

## Community in spite of Virus 14.3.2020



Dear Friend

It's only four days since I wrote, but what a lot is happening! Today I bring you some news about Othona, an Othona friend's blog, something to make you smile, I hope, and a bit of musical inspiration.

### **Othona cancellations**

After hours of discussion and consultation, our committee meeting on Sunday made a sad decision. Up to the end of April at least, we won't be running any of the residential events planned here. We've written to everyone who was booked on them.

It's very disappointing, but we feel this is the responsible way to go. We'll review this decision next month and see what happens with events beyond April. It seems highly likely we'll have to extend our closure. And you may remember from Saturday's email: we'll offer full refunds to everybody booked on events that we choose to cancel.

In this loss of what we usually see as our calling, there is a gain too. What came to me very strongly over the weekend - endorsed by our committee members - is that we can now channel lots of our energy into communications like this. Offering a modicum of 'virtual community' for anybody out there who finds themselves isolated in any sense.

Let's make the network of Othona's many members and friends a source of encouragement, a hub for exchanging news (some of which will be sad, but not all) and a way of keeping in touch. **A community without buildings.**

### **Keep Calm and... Rethink the Beatitudes**

Here's a little something I wrote the other day, which I hope may raise a smile

Blessed are the gel users – with them we are in safe hands  
Blessed are the sneeze-catchers – for they will bin their tissues

Blessed are the shelf-stackers – for they mitigate panic-buying  
Blessed are the ventilator makers – yesterday they built cars or weapons  
Blessed are the stranded tourists – may their minibars never run dry  
Blessed are the epidemiologists – for they will crunch the numbers  
Blessed are the caring neighbours – for they will spot who needs some help  
Blessed are the asymptomatic carriers – for it is not their fault  
Blessed are you when you self-isolate – for you shall re-read every good book, eat every tin of beans and maybe even tidy the attic  
Blessed are the carers, the health-workers, the frequent handwashers – for their touch is welcome and their conscience clear

### **A voice across the centuries: Julian of Norwich**

Mother Julian was a medieval Christian mystic who witnessed an episode of devastating pandemic (The Black Death 1348-1350). And she chose a lifestyle of self-isolation - though as a religious discipline, not to avoid the plague. We have a simple chant based on the best known words from her *Revelations of Divine Love* (the earliest surviving book in English written by a woman). It's what we sang together on Sunday and would like to share with you now. [Click here](#).

### **More to come**

You can expect lots more newsletters like this. I won't promise an exact frequency ;-)

Thank you to the more than 70 people who wrote back in response to Saturday's email. It was very moving to hear from you all, to know that many of you are lighting candles and joining us in spirit for our daily chapel time.

I'll be looking to share contributions from you folk too. Julie Leoni regularly visits us with her two sons. Here's [her blog](#) from three days ago, full of wisdom and practical ideas.

With the warmest wishes from the Dorset coast

Tony - and on behalf of Liz, Kate and Robin