

Community in spite of Virus 14.3.2020

Dear Friend

May I greet you from all of us at Othona West Dorset? Like everybody - like you, I'm sure - we're wondering. How will coronavirus affect us all?

The scenarios for its progress in the UK are getting more and more scary, aren't they? But we know that to live in fear is only half a life.

So I'm writing today with a thought or two that you may find supportive. And with info about how we're responding as an organisation to Covid-19.

We are not alone

Othona's understanding of Community has always been one of a dispersed network of people. Receiving this email means you are - as much as you wish to be - part of that network. At any one time the community gathered here on the Dorset coast (or at our sister centre in Essex) is just one small temporary manifestation of that wider fellowship.

In the weeks and months ahead some of us - who knows how many - will find ourselves physically isolated. Because many of the places or groups where we meet other people aren't open to us. Perhaps because we've had contact with the virus and we have to self-isolate.

One tiny resource that might help if that happens is our Circle of Friends. You probably remember in the chapel here there's a pottery circle of 7 figures with a central candle we light whenever we gather there.

Many people buy their own versions to take home. If you don't have one, here's a picture anyway.



I know some of us find this simple artefact - from a fairtrade workshop in Mexico - a great tool for restoring a sense of connection. When alone we can

light it and be consciously, prayerfully, held in a wider circle. Even just having the picture, you can imagine!

It may serve as a helpful image of your own circle while you're less able to be with them physically: your family, friends, colleagues.

And you could think of it as your connection with others linked to Othona. Every morning (at about 09.10) and most evenings you can know we'll be lighting our candle here too.

As a possible aid to this awareness, I'm attaching a copy of the simple words we use each day as a container for our time together in chapel. Like us, you could add the music, words, other spiritual touchstones that have meaning for you.

At this time of tremendous uncertainty, here in Dorset I know we're more aware than usual of Othona friends near and far. Who can't be with us in person but are with us in spirit.

Othona West Dorset and the virus

At the time of writing we have not cancelled any of our planned events. Obviously if this changes we'll keep you informed by further emails and will post news on our website.

But as a responsible organisation we're thinking about everything from handwashing to cancellation fees. [Here's a summary](#) of the measures we're taking at the moment.

More to come

We have lots of exciting news about developments here and about our programme later in the year, but today that can all wait. I'll write again very soon - I anticipate frequent newsletters this year..

With the warmest wishes from me and all of us at Othona

Tony Jaques (warden)