

Dear Friend



Hello again from Othona, with an apology first. A *few* people receiving this - Dorset residents mostly - were missed off (for technical reasons) from five earlier e-newsletters in the last three weeks. We've put that right. I hope if you're a newcomer to these virus-time communications you'll find them helpful (and see the N.B. at the foot of this page).

As you see I've got round to some cookie baking today. :-) It's Thursday - but perhaps like me you are finding it hard to keep track of days of the week? We've realised that gradually establishing a new rhythm for ourselves is one of the healthiest things we can do in these strange circumstances.

Today's newsletter brings you a bracing account of one Othona member's working life in social care. There's advice on managing anxiety through mindfulness, and an invitation to "follow the story of Jesus from Maundy Thursday to Easter morning in a contemplative way". (Yes, Maundy Thursday is only a week away.) Oh, and a real treat you may not have seen on Twitter or on television - not to be missed by lovers of musical theatre!

Frontline despatches

I invited readers who aren't self-isolating but still very active to tell us their stories. Here's how it is for Sue working in North Dorset. (Let's hear from others of you - maybe in teaching, pharmacy, food provision... any key worker roles.)

"You ask for news from the 'front line', an amorphous place where I seem to be, courtesy of my role, which has been ignored, unsung, and only recently described by Priti Patel as menial and low paid. There will be much good, I'm sure, to come out of all this, and maybe the role of the care worker will begin to get the credit it deserves.

"So, it really is business as usual for me and my colleagues. Every day we make up to 16 visits to vulnerable people, mainly, but by no means exclusively, elderly; we have

no extra PPE, just our normal gloves and flimsy plastic aprons, and I worry that we present an unacceptable risk to our clients. Handwashing is something I always do, but am doing so much more thoroughly in a bid to protect my clients, that my hands are raw and feel like sandpaper.

"Some of them have 4 visits a day, so, inevitably are visited by at least half a dozen different carers, all of whom visit many other people, have families at home and children still in a school setting. The much-banded "social distancing" isn't relevant to us, it seems, and guidelines tell us that we need only use a mask if we are caring for someone who has the virus, to protect ourselves, but not to wear one routinely to protect our vulnerable clients!

"I find this very hard to come to terms with; my ethos is to protect them, never mind myself - I'm, younger, stronger, and take great care of my immune system in every way possible. This, which was first put up a couple of weeks ago, is the latest guidance from my employer :

Hello Everyone

I'm sure you have all heard about Corona Virus . As we are all aware you are all Care Professionals . But just a friendly reminder to wash your hands with plenty of soap for as long as it takes to sing yourself Happy Birthday. Let's be proactive rather than reactive . Keep up the great work. Head Office [sic]

"I love my job, I always have; and I count myself fortunate to be able to carry on life much as normal when so many people are having to cope with such changed circumstances.

"I get out and about, driving round beautiful Dorset countryside watching spring unfold. I just wish I could do more to protect those I care for, their families and my colleagues.

"Love and best wishes to all at Othona. Longing to visit again when life returns to some semblance of normality. May God hold you in the hollow of her hand."

Mindfulness in Troubled Times

Tim Stead is a regular facilitator at Othona as a teacher of mindfulness. His course here last year shared the title of his book "See, Love, Be" or in other words Awareness, Compassion and Ease of Being. For this newsletter he's offering a timely document: [Mindfulness and Managing Anxiety](#). I recommend [Tim's website](#) as a resource generally on mindfulness and spirituality. (N.B. I think neither Tim nor Tess - see below - can control the irritating ads that sometimes pop up on their wordpress sites. But we're free to ignore them!)

Easter in a Time of Isolation

Tess Ward is another Othona favourite. Three years ago she led a wonderful Easter retreat for us. One participant wrote: "An Easter of the most profound spirituality - a

joyous enriching experience" and it was! Now Tess has adapted material from that to share with anyone who wants through her website.

She says "This is... for anyone who is not part of a gathered Christian community and would like to follow the story of Jesus from Maundy Thursday to Easter morning in a contemplative way... It is a series of rituals, poetry, readings, music and art. It will also include body prayer, silence and my own earthy written prayers.

"The purpose is to help reflection in your own home, either on your own or with those you share a home with. It will focus on the mystery of the cycle of living, dying and rebirth at the heart of all life."

Tess will start posting information online **this coming Sunday**. All you do in order to access it is click onto [her relevant webpage](#) where there is already some more introductory information.

One Day More

You may have known Jennie Knight who was my deputy here back in the early 2000s. It's lovely to hear from Jen occasionally and knowing my obsessions she's alerted me to this piece of absolute musical magic. [Les Mis meets Lockdown](#). Enjoy!

May all of us, like that Marsh family, find creativity and fun despite these troubled times

Tony - on behalf of all of us isolating at Othona: Robin, Liz, Kate, Gavin and Sean