

Dear Friends,

As we begin the second national lockdown, there is heightened fear and anxiety. To say 'we live in uncertain times' is an understatement. Most of us have never lived through something which had such a major effect on society, for such a long period, and with no obvious sign of when things will go back to normal, if ever.

All sorts of things happen in uncertain times: we become more anxious, we become more tired and less motivated, old tensions and weaknesses rise to the surface in ourselves, our relationships and our society. We get upset more easily, and people become more polarised. I've just had 2 weeks off and in large part that was down to exhaustion, and being advised to get extra rest. I doubt I'm the only one.

What can we do? Its important to keep \*worshipping\*, to keep remind ourselves of who God is and to lift our eyes to him - if you need some musical backing try this inspiring version of Crown Him With Many Crowns <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vo1rh6MJLI>. Find one or two people who can be your '\*covid response team\*' and support you. Scale down your \*plans \*to small, manageable steps. Take a bit of time to find and do what \*refuels \*you (one of those for me at the moment, its Autumnwatch) And recognise that what you're feeling is \*normal\*: it's not just you, we're all limping.

And.....Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, says /'...we do what we can to halt the spread of this virus – but we can still feel powerless. Is there anything else we can do? Really do? Yes. Yes there is. We can \*pray\*. Prayer is my first response when I feel out of my depth, when I need help, when I am worried, when I am concerned for those I love... Prayer changes things.' /

For the first time I can ever recall, the Church of England has called us to a time of national prayer and fasting. Attached is a simple daily prayer guide which you can use over the next 28 days. It's suggested that, where possible, we all pray at 6pm wherever we are. We can be united in the Spirit even if we aren't all present in the same place.

Here's one of the prayers in the leaflet. Why not pray it now?:

/Loving God, at this time of crisis when so many are suffering,// //we pray for our nation and our world.// //Give our leaders wisdom, our Health Service strength, our people hope.// //Lead us through these parched and difficult days to the fresh springs of joy and comfort that we find in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. /

May God draw near to you as you draw near to Him.

yours in Christ

David and Ruth

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