in one tradition, others more inclusive or exploratory no doubt. **If you find a really good resource of this kind, will you let us know?** Then we can share knowledge of it.

Links to follow

First of all, we've added a whole new section to our website: the [Community-Without-Buildings Resource](#). You might want to Bookmark/Favourite that for future quick reference. We'll be adding to it regularly, including archive copies of these newsletters. Today by clicking through you'll find "Prayer for a Pandemic" sent by Pat Hames in Connecticut and a poem "Lockdown" that's appeared quite widely on the internet (thanks Myriam Paish, Penny Motley and others for this). So do [click through here](#). And next time there'll be a link to our favourite poetry expert's new online talks.

Also today (Sunday) Julie Leoni (whose blogpost I shared last time) is offering an **online soothing meditation**, especially with the Othona diaspora (among others) in mind. Sorry this is ridiculously short notice, it's at 6.30pm today. You can see/hear it by using this link: <https://zoom.us/j/335637926> , If you use Facebook you'll find more details [here](#). This maybe the start of a series and Julie hopes to record each meditation so you can view it later. We'll keep you posted or you can contact Julie [this way](#).

N.B. "Keep Calm... and Rethink the Beatitudes" that I shared in the last newsletter had a couple of typos and omissions in it, so an amended version is now on the Resource page. Various people asked to share it; anything I've written you're welcome to share, preferably with brief acknowledgement of me and Othona.

Laugh Along

Fiona Heyes and her partner Chris Tempest were joking about what might be the ultimate self-help activity in these panic-buying times.

Then Chris found himself drawing this cartoon. (Not quite enough social distance, by the way, O Knitters!)



The Celtic Wheel turns to Mothering

Our reading in chapel this morning was from Tess Ward's "Celtic Wheel of the Year" (O Books) and we thought to reproduce some of her words for Mothering Sunday here:

Bearer of all, bent over the world,
toiling and tending, watching and weeping,
surround me by your spirit, as I was once held
in the dark waters of another's body.
Once carried and bathed, rocked and dandled,
be with me as I walk this day's road like a grown-up.

...

Be the natural love grounding my body
because I am made in the image of you.
Be the tender gaze that sees all I do
and cannot stop loving even when I need to learn.
Be as a lioness, protectress, still but ready
for when my untamed wandering would meet with harm.
I set out in the memory and desire of your care today.

More to come

I plan another newsletter midweek. If you know anyone else who'd like to receive it, the more the merrier. They don't need to know Othona. You can forward what you receive. Or ask them to drop us a line to bookings@othona-bb.org.uk with their name, postal address and email; we'll gladly add them to the list.

Returning to the image I began with, the primroses on the bank remind me of family groups spread out across a big picnic lawn. The daffodils inevitably suggest Wordsworth who saw "a crowd, a host of golden daffodils". Well. crowds are going to be few and far between now. We'll miss the buzz of visitors here at Othona; you'll have your own equivalent. But Wordsworth ended: "... oft when on my couch I lie, in vacant or in pensive mood, they flash upon that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude, and then my heart with pleasure fills, and dances with the daffodils." May we all nurture our inward eye if we can't get out and about, and dance even when alone!

Warmest wishes from the Dorset coast – from Tony (and on behalf of Liz, Kate and Robin)